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ICRC/N. Winquist

As conflict spread across central Africa, engulfing Zaire – now the Democratic Republic of the Congo – and the Republic of the Congo, hundreds of thousands of people fled their homes. In 1997 the ICRC helped 24,000 unaccompanied children lost in the turmoil to find their families again.

West Africa

ICRC delegation:

Liberia

ICRC regional delegations:

Abidjan, Dakar, Lagos

Central Africa

ICRC delegations:

Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda

ICRC regional delegation:

Yaoundé

Southern Africa

ICRC delegation:

Angola

ICRC regional delegations:

Harare, Pretoria

East Africa

ICRC delegations:

Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda

ICRC regional delegation:

Nairobi

Staff

ICRC expatriates:¹ 304

National Societies:¹ 87

Local employees:² 3026

Total expenditure

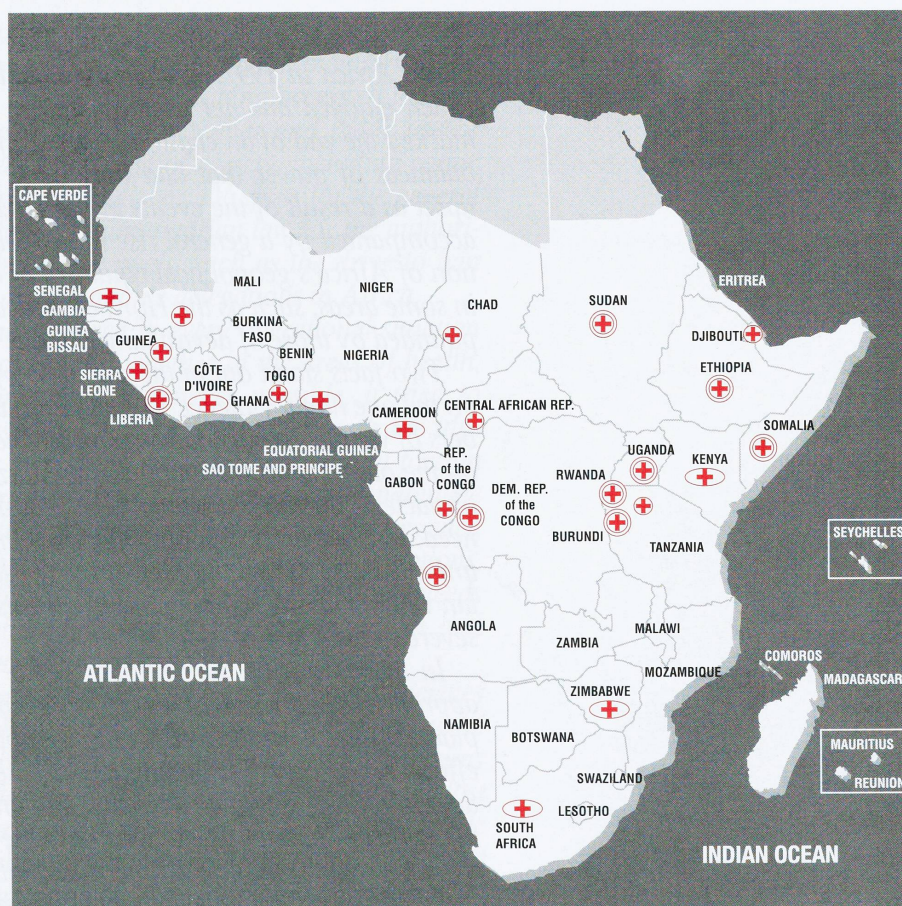
Sfr 234,800,632

Expenditure breakdown

| | Sfr |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Protection/tracing: | 68,465,579 |
| Relief: | 75,652,482 |
| Health activities: | 40,149,883 |
| Cooperation with | |
| National Societies: | 9,261,831 |
| Promotion/dissemination: | 8,057,632 |
| Operational support: | 19,695,778 |
| Overheads: | 13,517,447 |

¹ Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

² Under ICRC contract, as at December 1997.



ICRC / AR 12.97

AFRICA

War and intolerance continued to affect many countries in sub-Saharan Africa in 1997, with some notable exceptions, such as southern Africa, which enjoyed another year of relative stability, and Liberia, where elections marked the end of an eight-year-old conflict. Many of the political alliances and balances of power that had long been holding sway over the continent were upset as a result of the events in the Great Lakes region. These upheavals were accompanied by a general rise in instability, whose full impact on the redefinition of Africa's geopolitical equilibrium cannot yet be fully assessed. Moreover, in some areas, such as the Horn of Africa, the effects of the hostilities were compounded by those of devastating climatic conditions.

Two facts stand out in the overview of operational contexts presented below: on the one hand, violence – often blind and out of control – claimed large numbers of victims, many of them people who did not take part in the hostilities; and on the other hand, humanitarian organizations had to overcome a multitude of obstacles – including political ones – in order to protect and assist those most in need. In some instances, the difficulties proved insurmountable and tragic events unfolded away from the eyes of the world. From that point of view, humanitarian values and the right of conflict victims to protection and assistance suffered a severe setback in 1997.

In the course of the year the ICRC continuously adjusted its operational approach and the size of its staff to keep up with developments in the different places where it was active and to be able to come to the aid of the victims as effectively as possible. Owing to increased humanitarian needs, an operational delegation was set up in Kampala and an office opened in Bangui. The ICRC's network of regional delegations – whose tasks included but were not limited to the ongoing promotion of international humanitarian law and humanitarian mobilization as a whole – enabled the organization to take rapid action whenever violence flared, as it did in the Senegalese province of Casamance, the Central African Republic and Zambia.

Protecting detainees remained one of the ICRC's main concerns in 1997. On the African continent its delegates visited more than 155,000 persons incarcerated in 23 countries and conveyed several hundred thousand Red Cross messages between family members who had become separated during the events and between detainees and their relatives. Along with the steps that it took to remind the authorities of their responsibility to ensure that conditions of detention were acceptable and that detainees were treated humanely, the ICRC had to carry out large-scale assistance programmes in a number of prisons where significant humanitarian needs were noted. Furthermore, whenever the organization received reports of acts of violence committed against the civilian population, it approached the relevant authorities on a case-by-case or systematic basis and drew their attention to the fact that respect was due to persons not taking part in the hostilities.

This issue was also tackled by promoting humanitarian values among as wide an audience as possible, with a view not only to ensuring that humanitarian law was better known and complied with, but also to facilitating access to the victims. The ICRC thus developed a broad range of activities and made use of many different methods designed to reach all strata of society, including comic strips and music for young people, plays and radio or TV spots for the general public, and an advisory service in the field of humanitarian law for the authorities. Worldwide ICRC campaigns with specific goals, such as the drive to ban landmines, were also supported by the organization's delegations in Africa.

On the assistance side, the ICRC endeavoured in every operational situation to meet all the various needs of conflict victims, whether in the areas of health, sanitation, food or material aid of any kind. Whenever possible, it tried to involve beneficiaries as closely as possible in relief programmes, with the ultimate aim of enabling them to fend for themselves again and do without foreign aid. This approach included the numerous efforts that were made to rehabilitate the means of production of conflict victims by assisting them with activities such as agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing and handicrafts. In some situations, however, owing to the severity of the fighting or the urgent humanitarian needs of especially vulnerable groups, rehabilitation was not a feasible option and emergency relief distributions continued to be necessary.

As in previous years, the ICRC enjoyed the support of the National Societies of the countries in which it worked. Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteers were often the first and at times even the only people in a position to assist the victims when security conditions were at their worst. Tragically, several of them lost their lives or were wounded in the course of the year, notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo. Throughout 1997 the ICRC pursued its cooperation programmes with African National Societies, in particular with a view to strengthening their capacity to respond to emergency situations. Moreover, in conformity with the agreements concerning the respective fields of activity of the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the ICRC kept up its dialogue with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It also continued to carry out some of its programmes in the form of projects delegated to participating National Societies.

West Africa LIBERIA

During the first few months of the year, stability and security gradually returned to Liberia thanks to the implementation of the provisions agreed upon in Abuja, Nigeria, in August 1996, by the parties to the conflict (in particular, the demobilization and disarming of combatants belonging to the various factions) and the deployment of ECOMOG* contingents throughout the country. On 19 July the presidential elections – the first in two decades – were held to the satisfaction of foreign observers and resulted in victory for Charles Taylor, head of the former NPFL.* The newly elected President took office on 2 August and, immediately afterwards, set up a government that included members of other political groups. In early September the sanctions imposed on Liberia by ECOWAS* since 1992 were lifted and, at the end of the month, UNOMIL* began its disengagement. In late 1997, however, sev-



presidential elections

eral factors – including the conflict in Sierra Leone,³ the persistent presence of hundreds of thousands of Liberian refugees in neighbouring States, the country's general state of disarray after years of war and the aftermath of the wholesale violence that prevailed during the conflict – remained a threat to Liberia's new-found stability.

At the end of 1996 the ICRC had returned to Liberia on a permanent basis after a period of eight months during which, for security reasons, the delegation

³ See *Sierra Leone*, pp. 47-48.

* ECOMOG: Monitoring Group of the Economic Community of West African States

* NPFL: National Patriotic Front of Liberia

* ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

* UNOMIL: United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



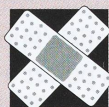
- visited 145 people detained in Monrovia's central prison, most of whom had been arrested by ECOMOG and handed over to the authorities (these people were subsequently released);
- visited 5 people detained in Monrovia's central prison after their transfer from the National Security Agency (which was under presidential authority);
- visited a person being held in a hospital, under ECOMOG's responsibility;
- gave all the detainees it visited the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families;
- distributed material assistance to the detainees it visited, in accordance with their needs;
- repaired the roof and sanitary facilities of Monrovia's central prison;



– until September, regularly monitored the situation of some 2,000 former RUF combatants and members of their families who had taken refuge in the west of the country, providing them with food made available by the WFP,* tools and medical supplies, and distributed further relief to the local population;



- conveyed 5,610 Red Cross messages between separated family members, in particular Liberian refugees outside the country and their relatives, by means of a collection and distribution network comprising over 40 offices throughout the country and run in cooperation with the Liberia National Red Cross Society and the National Societies of the host countries;



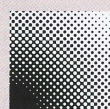
- provided medical supplies for clinics run by the Liberian Red Cross in Buchanan, Dolo, Gbarnga, Gbatala and Totota (the latter opened in 1997);
- ran a mobile clinic for displaced persons in and around Monrovia;
- reactivated a medical facility in Bopolu for former RUF combatants and their families who had taken refuge in the west of the country;



- supervised maintenance work (chlorination) on some 500 wells and pumps supplying drinking water to Monrovia;
- built or repaired sanitation and water-supply facilities in places where many displaced people had gathered and in medical facilities in Monrovia and the provinces;



- helped strengthen and develop the Liberian Red Cross by involving it closely with its own work (relating mainly to health, the promotion of humanitarian law and tracing), providing training and giving it material and financial support;



- launched a programme for schoolchildren in and around Monrovia to promote humanitarian values and Red Cross activities, in cooperation with the National Society;
- held information sessions for a wide variety of audiences, in particular ECOMOG contingents and the Liberian armed forces and police;
- taught several dozen volunteers from all branches of the National Society methods of promoting, in their own communities, a message of solidarity centred on respect for human beings.

* WFP: World Food Programme

*return of other humanitarian
organizations*

had withdrawn to Freetown, from where regular missions were carried out to Monrovia.⁴ As soon as President Taylor was elected and the government formed, the delegation contacted the new authorities to secure their consent to the deployment of ICRC activities on their territory – in particular, an agreement was signed with the Ministry of Justice allowing the ICRC to visit people deprived of their freedom.

As peace gradually returned and the country began to open up to numerous humanitarian organizations active in a wide range of spheres (health, agriculture, sanitation, etc.), the ICRC focused on activities to protect detainees and the civilian population. The delegation continued, in particular, to monitor and assist a group of some 2,000 people (former RUF* combatants and their families) who had fled from eastern Sierra Leone and given themselves up to the Mandingo wing of ULIMO* in Liberia.⁵ In September, with the situation in Liberia returning to normal, these people had regained a certain degree of self-sufficiency in food and a number of them intended to return home. As a result, the ICRC stopped providing them with assistance. Besides conducting visits to people being held by the country's authorities, the delegation approached ECOMOG several times to obtain access to the detainees in its power and discuss violations of humanitarian rules. Moreover, in cooperation with the Liberia National Red Cross Society, the ICRC developed and extended to the whole country a network for collecting and distributing Red Cross messages, thereby making it possible for family members separated by the events to keep in touch with one another.

While it dealt with these priorities, the delegation also pursued the medical and sanitation programmes begun in previous years and strove to promote international humanitarian law. The ICRC carried out most of this work in cooperation with the Liberian Red Cross, thereby contributing, together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to the strengthening and development of the National Society.

⁴ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, pp. 40-42.

⁵ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, p. 41.

* ULIMO: United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia

ABIDJAN

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

In Sierra Leone the hopes of peace glimpsed the previous year failed to materialize in 1997. The agreement signed between the government and the RUF in November 1996⁶ was not implemented and an increasing number of clashes occurred at the start of the year between the army and the traditional militias, and between the latter and the RUF. On 25 May the democratically elected President was overthrown by a group of army officers, known as the AFRC,* soon joined by the RUF, renamed the People's Army. This *coup d'état* was widely condemned by the international community, and in particular by ECOWAS, which demanded the ousted President's unconditional return to power.

In the days following 25 May the Nigerian troops stationed in Sierra Leone, later joined by ECOMOG contingents, tried

to restore the authority of the elected President by force, and fighting broke out in Freetown itself. During the hostilities, which took place in a general climate of extreme confusion and involved widespread looting, a number of civilians were killed or wounded and many residents of the capital fled to the provinces or to Guinea. Fighting also raged in the provinces, especially in Kenema, between the military alliance newly in power and the traditional militias. Against this backdrop of widespread insecurity, most aid and development organizations left the country.

In late August, as part of various measures decided on to reinstate the constitutional government, ECOWAS, followed by the UN Security Council,⁷ imposed sanctions on Sierra Leone. The ICRC had previously stepped in to remind



coup d'état in Freetown

⁶ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, pp. 43-44.

⁷ Resolution 1132 of 8 October 1997.

* AFRC: Armed Forces Revolutionary Council

ICRC role as neutral intermediary

ECOWAS that no embargo could be placed on humanitarian assistance. At the end of the year, the procedures that would enable the ICRC to continue bringing into Sierra Leone the materials necessary for its neutral and impartial work were still under discussion between the organization and the monitoring bodies put in place by ECOWAS and the Security Council.

The dialogue established between ECOWAS and the ruling junta, combined with diffuse military pressure, led on 23 October to the signing of an agreement whereby the junta undertook to restore power to the elected President after a transition period lasting until April 1998. At the end of the year, no significant progress had been made with the implementation of this agreement. Most aid organizations were still absent from the country and the embargo, whose consequences were still impossible to measure in humanitarian terms, remained in force.

Some days after the *coup d'état*, the ICRC made formal representations to ECOWAS, ECOMOG and the ruling junta in Freetown to remind them of their obligation to respect the relevant provisions of humanitarian law and the work of the Red Cross. In Freetown, at the height of the confusion, the ICRC acted as a neutral intermediary, in particular by facilitating the evacuation to Guinea of around 100 foreigners trapped in the city and by negotiating with the parties the evacuation of several hundred people from a hotel that was caught in the cross-fire. In addition, it quickly organized visits to people captured on both sides.

ABIDJAN Regional delegation



- in Sierra Leone, before the *coup d'état*, visited 134 people held under the responsibility of the government in 7 places of detention in Freetown and in the provinces;
- in Sierra Leone, after the *coup d'état*, visited 134 people

IN 1997 THE ICRC:

- detained under the responsibility of the ruling junta, and 15 people under that of ECOMOG;
- in Côte d'Ivoire, in Gagnoa prison, visited 29 people detained in connection with a boycott of the 1996 presidential elections;
- carried out a project to clean and disinfect the prisons in Gagnoa and Abidjan;
- gave the detainees it visited the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families;

- distributed food and other supplies to detainees, in accordance with their needs;



- conveyed 11,125 Red Cross messages between family members separated by the events in Sierra Leone, and between refugees settled in the region (mainly Sierra Leoneans and Liberians in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea) and their families, in cooperation with the National Societies of their host countries;



- distributed 260 tonnes of food in Sierra Leone (made available by the WFP), 1,200 tonnes of rice seed, 41,000 packets of vegetable seed and 72,000 hoes to around 200,000 conflict victims in eastern Sierra Leone;
- provided almost 1,000 tonnes of food, blankets, cooking utensils, candles and clothing to some 45,000 displaced people resettling in Sierra Leone;
- after the *coup d'état*, regularly distributed food to 4,000 vulnerable people in Freetown;



- for 2 months, dispatched a complete surgical team and provided medical supplies to help care for people wounded during the incidents that followed the *coup d'état* in Freetown;

- set up 5 clinics in Freetown to dispense primary health care to the city's population;
- opened on its premises in Zimi, Sierra Leone, a medical facility for people wounded in the periodic outbreaks of fighting, evacuated others to hospitals and supported medical establishments that took in the war-wounded;
- pursued a primary health-care programme for some 140,000 people in eastern Sierra Leone by supporting 10 medical facilities, training local staff, improving or setting up systems for the supply of drinking water and the disposal of waste water, and vaccinating children under the age of 5;



- continued its cooperation programmes with the region's National Societies, concentrating (depending on each case) on promoting structural development, training staff and volunteers, supporting activities to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and/or strengthening the capacity of the Societies to take action in emergency situations;



- continued its efforts to promote acceptance and greater understanding of humanitarian law and of the ICRC among various target groups in the region, namely the civilian and

military authorities, the police, the armed forces, various organizations, academic circles and the general public;

- advised the authorities in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo with respect to drawing up legislative measures on the use of the emblem and the repression of war crimes, and setting up interministerial committees for the implementation of humanitarian law;
- together with the interministerial committee of Côte d'Ivoire, organized in Abidjan the first meeting of African national interministerial committees for the implementation of humanitarian law, which was attended by government representatives and National Societies from 12 countries (Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Togo and Zimbabwe);
- together with the Red Cross of Benin, organized a seminar for around 40 representatives of the country's executive, legislative and judicial authorities to promote the implementation of humanitarian law at the national level;
- held a seminar in Guinea for 25 military officers responsible for instructing troops;
- organized ad hoc dissemination sessions in Sierra Leone for armed members of the various parties involved in the conflict.

*first visit to detainees
in Côte d'Ivoire*

The consequences of this crisis on Sierra Leone's health system – already greatly weakened by years of conflict – were disastrous, and the ICRC, like MSF* (one of the few other organizations to have stayed put) considerably increased its involvement in the medical sphere, both in Freetown and in the provinces. While the events did not lead to widespread food shortages in the country, partly thanks to the success of the agricultural programmes carried out in previous years by the ICRC and other organizations, the delegation had to assist certain groups of particularly vulnerable people in Freetown.

The ICRC also continued its cooperation with the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, in particular to strengthen the latter's capacity to act in emergency situations, setting up teams of volunteers in Freetown, Bo and Kenema and assisting with the promotion of humanitarian law and with tracing activities. After 25 May, the ICRC backed the National Society's emergency health and relief programme. Despite the political crisis, the ICRC managed to carry out its planned activities, begun in 1996, to provide agricultural assistance and support for medical facilities treating people affected by the situation in the east of the country.⁸ However, because of the insecurity, some activities had to be modified or delayed or even – though rarely – interrupted for a lengthy period.

In 1997 the ICRC signed an agreement with the authorities in Côte d'Ivoire allowing it to visit people detained in the country. The first visits took place in October, in two prisons in Abidjan and Gagnoa. Ad hoc food assistance was provided for several dozen inmates recovering after a cholera epidemic in the central prison and reformatory in Abidjan.

In Guinea the ICRC pursued its representations to the authorities with a view to gaining access to people being held in connection with an attempted *coup d'état* carried out in February 1996.⁹ By the end of the year the ICRC had not yet been authorized to visit these people.

While addressing the above priorities, the Abidjan regional delegation continued to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and provide advisory services for the implementation of this law at the national level. Moreover, within its own areas of expertise, the ICRC kept up its support for the region's National Societies.

⁸ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, p. 44.

⁹ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, p. 43.

* MSF: Médecins sans frontières

DAKAR

Regional delegation

(Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal)

In 1997, a year of presidential and legislative elections, Mali experienced serious political unrest. Several opposition figures remained outside the electoral process, during which the outgoing president was re-elected and his party gained a majority in the parliament. Fighting broke out, mainly in Bamako, both before and during the elections, and a number of opposition members were arrested and detained. The ICRC carefully monitored developments in connection with these people. At the same time, in the north of the country, the peace process begun in 1995 between the government and the Arab and Tuareg rebel movements failed to meet the expectations of the civilian population, whose living conditions did not improve to any measurable degree. The ICRC pursued the work undertaken in the previous years, in particular its efforts to support the peace process and to restore an atmosphere of trust between the various communities, by keeping in touch with all the parties, including groups of former rebel combatants, and by regularly passing on to the authorities the observations made by its delegates in the north of the country. Moreover, the ICRC helped relaunch the production sector among vulnerable groups, developing a broad spectrum of activities (agricultural, veterinary, fishing and water-supply programmes) itself and encouraging the relevant government services and local communities to become directly involved. In order to support the extension of the new government health policy to northern Mali, the ICRC also embarked on a wide-ranging three-year programme designed mainly to reactivate or, where necessary, set up fully equipped and staffed health posts in the Bourem and Timbuktu regions.

In Niger insecurity prevailed for the greater part of the year in the north and east of the country, where certain rebel groups, tired of waiting for the fulfilment of the promises made at the signing of the 1995 peace agreement, officially dissociated themselves from the peace process. As a result, both the army and the police hardened their positions. This turn of events was accompanied by a serious political crisis following the *coup d'état* and presidential elections in 1996, and by social tensions and economic problems. In 1997 the ICRC conducted several missions to Niger, in particular to step up its dialogue with the authorities on humanitarian problems in the country and to encourage greater acceptance of the organization's specific mandate.

In Senegal the year was marked by a very noticeable rise in tension in Casamance. The cease-fire declared in 1995 between the government and the

*supporting the peace
process in Mali*

missions to Niger

*renewed tension in
Casamance*

Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance was broken in March. Clashes between government and rebel forces claimed dozens of victims, including civilians, while several thousand people had to leave their homes because of the insecurity. The ICRC continued its visits to persons arrested in connection with the crisis and further developed its programmes to disseminate humanitarian law, in particular in government circles and among the armed forces (including the contingents stationed in Casamance) and the police. In addition, the ICRC supported the work undertaken by the Senegalese Red Cross Society in the troubled region.

DAKAR
Regional delegation

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- in Senegal, visited 191 people arrested in connection with the events in Casamance who were incarcerated in 3 places of detention in Dakar and Casamance;
- in Gambia, visited 15 people held at the Mile 2 prison in connection with the 1994 attempted *coup d'état* and its aftermath in 1995;
- in Guinea-Bissau, visited 2 people still being held in Bra following the attempted *coup d'état* in March 1993;
- in Mali, visited 4 detainees held in Niafunké;
- distributed various supplies, in accordance with the needs noted in the places of detention visited in Gambia (in cooperation with the National Society), Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Senegal;
- launched a vegetable garden programme at the central prison in

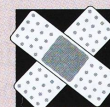
- Dakar to improve the detainees' food supply;
- gave all the detainees visited the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families;



- helped restore and maintain contact between people from various groups (in particular, refugees from the Great Lakes region and from Mali) and their families, by means of a network for exchanging Red Cross messages operated from Dakar, in cooperation with the region's National Societies;



- supplied food to the Senegalese Red Cross Society for its relief programme to help civilians affected by the events in Casamance;



- boosted the means of production of some 12,000 families in northern Mali by distributing supplies (64 tonnes of sorghum, rice and vegetable seed, farming tools, fishing tackle and materials for craftwork), supporting similar projects undertaken by the Mali Red Cross, vaccinating 50,000 head of livestock and treating 5,000 for various ailments, subsidizing the purchase of 100 tonnes of animal fodder so as to enable the poorest breeders to feed their herds during the lean season, and setting up a solidarity fund (with symbolic payment for services rendered) open to breeders' associations;
- in Mali, helped organize community-wide discussions with a view to involving local people directly in managing the health system in the northern part of the

Besides dealing with these particular priorities, throughout the year the regional delegation in Dakar pursued its overall activities to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and advise States on the implementation of this law at the national level. Similarly, within its areas of expertise, the ICRC continued to support the region's National Societies and to encourage dialogue and cooperation between them.

country, supported 8 health posts and other medical facilities, vaccinated 25,000 people (children under the age of 6 and women of child-bearing age who had not been immunized during the years of conflict) in the Bourem and Timbuktu regions, took part in the fight against a meningitis epidemic by vaccinating 17,000 people (some of these activities were carried out as part of a project delegated to the Belgian Red Cross);

- in Ziguinchor, Senegal, distributed medical supplies to a hospital and supported the restoration of a community health centre run by the Senegalese Red Cross Society;
- supported prevention work undertaken by the youth section of the Red Cross of Cape Verde during a cholera epidemic;



- built or rehabilitated 10 wells and other water-supply systems serving the health posts and isolated rural communities in the Bourem and Timbuktu regions of Mali;



- pursued its cooperation programmes with the region's National Societies, concentrating, depending on each case, on promoting structural development, training staff and volunteers, supporting activities to disseminate humanitarian law and/or strengthening the capacity of the Societies to act in emergency situations;
- in Dakar, held a seminar on information and dissemination topics for senior staff of the region's National Societies, and in Banjul, took part in a seminar for the Societies of Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal on institutional development;



- depending on the context, pursued its efforts to promote greater acceptance and understanding of humanitarian law and of the ICRC among various target groups, namely the civilian and military authorities, the armed forces, the police, various associations, the press, academic circles and the general public;
- launched studies (carried out by legal consultants selected locally) on the compatibility of legislation in Mali, Niger and Senegal with humanitarian law;
- in Senegal, in cooperation with the National Society and the Senegalese Institute for Human Rights and Peace, organized a seminar for about 30 high-ranking government officials, members of parliament and representatives of the army and the police, on the implementation of humanitarian law at the national level.

LAGOS

Regional delegation (Nigeria)

In 1997 the Provisional Ruling Council continued to implement its programme for the transition from military to civilian rule. Elections for the local government councils were held in March, followed in December by elections for the state assemblies. However, the slow pace at which the transition process was conducted, together with the arrest and prolonged detention of members of the opposition, continued to arouse criticism, both within Nigeria and from the international community. Furthermore, outbreaks of violence in several of the country's states claimed numerous civilian lives. These confrontations had various causes, in particular ethnic rivalry, disputes between the resident and migrant communities, and the relocation of municipality offices. Moreover, at the start of the year, a number of attacks were carried out against military targets, mainly in the Lagos area, leading to the arrest of suspects among militant members of the opposition.

The delegation continued to keep a close watch on developments in connection with the arrest and detention of members of the opposition, in particular through regular contacts with Nigerian human rights circles and the National Human Rights Commission set up in 1996. In parallel the ICRC continued to support the Nigerian Red Cross Society with a view to strengthening its operational capacity and thereby enabling it to act more effectively in emergency situations, in particular during outbreaks of intercommunal strife. In order to spread knowledge of humanitarian law, the ICRC pursued its ongoing programmes for the armed forces, the authorities and the media, and, in close cooperation with the National Society, launched an original project aimed this time at the general public, and featuring a play, entitled *Askari*, illustrating the values of peace and tolerance.¹⁰

Bakassi peninsula dispute

The ICRC also pursued the negotiations it had previously¹¹ entered into with the Nigerian authorities in order to gain access to any Cameroonian prisoners of war who had been captured in the border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula. The ICRC had received allegations of detention concerning such persons. In June the ICRC permanent Vice-President met with the Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs at the OAU* Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Harare, and in August the regional delegate raised the matter with the special legal adviser to the head of State. At the end of the year, however,

¹⁰ See *Promotion and development of international humanitarian law*, p. 304.

¹¹ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, pp. 49-50.

* OAU: Organization of African Unity

no progress had been made.¹² Furthermore, the Nigerian authorities gave no response to the list – forwarded the previous year by the ICRC at the request of the Cameroonian authorities – of 128 people who had gone missing during the conflict, or to the cases of three civilians who also remained unaccounted for.

¹² For a summary of the approaches made and action taken on the Cameroonian side in connection with the border dispute, see Yaoundé, pp. 78-80.

LAGOS Regional delegation



- supported the sanitation activities of the Nigerian Red Cross in prisons by offering its expertise and supplying equipment;
- supported a mobile clinic run by a local non-governmental organization and serving the main prisons in Lagos;



- in coordination with the regional delegation in Yaoundé and in cooperation with the Nigerian Red Cross, continued to convey Red Cross messages between Nigerian civilian internees and prisoners of war held in Cameroon and their families in Nigeria (1,000 messages were handled);



- provided the National Society with bandages, 200 blankets, cooking equipment and utensils, 650 jerrycans and plastic sheeting for its work for victims of intercommunal strife;



- continued to support the work of the Nigerian Red Cross aimed at spreading knowledge of humanitarian law and helped strengthen the National Society's operational capacity (in particular by developing a radio network linking the country's states), financing the salaries of senior staff at headquarters and maintaining a vehicle fleet;



- continued to cooperate with most of the country's military academies in the teaching of

humanitarian law, in particular by organizing a seminar for some 60 officers responsible for instructing troops, and held several dissemination sessions for commanding officers of the armed forces and the police;

- together with the Nigerian Red Cross, launched a programme aimed at reaching a wide audience by means of a play - with television and radio adaptations - illustrating the values of peace and tolerance inherent in the main local cultures (the play, *Askari*, was performed before tens of thousands of people in 20 of the country's states);
- organized a seminar for government officials and professors from some 15 Nigerian law faculties on the teaching of humanitarian law in the country's universities.

Central Africa

BURUNDI

stalled talks

ICRC operations in Burundi remained suspended throughout 1997 owing to the withdrawal of all expatriates in June 1996 following the murder of three delegates in the province of Cibitoke.¹³ Several missions to Bujumbura were carried out during the year to urge the Burundian authorities to move ahead with the thorough investigation requested by the ICRC into the circumstances of the attack in which the delegates had lost their lives. However, no tangible results came of these contacts. While deploring the fact that many Burundian victims remained without protection, by the year's end the ICRC still considered that the conditions required for it to resume work in the country had not yet been fulfilled.

During the year the ICRC nevertheless kept open its delegation in Bujumbura, with the support of its Burundian colleagues. Fifteen vehicles were exported to the former Zaire for use in the organization's work there, while some of the ICRC's stocks of medical supplies were handed over to three hospitals in Bujumbura.

The situation in Burundi remained extremely precarious in 1997. At the start of the year, talks were held between the government and one of the main opposition parties, the CNDD,* but little progress was achieved. At the international level, the mediation efforts undertaken by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere also remained unsuccessful. In April the economic embargo imposed on Burundi the previous year¹⁴ by several African countries was eased. Clashes and fighting between the Burundian army and rebel forces continued, in particular in the southern and northern provinces. Other tensions arose between the CNDD-FDD* and the *Palipehutu** when they could not agree about whether the time was ripe for opening negotiations with the Buyoya government. Moreover, relations between Burundi and Tanzania became increasingly strained and sporadic armed incidents occurred along the border between the two States.

Besides the direct victims of the fighting, civilians – mainly in rural areas – continued to be severely affected by the crisis in Burundi. In sensitive regions the government continued the policy it had begun the previous year of grouping the population in villages put under the protection of the army. The concentration of

¹³ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p. 51.

¹⁴ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p. 53.

* CNDD: National Council for the Defence of Democracy

* FDD: Force for the Defence of Democracy

* *Palipehutu*: Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People

people in places that were not designed to accommodate so many – especially in terms of medical and sanitary facilities – together with the lack of access to farmland, had serious humanitarian consequences (during the second half of the year, several tens of thousands of these people were nevertheless able to return home). Moreover, in a climate of heightened antagonism between the various communities, the values of tolerance and humanity often fell by the wayside, and a great many acts of violence against civilians were reported.

Against this backdrop, around 30 humanitarian organizations continued their work to assist those affected by the situation, subject to the restrictions that were imposed on them and the security constraints they had to cope with.

Central Africa

BURUNDI

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* CNDD: National Council for the Defence of Democracy

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At the political level, self-proclaimed President Laurent Désiré Kabila and his government were scarcely installed in Kinshasa when they had to face the resurgence of certain sectors of the opposition to former President Mobutu, whose members were frustrated at not having been invited to share power. Opposition demonstrations were held, in particular in the capital, and were suppressed by ADFL contingents. Arrests also took place in opposition circles and among the members of the former regime.

The conflict, together with the insecurity that prevailed right through the year in some regions, had serious humanitarian consequences in a country already weakened by years of crumbling public services and an ongoing socio-economic crisis.

Many civilians suffered from the scorched-earth policy adopted by the different groups of fighters retreating before the advance of the ADFL. Along the westward routes taken by these fighters, notably in Equateur and Eastern Province, civilians saw their property looted without restraint while infrastructure such as hospitals, health posts and water-supply facilities were also plundered, or even destroyed. Owing to the general insecurity, tens of thousands of civilians fled their homes and travelled to places in the country that were considered safer, while tens of thousands of others crossed Lake Tanganyika to seek refuge in Tanzania, in the Kigoma region. Subsequently, as a result of new developments and the gradual lessening of tension, the displaced people began to go back home. In September UNHCR started to repatriate the refugees settled in Tanzania, while others returned on their own.

Before the advancing ADFL fighters, some of the Rwandan and Burundian refugees living in the camps set up between Uvira and Bukavu returned to their countries of origin;¹⁷ others (mainly Rwandans) headed for the country's western borders. Although a number of them managed to reach Angola, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and countries further away on the Atlantic coast, several tens of thousands of these refugees moving towards the west remained in quite inaccessible areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Driven by illness, hunger and a hostile environment, they abandoned their hiding places and gathered in groups, in particular to the south of Kisangani and in Mbandaka. At the same time, whether because of the lack of minimum security conditions, the intransigence of the parties involved or the almost insuperable logistic difficulties and the fluctuating military situation, the humanitarian organizations working in this situation, including the ICRC, found their access to victims very seriously impeded. After much pressure had been brought to bear on the new authorities by the international community, the refugees south of Kisangani and in Mbandaka were finally repatriated to Rwanda by UNHCR in June and

unrestrained looting

untold tragedy

¹⁷ See *Rwanda* pp. 71-77.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

During the early months of 1997, the offensive launched at the end of September 1996 by the ADFL* in the Uvira region¹⁵ moved rapidly towards the interior of the country. With virtually no fighting, except along the Kisangani-Walikale axis and in Kenge, the ADFL took the country's major towns one by one, aided by foreign forces, thereby opening up the way to Kinshasa. The capital fell on 17 May, a few days after the departure of President Mobutu, who was to die in exile in Morocco in September. The ADFL subsequently extended its control over the whole country, now renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the exception of a few pockets of resistance where groups of fighters – soldiers from the former Zairian and Rwandan armed forces, *Interahamwe* militiamen and traditional fighters –



ADFL in Kinshasa

continued their guerrilla activities against the ADFL. At the end of the year security conditions remained precarious in several parts of the country, especially in the east, owing to the presence of these groups, dissension between various ADFL contingents and tensions or sporadic fighting between rival communities, mainly in the Fizi, Baraka and Masisi areas.

In addition, the conflict that broke out in June in the neighbouring Republic of the Congo had repercussions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in the capital, where gunfire from the opposite bank of the Congo river claimed victims among the civilian population. The fighting in Brazzaville drove several thousand Congolese to seek refuge in Kinshasa.¹⁶

¹⁵ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁶ See *Republic of the Congo*, pp. 66-70.

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

set up a network for exchanging Red Cross messages. At the end of 1997, as most of the displaced people had returned home and the situation had stabilized, the volume of messages handled had greatly decreased. Throughout the year the ICRC also continued to convey Red Cross messages between Congolese refugees settled in the Kigoma region of Tanzania and their families in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and between Angolan refugees and their families at home.

restoring family links

Special attention was paid to the problem of unaccompanied children. The dismantling of the Rwandan refugee camps in the Kivu area in October 1996 made it impossible to monitor the minors registered there in the previous years, a large number of them having gone back home during mass returns or during repatriations organized by UNHCR.²⁰ However, unaccompanied Rwandan children continued to turn up throughout the year in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; these were repatriated by UNHCR, SCF* or the ICRC. At the end of the year, to the best of the ICRC's knowledge, there remained 2,000 unaccompanied Rwandan children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in addition to unaccompanied Burundian children. Together with the National Society, the ICRC also registered unaccompanied Congolese children who had become separated from their families during the events, with the ultimate aim of reuniting them with their parents.

resettlement of displaced persons

Besides providing emergency aid for displaced persons and refugees in the acute phase of the conflict, the ICRC's priority was to help Congolese civilians who had left their homes because of the conflict to return and settle back in. In mid-April a vast operation was set up to transport these people – with all kinds of vehicle, from planes and boats to trains and trucks – back to their places of origin. This operation started in Kisangani, from where several thousand of them were brought back to various destinations in the Kivu area. It continued with similar transfers throughout the national territory and finished at the end of the year. In addition, to help the returnees (including refugees coming back from Tanzania) settle in their homes again, the ICRC distributed food, seed, farming tools, blankets, tarpaulins, jerrycans, kitchen utensils and soap, depending on their needs. Various institutions dealing with vulnerable groups, such as hospitals, orphanages and missions, also received food aid. In addition, food was distributed to workers who were repairing damaged roads in the Kivu area.

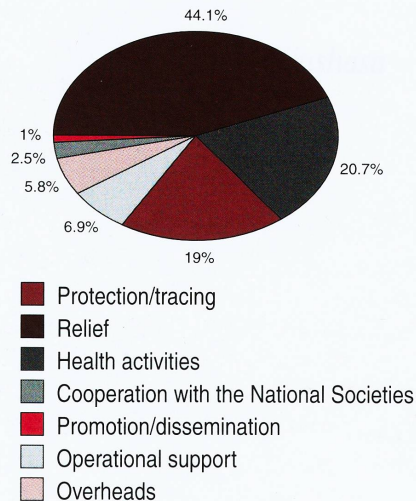
In the emergency phase, and in coordination with the other aid organizations active in the area, the ICRC endeavoured to bring food and medical supplies to the refugee groups to which it had access, whether they were heading back to Rwanda along the routes leading from the Kivu area towards the west and south, or whether they were in the Republic of the Congo (Lukolela-Liranga) and, to a

²⁰ See in particular *Rwanda*, pp. 71-77.

* SCF: Save the Children Fund

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO AND REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Total expenditure in 1997:
Sfr 54,773,517



July. Other, smaller groups of refugees continued to emerge from the bush right up to the end of December, mainly in the Kivu area, and they were also repatriated to Rwanda. The circumstances in which these events took place – and which still need to be elucidated precisely¹⁸ – were desperate and the approaches made by humanitarian organizations (principally UNHCR, but also the ICRC and some non-governmental organizations) to protect the refugees remained largely unsuccessful.

During the year the ICRC maintained a flexible policy to its staff deployment, in accordance with the developments in the military situation. In the early months the activities carried out by the organization in the increasingly vast areas controlled by the ADFL were run from a mission in Bukavu, in coordination with the Kinshasa delegation, which pursued its own activities in government-held territory. In June, after the ADFL had taken power in Kinshasa, the Bukavu mission was dismantled and the Kinshasa delegation resumed direct responsibility for all ICRC activities in the country. At the end of the year, besides the Kinshasa delegation, the ICRC's set-up consisted of sub-delegations in Bukavu, Goma, Kisangani and Uvira, and offices or sub-offices in Buta, Kindu, Lubumbashi and Mbandaka. Several times in 1997, ICRC teams deployed in the field to respond to specifically identified humanitarian needs had to suspend their activities or even withdraw completely, owing to the lack of any security whatsoever. For the same reason, entire regions remained inaccessible to the ICRC for varying amounts of time, especially in the Masisi area.

At the start of 1997, the ICRC was able to continue its activities for detainees in areas that were still controlled by the Mobutu government. Besides regular visits to the places of detention run by the military and civilian authorities, the ICRC carried out sanitation work in prisons and continued a programme begun in 1994 to meet the basic needs of detainees in several of the places visited.¹⁹ When the ADFL seized power in Kinshasa in May, a stop was put to these activities. According to the information available to the ICRC, the detainees already visited by the organization either had been released or had escaped when the regime changed. The ICRC subsequently made repeated approaches to the new authorities in order to gain access to any new detainees. By the end of the year, despite a dialogue with the authorities on the issue, the ICRC was still unable to visit persons held by the ADFL.

During the first months of the year, many families were scattered on both sides of the front line. Therefore, in cooperation with the Red Cross of Zaire, the ICRC

¹⁸ During the year, the UN appointed a commission to inquire into the serious human rights violations allegedly committed in the country since 1993. With one delay after another, by the end of the year the commission had still not been able to begin its work.

¹⁹ See the ICRC's 1994 *Annual Report*, p. 64, 1995 *Annual Report*, p. 65; and 1996 *Annual Report*, p. 64.

Throughout the year, the ICRC continued its cooperation with the Red Cross of Zaire, renamed the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. When the crisis was at its most acute, material aid (food, stretchers and first-aid kits) was brought to the National Society's volunteers, who were often the first to care for the victims. Priority was also given to training and equipping first-aid workers, to training volunteers in charge of promoting knowledge of Red Cross work and to supporting various programmes run by the National Society, for example those to improve hygiene in public places in Kinshasa, set up neighbourhood composting systems and train teams of patrollers responsible for ensuring the safety of schoolchildren at the capital's main crossroads. Out of a concern to contribute to the financial independence of the National Society's branches, the ICRC supported the implementation of various income-generating projects whose profits were to be used to cover some running costs. Lastly, it contributed towards the National Society's overall running costs and helped pay the salaries of some of its senior staff.

*spotlight on the
National Society*

In the context of the emergency work done for refugees scattered throughout the country, special mention must be made of the determination and courage of the National Society volunteers who, with the limited resources available to them, took action at a time when it was impossible for the international humanitarian organizations to intervene. Several of these volunteers paid for their commitment with their lives, notably in Kenge, where 10 of them were killed in the cross-fire.

restoring medical facilities

lesser extent, the Central African Republic (Bangui). In April the ICRC, which was being held at a distance from the tragic events that were unfolding, publicly requested that the ADFL guarantee humanitarian organizations free access to the victims.

Health activities developed along several different lines. First of all, besides the emergency assistance it provided to the displaced people and refugees, the ICRC supported medical facilities treating the war-wounded evacuated from the conflict areas, in particular in Kinshasa, Goma, Bukavu and Uvira. Later, it concentrated more on post-conflict rehabilitation in the areas which had been worst hit by the hostilities and where the civilian population had not had access to medical treatment. Here, the priority was to enable the health-care system – dealt a final blow by the war – to become operational once more, until other organizations (development agencies, for example) could resume or begin their programmes. Depending on the needs encountered, the ICRC restored or even rebuilt looted or destroyed medical facilities and provided them with regular or ad hoc medical supplies and the support necessary to run them. In addition, work was begun on several referral hospitals and aid was delivered to them, mainly to enable them to provide adequate surgical services. An expatriate medical and surgical team was sent to the Uvira hospital to compensate for the lack of qualified local staff.

support for water-supply systems

Meanwhile, the ICRC's water and sanitation programme focused on preventing epidemics which could be caused by the drinking water shortages that threatened the large urban areas owing to the destruction of water-supply infrastructure during the conflict. Technical and material assistance was given to the relevant government department, whose provincial branches had often been cut off from any support from the capital. The ICRC's efforts ranged from merely providing various kinds of supplies to carrying out work on a large scale, such as rehabilitating entire water-supply systems. This programme began in the Kivu area and was later extended to other provinces as the ADFL advanced. In addition, ad hoc sanitation work was done for various medical facilities.

The conflict, followed by the change in regime, meant that the ICRC could only partly achieve the aims it had set itself for promoting humanitarian law, whether among the armed forces, the general public or in academic circles. As the conflict was marked by sharply drawn ethnic divisions and the proliferation and fragmentation of armed groups, a humanitarian message based on respect for people not or no longer taking part in the fighting generally had little if any chance of being heard. However, the firm commitment of the National Society volunteers working alongside the victims, often in extremely difficult security conditions, undoubtedly set an example for the population. A dialogue on this issue was later begun with the recently installed authorities, in particular the military, and in the second half of the year the ICRC was able to hold sessions on humanitarian law for officers in the new national army and police force, which were then being set up.

logy, laboratory) and provided a medical and surgical team for the hospital so as to compensate for the lack of qualified staff and to train local staff;



- up to May, restored and maintained the systems for supplying drinking water and evacuating waste water in 5 prisons;
- furnished the relevant authorities with 250 tonnes of chemicals for water treatment, hydromechanical equipment and various supplies, and carried out work on installations to ensure the distribution of drinking water in 12 towns (in Lubumbashi and Buta these activities were carried out under projects delegated to the American and Netherlands National Societies, in November and December respectively);
- sank and equipped 35 wells in various villages on the Rusizi plain (this work was begun in November under a project delegated to the Australian Red Cross);



- made food and other supplies available to the National Society for its work to assist displaced Congolese and refugees scattered throughout the country;
- continued to support the National Society's various programmes (improvement of hygiene in public places, school patrollers, theatre group promoting humanitarian ideas, neighbourhood composting systems, income-generating projects);



- held a seminar on the law of war for 400 officers from the armed forces of the Mobutu government;
- held seminars on the law of war for 320 staff officers from the new Congolese national army and 400 trainee police;
- organized 2 lectures on the law of war and the ICRC's role for 720 students from the Catholic University of Kinshasa and the National Education Institute.

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- up to May, visited 96 people detained in connection with the events in 14 places of detention run by the military and civilian authorities under the Mobutu government;
- up to May, and in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and local religious organizations, continued an assistance programme to provide water, food and other basic necessities for some 2,600 people held in 14 places of detention;
- made approaches to the ADFL with a view to obtaining access to the detainees under its responsibility;



- in cooperation with the National Society, handled over 133,500 Red Cross messages between family members separated by the events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, between Congolese refugees settled in Tanzania and their relatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and between Angolan refugees and their relatives at home;

- took part in the repatriation, by UNHCR and SCF, of over 18,500 unaccompanied Rwandan children;
- together with the National Society, registered 1,123 unaccompanied Congolese children separated from their families by the events, and organized 874 family reunifications;



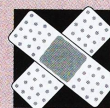
- made ad hoc representations to the ADFL concerning acts of violence against civilians that were brought to its attention;



- arranged for some 24,000 people who had been displaced throughout the country as a result of the conflict to return home;
- distributed vegetable seed and tools to over 30,000 displaced Congolese families who were resettling in the Kivu area;
- handed out blankets, tarpaulins, jerrycans, kitchen utensils and soap to over 41,000 Congolese families (displaced people or refugees returning from Tanzania) to help them settle back home

and provided supplementary food rations for over 75,000 people affected by the events, mainly in the Kivu area;

- distributed emergency aid (mainly high-protein biscuits and essential medicines) to the groups of Rwandan and Burundian refugees and displaced Congolese to whom it had access;
- supplied seed and tools to 1 cooperative and 3 agricultural colleges as a way of encouraging them to resume seed production;



- during the conflict, distributed medical supplies to health facilities admitting the wounded and displaced people;
- restored or rebuilt 58 medical facilities that had been looted or destroyed in the conflict, mainly in the Kivu area, and regularly provided these facilities, and a number of hospitals, with medical supplies (in the Kisangani region, these activities were carried out from September onwards under a project delegated to the Belgian Red Cross);
- restored or set up several units in the Uvira hospital (surgery, radio-

Brazzaville was the scene of massive destruction, made worse by widespread looting, that affected essential infrastructure, such as the water-supply system and medical facilities. More generally, the conflict had disastrous economic and social consequences on the country as a whole.

The random violence and the lack of any security whatsoever in Brazzaville during the early days of the fighting made it impossible for the ICRC to work, and its expatriate staff present in the Congolese capital when the conflict erupted had to withdraw to Kinshasa. On 12 June the ICRC publicly called on all the parties concerned to respect and ensure respect for the fundamental rules of humanitarian law, in particular those protecting people who were not or were no longer participating in the fighting and humanitarian personnel. Contact was later made with representatives of the forces involved and an operation to assist the victims was set up with the help of the National Society and in conjunction with other humanitarian organizations working on the spot. Nevertheless, owing to the insecurity that prevailed up to the end of the year and also to serious logistic restrictions, the ICRC's work was repeatedly hindered in the course of the year.

During the conflict, whenever there was a lull or an opportunity presented itself, the ICRC endeavoured to support the medical facilities that were still operational on both sides of the front line splitting Brazzaville down the middle, so that the war-wounded could be treated. Food and medical supplies, brought in by plane or boat from Kinshasa, were distributed in several hospitals and some 20 health centres in cooperation with the Congolese Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations working on the spot. In August the only referral hospital in the northern part of the capital had to close down because of the fighting, and the hospital's patients and staff were transferred by the authorities to a school in Kintele, about 20 kilometres north of Brazzaville. The ICRC helped turn this school into a first-aid post. Together with the National Society, the ICRC also set up a relay system for transferring the wounded from Brazzaville to Kinshasa, where they were treated in a health post opened by the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Depending on how seriously they were wounded, these patients were either treated there or evacuated to the general hospital in Kinshasa where 100 or so beds had been made available with the ICRC's assistance. Meanwhile, as this could be no more than a temporary arrangement, the ICRC explored local solutions. In Gamboma it supported a hospital that treated the war-wounded evacuated from the northern part of Brazzaville.

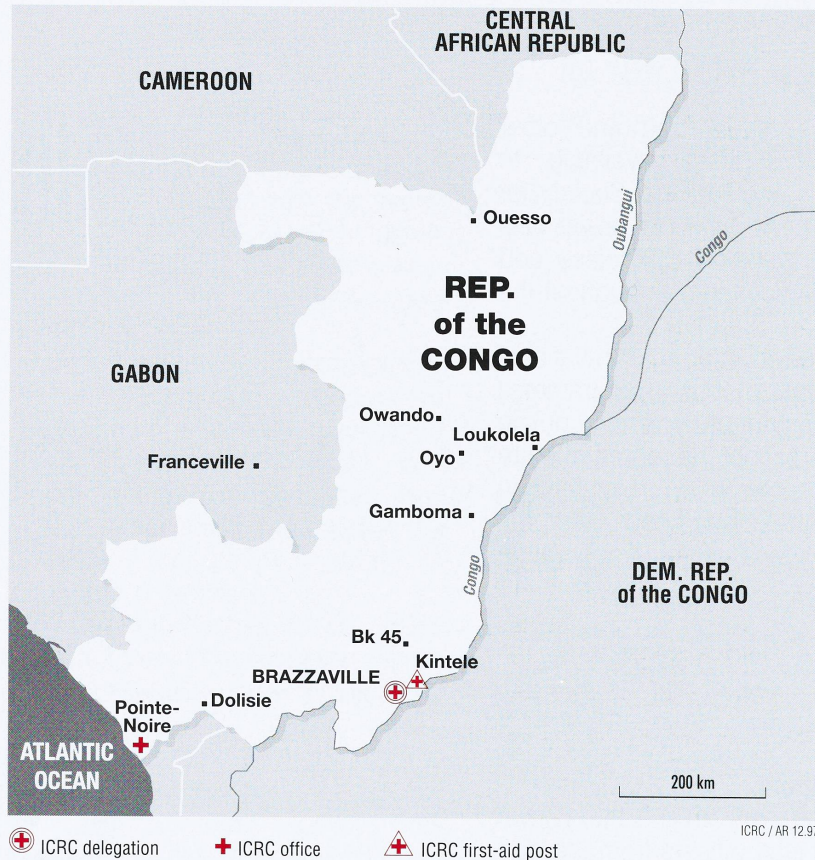
In addition, on both the northern and southern roads taken by people fleeing from the capital, and on the island of Mbamu (in the Congo river, between Kinshasa and Brazzaville), the ICRC supported temporary health posts that had been opened to treat displaced people. In areas where they were gathering, latrines, showers and tanks of drinking water were set up to prevent the development of illnesses caused by poor hygiene. Furthermore, in the centre of

emergency medical aid

*prevention of disease
caused by poor hygiene*

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

With the approach of the presidential elections planned for the end of July, there was a steady increase in the political tension that had been felt in the Republic of the Congo since the start of the year between the outgoing President, Pascal Lissouba, and his predecessor from 1979 to 1992, Denis Sassou-Nguesso. On 5 June violent fighting broke out in and around Brazzaville. In the north of the country, in July, Sassou-Nguesso's supporters took control of several towns that had been held until then by forces loyal to Lissouba. The various attempts made during this period to find a solution to the crisis through mediation proved fruitless, and the fighting continued with occasional lulls. Finally, in October, Sassou-Nguesso's supporters – with the help of the Angolan armed forces²¹ – seized Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville. In early November the self-proclaimed new President, Sassou-Nguesso, announced the composition of his government. At the end



*fighting in the heart
of Brazzaville*

civilians the main victims

of the year insecurity still prevailed in the capital, where many people continued to bear arms, and also in certain parts of the country that were not fully under the control of the new authorities.

Civilians were the main victims of the conflict, which took place primarily in Brazzaville itself. Thousands of people were killed or wounded in the capital during the fighting, in which substantial military resources were deployed, often at random. Many of the capital's inhabitants left the city, fleeing northwards or southwards to safer places. Some were taken in by relatives or returned to their native villages, others gathered in places such as churches, administrative buildings, schools or islands in the Congo river between Brazzaville and Kinshasa, while still others sought refuge in Kinshasa. During the fighting the centre of

²¹ See *Angola*, p. 83.

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



– asked the new authorities for permission to visit the people arrested and detained in connection with the conflict and the change of regime;



- from mid-December, conveyed some 500 Red Cross messages between residents of Brazzaville and their relatives abroad;
- registered 125 unaccompanied children separated from their families during the fighting and organized 31 family reunifications in the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo;



- made ad hoc representations to the parties when acts of violence against civilians were brought to its attention or when humanitarian work was not respected by the combatants under their authority;
- after negotiations with the parties concerned, evacuated to a safer area 60 orphans and their companions who had been trapped in the fighting north of Brazzaville;
- during an operation led by the French armed forces, evacuated 50 or so foreign nationals from Brazzaville to Kinshasa;



– distributed over 150 tonnes of food, together with tarpaulins, jerrycans, kitchen utensils, soap and medicines to some 12,000 people (those displaced, the wounded, medical personnel, Rwandan refugees and vulnerable groups);



- during the conflict, either regularly or on an ad hoc basis supported 2 hospitals and around 20 health centres in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire and along the routes taken by displaced people leaving the capital;
- arranged for the evacuation of over 250 wounded people from the Republic of the Congo to Kinshasa and assisted the Kinshasa general hospital in treating the most serious cases;
- after the conflict, set about repairing and supporting the resumption of medical activities in around 20 health centres in Brazzaville, helped rehabilitate the university teaching hospital and the military hospital in Brazzaville, and provided ad hoc assistance for several medical facilities elsewhere in the country;



- carried out sanitation work (installing latrines and showers, sinking wells or transporting drinking water) in many places where displaced people had gathered;
- supplied 80 tonnes of chemicals for water purification and various equipment needed to restore 2 water-treatment plants supplying Brazzaville, and assisted the water board in repairing the water-distribution system in the capital;
- collected and buried several hundred abandoned corpses in Brazzaville;



- gave the Congolese Red Cross supplies for its projects to assist victims of the conflict and involved National Society volunteers in implementing its programmes;



- at every opportunity raised awareness among the various authorities and groups of fighters it met concerning the need to respect humanitarian work and the basic rules of humanitarian law.

reactivating medical facilities

Brazzaville, National Society and ICRC teams set about collecting abandoned corpses and burying them in a cemetery outside the city. This work had to be interrupted after only a few days owing to security problems, and the ICRC subsequently provided the parties to the conflict with equipment for carrying out this task themselves. Finally, in conjunction with MSF,* food and medical aid were brought to over 5,000 Rwandan refugees who had arrived from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in May and settled in Lukolela-Liranga, upriver from Brazzaville. In June this work was taken over by UNHCR, also with MSF.

After Brazzaville had been seized by Sassou-Nguesso's supporters and a new regime put in place, the ICRC concentrated on post-conflict rehabilitation work. Its priorities were to reactivate the health-care system, which had been largely destroyed or rendered inoperative during the war, and to restore the supply of drinking water to Brazzaville.

Repairs were begun on around 20 health centres in Brazzaville, which received medical supplies on a regular basis to enable them to function again at their pre-war capacity. The ICRC also contributed to the rehabilitation of the university teaching hospital, which was the referral hospital for the entire country, in particular by supplying fuel for its generator and providing the materials necessary to ensure a capacity of 250 beds. For a month an expatriate surgeon advised local medical staff, and for two months food was distributed for 200 patients there. Medical aid was also brought to the Brazzaville military hospital (where most patients were civilians) and to several hospitals and medical facilities elsewhere in the country.

In the sphere of sanitation, the ICRC assisted the national water board in repairing Brazzaville's two main water-treatment plants, which had been destroyed during the war. A high-voltage cable supplying electricity to one of the plants was repaired, and chemicals for water purification and various equipment were provided. By the end of November, both plants were back in operation and ICRC experts, together with technicians from the relevant government department, were able to concentrate on repairing the many leaks in the city's pipework that had been caused by the fighting. In neighbourhoods where it had been impossible to restore water-distribution systems, in particular where health centres were situated, drinking water was brought in by tanker truck. Moreover, in several places where displaced people remained, the ICRC provided the equipment necessary to sink wells and build showers and latrines.

assisting returnees

With displaced people beginning to return to Brazzaville, the ICRC also went about distributing food and other supplies in the city's worst-hit areas, to help residents settle back in. Relief items were also provided in a dozen places where several thousand displaced people were still sheltering.

* MSF: *Médecins sans frontières*

RWANDA

The problems of all kinds facing Rwanda since the 1994 genocide continued to plague the country in 1997. No lasting solution emerged to the crisis, which was marked by rising tension between the armed opposition groups and the RPA* and resulted in an increasing polarization of Rwandan society.

Following the offensive launched in the former Zaire at the end of September 1996 by the ADFL* (supported by the RPA), hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees, who had settled in camps in Kivu since 1994, were forced to return to their country. Tens of thousands more headed for the western borders of the former Zaire, while an unspecified number died in circumstances yet to be clarified while wandering through the former Zaire.²² The Rwandan refugees living in the Ngara region of Tanzania returned to their country in December 1996, having been urged to do so by the Tanzanian authorities. Subsequently, tens of thousands of other

Rwandan refugees were repatriated from the former Zaire by UNHCR, in April and June. The sudden mass return of over a million people to Rwanda caused problems both in the short and in the long terms, ranging from how to provide emergency accommodation for the new arrivals to how to reintegrate them into Rwandan society.

Meanwhile, growing insecurity pervaded Rwanda in 1997, mainly in the prefectures of Gisenyi and Ruhengeri, where skirmishes between guerrilla forces and the RPA increased. At times, these clashes degenerated into out-and-out combat involving a large number of fighters on both sides and the use of considerable military force. In addition to the casualties among the soldiers and rebels, many civil-



growing insecurity

²² See *Democratic Republic of the Congo*, pp. 58-65.

* RPA: Rwandan Patriotic Army

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

As soon as the new government had been installed, contact was made with the authorities, including those at the highest level, to inform them about the ICRC's activities, to ask them to guarantee safe conditions for humanitarian work and to request permission to visit people arrested and detained in connection with the events. On this last point, although the response received was favourable in principle, by the year's end it had yet to be formalized in an agreement. During the conflict, the ICRC made approaches on an ad hoc basis when acts of violence against civilians were brought to its attention. However, given the atmosphere of widespread violence and the proliferation of people bearing arms, who were often young and operating outside the established hierarchical structures, the ICRC's protection activities and its efforts to promote knowledge of humanitarian law were scaled down.

In mid-December work was begun on setting up a network for collecting Red Cross messages so that the inhabitants of Brazzaville could send news to their families abroad. During and after the conflict, the ICRC registered several dozen unaccompanied children separated from their families during the fighting. Some of these were quickly reunited with their parents and at the year's end the ICRC was continuing its efforts to find the relatives of those remaining.

*prominent role of
National Society*

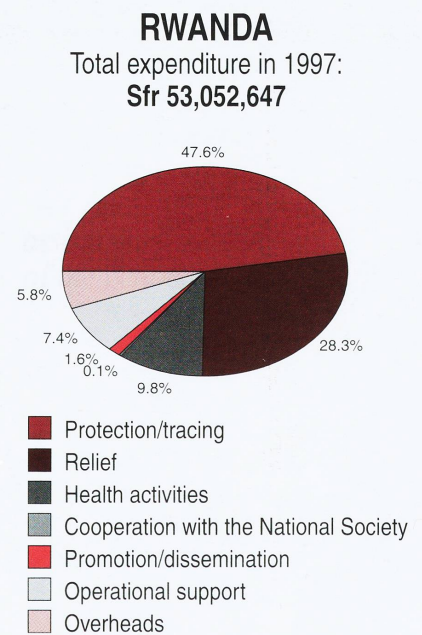
National Society volunteers played a prominent role in helping to carry out these activities, often in dangerous situations. On 22 November one of them was killed and two others were wounded when a combatant opened fire on the truck they were in.

At the beginning of 1997, a number of expatriates and Rwandans working for non-governmental organizations and UN bodies were killed or injured in attacks in which they were deliberately targeted in the prefectures of Cyangugu, Gisenyi and Ruhengeri. In view of the deterioration in security conditions, the ICRC had to suspend its activities for 10 days or so, to give itself time to take additional precautions and to review both the size of its staff and its *modus operandi* in the country. From March onwards, as the ICRC gradually resumed its activities, security remained a constant concern and the regions accessible to the organization were regularly assessed. At the end of the year, the situation in a large part of Rwanda, mainly the north and west, was so dangerous that the ICRC was unable to work there.

As in previous years, one of the ICRC's main concerns was the drastic situation that persisted in the central prisons as a result of overcrowding. Contacts were kept up with the Rwandan authorities, at all levels, with a view to reminding them of their responsibility to provide acceptable detention conditions and discussing with them various means for improving the situation in prisons. Meanwhile, the major assistance operation launched in 1994 to ensure the survival of detainees²³ continued throughout the year. As the authorities were experiencing procurement difficulties of all kinds, the ICRC supplemented the quantity of food supplied in prisons. Vitamin tablets were also distributed, and the most seriously undernourished inmates were put on a nutritional rehabilitation programme. In addition to monitoring the general state of health of detainees, the ICRC distributed medicines and equipment to prison dispensaries, in accordance with the principle that aid should be provided only where the capacity of the authorities in charge was overstretched. In May the ICRC and the Ministry of Justice signed an agreement whereby the authorities would take back responsibility for maintaining sanitary facilities in the country's prisons while the ICRC would provide technical and financial support for the team of technicians put together for this purpose by the authorities. Furthermore, in cooperation with the authorities concerned, the ICRC concluded the work previously begun to upgrade the water-supply systems in several towns. This work also benefited the prisons situated in these towns by considerably reducing the risk that the water supply would be cut off, a chronic problem in some places of detention in the past. Nevertheless, water had to be brought to two prisons by tanker truck.

Despite the commitment of the authorities, the ICRC's assistance programmes and the efforts made by other humanitarian organizations, no lasting solutions were found in 1997 to the causes of prison overcrowding or its grave consequences, and the health of detainees gradually declined.

assistance in places of detention



²³ See the ICRC's 1994 Annual Report, p. 61; 1995 Annual Report, pp. 59-60; and 1996 Annual Report, pp. 55-61.

ians were killed or wounded, either because they had been deliberately targeted (in a situation where, because of the growing mutual distrust between the communities, the principle of affording due respect to the civilian population was increasingly ignored) or because they were the victims of reprisals for support given (allegedly or in fact) to the other side, or else because they simply happened to get caught in the cross-fire. On several occasions the guerrillas carried out their attacks against communal lock-ups: hundreds of detainees and civilians were wounded or killed during these attacks and in the fighting with the army that ensued.

120,000 detainees

The number of arrests remained high, in particular following the return of the refugees at the start of the year. Those detained included not only people suspected of having played a part in the 1994 genocide, but others taken in for reasons of State security. Arrests were often carried out arbitrarily, outside any legal framework. Despite the efforts made by the Rwandan government to strengthen the judicial system, which was overwhelmed by the work involved in limiting these arbitrary arrests and in preparing and investigating the cases of those detained, and given the small number of releases that took place in 1997, the prison overcrowding noted in previous years persisted, with the ever-present risk of serious consequences for the health of detainees. Owing to the lack of space, the Rwandan authorities resorted more and more often to communal lock-ups for incarcerating newly arrested people. These places of detention, however, were not designed to hold such a large number of inmates for a lengthy period. Added to this was the lack of resources allocated to the Ministry of the Interior, which was in charge of managing these places of detention, so that it could meet the basic needs of detainees. As the months went by, conditions in the lock-ups gradually deteriorated, leading to the death of some 1,300 detainees registered by the ICRC. At the end of the year, over 73,800 people were crammed into the country's central prisons, over 46,500 in lock-ups and 3,000 in the other places of detention visited by the ICRC.

precarious food supply

In addition, a large number of people continued to live in great destitution, their suffering caused either by the 1994 genocide (mainly widows and orphans) or by the general insecurity prevailing in some parts of the country. The dangerous climate also slowed down the resumption of production activities and hampered the setting up of large-scale reconstruction and development programmes. Moreover, Rwanda's food supply remained precarious, mainly owing to rising prices, average harvests, the return of refugees in droves and a rainy season that came late to the agricultural regions in the south. Faced with this situation, the Rwandan government called for substantial international food aid.

Such was the situation faced by the ICRC as it pursued the efforts it had begun in 1996 in all its customary spheres of activity.

The resumption of postal services and the return of the majority of refugees – including the unaccompanied children who had been living in camps in Tanzania and the former Zaire – to their places of origin made it possible for most of the people who were without news of their families to renew contact with them. The major network for exchanging Red Cross messages, in place since 1994, was therefore scaled down, and only messages between detainees and their relatives continued to be exchanged. Furthermore, over 27,000 unaccompanied children were registered in 1997, mainly after the refugees had returned. In cooperation with other organizations, in particular UNICEF, UNHCR and SCF-UK, most of these minors were reunited with their families. For the others – children separated from their parents since 1994 and living in Rwanda, and very young children who were unable to give precise details of their identity (some 8,800 by the end of the year) – efforts to find their families continued under the programme coordinated by the ICRC since 1994.²⁴

*concerted efforts
to reunite families*

In 1997, owing to the prevailing insecurity, two programmes launched the preceding years by various National Societies²⁵ to increase the supply of drinking water in rural areas had to be taken over by the ICRC, and they were successfully concluded during the year. A third had to be abandoned because of inadequate security. The ICRC also stepped in temporarily to ensure sanitation and drinking water supplies for vulnerable groups (orphans, widows and welfare cases).

In addition to its medical activities in prisons, the ICRC continued to support the hospital in Kibuye, in particular by providing expatriate staff to compensate for the scarcity of qualified Rwandan personnel. Moreover, on several occasions, ad hoc assistance was given to medical facilities having to cope with a sudden influx of wounded. The Gatagara prosthetic/orthotic centre, which had been restored under a project delegated to the Swiss Red Cross, was officially inaugurated in early August.

Work begun the previous year to assist vulnerable people, in particular those who had lived through the 1994 genocide, was extended in 1997. The ICRC's approach consisted in supporting programmes submitted to it by various associations of survivors. These programmes, aimed at the socio-economic reintegration of vulnerable groups, were of various kinds: depending on the case, the ICRC provided food and basic necessities, school supplies, small livestock, poultry or swarms of bees, building materials, seed and tools, or even materials for handicrafts. It also regularly gave out food and basic necessities to orphanages and social-welfare institutions.

*assistance for survivors
of the genocide*

Moreover, when the Rwandan refugees returning from the former Zaire and Tanzania came back in their country, the ICRC took part in the emergency opera-

²⁴ See the ICRC's 1994 Annual Report, pp. 57-58; 1995 Annual Report, p. 61; and 1996 Annual Report, p. 60.

²⁵ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p. 60.

*first visits to military
places of detention*

In lock-ups, because of the extremely serious worsening of detention conditions noted at the start of the year, the ICRC altered the approach it had adopted until then (ad hoc intervention only, so as not to turn the lock-ups – originally designed for temporary detention – into places used for detention over longer periods) and broadened its intervention criteria. When the situation was at its worst, sanitation and rehabilitation activities were undertaken, in particular to improve air circulation and increase the supply of drinking water. High-protein biscuits were distributed in some cases and steps were taken to transfer the most seriously undernourished detainees to prisons where they could be put on a nutritional rehabilitation programme. The ICRC also supplied food to two humanitarian organizations (Concern and Caritas) that managed communal kitchens in some lock-ups. Lastly, it made medical supplies available to the authorities.

Meanwhile, the ICRC kept up regular contacts with other organizations active in prisons in Rwanda – in particular UNDP* – and continued its efforts to draw the attention of the governments concerned to the gravity of the situation that prevailed in Rwandan places of detention and to the need for lasting solutions to the problems there.

Besides this wide-ranging assistance programme, which represented the first and a necessary stage in protecting detainees, the ICRC continued its visits to prisons, lock-ups and several places of detention run by the *gendarmerie*. In June the ICRC received authorization to visit two places of detention under the responsibility of the military authorities in Kigali. The aim of all these visits was to register people newly arrested, monitor previously registered cases, check on detention conditions and offer all detainees the possibility of exchanging news with their families. On the basis of the observations made during these visits, the ICRC regularly submitted written and oral reports to the authorities, reminding them of their obligation to treat detainees humanely.

The ICRC's work to protect the civilian population in the parts of the country most affected by the conflict was limited, mainly because security problems prevented the organization from going to these areas. It was therefore all the more necessary to promote humanitarian rules, in particular among people carrying weapons. The Rwandan military authorities accepted a plan proposed by the ICRC to make the teaching of humanitarian law a standard part of the instruction given to all troops, and the first stages of the plan, notably the training of Rwandan military instructors, were implemented during the year. Meanwhile, sessions were held for RPA units and the civilian authorities, to encourage respect for humanitarian rules and the work of humanitarian organizations. Programmes were also produced with the national radio and broadcast to a wide audience.

* UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

which was primarily responsible for developing the Rwanda Red Cross, the ICRC continued working with the latter, focusing mainly on restoring family links, strengthening the Society's capacity to respond to emergencies and assist the most destitute, and promoting knowledge of the Red Cross and its work.



- supported the Kibuye hospital by making medical and surgical teams available and providing medical supplies (over 4,600 patients were admitted and over 30,000 out-patient consultations were given during the year);
- provided ad hoc assistance to medical facilities treating the war-wounded;



- by means of a project delegated to the Swiss Red Cross, restored the Gatagara prosthetic/orthotic centre, where it fitted 46 new amputees with artificial limbs and produced 57 prostheses and 151 orthoses;



- repaired the water-supply systems in several towns (Gitarama, Gikongoro, Byumba, Rwampara and Kinyiya);
- supplied 100 tonnes of chemicals and technical equipment needed to operate the water-treatment

- plants serving large urban areas;
- continued its sanitation work in rural areas to make drinking water more readily available in the prefectures of Gitarama and Kibungo;



- supplied the Rwandan Red Cross with 2,304 tonnes of food for an ongoing programme to feed 10,000 secondary-school pupils in Butare, Gisenyi, Gitarama and Ruhengeri;
- supported National Society branches in their first-aid work, in particular in manufacturing stretchers;
- backed an exhibition on the Red Cross that was presented in most of the major towns and was seen by some 20,000 people (civilians, members of the armed forces, government employees and students);



- held an instructors' seminar for 25 RPA officers with a view to standardizing the teaching

of humanitarian law within the armed forces;

- arranged for 2 Rwandan professors to be trained at the University of Abidjan as part of an endeavour to introduce the teaching of humanitarian law at the National University of Rwanda, and supplied the latter with reference books;
- organized many sessions on humanitarian law for different audiences (civilian authorities and units of the armed forces and the *gendarmerie*);
- conducted a historical study of traditional humanitarian values and principles with a view to adapting its humanitarian message to the Rwandan cultural context;
- in cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, organized a humanitarian law seminar in Arusha for the Tribunal judges, their assistants and defence lawyers.

tion carried out by a number of humanitarian organizations – especially UNHCR, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Rwandan Red Cross and non-governmental organizations – to receive the new arrivals.

In 1997 the Rwandan National Society, whose reconstruction was in full swing, concentrated on setting up local structures. In consultation with the Federation,

RWANDA

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- continued its visits to detainees held in prisons and communal lock-ups and those held by *gendarmerie* squads (at the end of 1997, some 73,800 people registered by the ICRC were detained in prisons, some 46,500 in lock-ups and some 2,100 by *gendarmerie* squads);
- began in June to visit detainees held under the responsibility of the military authorities in 2 places of detention (by the year's end, 983 people had been registered);
- visited the detainees held under the responsibility of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha (by the year's end, 20 people had been registered);
- provided 9,568 tonnes of food, 116 tonnes of fortified milk, over 15 million vitamin tablets and 325 tonnes of other supplies under its prison assistance programmes;

- covered 50% of the annual demand for medicines in prison dispensaries;
- supported the technical unit set up by the authorities to maintain sanitary facilities in prisons;
- carried out or began repair/sanitation work in around 40 lock-ups where detention conditions were the most appalling;
- conveyed some 43,000 Red Cross messages between detainees and their families;
- monitored the health of detainees (hygiene, nutrition, vulnerability to epidemics);
- supplied office equipment and other assistance to the Ministry of Justice in order to help it put together files on detainees;



- conveyed some 14,000 Red Cross messages between family members separated by the events, both within Rwanda and

between Rwanda and neighbouring States or other countries;

- continued to coordinate a programme to register unaccompanied Rwandan children with a view to finding their parents (24,268 children were reunited with their families during the year, either by the ICRC or by other humanitarian organizations);



- supported over 80 programmes implemented by local associations for survivors of the 1994 genocide, distributing 3,173 tonnes of food and 180 tonnes of soap, blankets, tarpaulins, etc;
- distributed drinking water, medicines and 50 tonnes of high-protein biscuits as part of the emergency operation undertaken by humanitarian organizations to assist refugees returning from the former Zaire and Tanzania;

tion process, violent fighting broke out in June when MISAB set about disarming the mutineers. The fighting, which took place in the capital itself, left many dead and wounded, including civilians, and prompted tens of thousands of the city's inhabitants to flee to safety. A cease-fire was agreed on between the parties at the start of July and a new accord was reached. By the end of the year, however, this agreement had been implemented only in part.

During the year the ICRC supported the work undertaken by the Central African Red Cross Society, in particular to provide first aid for people wounded in the fighting, evacuate them to appropriate medical facilities and distribute relief to displaced people. However, humanitarian efforts suffered on some occasions from the parties' lack of understanding of the specific role of the Red Cross. The ICRC, present on a permanent basis in Bangui since June, therefore endeavoured to raise awareness among officials on both sides, and among the general public, of the guiding Red Cross principles of neutrality and impartiality. In addition, the ICRC visited people arrested in connection with the events and provided them with regular food aid until their release.

In Chad the process of normalization begun in 1996 continued into 1997. Legislative elections were held at the start of the year and a new National Assembly was set up shortly afterwards. The situation at the military level remained calm, except for the fierce fighting that broke out in the south of the country between the Chadian armed forces and FARF* combatants at the end of the year. In addition, tension mounted sporadically in the east and south between rival communities. During the year, the ICRC continued to assist people detained for security reasons, spread knowledge of humanitarian law among the armed forces and support the Red Cross of Chad. In January Chad acceded to the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions.

Besides focusing on these special priorities, throughout 1997 the Yaoundé regional delegation pursued its activities to raise awareness of humanitarian law and to provide advisory services aimed at promoting the implementation of this law at the national level. Similarly, within its fields of expertise, the ICRC continued to support the region's National Societies and to foster the development of a policy of regional cooperation among them.

visits to detainees in Chad

* FARF: Armed Forces for a Federal Republic

YAOUNDE

Regional delegation

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

Bakassi peninsula dispute

In 1997 the border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula remained unresolved. The International Court of Justice, to which the case had been submitted in 1994 by Cameroon, had not yet handed down its decision and no official negotiations between the two parties had been entered into. On the front line, there were some sporadic skirmishes. The ICRC, in cooperation with the Cameroon Red Cross Society, carried out an operation to enable groups of people displaced because of the insecurity to grow their own food again. At the same time, food was regularly distributed to those who did not want to leave their villages, and ad hoc material assistance was provided for the families of people who had gone missing during the conflict. In addition, regular visits were continued to the Nigerian prisoners of war and civilian internees detained in Cameroon in connection with the dispute. These visits were temporarily suspended in July and November by the Cameroonian authorities, weary of the lack of progress on this issue on the Nigerian side.²⁶ For the same reason, from June up to the end of the year the Cameroonian authorities suspended the exchange of Red Cross messages between these prisoners, who were protected by the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions and Protocol I, and their families in Nigeria.

In Equatorial Guinea, on the basis of an agreement reached with the authorities in December 1995,²⁷ the ICRC visited 16 civilian and military places of detention. At the time of the visits, no one arrested for security reasons was being detained. In cooperation with the Equatorial Guinea Red Cross Society, sanitation work was carried out in several of the places of detention visited.

fighting in Bangui

In the Central African Republic the tension caused in 1996 by a mutiny in certain army units²⁸ continued to affect Bangui. At the start of the year, through the mediation of Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon and Mali, an agreement was reached between the mutineers and the authorities, followed by the deployment of a military force – MISAB* – made up of contingents from six African countries.²⁹ After several armed incidents, and given the lack of any real progress in the reconcilia-

²⁶ For an account of approaches and activities on the Nigerian side in connection with the Bakassi border dispute, see *Lagos*, pp. 54-55.

²⁷ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, p. 70.

²⁸ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, pp. 70-71.

²⁹ Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Mali, Senegal and Togo.

* MISAB: Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Bangui Accords



- in Cameroon, rehabilitated 6 springs in 2 villages situated near the front line on the Bakassi peninsula;



- continued its programmes of cooperation with the region's National Societies, focusing, depending on the circumstances, on various activities (fostering structural development, training senior staff and volunteers, supporting efforts to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and/or strengthening emergency preparedness);



- depending on the context, continued its efforts to promote greater understanding and acceptance of humanitarian law and the ICRC among different target groups in the region (the civilian and military authorities, the armed forces and the police, various associations, the press, academic circles and the general public);
- in Cameroon, within the framework of its advisory service for the promotion of humanitarian law, launched a study on the conformity of national legislation with that law.

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- in Cameroon, visited Nigerian civilian internees and prisoners of war (34 and 87, respectively, by the year's end) detained in connection with the Bakassi border dispute;
- in the Central African Republic, visited 136 people held in 5 places of detention under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence in Bangui in connection with the events of January and June (all these people were subsequently released), and 1 person held for security reasons in a military camp;
- in Chad, during a round of visits made to 42 civilian and military places of detention, visited 39 people detained for security reasons;
- in Equatorial Guinea, visited 16 civilian and military places of detention;
- distributed various kinds of assistance, in accordance with the specific needs noted in the places of detention visited;
- gave all the detainees visited the possibility of exchanging Red Cross messages with their families (for the Nigerian civilian internees and prisoners of war held in Cameroon, the country's authorities suspended this service in June);



- helped restore and maintain family links for different groups of people (in particular, Congolese, Chadian and Rwandan refugees in the Central African Republic) by means of a network for exchanging Red Cross messages run from Yaoundé in conjunction with the region's National Societies;



- in Cameroon, enabled some 2,000 people displaced as a result of the Bakassi border dispute to grow their own food again by providing them with seed in cooperation with the National Society, regularly distributed food to 150 elderly and disabled people who did not wish to leave their villages near the front line, and provided school supplies and clothing for 120 families of people who had gone missing in connection with the dispute;
- in the Central African Republic, in cooperation with the National Society, distributed blankets and tarpaulins to some 2,600 people temporarily displaced following the events in Bangui at the end of June;



- in Chad, in cooperation with the National Society, distributed 51 tonnes of food to 2 groups of people fleeing the violence between nomads and farmers in the east and south of the country, and provided around 100 Chadian refugees returning from Libya with the assistance they needed to reach their homes;
- in cooperation with the Central African Red Cross Society, provided supplies for the medical facilities in Bangui treating people wounded during the events of January and the end of June, and supported the medical work done by the National Society in this context;
- gave the Cameroonian health authorities the medical assistance they needed for treating people wounded in the Bakassi border dispute;
- supported the work done by the Cameroonian and Chadian National Societies to fight epidemics of diseases such as cholera;

of UNAVEM III* three times and then sending a new UN mission – UNOMA* – to the country on 1 July. At the end of August, however, in view of UNITA's unwillingness to conform to the letter of the provisions contained in the peace protocol, the UN Security Council threatened to take sanctions against the movement. Owing to the negligible progress made by UNITA, these sanctions finally came into force on 29 October.

The Angolan armed forces launched an offensive in Lunda Norte province, in the north-east of the country, at the end of May, with the declared aim of securing the Angolan borders and preventing any incursion by armed elements from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.³¹ They occupied several towns that were still under the control of UNITA, which led to a sporadic resumption of fighting and the displacement of civilians. At the start of June, the ICRC visited the province to assess any humanitarian needs that might have arisen as a result of the fighting. Other surveys were subsequently carried out in most of the other provinces bordering on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Moxico, Lunda Sul, Malanje and Uige) and in the areas around Huila, Benguela and Huambo, where a rise in tension could also be felt. In connection with the events unfolding in the Republic of Congo,³² ICRC delegates also made several trips in late 1997 to the Cabinda enclave, the scene of clashes between the Angolan armed forces and Cabinda separatist groups. Moreover, in view of the presence in the Republic of the Congo of elements of the Angolan armed forces, the ICRC sent the authorities concerned a *note verbale* and a memorandum reminding them of the need, in this situation, to respect and ensure respect for the principles and rules of humanitarian law.

Following the end of the process to release people detained in connection with the conflict, the delegation did not carry out any activities in Angola's places of detention during the first eight months of the year. However, new prisoners coming within the ICRC's mandate were captured by the government after the resumption of hostilities in the north-east of the country.

In 1997 the ICRC handed over to the Angola Red Cross some of its programmes aimed at restoring and maintaining contact between family members separated by the events. The National Society thus became responsible for distributing Red Cross messages in the towns of Huambo and Kuito. However, the new outbreak of hostilities in the north-east, together with the fact that it was impossible for the National Society to gain access to UNITA-controlled areas, pointed to the need for the ICRC to continue its involvement in this work. The delegation

tensions in the north-east

restoring family links

³¹ See *Democratic Republic of the Congo*, pp. 58-60.

³² See *Republic of the Congo*, pp. 66-68.

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

* UNOMA: United Nations Observer Mission in Angola

Southern Africa

ANGOLA

In Angola the start of the year was marked by a series of delays that lasted several weeks and stood in the way of the implementation of the political aspects of the Lusaka Peace Protocol signed by the Angolan government and UNITA* in November 1994. A range of political decisions had to be reached on three main issues: the taking of office of the 70 UNITA deputies elected to the National Assembly in 1992, the formation of a government of national unity and reconciliation and the defining of the constitutional status of the President of UNITA. It was only after this last point had been settled, in early April, that the UNITA deputies were sworn in and the government of national unity and reconciliation was officially set up. As for the process of extending government administration to the areas still controlled by UNITA, it was hindered by many diffi-

culties. In May it ground to a halt for several months and it did not resume until September, when UNITA handed over several towns, including Negage (Uige province), to the Angolan government.

The incorporation into the new Angolan armed forces of 26,300 men selected from among UNITA troops³⁰ proved impossible to achieve in accordance with the terms of the peace accord and in the end only 11,000 soldiers from this movement were absorbed. Moreover, a great many UNITA fighters who should have been demobilized deserted the confinement centres before the end of the process.

The international community was disturbed about these various delays and put pressure on the parties to respect the 1994 peace protocol, extending the mandate



³⁰ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p 74.

* UNITA: National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- visited 45 detainees in Uíge, Lunda Norte and Huambo provinces who had been arrested in connection with the resumption of fighting in the north-east of the country;
- as UNITA was unable to provide new information on the matter, ended its representations concerning 78 detainees held by this movement, of whom it had had no news since 1994;
- passed on to the relevant political authorities 158 allegations of arrest or disappearances that had been made to it by the families of those concerned;



- helped restore and maintain contact between separated family members, some of whom were in government-held and others in UNITA-held areas (in so doing collected 10,806 and delivered 10,960 Red Cross messages);
- reunited 44 people with their families;
- registered some 50 unaccompanied Rwandan children under the age of 16 who were refugees in Angola, with a view to reuniting them with their families in Rwanda;
- satisfied 74 tracing requests dealt with, in part, by the Angola Red Cross under ICRC supervision;



- handed over to the provincial authorities or to non-governmental organizations the responsibility for 13 health posts on the Planalto;
- provided ad hoc assistance to the hospitals of Dundo and N'zagi (Lunda Norte province), Saurimo (Lunda Sul) and Malanje, in the form of medical supplies for the treatment, if necessary, of some 150 war-wounded;



- opened a new centre in Huambo for the production of orthopaedic components;
- manufactured 1,720 prostheses and 6,146 orthopaedic components for other organizations carrying out prosthetic/orthotic work in Angola;
- fitted 1,344 new amputees with artificial limbs and repaired prostheses for amputees who had already been fitted some time before;
- finished repairing the water-supply systems in the towns of Caala and Bailundo, in cooperation with the Netherlands Red Cross and the German Red Cross respectively, and completed the water-supply and sanitation projects begun in Ganda and Kuito;
- handed over all its water and sanitation projects to the relevant



provincial authorities or to non-governmental organizations active in this sphere;



- held training sessions for Angola Red Cross staff, including a seminar for the heads of the National Society's provincial branches, on restoring and maintaining family links;



- recorded radio programmes broadcasting humanitarian messages in the local Kikongo and Umbundu languages, using local traditions as a basis;
- gave lectures on humanitarian law, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the ICRC to representatives of the local authorities and the traditional leaders, the press, the National Society, the Angolan police and armed forces (including a commando unit based in Cabinda) and 370 members of UNAVEM III and UNOMA;



- informed the population in the Huambo region about the damage and suffering caused by the indiscriminate use of mines, in particular through 144 performances given by a group of traditional singers and dancers to audiences totalling around 12,000 people.

*sanitation projects
handed over*

*support for health
posts ended*

*spreading the
humanitarian message*

therefore decided to maintain its three sub-offices in the areas still in UNITA hands.

In February the ICRC completed its work on sanitation projects in Angola and handed them over to the relevant provincial authorities or to non-governmental organizations that were ready to continue them. Instructions on the management of the facilities were accompanied by large donations of equipment and materials.

At the start of the year, the delegation also ended its programmes to support health posts – with the exception of the Chipipa post (Huambo province), the rehabilitation of which was completed in June – and handed over the responsibility for the posts to the Angolan Ministry of Health or to other humanitarian agencies. Meanwhile it provided logistic and administrative support for the German Red Cross, within the framework of a six-month bilateral project for restoring health posts in Bailundo and, partly, the hospital there. Following the resurgence of tensions in the north-east of the country, a medical survey was carried out in several provinces affected by problems of overt or latent violence. On the basis of the survey, the ICRC gradually began to resume its ad hoc assistance to certain medical facilities in potential conflict areas so as to enable them to deal with any influx of wounded people that might occur.

In addition, the ICRC continued to fit amputees with artificial limbs in its prosthetic/orthotic centres in Bomba Alta (Huambo), Kuito and Neves Bendinha (Luanda), and to manufacture orthopaedic components in its production unit in Neves Bendinha and, since January, in the one in Bomba Alta. On 4 June the ICRC and the other members of the coordination group for prosthetic/orthotic programmes in Angola³³ signed a letter of agreement with a view to streamlining the manufacture of artificial limbs throughout the country and thereby enabling all amputees to have their artificial limbs serviced or repaired at the centre nearest them.

In 1997 again, many civilians fell victim to banditry, which also plagued the international organizations present in Angola. The ICRC was itself the victim of three security incidents at the start of the year, involving the theft of vehicles in the town of Luanda. Moreover, outside the towns, political violence not only prompted the displacement of large groups of people, it also caused the interruption or even the suspension of the activities of some humanitarian organizations. For this reason, in order to help prevent civilians in rural areas from being victimized by armed elements, the ICRC continued to spread its humanitarian messages via weekly programmes broadcast on national radio. Information sessions on Red Cross principles, the ICRC's mandate, the organization's work in Angola and the promotion of humanitarian law were also organized for various audiences, includ-

³³ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p 76.

HARARE

Regional delegation

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

The countries covered by the Harare regional delegation enjoyed a period of relative political and social stability in 1997, although tensions surfaced at the end of the year in Zambia and Zimbabwe and living conditions remained difficult for many people in the region. In addition, the effects of the AIDS epidemic were very strongly felt in this part of southern Africa.

This year again, the ICRC concentrated on cooperation with the region's National Societies. By means of financial and material support, training courses and practical advice, the organization helped most of these Societies to become autonomous in their work aimed at restoring and maintaining family links. In most of the region's countries, in cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, it also organized first-aid courses for volunteers and emergency-preparedness seminars for the senior staff of the National Societies. Moreover, the regional delegation helped the Societies to improve their media profile in their respective countries and facilitated contact between them.

*cooperation with the
National Societies*

Promoting greater knowledge of and respect for international humanitarian law – among the armed forces, the police, the authorities, the general public and in academic circles – was also a key concern. As regards dissemination among the armed forces, the ICRC was involved, in particular, in designing and setting up situations in which humanitarian law applied and which were acted out in the context of various military exercises. The delegation also held several seminars, sometimes in cooperation with outside partners (the Spanish Civil Guard, ACCORD*), for members of the Mozambican and Namibian armed forces. Where the police were concerned, the regional delegation focused its dissemination work most particularly on Zambia and Mozambique, a country which was about to create a new police force. Furthermore, the ICRC continued to provide advisory services to the authorities concerned with a view to encouraging them to set up mechanisms for incorporating humanitarian law into their national legislation.

*seminars for the armed forces
and the police*

In October the regional delegation had a favourable initial interview with the commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Botswana regarding the development of activities to promote humanitarian law in that country.

* ACCORD: African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes

*raising awareness of
the danger of mines*

ing the authorities, the armed forces, the media and the Angolan Red Cross.

The visit in January by Diana, Princess of Wales, to the ICRC's two artificial limb production centres in Angola helped to spread awareness among the general public, both in that country and abroad, of the ICRC's campaign to bring about a ban on anti-personnel landmines and of its work to support the victims of these weapons. In addition, the delegation continued to organize seminars on this subject for the media and for government representatives. Among other things, it promoted, jointly with UNICEF, a debate in the National Assembly that addressed Angola's participation in the Ottawa Conference to be held in December. The general public was also made aware of the danger of mines by means of performances given by a group of traditional singers and dancers in the province of Huambo.³⁴

³⁴ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, p 79.

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



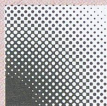
- stepped up and coordinated a programme for restoring and maintaining family links run by the region's National Societies, which (especially those of Zambia and Malawi) collected 7,742 Red Cross messages sent by refugees from various African countries (mainly from the Great Lakes region) and delivered 4,466 to them;
- supervised the registration by the Zambia Red Cross Society of 73 unaccompanied children from the Great Lakes region who were among the refugees settled in the Natende and Maheba camps;
- gave financial backing to the Mozambique Red Cross Society so as to help it resolve the 51 cases of unaccompanied children that remained outstanding after the end of the civil war;



- in Malawi, supplied the prosthetic/orthotic centre at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Blantyre-Limbe with 124 kg of polypropylene and other materials for manufacturing artificial limbs, and in Zimbabwe, supplied the Bulawayo and the Harare prosthetic/orthotic centres with, respectively, 784 kg and 1,017 kg of materials and equipment;



- financed the training of new first-aid instructors in Botswana and Malawi;
- supplied the Zimbabwe Red Cross Society with blankets, bandages and jerrycans for its first-aid programmes and gave similar assistance to the Malawi Red Cross Society for its emergency-preparedness programme;
- provided a vehicle each for the Malawi Red Cross and the Namibia Red Cross, to support their dissemination work within their far-flung local branches;
- in conjunction with the Federation, organized a workshop on emergency preparedness for members of the Zambian Red Cross;



- held 3 decentralized regional courses on the law of armed conflict for 75 officers of the Mozambican armed forces responsible for training programmes in military academies and units;
- organized courses in humanitarian law for some 20 staff officers from the Salima military academy in Malawi and for senior staff officers from Mozambique;

- gave lectures on the law of armed conflict, Red Cross principles and the ICRC's work to representatives of the authorities, the armed forces and the police in the other countries covered by the regional delegation;
- as a consultant on humanitarian law, took part in several regional military exercises, including the multinational Blue Hungwe exercise involving over 1,100 soldiers from the armed forces of 8 southern African countries;
- continued its efforts to ensure that national legislation was in conformity with humanitarian law, in particular by organizing technical missions to several of the region's countries;
- encouraged the setting up in Mozambique of an interministerial committee for the national implementation of humanitarian law and supported the work of similar committees in Namibia and Zimbabwe.

*implementing humanitarian
law in Mozambique*

*technical support for the
Namibia Red Cross*

tensions in Zambia

The political crisis that had broken out in Malawi the previous year³⁵ ended in April and the country began gearing up for the general elections to be held in 1999. The ICRC provided technical and material assistance for the Malawi Red Cross Society's emergency-preparedness programme. It also increased its financial support for the National Society's activities aimed at restoring and maintaining family links so as to enable the Society to meet the needs generated by the arrival in Malawi of refugees from the Great Lakes region.

In Mozambique the ICRC focused on promoting humanitarian law among the country's armed forces and police. In March, with the help of an expert from the Spanish Civil Guard, it organized a course for high-ranking officers from the Mozambican armed forces. In addition, jointly with the Ministry of Justice and with support from its own Advisory Service, the ICRC ran a seminar on the national implementation of humanitarian law for senior representatives of the government, the armed forces and the police and for members of the academic world. One notable outcome of this seminar was the setting up of an interministerial committee for the implementation of humanitarian law.

In April the ICRC held a training course in Namibia so as to enable National Society staff involved in activities to restore and maintain family links to work independently, with ICRC technical and financial assistance. At the same time a workshop was held for the Angolan refugee community in Namibia, and centres for collecting and delivering Red Cross messages were opened in the places where groups of Angolans were living. A Red Cross message service was also set up by the National Society for foreign nationals being detained as illegal immigrants.

The year under review saw a continuation of the confrontations between the government of President Chiluba and the country's opposition parties. Tension rose after the attempted military *coup d'état* of 28 October. Following this event, a state of emergency was decreed, judicial guarantees were restricted and some 90 people – both soldiers and civilians – were arrested. Former President Kaunda, accused of having instigated the *coup d'état*, was placed under house arrest. Concerned by the consequences of these arrests, the ICRC conducted several missions to Zambia and at the start of December, on the basis of its statutory right of initiative, offered its services to the government, requesting access to the people detained in connection with the events.

In Zimbabwe there were several protests in 1997 against the government's tax and social welfare policies, and these sometimes degenerated into clashes with the police. The end of the year was also marked by intercommunity tensions, following the authorities' decision to proceed with the expropriation of some of the land belonging to white farmers. The regional delegation gave a number of lectures on humanitarian law for members of the Zimbabwean armed forces, including contingents detailed to peace-keeping missions, and for officers of the Zimbabwean and United States armed forces within the framework of a joint exercise.

³⁵ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p 80.

people to seek safety in the town of Richmond. In February riots also took place in the shantytowns west of Johannesburg, leaving a number of people dead or wounded. While the regional delegation did not carry out any specific activities relating to security detainees, it nevertheless made several visits during the year to prisons and police stations in order to check on detention conditions and – as an observer or an expert – kept up its contacts with non-governmental organizations involved in prison work. In conjunction with the South African Red Cross Society, during the first half of 1997 the ICRC continued its efforts to assist victims of the political violence in KwaZulu/Natal. This activity, however, was suspended at the end of June when political violence in the province fell back to a low level, leading the ICRC to downsize its contingent in the field and close its Durban office. In addition, the regional delegation provided the National Society with logistic support for its programme to help the victims of flooding in the Midlands region (KwaZulu/Natal) in January and the Durban region in April. The ICRC also supported the South African Red Cross in developing its activities to assist the population living in shantytowns and in strengthening its branches situated in poor and vulnerable regions. Lastly, the regional delegation continued its training programme in humanitarian law for the South African army.

At the start of the year, the capital of the Comoros, Moroni, was the scene of strikes and demonstrations by civil servants, which in some cases escalated into violent confrontations with the army and the police, leaving a number of demonstrators wounded. Arrests took place in connection with these events, although the people imprisoned were subsequently released. During the first quarter of 1997 the ICRC made several vain attempts to obtain access to security detainees in Moroni. The island of Anjouan was also affected by this wave of protest and the situation reached a point where clashes erupted between the demonstrators and the Comorian army, sent to the island to help restore law and order. The clashes ended with the death of several people and the wounding of many more, whom the Comoros Red Crescent assisted with the support of the ICRC. The second half of 1997 was marked by the unilateral declaration of independence on 14 July of the island of Anjouan, followed swiftly by that of the island of Moheli. On 3 September the Comorian army tried to regain control of Anjouan, but met with vigorous resistance from the local population. These confrontations claimed many victims (people left dead, wounded or homeless) and led to the capture of 83 soldiers. On 8 September the ICRC sent a delegate to the spot to investigate humanitarian needs. Through the intervention of the Comoros Red Crescent, medicines and other supplies were provided for the people affected. Three times, and in conformity with its customary procedures, the ICRC visited the Comorian soldiers being held by the Anjouan secessionists. Some of these detainees – a total of 56 people – were subsequently released, but the ICRC continued to keep a close watch on the situation of the remaining 27.

*secessionist movement in
Anjouan and Moheli*

PRETORIA

Regional delegation

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

The year was marked by a worsening of the situation in the Comoros, continuing political instability in countries such as Lesotho and Swaziland and outbreaks of violence in South Africa (KwaZulu/Natal). Furthermore, several of the region's countries were affected, at the economic level, by a period of drought caused by the El Niño weather pattern. The ICRC monitored the situation in these countries closely and, where appropriate, assisted the victims, sometimes through the National Societies concerned. It also supported the region's National Societies, both in organizational matters and with material and financial backing. Depending on the case, and to varying degrees, it fostered their structural development, helped strengthen their emergency preparedness, assisted them with projects linked to prevention or public relations, or provided training for their staff and volunteers. The ICRC also strove to increase knowledge of and respect for humanitarian law in this part of Africa by raising awareness of these issues in various circles. In particular, it encouraged the region's States to adopt national measures to implement humanitarian law and urged them to accede to the 1980 UN Convention prohibiting or restricting the use of certain conventional weapons and the Ottawa Convention banning the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.

In South Africa the year was marked by the withdrawal from political life of the President of the NP,* the resignations of senior members of the main South African political groupings (NP, ANC*, IFP*), the formation in September of a new party, the UDM,* and the appointment of the country's Vice-President as head of the ANC.

*violence persists in
KwaZulu/Natal*

In general, this year again problems linked to violence, in all its forms, persisted in South Africa. While crime continued to be a problem in the country's large cities and, from the end of the year, for white farm owners, political violence (although markedly on the decrease in comparison with 1996) hit KwaZulu/Natal especially hard. In July and August an increase in sporadic violence in that province required the mobilization of the police and the army and prompted 3,000

* NP: National Party

* ANC: African National Congress

* IFP: Inkatha Freedom Party

* UDM: United Democratic Movement

In Lesotho the unrest that had been rocking the country sporadically since 1994 continued in February with a mutiny by several dozen junior police officers who took possession of the police headquarters in Maseru. After having tried in vain for 11 days to negotiate with the mutineers, the Lesotho government called on the armed forces to launch an attack on the premises. The attack was carried out on 16 February and led to the arrest of 127 police, most of whom were released within 48 hours. With the agreement of the country's authorities, the ICRC twice visited the people imprisoned following these events.

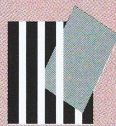
mutiny by the Lesotho police

In Madagascar the ICRC provided financial support and hospital tents for the Malagasy Red Cross Society to use in its relief activities for victims of the cyclone that hit the island in January. The organization also extended its community first-aid programme to another four regional committees on the island. Furthermore, this year too³⁶ it continued its assessment and monitoring programme in the country's places of detention. A report on the nutritional status of all categories of prisoners, summing up the ICRC's findings in 34 prisons visited between June 1995 and December 1996, was drawn up and handed over to the relevant authorities. On the basis of the report, in August the ICRC organized a workshop for national and regional senior prison administration staff, in order to raise their awareness of nutritional problems in places of detention. Moreover, an ICRC agronomist visited fields and vegetable plots attached to the main prisons under the responsibility of 13 prison administrations, with a view to assessing their condition and the chances of increasing their productivity with little investment. Lastly, the ICRC carried out its annual round of visits to seven places of detention and noted that all security detainees had been released in conformity with an amnesty granted in March by the Malagasy parliament.

*assessment programme
continues in Madagascar
prisons*

In February the regional delegation carried out a mission to Mauritius and the Seychelles to monitor the development of cooperation programmes (emergency preparedness, promotion of humanitarian law) conducted jointly by the ICRC and each of the two National Societies concerned.

³⁶ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p 84.



- in July and December, visited and distributed leisure items to 41 security detainees, including 35 accused of sedition, in the central prison and the women's prison in Maseru, Lesotho;
- visited 2 prisons and 5 police stations in South Africa;
- in Madagascar, visited 44 agricultural penal camps and 16 prison vegetable plots as part of an assessment of the nutritional status of detainees, conducted follow-up visits to 14 prisons and organized an awareness-raising seminar on the nutritional problems encountered in the country's prisons for the national director of the prison administration, 12 regional directors and 6 section heads;
- in the Comoros, conducted 3 visits to government soldiers captured during the events of September in Anjouan and brought them leisure and hygiene articles;
- gave all the detainees visited in the above situations the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families;



- by means of Red Cross messages, helped maintain family links between refugees from various African countries, most of whom were in South Africa and Swaziland, and their relatives abroad (287 messages were sent

IN 1997 THE ICRC:

in the countries covered by the regional delegation and 688 delivered);



- in KwaZulu/Natal, during the first 6 months of the year and in cooperation with the South African Red Cross Society, distributed food aid and essential items (blankets, jerrycans, kitchen sets and tarpaulins) to victims of the political violence;
- delivered medicines to the Comoros Red Crescent, together with 25 tents and 50 kitchen sets sent by the Nairobi regional delegation for distribution to the people affected by the events in Anjouan;
- made 6 hospital tents available to the Malagasy Red Cross Society;



- financed several training courses for first-aid workers and instructors from the National Societies of Lesotho and South Africa;
- provided basic training or refresher courses in first aid for volunteers from 4 regional committees of the Malagasy Red Cross;
- assessed the medical programmes undertaken by 14 local committees of the Comoros Red Crescent and examined the possibility of developing a pilot project in community first-aid in Moheli;
- donated an ambulance to the local branch of the Seychelles

Red Cross Society in Praslin;

- in Johannesburg, in cooperation with the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, organized an information course for senior members of the Red Cross Societies of Lesotho, Madagascar, Swaziland and South Africa;



- organized lectures on humanitarian law for over 470 members of the armed forces and police of Lesotho, South Africa and Swaziland, and, with the help of 2 officers, assessed the inclusion of a regular teaching programme on this body of law in the training given to the South African armed forces;
- in Lesotho and Swaziland, held working meetings with high-level officials on the national implementation of humanitarian law;
- in cooperation with the Comoros Red Crescent, ran several seminars for the Comorian armed and security forces, focusing in particular on the behaviour to adopt in situations of internal unrest;
- in the Comoros, Lesotho and South Africa, held dissemination sessions for representatives of the authorities, the press and the academic world attended by a total of some 340 people;
- printed 3,000 copies of *Rules for behaviour in combat* in the siSwati language and made them available to the Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross Society.

ETHIOPIA

During the year under review the Ethiopian government, led by the EPRDF,* continued its programme of political and economic reforms but was unable to rally all political tendencies, despite discussions with the main armed opposition groups. The tensions noted in previous years thus persisted, in particular in the Oromia National Regional State and the Somali National Regional State (Regions 4 and 5) where two of the main groups from the Ethiopian armed opposition, the OLF* and the ONLF,* remained active, although only to a limited extent. Furthermore, along the border with Sudan the situation became temporarily volatile at the start of the year when the armed opposition to the Sudanese government opened up new fronts in Sudan.³⁸ Along the border with Somalia, too, in the Gedo region, the tensions observed the previous year persisted between the Al Ittihad fighters and those from a Somali faction, the SNF,* supported by the Ethiopian army.³⁹

Meanwhile Ethiopia's food supply, constantly threatened by adverse weather, remained very precarious in 1997, especially in the countryside. The Wello and Shoa areas in central Ethiopia were hit by drought, while other places, in particular the Ogaden region at the end of the year, had extremely heavy rainfall which caused serious flooding and left tens of thousands of people destitute.

To strengthen its presence in sensitive areas and improve both its familiarity with the humanitarian problems there and its response capacity, in 1997 the ICRC



³⁸ See *Sudan*, pp. 104-108.

³⁹ See *Somalia*, pp. 99-103.

* EPRDF: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

* OLF: Oromo Liberation Front

* ONLF: Ogaden National Liberation Front

* SNF: Somali National Front

East Africa

ERITREA

In 1997 the Eritrean government continued its efforts to rebuild and develop the country. In May the Constitutional Assembly voted unanimously to adopt a national constitution, which paved the way for political pluralism while restricting the formation of any new political parties that might be founded on an ethnic or religious basis. At the international level, relations between Eritrea and Sudan deteriorated after the two States accused each other of supporting opposition groups active on either side; this turn for the worse was reflected in a military build-up along the border.³⁷ As the ICRC was unable to work on the spot, it was not in a position to evaluate the implications of this rise in tension for the humanitarian situation.

The efforts made by the ICRC during the year to resume its dialogue with the Eritrean authorities and to urge them to accede to the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols remained fruitless.

Meanwhile the ICRC continued its support for the emerging Red Cross Society of Eritrea. In particular, it backed the National Society's efforts to cooperate with Circus Eritrea, a local non-governmental organization composed of street children whose performances carry a humanitarian message, and to train first-aid workers, especially in the border areas in the west and north of the country.

³⁷ See *Sudan*, pp. 104-108.

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- visited 10,980 people held in connection with the 1991 change of regime or for security reasons in 126 places of detention and registered 5,660 new detainees;
- in cooperation with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, handled 2,180 Red Cross messages between people detained under the responsibility of the civilian authorities and their families;
- improved health conditions in places of detention by advising medical personnel, providing medical supplies or carrying out sanitation work, as necessary;
- distributed material assistance to some 56,000 detainees;

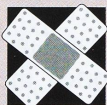


- helped maintain or restore family links for Ethiopian refugees outside the country and for refugees from neighbouring countries settled in Ethiopia, through a network for exchanging Red Cross messages run in conjunction with the Ethiopian Red Cross (4,572 messages handled);



- supported the National Society's work to assist 25,000 victims of flooding in the east of the country by providing tarpaulins, blankets, saucepans, mosquito nets, jerrycans and medicines, and by vaccinating livestock;

- launched a programme in the Afder area to combat the tsetse fly and another to teach nomadic herders how to recognize the most common diseases affecting their animals and how to treat them with suitable medicines, in cooperation with the International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology and the South-East Rangelands Project;
- distributed material assistance to some 10,000 Somali refugees in Dolo;



- in cooperation with the health authorities, launched a rural community health-care programme in the Afder area, supporting existing medical facilities, backing vaccination campaigns and training health workers in remote villages;
- for several months, set up a nutritional rehabilitation centre for the most undernourished children among the Somali refugees in Dolo;



- repaired or built 5 water-supply points for communities of nomadic herders in the Afder area;



- continued to assist the National Society in strengthening its branches (in particular, supported the opening of a branch in Asosa), promoting humanitarian law, restoring family links and providing first aid;



- helped set up and supported the work of an interministerial committee for the development and implementation of humanitarian law;
- signed or submitted several agreements with the relevant authorities aimed at standardizing the teaching of humanitarian law among the armed forces, the police and civil servants;
- alone or in cooperation with the Ethiopian Red Cross, organized many information sessions on humanitarian law for various audiences, including the civilian and military authorities and the public at large;
- continued to support cooperation between the Ethiopian Red Cross and Circus Ethiopia, a local organization whose artistic performances inform the general public about various humanitarian subjects.

access to detainees

opened two new offices, in Gode (Somali National Regional State) and Asosa (Benishangul-Gumuz National Regional State), in addition to its sub-delegation in Harar and its office in Jijiga.

Throughout the year the ICRC continued its visits to people imprisoned in connection with the change of regime in 1991 or for reasons of State security. Thanks to its intense dialogue with the Ethiopian authorities, the organization also gained access to civilian places of detention that had previously been off limits to it. Despite this positive development, the ICRC was unable to see all those incarcerated in the country.

After completing its visits to places of detention, the ICRC regularly reported its findings and made recommendations to the authorities, reminding them of their responsibility to provide decent living conditions for detainees. It placed particular emphasis on various means of countering the combined effects of overcrowding, poor hygiene and lack of medical care. On several occasions, when particularly acute needs were observed, the ICRC took direct action, providing equipment, medicines and hygiene items or carrying out sanitation work, as necessary. The anti-tuberculosis programme begun in 1994 in conjunction with the authorities in several places of detention had to be stopped during the year, as no solutions had been found to the obstacles previously encountered both in diagnosing sick detainees and in treating and monitoring them.⁴⁰ The ICRC nevertheless continued to pay special attention to the problem of tuberculosis in prisons and to report its observations to the authorities. The organization also offered detainees held in places under the responsibility of the civilian authorities the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families. Moreover, it monitored hearings in the trials of officials from the former regime to ensure that the judicial guarantees provided for under humanitarian law were respected.

assistance for civilians

In the Afder area (Region 5), which was the scene of regular armed clashes, the ICRC initiated a programme to support vulnerable groups. On the basis of surveys carried out on the spot to determine the population's main needs, various activities were launched in the areas of health care, veterinary services, water supply and sanitation. In addition, the ICRC took steps to support several thousand Somali refugees in Dolo, distributing supplies and opening a nutritional rehabilitation centre for the most seriously underfed children. The situation of these vulnerable people later became stabilized. Lastly, when the east of the country was hit by extremely heavy rainfall followed by floods, the ICRC actively supported the relief operation carried out by the Ethiopian Red Cross Society as part of a general effort launched on the government's initiative.

⁴⁰ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, pp. 87-88.

SOMALIA

The year under review was one of contrasts for Somalia. On the one hand, the leaders of the country's various factions met on numerous occasions to try to end the longstanding conflict. Their discussions were held mainly within the framework of the so-called Sodere process.⁴² This process, begun at the end of 1996, led to the creation on 3 January 1997 of a National Salvation Council. After remaining at a standstill for a long time, it was subsequently relaunched in November on the initiative of the Egyptian government, which invited the representatives of the main factions, including Hussein Aidid and Ali Mahdi, to Cairo. An important stage was reached in December when the factions, meeting in the Egyptian capital, adopted a joint declaration on the restoration of national unity. By the end of the year, however, this declaration – which still had to be formally approved at a national reconciliation conference planned for early 1998 – was already being challenged by various factions that had signed it. Besides this, and independently of the Sodere process, Hussein Aidid signed two peace agreements during the year, the first with his former ally Osman Ato and the second with Ali Mahdi, and these helped temporarily to lower the tension in Mogadishu.

Meanwhile violence continued to flare up in Somalia. The most serious fighting broke out in the Gedo region from March to June, between the Al Ittihad movement and the SNF,⁴³ and in the Bay and Bakol regions from July onwards, between Hussein Aidid's SNA* and the RRA.* In Mogadishu the situation remained volatile throughout the year, with sporadic clashes. Other, less serious, tension



ICRC / AR 12.97

conflicts and natural disasters

⁴² From the name of a place in Ethiopia where the first discussions took place.

⁴³ See also the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, pp. 91-92.

* SNA: Somali National Alliance

* RRA: Rahanwein Resistance Army

*standardizing the teaching
of humanitarian law*

During the year the Ethiopian military authorities approved a plan of action proposed by the ICRC to include the teaching of international humanitarian law in the instruction given to troops. By the end of the year the first phase of the plan – training Ethiopian military instructors and adapting teaching materials – had been put in place. Agreements on incorporating humanitarian law in training programmes were also submitted during the year to the police force and to the Ethiopian Civil Service College. In parallel with these efforts to standardize the teaching of humanitarian law, the ICRC organized many dissemination sessions for various audiences, either alone or in cooperation with the Ethiopian Red Cross. Furthermore, within the framework of its advisory service for States, the ICRC backed the work of the interministerial committee for the implementation of humanitarian law set up by the authorities in February.

The Ethiopian Red Cross, with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, began a process of change in 1997 with a view to consolidating its base. The ICRC became involved in this process and, in June, signed a cooperation agreement with the National Society on the strengthening of its branches, especially in sensitive areas of the country, in the spheres of first aid, promotion of humanitarian law and tracing. In conjunction with the Federation, the ICRC also supported the setting up of a new branch of the Ethiopian Red Cross in Asosa.

mission to the OAU

Throughout the year the ICRC mission to the OAU* in Addis Ababa continued its efforts to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and raise awareness in diplomatic circles of humanitarian issues such as landmines, child soldiers, displaced persons or the teaching and implementation of humanitarian law.⁴¹

⁴¹ See *Operational Activities*, pp. 36-39.

* OAU: Organization of African Unity

tered over vast areas). At the same time, the ICRC continued and expanded its preventive work, to enable threatened groups to resume or develop their traditional food-producing activities (agriculture, livestock-rearing and fishing). In this wide-ranging endeavour, the ICRC constantly took care to involve the groups concerned closely in designing and carrying out the programmes planned so as to ensure their success and durability. The areas targeted were mainly rural, as taking such action in the large urban areas (which also had serious humanitarian needs) was far beyond the organization's expertise and capabilities. Nevertheless, in towns and cities the ICRC helped the Somali Red Crescent Society to set up micro-projects designed to support the most disadvantaged, for example by arranging small loans for people who wanted to set up a business, organizing courses in typing and English or raising goats that were then handed over to those in need.

*emergency relief and support
for food production*

The ICRC's involvement in health activities also responded to the dictates of emergencies on the one hand and prevention on the other. Hospitals and other medical facilities admitting war casualties were supported throughout the year, whether regularly or on an occasional basis. The medical and sanitation needs of people driven from their homes by the fighting and/or floods were also taken into account when it was being decided what form emergency aid should take. At the same time, programmes focusing on primary health care in the isolated villages around Marere, support for the Somali Red Crescent's health posts (mainly in the Hiran area) and the prevention of diseases such as cholera were continued. As regards water supply and sanitation, priority was given to facilitating access to drinking water for herders and their animals.

*emergency and preventive
health care*

Otherwise, work to protect the civilian population and detainees was restricted by circumstances peculiar to the Somali situation, notably the number of opposing parties and their degree of fragmentation, the weakness of the chain of command (fighters sometimes acted on their own initiative) and the cultural mechanisms for settling disputes between clans and sub-clans. Because of this, the ICRC focused on the promotion of humanitarian law on a broad scale, in cooperation with the Somali Red Crescent Society. In order to ensure that the humanitarian message reached the greatest possible number of people, particular care was taken to link it to traditional Somali cultural values and to find the most suitable means of conveying it. In addition, on some occasions the ICRC approached the faction leaders directly to remind them of the basic humanitarian rules and the respect to which humanitarian work is entitled. This was the case in June, following the murder of a doctor from the organization MSF* on the premises of the Baidoa hospital, and in April, after shots were fired at the offices of the Somali Red Crescent in

promoting humanitarian law

* MSF: Médecins sans frontières

Somaliland

spots were also recorded in Kismayo between the SNF and the SSDF,* and in Galkayo between the SSDF and the SNA.

In several regions, drought or floods further darkened the picture, jeopardizing harvests and driving thousands of civilians from their homes. This was particularly so at the end of the year, when the Juba and Shabele valleys were hit by the worst floods in 40 years. According to estimates produced by the Somalia Aid Co-ordination Body,⁴⁴ these floods caused the deaths of 1,800 people and the displacement of 230,000 others.

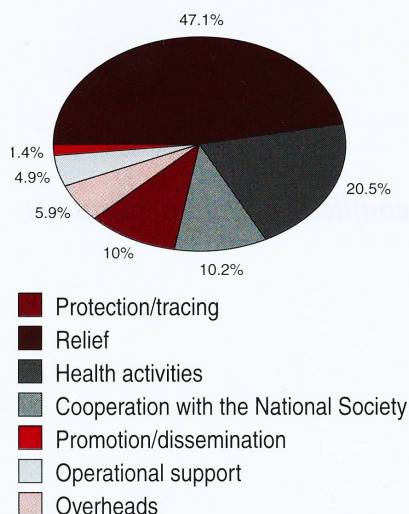
By comparison with the rest of the country, Somaliland enjoyed a period of relative stability in 1997. President Egal was re-elected in February and his government took pains to consolidate its position by including some members of the opposition. The region's economy benefited from this favourable situation, which also enabled aid and development organizations to begin or expand their programmes. Occasional tensions between opposing clans or sub-clans nevertheless persisted, in particular in the east of Somaliland.

Many Somalis – directly or indirectly affected by the various conflicts, at the mercy of disastrous weather, deprived of public services and vital infrastructure, left to their own devices by a ruined economy – remained very vulnerable in 1997, whether they lived in the towns or the countryside, and some of them were largely dependent on aid organizations.

During the year the ICRC continued its efforts in all its traditional spheres of activity, following the working method it had adopted in July 1994 with a view to avoiding the risks inherent in maintaining a permanent set-up in Somalia (delegation based in Nairobi, network of local employees scattered throughout the country, ad hoc missions by expatriate staff to outline the main tasks to be carried out and monitor them).⁴⁵ On some occasions, owing to perilous security conditions, certain areas remained inaccessible to the ICRC for varying amounts of time.

As in previous years, assistance programmes for people affected by the fighting and by adverse weather developed along two main lines. On the one hand, emergency aid was provided – food, medical and other supplies, sanitation work or support for agricultural activities, depending on the case – for people left without any means of survival. Operations such as these were organized in particular to assist people recently displaced as a result of the hostilities in the Gedo, Bay and Bakol regions, and also as part of an international effort to help victims of the serious flooding that occurred at the end of the year – this last operation was hampered by major logistic constraints (lines of communication cut, people in distress scat-

SOMALIA
Total expenditure in 1997:
Sfr 27,925,575



⁴⁴ A body composed of donor countries, member States of the Intergovernmental Authority Development (see footnote p. 105), Egypt and Yemen, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations.

⁴⁵ See the ICRC's 1994 *Annual Report*, p. 86; and the 1996 *Annual Report*, p. 91.

* SSDF: Somali Salvation Democratic Front

Following its practice of previous years, the ICRC also continued to support the Somali Red Crescent. In particular, it sought to involve the National Society's staff more and more in its own activities, so as to enable them to take over this work, and it endeavoured to promote and back the Somali Red Crescent's efforts to set up programmes for vulnerable groups.

by the flooding in the Juba and Shabele valleys;

- set up a first-aid post for 15,000 people displaced by the flooding near Belet Huen and a mobile clinic in the Marere region;
- continued its community-based health programme in remote villages with no access to medical facilities by teaching local personnel how to treat the most common illnesses, supplying them with basic medicines and improving access to drinking water;
- in cooperation with the Somali Red Crescent, strove to contain a cholera epidemic in the Wanla Weyn region by providing medicines, logistic means and sanitation equipment, and by training local medical personnel;



- equipped, sank or repaired 12 boreholes, 26 wells and 5 traditional water reservoirs in rural areas (part of this work was carried out under a project delegated to the German Red Cross) and improved the supply of drinking water and the drainage systems in several health posts and other medical facilities;
- set up an emergency programme to provide some 90,000 people trapped by the floods in the Marere region with drinking water;



- continued to support the Somali Red Crescent, especially with a view to strengthening its operational capacity;



- completed a historical study of the similarities between Somali cultural traditions and humanitarian law, distributed the study to decision-makers in the country and selected a dozen radio plays written by local authors on the basis of the study for airing by the Somali service of the British Broadcasting Corporation;
- continued its programmes for young people and those serving in the militia, begun in 1996, linking humanitarian ideas to Somali traditions and developing suitable ways of conveying these ideas (plays, video cassettes, comic strips).⁴⁷

Mogadishu. In Somaliland, a dialogue was begun with the relevant authorities on the possibility of teaching humanitarian law to the region's armed forces. The work of tracing missing persons and restoring family links continued by means of a vast network for exchanging Red Cross messages run by the Somali Red Crescent.

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



– with the help of the Somali Red Crescent Society, handled 75,131 Red Cross messages

between members of dispersed families in Somalia or abroad;

– located 632 members of dispersed families and organized 6 family reunifications;



– distributed over 2,400 tonnes of food and some 1,100 tonnes of seed, together with

tools, tarpaulins, blankets, mosquito nets and basic necessities, to people affected by the fighting, adverse weather or poor harvests;

– distributed regular food aid to several orphanages and hospitals and to detainees in Mogadishu's central prison, the WFP* having concluded its work in this sphere in 1996;⁴⁶

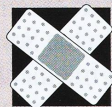
– repaired 8 km of broken or badly maintained dykes over a 200-km stretch of the Juba river and rehabilitated irrigation systems covering 1,600 hectares of arable land in the Hiran region;

– in the Juba valley, continued and developed a programme to combat the tsetse fly, responsible for disease in livestock, and in the Hiran region, launched a programme to fight a maize pest, in cooperation with the International Centre for Pest Physiology and Ecology (Kenya);

– distributed fishing tackle to several thousand fishermen along the river banks, taught around 100 people how to make fishnets, rehabilitated the Bosaso fish market and, together with the Somali Red Crescent, launched a training programme on sea-fishing techniques and fish storage for some

380 people living on the coast, giving the participants fishing tackle and small boats at the end of the course;

– supported several programmes launched by the National Society to assist the most disadvantaged, mainly in urban areas;



– supported the Somali Red Crescent hospital in Mogadishu (Kaysaney) and other hos-

pitals admitting war casualties in the capital and in Baidoa, Beer, Belet Weyn, Dusamareb and Galkayo;

– improved the services provided by the laboratory of the Somali Red Crescent hospital in Mogadishu by sending an expatriate specialist there for 2 months;

– distributed medicines for malaria and diarrhoea to people affected

⁴⁶ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p. 92.

the Sudanese government and the SPLA met for peace talks in Kenya, under the aegis of IGAD.* These talks ended without any tangible outcome, but the parties did commit themselves to meeting again in April 1998.

As in previous years, most of the inhabitants of southern Sudan were living in a highly critical situation owing to the conflict, the widespread insecurity, the collapse of services and infrastructure following years of war and, in some cases, drought. The fighting in the first six months left many wounded, some of whom died for lack of treatment due to the vastness of the region and the inability of local medical facilities to cope. In addition, thousands of people had to flee their homes, especially in the Bahr al-Ghazal province and the Yei region, or else, in the case of those who had already left their homes in previous years, had to move on again to try and find somewhere safer. In this situation, the humanitarian work carried out under the UN's Operation Lifeline Sudan continued throughout the year, but with delays or restrictions due to financing difficulties or the attitude of the parties and without access to entire regions where humanitarian needs had been reported.

The ICRC's activities remained affected throughout the year by the crisis that had arisen in November 1996 when Commander Kerubino and the Sudanese government had accused the ICRC of having transported by plane combatants and weapons for the SPLA (in reality, the organization was bringing five wounded Sudanese back to Wunrok, Bahr al-Ghazal, after they had been treated at its hospital in Lokichokio, Kenya).⁴⁹ The ICRC, forced to suspend its operations in the field owing to the suspicions aroused against it, made it quite clear that these accusations were completely unfounded. In addition, it maintained that a total resumption of its operations could not be envisaged until two essential conditions had been met, namely, the total withdrawal of the accusations, on the one hand, and authorization to visit the five patients it had brought back to Wunroc and whose fate was still unknown, on the other. By the end of the year, the constant dialogue maintained with the Sudanese authorities gave grounds for some optimism regarding the resolution of this crisis.

The suspension of ICRC activities mainly affected the work done by expatriate staff in southern Sudan. In cooperation with the Sudanese Red Crescent or through its Sudanese employees, the ICRC was in fact able to continue with some of the programmes it had developed in southern Sudan in the previous few years. Moreover, other activities carried out in 1996 were successfully handed over to

indirect effects of the conflict

relations with the authorities

⁴⁹ See the ICRC's *1996 Annual Report*, p. 96.

* IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a sub-regional organization which has a general secretariat in Djibouti and is composed of the following countries: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

SUDAN

The conflict in southern Sudan grew more intense at the start of the year. In March the SPLA* launched a major military offensive between the Ugandan border and Juba, directed against the government army and its allies and against the Ugandan rebels in the WNBF* and the LRA.* Later, trapped south of Juba, the SPLA continued its march and conquered large areas in the Lakes and Bahr al-Ghazal provinces. At the same time, operating from the borders with Eritrea and Ethiopia, the NDA* opened up new fronts in the Blue Nile and Red Sea provinces. The military situation stabilized somewhat during the second half of the year, although sporadic fighting continued, especially in Bahr al-Ghazal and around Juba.

On the political level, two significant events occurred in 1997. In April the government signed a peace agreement with six factions of the armed opposition, including Riek Machar's SSIA/M* and the SPLA/Bahr al-Ghazal of Commander

Kerubino (an SPLA dissident); these factions had already signed a political charter with Khartoum the previous year.⁴⁸ The agreement led to the setting up, in August, of a South Sudan Coordination Council headed by Riek Machar. The principal mandate given to this Council was to prepare, during a four-year transitional period, for a referendum on the political status of southern Sudan. It was also given extended authority in the military sphere with the establishment of a unified force, the SSDF.* Furthermore, in October – for the first time since 1994 –



⁴⁸ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p. 95.

* SPLA: Sudanese People's Liberation Army

* WNBF: West Nile Bank Front

* LRA: Lord's Resistance Army

* NDA: National Democratic Alliance

* SSIA/M: South Sudan Independence Army/Movement

* SSDF: South Sudan Defence Forces

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



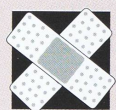
- visited 2 Ugandan prisoners of war interned in Khartoum, provided them with essential supplies and gave them the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families at home;
- visited some 1,700 people held by the SPLA in 4 places of detention, provided them with assistance (food, medical supplies and other items, as needed) and conveyed 4,839 Red Cross messages between them and their families;



- in cooperation with the Sudanese Red Crescent and the National Societies of the host countries, handled 107,291 Red Cross messages between members of dispersed families in Sudan and between Sudanese refugees outside the country and their relatives;



- supplied fishing tackle to Action Against Hunger, an organization that had taken over an ICRC programme in Malwalkon (Bahr al-Ghazal);



- admitted 2,215 patients and performed 4,877 operations at the Lokichokio hospital where it continued to train Kenyan medical personnel;

- continued its support for the Sudanese Ministry of Health hospital in Juba by regularly providing it with medical supplies and food, and by carrying out sanitation work there;
- assisted several government hospitals that admitted war casualties (Ed Damazin, Kassala and Omdurman) and surgical facilities in areas controlled by the SPLA (Yei, Maridi);
- evacuated around 50 Sudanese war casualties by plane from northern Uganda to the Lokichokio hospital;
- provided the health posts in the South Bor and Waat areas with medical supplies;
- organized a seminar on war surgery for Sudanese surgeons and government officials in Khartoum;



- fitted 180 new war amputees with artificial limbs and produced 476 prostheses and orthoses in the Lokichokio prosthetic/orthotic workshop;



- strengthened the operational capacity of the Sudanese Red Crescent by providing various kinds of assistance, together with logistic and financial support for its programmes benefiting those affected by the conflict in southern Sudan, Khartoum and the east of the country;



- organized information sessions on humanitarian law for the Sudanese armed forces in Khartoum and for patients at the Lokichokio hospital;
- assisted the National Society in organizing a seminar in Khartoum for the Sudanese media on the issue of anti-personnel mines.

*visit to Ugandan
prisoners of war*

*access to people
detained by the SPLA*

treating the wounded

humanitarian organizations working on the spot – or were on their way to being so by the end of the year.

In Khartoum in June the ICRC visited two Ugandan prisoners of war captured during the fighting that had taken place at the start of the year on the border between Uganda and Sudan. These two people, like the Sudanese prisoners of war captured by Uganda in similar circumstances, are protected by the Third Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war.⁵⁰

Because it was impossible for ICRC expatriates to go to southern Sudan, visits to people held by the SPLA in several places of detention were continued by the organization's Sudanese employees. The principal aim of these visits was to enable the detainees – whether already visited by the ICRC or recently captured – to exchange Red Cross messages with their families, mainly in the north of the country. In addition, owing to the serious humanitarian problems observed, on several occasions the ICRC provided food, medical supplies and other items to these detainees. At the same time the organization reminded the detaining authorities of their responsibility to ensure acceptable conditions of detention for prisoners.

Furthermore, the ICRC continued its efforts to maintain or restore contact between members of dispersed families in southern Sudan and between Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries and their relatives. This was done thanks to a network for exchanging Red Cross messages run by the Sudanese Red Crescent and local ICRC employees, with the cooperation of the National Societies in the host countries and, at times, with logistic support from the UN's Operation Lifeline Sudan.

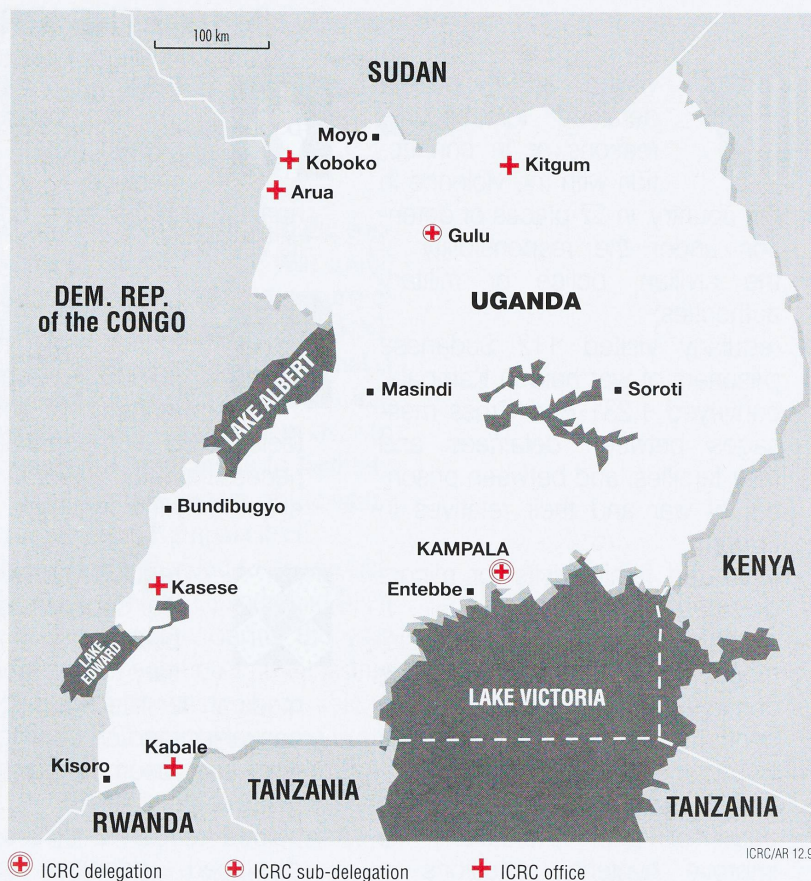
The ICRC's health-related work concentrated first and foremost on the Lokichokio hospital in Kenya. During its 10 years of activity, the facility had been extended and improved on several occasions (from 40 beds at the time it was built, its capacity could now be stretched to over 500 beds in time of need) and a total of almost 12,000 war casualties and other patients had been admitted there. In 1997, as the ICRC was itself unable to carry out medical evacuations from southern Sudan, it arranged with Operation Lifeline Sudan for hundreds of people wounded in the fighting in that part of the country to be brought to the hospital and then taken home once they had recovered. The prosthetic/orthotic workshop set up in Lokichokio, for its part, continued its activities for Sudanese war amputees. Some of the primary health-care programmes launched in previous years in three areas of southern Sudan were taken over by other humanitarian organizations, while in other cases, under the supervision of its local employees, the ICRC continued to provide medical supplies to the health posts and dispensaries it had assisted previously. In cooperation with the Sudanese Red Crescent,

⁵⁰ For an account of activities and approaches on the Ugandan side, see *Uganda*, pp. 109-112.

UGANDA

In 1997 the tensions that had come to the fore again the previous year in several regions of Uganda persisted or even worsened. In the south-west (Bundibugyo, Kabarole and Kasese districts), the clashes that had taken place at the end of 1996 between the Ugandan army and the ADF* rebels degenerated into more violent fighting from June onwards. In the north (Gulu and Kitgum districts), the LRA continued its military activities throughout the year. In the north-west (West Nile region), on the other hand, the conflict between the Ugandan army and the WNBF rebels seemed to abate towards the end of June, except in Aringa county where guerrilla activities continued to be carried out by a dissident faction of the WNBF, the URNF II.*

The deterioration of the security situation in some parts of the country led to an increase in humanitarian needs. As in 1996, civilians, especially those living in the countryside who were terrorized by the acts of violence committed against them, were the main victims of the conflict. With the gradual return of calm to the Koboko area (West Nile) in 1997, most of the people who had been displaced the previous year were able to return home, whereas in the other conflict-ridden parts of the country the number of those displaced increased. In addition to these people, there were thousands of others who were afraid of spending the night in isolated places and gathered in villages or towns at nightfall, returning home the following morning. These population movements, attributable also in part to the government's policy of assembling groups from the countryside in certain localities and commercial centres protected by the army, had unfavourable consequences: in particular, farmers found themselves virtually cut off from their fields and, therefore, their means of subsistence, while the places in which the displaced people assembled were generally not equipped (especially



civilians the main victims

* ADF: Allied Democratic Forces

* URNF II: Ugandan National Rescue Front II

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- visited 1,897 people detained for security reasons or in connection with the violence in the country, in 37 places of detention under the responsibility of the civilian, police or military authorities;
- regularly visited 112 Sudanese prisoners of war held in Kampala;
- conveyed 1,231 Red Cross messages between detainees and their families, and between prisoners of war and their relatives in Sudan;
- facilitated family visits for minors detained in Kampala;
- distributed various kinds of assistance, depending on the needs observed and the degree of emergency, in the places of detention visited;
- carried out sanitation work, on the basis of prior evaluations, to improve hygiene conditions in 3 prisons and offered to assist the authorities in planning similar work in other prisons;



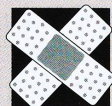
- helped the Uganda Red Cross Society run a network for exchanging Red Cross messages from detainees, members of families separated by the events and refugees in the country, by training and supervising qualified staff and by repairing motorbikes or supplying them to National Society volunteers engaged in this work;



- made representations to the parties concerned when acts of violence committed against civilians were brought to its attention;



- distributed over 1,500 tonnes of food to 50,000 people, 46 tonnes of seed and tools to 130,000 people and basic necessities to 240,000 people affected by the fighting;



- regularly provided medical supplies for 6 hospitals and, as necessary, for around 30 medical facilities admitting war casualties and/or treating people who had been displaced as a result of the violence;
- helped reopen 2 clinics treating displaced people who had returned home to Koboko;



- assessed the need for artificial limbs for war casualties;



- rehabilitated 19 springs and 7 boreholes to improve access to drinking water in Koboko and the surrounding area, and supported a programme run by the Uganda Red Cross to teach rules of health and hygiene to the local population;



- supported the Uganda Red Cross, in particular through greater cooperation in the areas of tracing and promotion of humanitarian law, and by increasingly involving the National Society's staff in designing and implementing its assistance programmes;



- in cooperation with the Uganda Red Cross, gave many presentations on Red Cross activities, in particular for the local and traditional authorities, with the aim of facilitating humanitarian work and improving access to victims;
- organized sessions and seminars to spread knowledge of humanitarian law among the armed forces and discussed with the military authorities ways of standardizing the teaching of humanitarian law to troops.

as regards hygiene and health) to cater for so many. By the end of the year, the number of people displaced as a result of the conflict came to over 325,000, mainly in the south-west (Bundibugyo, Kabarole and Kasese districts) and the north (Gulu and Kitgum districts). To this displaced population should be added 180,000 Sudanese refugees in the north of the country and 23,000 Rwandan, Congolese, Somali, Ethiopian and Kenyan refugees.

Furthermore, in 1997 the number of people detained in connection with the conflict also increased, in particular following the events at the start of the year in the West Nile area during which hundreds of WNBF fighters were captured or surrendered. A number of Sudanese were taken prisoner at the same time. Many UNRF II and LRA fighters gave themselves up during the year and, considering that a large number of those who came from the LRA were actually people who had been kidnapped by this movement, the Ugandan authorities handed them over to World Vision, a humanitarian organization in charge of a programme to facilitate reintegration into civilian life. Other arrests were made in the context of the situation in the south-west and following the attacks carried out in Kampala itself.

Because of the increase in humanitarian needs, the ICRC decided to open a delegation in Kampala from 1 May – up to then, the work done in Uganda had been supervised by the regional delegation in Nairobi. Furthermore, during the year three offices were opened, in Kasese, Arua and Kitgum, in addition to the existing ones in Gulu and Koboko. At times some parts of the country were inaccessible to the ICRC because of the prevailing insecurity. The ICRC maintained a constant dialogue with the Ugandan authorities on this issue, but it was able to have little contact with the various rebel movements.

In 1997 the ICRC had ample access to places of detention, whether these were under the responsibility of the civilian or military authorities or the police. Some 1,800 people held in connection with the conflict were visited. During the year, the Ugandan army transferred most of the fighters it had captured or who had given themselves up to civilian prisons, which were ill prepared to deal with this influx of new detainees. The ICRC constantly reminded the Ugandan authorities of their responsibility to provide acceptable living conditions for detainees. Meanwhile, in response to certain emergencies, food and other supplies were distributed. The general state of health of the prison population was also monitored and, in some cases, the ICRC gave assistance designed to help the authorities fight the spread of contagious diseases. In addition, the ICRC facilitated contact between the Ugandan authorities and representatives of donor governments and aid organizations on issues relating to the improvement of conditions of detention. It also offered to assist the detaining authorities in planning work to upgrade the sanitary installations in several civilian prisons.

The Sudanese prisoners of war, protected by the Third Convention, were regularly visited by the ICRC, which provided them with assistance according to their

new delegation

access to detainees...

*... and to Sudanese
prisoners of war*

needs and gave them the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families at home. Following these visits, confidential reports on the general conditions of detention, together with the ICRC's recommendations, were submitted to the Ugandan government.

Another key concern of the ICRC's was the protection of the civilian population. Whenever acts of violence committed against civilians were brought to its attention, the organization made ad hoc representations to the relevant parties. More generally, in cooperation with the Uganda Red Cross Society, the ICRC pursued its programmes to promote compliance with the rules of humanitarian law – and, by the same token, the respect to which civilians and people who are not or are no longer fighting are entitled – for various audiences, in particular the armed forces. A project aimed at systematically including humanitarian law as part of military training was discussed with the authorities concerned.

Displaced people in the conflict areas received various forms of assistance, depending on their situation. Where these people had, despite the circumstances, managed to keep their access to agricultural land, the ICRC provided them with seed and tools so that they could grow all or at least part of their own food again. Otherwise, especially in cases where newly displaced people had lost everything in fleeing to safety, food and basic necessities were distributed. The ICRC also supplied relief for displaced people who were able to return home in the Koboko region, to help them settle in. Close coordination was maintained with the other humanitarian organizations on the spot – in particular the WFP, which was working to feed people in the districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Bundibugyo – so as to achieve optimal coverage of the needs observed.

Besides its medical work in prisons, the ICRC provided medical supplies regularly or as needed to hospitals and other medical facilities that admitted war casualties or treated displaced people. In cooperation with the Uganda Red Cross, a programme to educate the local population about hygiene and the prevention of malaria was also initiated in the Koboko area. In addition, the ICRC carried out an assessment of the need for artificial limbs which concluded that an orthopaedic specialist should be sent to Uganda in 1998 in order to improve the services available for war amputees.

*cooperation with the
National Society*

The Uganda Red Cross and the ICRC discussed a cooperation agreement, to be signed in 1998, dealing specifically with work to restore family links and promote knowledge of humanitarian law, two areas of activity for which the National Society had taken over responsibility in 1993. In addition, the ICRC continued its cooperation with the Uganda Red Cross in order to strengthen the latter's emergency preparedness, taking particular care to involve the National Society's staff more and more in designing and implementing programmes.

Lastly, the Kampala delegation provided logistic support for the ICRC's operations in Rwanda and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

NAIROBI

Regional delegation

(Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania)

In 1997 the delegation in Nairobi continued to provide support for ICRC operations throughout the region. During the year specialists based in Nairobi, in addition to running a regional technical workshop, assisted the other delegations in many spheres: agricultural and veterinary work, nutrition, water supply and sanitation, restoration of family links, aerial logistics and operations, transportation, administration, assistance to staff, dissemination of humanitarian law among the armed forces and other bearers of weapons, relations with the media and promotion of the ICRC's work.

regional support

At the same time the delegation focused on the situation of refugees in Tanzania, political tension and violence in Kenya and, to a lesser extent, political developments in Djibouti. On 1 May responsibility for the ICRC's work in Uganda, previously borne by the Nairobi-based staff, was handed over to a new delegation set up in Kampala.

In Djibouti the year was marked by political tension stemming from power struggles over the succession to the president in office and, from September, by the resumption, albeit limited, of military activity by a dissident faction of the FRUD.* Arrests were made among the Afar opposition, while other opposition members were extradited from Ethiopia. The ICRC was able to visit these people, who were held in Gabode prison.

In Kenya, as the months went by, the prospect of presidential and legislative elections planned for the end of the year led to a heightening of tension between the government and the opposition. The latter sought the adoption of constitutional reforms, in particular to enable fair elections to be prepared and held and to allow for genuine power-sharing. Starting in May there were mass demonstrations, mainly in urban centres, which occasionally degenerated into confrontations between demonstrators and police. Dozens of people were killed and hundreds of others wounded. Arrests were made, but those concerned were usually released quickly. Furthermore, in mid-August the Mombasa area was hit by a wave of violence that targeted mainly civilians, especially those from the interior of the country. Almost 100 people were killed, dozens arrested, hundreds wounded and tens of thousands of others displaced. The opposition and the government later came to an agreement on introducing a set of constitutional reforms and the presidential and legislative elections were held on 29 and 30 December. As a result, the

tension in the run-up to the elections in Kenya

* FRUD: Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy

outgoing president was re-elected and his party gained a majority in the parliament. Added to the political disturbances were sporadic clashes between rival communities, often sparked off by disputes over cattle stealing, especially in the areas bordering on Ethiopia, Uganda and Sudan. These – often deadly – clashes left a large number of civilians in a highly precarious situation. Moreover, people living in certain parts of the country were severely affected by dire weather, in particular in the north and north-east, which were hit first by drought and then by major floods towards the end of the year.

The ICRC, in consultation with the Federation, continued to support the Kenya Red Cross Society, in particular with a view to increasing its capacity to spread knowledge of humanitarian law, provide emergency assistance and restore family links. Thanks to this support, the National Society was able to take effective action in the situations described above – giving first aid to people injured during demonstrations and evacuating those most seriously hit to suitable medical facilities, providing food and other supplies to victims of intercommunal violence or disastrous weather, or restoring contact between family members separated by the events in Mombasa. Meanwhile the ICRC kept up an intense dialogue with the authorities and the leaders of the main opposition parties with a view to encouraging respect for humanitarian rules and Red Cross work. It continued its efforts to increase knowledge of humanitarian law among various groups, in particular by holding numerous sessions for the armed forces and the security forces. In parallel, the ICRC and the military authorities agreed on a new approach to make the study of humanitarian law a standard part of the instruction received by all troops, and initial steps in this direction were taken during the year. The ICRC also maintained contact with the authorities to promote Kenya's accession to the humanitarian law treaties, in particular the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions. Lastly, the organization took care to monitor developments following the arrests made in connection with the political tensions, and it entered into a dialogue on this matter with the authorities concerned.

*population movements
in Tanzania*

The situation in Tanzania remained calm throughout the year except in Zanzibar where, since the 1995 elections, political tension had persisted owing to the opposition's refusal to sit on various government bodies; at the end of the year, several opposition members were arrested. Despite this relative calm, the inhabitants of many parts of the country suffered the consequences of a severe drought and, with the help of specialized international organizations, the government therefore took measures to distribute food to vulnerable people. Moreover, because of the events taking place in neighbouring countries to the west, there were mass movements of refugees in Tanzania. The repatriation of some 500,000 Rwandan refugees who had settled in the Ngara region since 1994 – begun at the end of 1996 – was completed in January. Further south, in Kigoma province, some 75,000 people fleeing the events taking place in the former Zaire sought refuge in

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



– in June and October respectively, visited 3 and 16 people detained in Djibouti for security

reasons;

- provided technical and material assistance intended to improve living conditions in the Djibouti central prison;
- helped the Tanzanian authorities fight the spread of a cholera epidemic in 3 prisons in Dar es Salaam;



– supported the Tanzania Red Cross Society in its efforts to restore contact between Congolese refugees and their families in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and between Burundian refugees scattered among the various camps in Tanzania and their relatives;

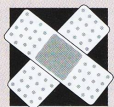
- coordinated a programme to register unaccompanied children found among Burundian refugees, with the aim of reuniting them with their families (1,357 unaccompanied minors were registered and 12 family reunifications were organized in various camps);
- helped restore or maintain contact between the refugee groups in Djibouti and their families by means of a network for exchanging Red Cross messages run in cooperation with the National Societies of the host countries;



– purchased locally around 1,600 tonnes and dispatched over 7,000 tonnes of relief

supplies for use in its operations in the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda;

- supported the Kenya Red Cross Society's programmes in aid of vulnerable groups by providing 300 tonnes of food, blankets, kitchen sets and tarpaulins;
- in cooperation with the Kenyan National Society and the Federation, repaired infrastructure (dispensaries, schools, cattle dips) destroyed in the Rift valley, Kenya, during intercommunal clashes;



– provided regular medical assistance to the Kigoma regional hospital in Tanzania for treating 158 Burundian war casualties;



– transferred 13 war amputees from Djibouti to the Addis Ababa prosthetic/orthotic workshop (under the responsibility of the ICRC's Special Fund for the Disabled)⁵¹ for the replacement of prostheses received in 1994;



– repaired a water-supply system destroyed during the intercommunal violence in Kenya's Rift valley and equipped 3 health posts with hand pumps;



– continued its cooperation programmes with the region's National Societies, concentrating (depending on the circumstances and to varying degrees) on fostering structural development, supporting activities to restore family links and/or promote humanitarian law and strengthening emergency preparedness;



– in Kenya, held dissemination sessions for the police and supported the armed forces programme to teach humanitarian law to troops, in particular by training instructors at the Staff College and the Cadet Officers' Academy and by supplying teaching aids to military academies;

- organized several courses in humanitarian law for the staff and students of 3 universities in Kenya's Rift valley;
- held an exhibition and a round table on anti-personnel mines for representatives of various humanitarian organizations in Kenya;
- held an exhibition on anti-personnel mines in cooperation with the Tanzanian National Society.

⁵¹ See Special Fund for the Disabled, p. 370.

restoring family links

Tanzania. In September, on the basis of an agreement reached with the Tanzanian authorities and the authorities of the newly established Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNHCR began to repatriate these refugees; meanwhile several thousand made their own way home. In addition, the insecurity affecting Burundi led to an increase in the number of Burundian refugees in Kigoma province, who amounted to 300,000 by the end of the year. In September also the Tanzanian authorities launched a large-scale operation to assemble in the refugee camps all foreign nationals in an irregular situation who were dispersed in the Kigoma area; in this way, thousands of people were grouped in camps and several hundred expelled. Furthermore, Burundian war casualties crossed the border to receive treatment on Tanzanian soil. Against this backdrop, relations between Burundi and Tanzania remained tense throughout the year, especially in November, when several armed incidents occurred along the border between the two countries.

The ICRC adapted its set-up to the changing situation: its office in Ngara was closed after the departure of the Rwandan refugees, an office was opened in Kigoma and a permanent presence established in Dar es Salaam. The ICRC's activities in aid of Burundian and Congolese refugees concentrated on supporting the work of the Tanzania Red Cross Society in the areas of tracing and restoring family links. Special emphasis was placed, in cooperation with other humanitarian organizations (in particular UNHCR and UNICEF), on identifying and registering unaccompanied children found among the refugees, with the ultimate aim of reuniting them with their families. In addition, the ICRC assessed the medical care given to the Burundian war casualties who had arrived in Tanzania and provided regular assistance to the Kigoma regional hospital, which admitted most of these patients. The issue of a group of soldiers from the former Zairian armed forces who, together with their families, had sought refuge in Kigoma, was the subject of a dialogue with the Tanzanian authorities and UNHCR – in this connection, the ICRC made known its readiness to visit and assist the group, depending on the needs observed, should the Tanzanian authorities decide to intern the soldiers (within the meaning of international humanitarian law). A similar question arose at the end of the year with the presence in Kigoma of a group of Burundian fighters from the FDD,* arrested by the Tanzanian authorities. Furthermore, when cases of cholera were reported in several prisons in Dar es Salaam, the ICRC sent a sanitation specialist there and provided medicines and other supplies to help the relevant authorities and the Tanzania Red Cross stop the spread of an epidemic.

* FDD: Force for the Defence of Democracy (the armed branch of the CNDD, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy)

