

**Zeitschrift:** Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Herausgeber:** International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Band:** - (1997)

**Rubrik:** Asia and the Pacific

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 07.03.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**



**Indian sub-continent and Myanmar**

**ICRC delegations:**

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

**ICRC regional delegation:**

New Delhi

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

**ICRC delegation:**

Cambodia

**ICRC regional delegations:**

Bangkok, Jakarta, Manila

**Staff**

ICRC expatriates:<sup>1</sup> 196

National Societies:<sup>1</sup> 48

Local employees:<sup>2</sup> 1,604

**Total expenditure:**

Sfr 109,802,192

**Expenditure breakdown:**

**Sfr**

Protection/tracing: 27,161,002

Relief: 39,365,956

Health activities: 21,828,341

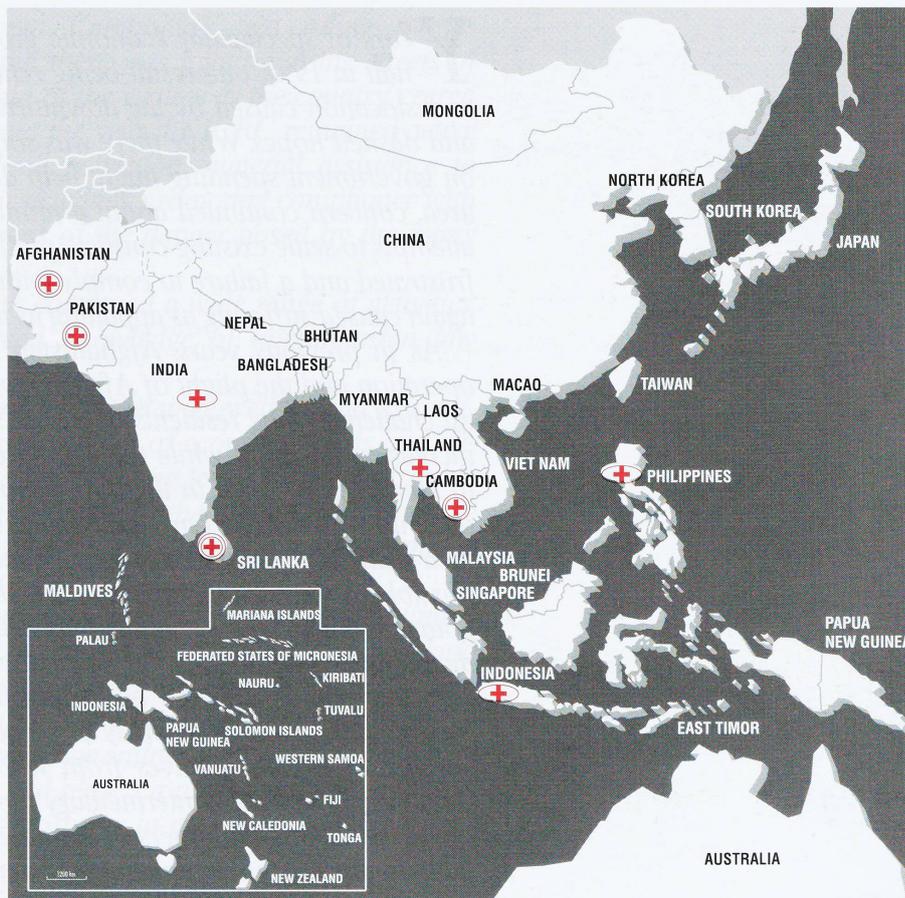
Cooperation with

National Societies: 3,970,787

Promotion/dissemination: 3,880,192

Operational support: 7,236,906

Overheads: 6,359,008



⊕ ICRC regional delegation ⊕ ICRC delegation

ICRC / AR 12.97

# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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

<sup>2</sup> Under ICRC contract, as at December 1997.

*Years of spectacular economic growth in East Asia came to an abrupt halt in 1997, one result being renewed potential for political instability as dislocation caused by the downturn unleashed a tide of uncertainty, debt and dashed hopes. While there was some prospect that the resulting squeeze on government spending might help dampen a disquieting arms race in the area, concern continued about a number of region-wide tensions. Ongoing attempts to settle existing conflicts, particularly in South Asia, continued to be frustrated and a failure to comply with international humanitarian law once again caused suffering as appalling as it was unnecessary.*

*As in previous years, Afghanistan was the scene of the ICRC's largest operation and the plight of Afghan civilians one of the organization's greatest challenges. The residents of Kabul struggled through yet another year of increasing hardship while the war spread north to Mazar-i-Sharif and west to Herat. As so often in the past, people were driven from their homes and out into a harsh, barren countryside. ICRC delegates endeavoured to ease their distress, striving to ensure adequate medical care for as wide a range as possible of the population, providing the relief supplies needed to keep them going and working to restore conditions in which they could recover a degree of self-sufficiency. As usual, the ICRC played a leading role in rehabilitating people disabled by the conflict in the mine-infested country and used its network of Red Cross messages to keep a growing number of families in touch with relatives from whom the fighting had separated them. Accepted as a neutral intermediary throughout Afghanistan, the ICRC once again visited large numbers of detainees and did what it could to ensure that their conditions and treatment met international standards.*

*The north and east of Sri Lanka were yet again the setting for violent clashes as the war dragged on through another year, with government forces engaged in a dogged struggle to open a secure land route to the Jaffna peninsula. Delegates worked hard to meet the needs of deprived civilians in areas in which armed tension coupled with drought had rendered normal life impossible. Medical care loomed large in their efforts, as did water and sanitation work. The ICRC also continued its detainee-welfare activities and promoted respect for humanitarian law.*

*In August the ICRC opened its first regional training unit, for Asia and the Pacific, and held its first introductory training course outside Switzerland (in Rajasthan, India) for staff from the region.*

*Delegates based in New Delhi continued visiting persons held in connection with the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The regional delegation also carried on its programme to promote knowledge of and compliance with humanitarian law among the region's security forces.*

*Strains in the relationship between Cambodia's two ruling parties exploded into open conflict in July and there was fighting in the streets of Phnom Penh. Delegates came to the aid of the victims as the country veered perilously close to civil war. Throughout the year the ICRC remained active in the areas of detainee welfare, blood collection, material assistance to health-care facilities, prosthetic/orthotic activities, promoting compliance with humanitarian law and raising awareness of the danger posed by the many millions of mines littering Cambodian soil.*

*The regional delegation in Bangkok continued a wide range of activities, in particular its programme to spread knowledge of humanitarian law throughout the Far East.*

*Delegates based in Jakarta maintained their detainee-welfare and dissemination work in an area in which a combination of economic crisis and climatic change was aggravating the effects of existing tensions. A catastrophic drought throughout the region brought hunger to the inhabitants of remote villages in Irian Jaya already sorely tried by the state of persistent tension prevailing there.*

*The peace process laboured on in the Philippines as the ICRC continued to visit detainees and came to the aid of the victims of fighting on the island of Mindanao.*

*The historic signing in December of a treaty banning the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines was the culmination of a long campaign in which the ICRC had played a prominent part, not least through the efforts of its media liaison officers in a number of the region's delegations.*

# Indian sub-continent and Myanmar

## AFGHANISTAN

The period under review ended much as it had begun, with the southern two-thirds of Afghanistan, including the capital Kabul, under the control of the largely Pashtun Taliban, the Kandahar-based movement led by Mullah Mohammad Omar. Throughout the year Taliban forces faced three main opposition groups: the predominantly Tajik Jamiat-i-Islami party of Commander Massoud and Professor Rabbani, the mainly Uzbek Jumbesh party of Generals Dostom and Malik and the two factions of the Hazara Hezb-i-Wahdat of Shiite leaders Karim Khalili and Mohammed Akbari. Rivalries and shifting alliances both inside and outside the opposition coalition resulted in ferocious fighting in and around Mazar-i-Sharif over the summer, though this did not change the situa-



tion on the ground and the Taliban finished the year with no northern areas under their control apart from the Pashtun-dominated Kunduz enclave.

Thus, with their country the main arena of an intricate regional power game, the people of Afghanistan suffered through yet another year of a conflict as cruel as it was inconclusive. Eighteen years of fighting had left the economy in ruins, health-care facilities overwhelmed and the exhausted population struggling to cope not only with shot and shell but also with soaring inflation, food shortages, disease and despair.

The ICRC was very concerned about violations of international humanitarian law. It repeatedly reminded all the parties to the conflict of their obligations toward persons protected by that body of law and of the requirement to comply with the rules it lays down regarding the conduct of hostilities. Delegates endeavoured to verify reports of detention, assiduously requested access to all those held, and made confidential representations to all the warring parties with a view to obtaining a greater degree of compliance with the law of armed conflict.

Tragedy struck the ICRC in October when an employee was killed by a stray bullet while driving a vehicle in a convoy that was caught in crossfire.

Over the years, countless Afghans have been driven from their homes by the violence raging around them. The period under review was no exception. Early in the year, with the fierce Afghan winter still holding the landscape in its grip, many tens of thousands of civilians were on the move, their only possessions that which they could carry on their backs. Though a lucky few found shelter with family or friends, a number of areas soon became saturated with the influx of displaced people. When some 9,000 found themselves in the north-western city of Herat without shelter and with only the barest essentials for survival, the ICRC delegation set up a camp on the outskirts of town, brought in large numbers of tents, water tanks and jerrycans, and sunk wells, built latrines and otherwise strove to ensure an adequate water supply and acceptable sanitary conditions for the camp's capacity of 30,000 people. Sanitation work was also carried out in other camps near the city and two outpatient clinics were set up in conjunction with the Afghan Red Crescent Society. Delegates distributed food to camp-dwellers and to thousands of families to the east in the Pul-i-Khumri area and various other places around the country, both urban and rural. Fighting in the north over the summer caused massive displacement of civilians. The ICRC took immediate action to provide them with food, safe drinking water, medical care and adequate sanitary facilities. As the year drew to a close, the ICRC was assisting some 2,000 displaced families in Bamyan. Though concerned to meet the needs of people forced to flee their homes, delegates encouraged these people to return as soon as conditions made it safe to do so. The ICRC's activities in aid of displaced people were carried out in close cooperation with United Nations agencies and a range of non-governmental organizations.

With the growing volume and diversification of the ICRC's relief work in Afghanistan, the organization strengthened its logistics base across the border in Peshawar, Pakistan. However, the strategic situation and the resulting north-south divide in Afghanistan meant that the Peshawar base could not provide all the support needed. The closure of the border with Uzbekistan also forced the ICRC to seek new solutions and, as a result, the organization rented warehouses in Turkmenistan.

The war-weary population of Kabul, swollen as it was with people fleeing there to escape the fighting, struggled on through deteriorating economic conditions. As in the provinces, the ICRC delegation in the capital continued to concentrate on helping returnees, the destitute (identified by means of socio-economic survey) and some 30,000 of the most vulnerable families<sup>3</sup>, those headed by a widow or a disabled breadwinner. To this end, delegates distributed food (cereals, pulses,

*thousands of civilians  
on the move*

*war-weary population*

<sup>3</sup> The ICRC bases its distributions in Afghanistan on the family unit, calculated as equal to six individuals.

*food-for-work programmes*

vegetable oil and salt) and other relief (clothing, blankets, heating fuel, stoves, soap, plastic sheeting and jerrycans). The number of beneficiaries in Kabul grew over the period under review and rations were increased when harsh climatic conditions raised calorific requirements.

When spring finally arrived, it brought heavy rains. ICRC relief teams joined their counterparts from the Afghan Red Crescent and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to come to the aid of flood victims in the north and south-west of the country.

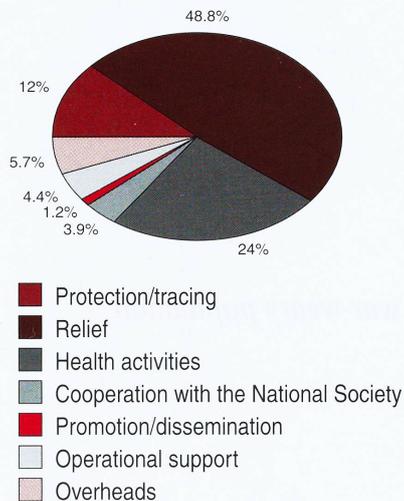
The food-for-work programme was expanded in the capital as part of the ongoing effort to reduce long-term dependence on direct aid. New food-for-work and cash-for-work projects were also implemented in the provinces, in some cases by the ICRC alone and in others in conjunction with the Afghan Red Crescent. Emphasis was placed on restoring essential infrastructure, though the projects included activities as varied as refuse collection and the production of knitwear by hundreds of widows in Kabul for distribution by the ICRC to detainees vulnerable to the winter cold. Such projects outside the capital made it possible to reduce the number of people receiving direct aid. As in previous years, food-for-work schemes were largely aimed at heading off a further deterioration of the nutritional situation – and hence the population’s health – by stimulating cultivation of arable land and thus promoting self-sufficiency. They frequently dovetailed with income-generating schemes in urban areas such as tool production by craftsmen who used metal from derelict tanks and other weapons of war to make agricultural implements such as spades. By the end of the year, agricultural projects were under way in 20 provinces and included the spraying of fruit trees, support for honey production and orchard-tree nurseries, seed distributions and work to restore the irrigation systems so vital in that parched and wind-blown landscape. Such work in Badghis province, for example, helped settle returnees and prevent renewed displacement. It was also instrumental in enabling displaced people living in the Samarkhel camp near Jalalabad to return to their homes in the Tagab valley. Delegated to the Swedish Red Cross while remaining under the overall responsibility of the ICRC, the Tagab resettlement programme also included water-supply and housing-construction projects.

Preliminary surveys carried out in the Panjshir valley with a view to launching relief and veterinary programmes paved the way for aid to medical facilities there as well as a vaccination campaign for livestock.

The carnage of war once again made medical care a priority for the ICRC. Following the winter lull, bursts of heavy fighting such as the Taliban offensive in the north and attacks on Kabul placed an intolerable strain on the country’s already crumbling medical infrastructure. The ICRC therefore continued entirely to support five major surgical facilities: the Karte Seh and Wazir Akbar Khan hospitals in Kabul, the Jalalabad Public Health Hospital, the Mirwais hospital in

**AFGHAN CONFLICT**

Total expenditure in 1997:  
Sfr 71,443,221



Kandahar and Ghazni hospital. Among other things, the delegation provided the hospitals' surgical departments with essential supplies and salary incentives for staff. Some 20 other facilities treating the war-wounded across Afghanistan, including the military hospitals in Kabul and Herat, also received ICRC assistance. In the wake of the fighting in northern Afghanistan, the ICRC stepped up its assistance to Mazar-i-Sharif and environs by, among other things, sending an expatriate medical team to help out in the city's main hospitals. The ICRC team training local staff at Ghazni hospital extended its stay to the end of the year as part of the organization's ongoing effort to foster the independence of local staff by affording them an opportunity to gain hands-on experience under expert supervision. Finally, 20 expatriates continued to provide training for Afghan staff at Mirwais hospital in Kandahar.

*medical infrastructure  
in need*

Given the unstable strategic situation during the period under review (some battle lines remained static for months on end while others moved hundreds of kilometres in a single day), stationary medical facilities such as first-aid posts lost much of their relevance. Throughout the year, therefore, the ICRC strove to provide more flexible assistance with increased support for ambulance services, giving on-the-spot care and taking serious cases to the nearest surgical unit.

In September the Taliban authorities in Kabul ordered that women requiring treatment be channelled into a single medical facility, which was very poorly equipped, and that female medical staff no longer work anywhere else. The ICRC therefore entered into negotiations with the authorities in a search for practical measures to ensure access for all to adequate medical care while respecting religious convictions. A special committee composed of representatives from the Taliban, the UN, non-governmental organizations and the ICRC was set up to seek solutions, and as the year ended women were once again being admitted to the capital's main hospitals and female staff were resuming their work.

*female patients and staff*

Even for those who managed to escape the effects of actual battle and the poverty, hunger and disease resulting from years of violence and chaos, mine-infested Afghanistan remained a potentially deadly place. For those all-too-numerous Afghans who had fallen victim to these fiendish devices, the ICRC continued running its prosthetic/orthotic centres in Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif. Restoration work continued on the Ali Abad centre in the capital, which had been badly damaged in 1994 and temporarily replaced by a workshop set up on the grounds of the Wazir Akbar Khan hospital to produce artificial limbs, orthopaedic appliances and components. The workshop supplied raw materials, components and wheelchairs to the three ICRC provincial centres as well as to workshops run by other organizations. During the period under review the ICRC prosthetic/orthotic programme in Afghanistan admitted its 20,000th amputee since it was launched in 1988. Though the programme was originally designed to help individuals – both military and civilian – who had lost limbs in

*deadly danger of landmines*

mine blasts, the prolonged war in Afghanistan has had a devastating impact on the general health of the people and, just as ICRC-supported war-surgery hospitals also frequently meet the surgical needs of the entire population, the prosthetic/orthotic centres – 60% of whose staff were themselves disabled – cared for paraplegics and people disabled by disease, such as a growing number of poliomyelitis victims.

*water supply and sanitation in Kabul*

Kabul's infrastructure had steadily deteriorated over the years and the resulting inadequacy of the water supply and waste disposal had greatly encouraged the spread of infectious disease. In 1997 a pilot project was carried out featuring a comprehensive approach to low-cost water supply and sanitation, and including the construction of large numbers of improved latrines and the sinking of both tube and shallow wells for use by the public. The project proved a resounding success and was therefore expanded, with ICRC engineers taking measures to prevent the contamination of existing wells, organizing the collection of night soil and working to promote hygienic practices.

*high number of detainees*

Delegates visited places of detention in much of Afghanistan, seeing a dramatically higher number of detainees than in the previous year, though a rapidly changing military situation frequently made it difficult to contact the relevant authorities. Much effort and time was therefore invested in establishing new contacts and explaining the ICRC's mission. Despite numerous representations beginning in May, however, delegates were not allowed to visit persons detained by one of the main parties. As the year ended and alarming allegations were being made that many of those detainees had been executed, the ICRC was continuing to make every effort to gain access to all places of detention.

Among the items they distributed to needy detainees, delegates provided clothing and quilts to alleviate the bitter cold of the Afghan winter. Many places of detention were overcrowded and a sharp rise was noted in the incidence of water-borne disease. ICRC engineers therefore took action to improve the water supply and sanitation facilities in a number of these places, repairing latrines, washrooms and waste-evacuation systems, and sinking new wells and equipping them with hand pumps. Initiatives were also taken to encourage the growing of food in prisons and to foster literacy among the detainee population.

*maintaining family links*

In May the ICRC brought together 50 representatives of the Taliban prison authorities to explain the organization's mandate and visiting procedures and describe its activities across the country.

A key aspect of ICRC visits to detainees was enabling them to contact and remain in touch with their families, virtually throughout the country, by means of Red Cross messages. With invaluable assistance from the National Society in a country devoid of conventional postal services, remarkable success was achieved in forwarding these messages, which also provided a means for families separated by the fighting to remain in touch with their relatives both inside and outside

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- visited and registered 9,411 detainees (7,418 for the first time) in 87 places of detention run by the Kabul authorities and the other parties;
- forwarded 19,958 Red Cross messages between the detainees and their families;
- issued 32 detention certificates;
- provided 77 tonnes of food and non-food relief to detainees;
- carried out water and sanitation work in 13 places of detention;



- forwarded 33,327 Red Cross messages between individual civilians and their families, a dramatic rise over the previous year;
- reunited with relatives 120 members of dispersed families;



- distributed 24,278 tonnes of food and 3,806 tonnes of other relief to a total of about one million particularly vulnerable Afghan civilians, some 220,000 of them in Kabul;
- organized the clearing and repair of 1,040 kilometres of irrigation channels and 60 wells, thus providing irrigation for 25,000 hectares of previously parched land and 1,150 tonnes of flour to 14,000 families taking part in the food-for-work scheme;

- distributed 50,000 locally produced agricultural implements to 16,276 families in 19 provinces;
- distributed 186 tonnes of seed to 23,400 families;
- ultimately assisted a total of 150,000 farming families through its programme;



- fully supported 5 Afghan hospitals, which admitted a total of 20,147 people (5,474 of whom were suffering from war-related injuries) and provided ad hoc support to more than 12 other hospitals around the country;
- collected 9,114 units of blood in 5 hospital blood banks;
- organized a war-surgery seminar (involving 2 ICRC surgeons and the head of the organization's prosthetic/orthotic centre in Mazar-i-Sharif) for over 60 surgeons in the northern provinces (seminars on amputation techniques, stump management and prosthetics/orthotics were also held in hospitals around the country);



- manufactured 4,615 prostheses and 2,974 orthoses, and fitted 4,399 newly disabled people with such appliances, in 4 rehabilitation centres;



- constructed 10,640 latrines;
- sunk 80 wells;
- carried out water and sanitation work in 6 places of detention;



- provided a wide range of support to the headquarters, 3 regional offices and 24 provincial branches of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, for example by carrying out joint relief programmes, training staff in tracing techniques, assisting in the production of publications, supporting Red Crescent clinics, *maras-tonns* and social rehabilitation programmes, and building up the Society's operational capacity;



- organized 322 dissemination events attended by over 16,000 people;



- launched a programme aimed both at collating information on the location of anti-personnel mines, mine incidents and the treatment received by mine victims, and at raising mine-awareness among the population, in particular farmers, women and children (these activities, carried out jointly with the Afghan Red Crescent, reached nearly 150,000 people).

*Afghan Red Crescent active  
throughout the country*

Afghanistan. Nevertheless, fighting in certain regions posed major obstacles and some messages unfortunately had to be returned to the sender. Though facing similar difficulties, tracing staff managed to reunite a number of families split apart by the hostilities. During the year much of the ICRC's tracing programme in Afghanistan was handed over to the National Society and special training sessions were organized for its staff.

As in the past, the Afghan Red Crescent was the ICRC's main partner in humanitarian endeavour throughout the war-torn country. Each province had a functional National Society branch and the ICRC, working in close cooperation with the Federation, strove in 1997 to help all the branches consolidate their activities. Red Crescent staff were very much involved in relief distributions to the most vulnerable members of society (indeed, some such operations were carried out independently by the National Society with ICRC financial and technical support) and in the implementation of food-for-work schemes, agricultural projects and programmes to spread knowledge of humanitarian law. The Red Crescent played an essential role in locating potential beneficiaries for the ICRC's limb-fitting programme. Delegates bolstered the National Society's self-sufficiency by assisting it in a number of income-generating projects, which included cattle-raising, farming, carpet-weaving, tailoring and carpentry. The delegation supported the Society's *marastoons*<sup>4</sup> in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif and Jalalabad, and in the latter two cases finished refurbishing the premises. It also supported the Society's mine-awareness team, which made numerous presentations in Wardak and Logar provinces.

Spreading knowledge of humanitarian law was once again an integral part of the delegates' day-to-day work. Acting together with the National Society, delegates made every effort to promote compliance with that body of law and respect for Red Cross/Red Crescent principles as well as to strengthen a nationwide network of activities aimed at deepening knowledge of the law among combatants, Red Crescent staff and the general population. Dissemination specialists placed promotional radio spots on local stations throughout the country and once again took part in the serialized BBC\* series *New home, new life*. Regular training sessions were held for ICRC employees and hospital staff, and a four-day seminar was organized for National Society dissemination officers and chairmen of local branches.

---

<sup>4</sup> Homes for particularly disadvantaged people such as orphans and the mentally ill.

\* BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

## PAKISTAN

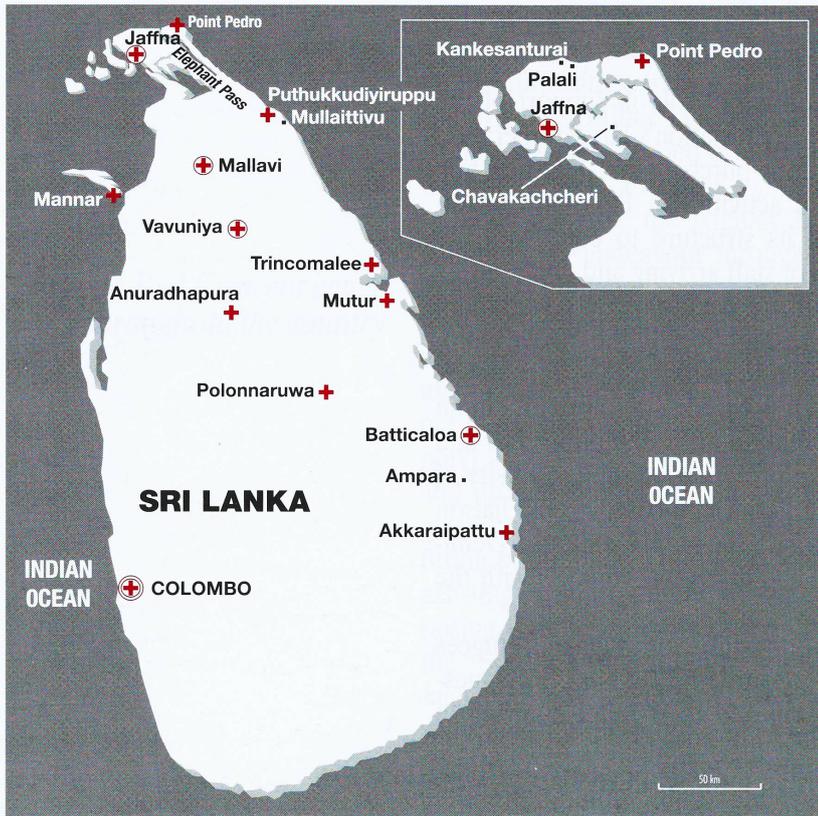
The delegation in Pakistan once again played a key role in support of the ICRC's work in Afghanistan, which was the organization's largest operation in 1997. The sub-delegation in Peshawar remained the purchase unit, logistical hub and general gateway to the ICRC's widespread activities in Pakistan's north-western neighbour and over the year adjusted its structure to cope with the increasing flow of relief and medical supplies and of staff arriving and departing.

The delegation in Islamabad continued to nurture contacts with government authorities, the armed forces, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, the media, diplomatic circles and international organizations in order to encourage support for the work of the ICRC and the body of law on which it is based, and to brief them on the ICRC's role in Jammu and Kashmir. A presentation on humanitarian law and the organization's activities was also organized for professors at the University of Karachi and other institutions of higher learning. The Delhi-based media liaison officer travelled to Pakistan to cultivate contacts with the media while the Delhi-based delegate to the armed and security forces had high-level contacts with the training branch of Pakistan's military.

The delegation issued 665 travel documents, mainly for Afghan refugees accepted for resettlement in third countries, and forwarded 2,212 Red Cross messages, the majority between people in Afghanistan and their relatives living in Pakistan.

Though the ICRC's medical activities on Pakistan territory in connection with the conflict in Afghanistan had been phased out, the organization's Quetta office continued to support work across the border in Kandahar, maintained contact with local authorities and supported the Baluchistan branch of the Pakistan Red Crescent. Elsewhere, the ICRC continued to meet the operating costs of the two ambulances donated by it to the Karachi branch of the National Society and to support the Society's mobile eye clinic in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

## SRI LANKA



 ICRC delegation  
  ICRC sub-delegation  
  ICRC office/local office

ICRC / AR 12.97

Widespread fears that the period under review would prove to be yet another year of violence and bloodshed in Sri Lanka were confirmed as the force of arms once again held sway. Fighting flared early on as government troops sought to cut off LTTE\* forces in the jungles of the Vanni region by wresting control of the road leading from Vavuniya to Mannar and launching, several months later, the biggest offensive in the country's recent history in a bid to take the Vavuniya-Kilinochchi road, a much-coveted land route leading north to the Jaffna peninsula. The LTTE struck at shipping on the government-held Jaffna peninsula and elsewhere. As so often before in this protracted conflict, attack was followed by counter-attack and the cost in human lives and suffering was great. The already precarious situation of the hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians in the Vanni region worsened while intercommunal tensions and violence mounted in the east of the country. Shock waves from the struggle were also felt

once more in the Sri Lankan capital itself. The effects on the civilian population of the fighting itself were exacerbated by government restrictions on the transport of goods into areas where the LTTE was present. The need for humanitarian assistance therefore remained unabated.

The Colombo delegation called on all the parties to the conflict to show greater respect for humanitarian law, reminding them in particular of their obligation to spare prisoners, the wounded and civilians. Delegates monitored military operations whenever they occurred to ascertain whether the rules of warfare were being complied with and made representations – both oral and written – to the parties involved when violations were noted. In contrast to the other points raised with the warring parties, some improvement was noted in the degree to which an effort was made to spare the civilian population.

\* LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the main armed Tamil opposition group

The ICRC continued to act as a neutral intermediary between the parties. For example, it retrieved and returned to the authorities concerned the mortal remains of both government soldiers and LTTE combatants; it transported civilians requiring medical treatment and distributed medical supplies in “uncleared areas”; it escorted government relief convoys when these were judged necessary and requested by local officials, and provided protection for government officials working on irrigation projects, supervising school examinations and conducting anti-malaria campaigns and polio vaccinations (in the latter case a cease-fire was arranged); it facilitated the release by the LTTE of foreign sailors and a foreign vessel; and, finally, at the request of both parties and with the cooperation of the military, it facilitated a meeting in February between the LTTE and Muslim leaders which resulted in an easing of intercommunal friction.

The plight of the displaced civilians in the Vanni region (estimates ran as high as 350,000) remained a source of great concern. Delegates continued distributions of non-food relief to the most vulnerable among them in order to improve their health and hygiene conditions and to afford them better shelter. Though disrupted for a time, government food convoys to the region resumed under ICRC escort. A number of cases of malnutrition prompted delegates to notify the authorities and request action. As a precaution against emergencies, delegates built up a stock of non-food items sufficient to meet the needs of 10,000 people. Relief distributions were also carried out, albeit on a much smaller scale, in the east of the country and the Anuradhapura district. The ICRC opened an office in Puthukkudiyiruppu in order to ensure that its staff were based as close as possible to those they sought to assist in a war increasingly being waged in separate zones.

In certain areas of Eastern Province the ICRC worked with other agencies to combine agricultural and irrigation projects in order to stimulate food production and thus make residents self-sufficient enough to cope despite the economic restrictions imposed on them for security reasons.

Though interrupted briefly for a change of vessel, weekly rotations were made by an ICRC ship between Trincomalee and the Jaffna peninsula. As the sole independent link between Jaffna and the rest of the country, the ship transported staff from the ICRC and other agencies, persons requiring medical care unavailable in Jaffna, government-provided medical supplies and other humanitarian items.

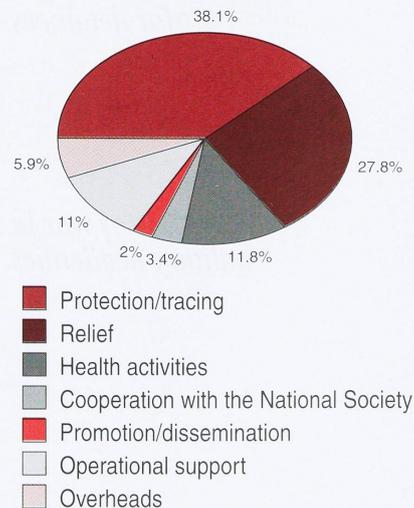
The year under review started with the third consecutive poor rainy season. The resulting water shortage, combined with the high number of civilians displaced into areas lacking adequate drinking water, sanitary facilities and other infrastructure, heightened still further concern about outbreaks of water-borne disease. With local resources strained beyond the breaking point, ICRC staff continued to install and repair pumps and wells in the Vanni region and Eastern Province, provide items necessary for water distribution and proper hygiene, and carry out awareness-raising work to promote hygiene, water conservation and

*ICRC acts as neutral intermediary*

*food, water and shelter for the displaced*

### SRI LANKA

Total expenditure in 1997:  
Sfr 14,870,287



*mobile clinics and  
health-care centres*

other practices necessary to health. These programmes had to remain flexible in order to keep up with population movements.

As the year began, the ICRC lent its support to the addition of a further mobile health team run by the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society. This brought to 10 the number of such units working in the north and the east of the country to ensure that civilian war victims frequently on the move had access to basic health care. With the deterioration of security conditions in certain areas, ICRC staff took over the running of the teams assigned to them. In the Vanni region delegates continued to furnish material support to the steadily growing number of primary health-care centres run by the Sri Lanka Red Cross, providing treatment and health education for people in remote areas. Some centres had to change location to keep up with population movements resulting from the fighting. The ICRC also provided medical supplies – in particular anti-malarial drugs – to government medical facilities in the Vanni region and to National Society branches in Jaffna aiding victims of the conflict.

Delegates continued their regular visits to detainees being held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Emergency Regulations, seeing large numbers of people in prisons, police stations, rehabilitation camps and other places of long-term detention. As in 1996, security incidents in the capital, Colombo, led to a sharp rise in the number of arrests.

Visits were also conducted to a small number of persons detained by the LTTE and talks continued with a view to gaining access to all detainees held by the group. The LTTE released, under ICRC auspices, two Indonesian nationals, 37 crew members of a North Korean ship and 27 Sri Lankan civilians.

*Red Cross messages  
for detainees*

Where no other means was available, Red Cross messages were used to establish and maintain contact between detainees and their families. The ICRC also processed tracing requests: from the Sri Lankan military regarding the fate of soldiers missing in action, from civilians regarding loved ones from whom they had been separated by the hostilities and from families regarding members who had allegedly been arrested by the security forces.

*law of war in  
military academies*

Work continued throughout Sri Lanka to improve knowledge of and compliance with humanitarian law. Though dissemination is part of the daily work of ICRC staff, there was much activity specifically for this purpose. Presentations were held around the country for police, army and air force personnel. Particular stress was laid on military academies, which have incorporated the law of war into their syllabus. A two-week course was organized for army officers to train them as instructors in this body of law. Similarly, and for the first time, the air force organized a course for instructors in conjunction with the ICRC. Informal presentations were made to Tamil paramilitary groups. A major effort was made to inform the civilian population about the ICRC's mandate and the law on which that mandate is based, with events being organized at schools, administrative centres and local

## IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- visited 3,066 detainees (2,056 for the first time) in 180 government-run places of detention, including 66 persons held in connection with the 1987-90 uprising by the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna party, the Sinhalese opposition;
- visited 37 detainees being held by the LTTE;
- collected 5,402 Red Cross messages from detainees and delivered 4,044 such messages to detainees;
- issued 72 detention certificates;



- organized the reunification of 20 families, mostly by escorting isolated family members out of conflict zones to where relatives were living or had taken refuge;
- opened 1,382 tracing files;
- resolved 958 cases;
- collected 4,046 Red Cross messages and delivered 7,018 such messages between individual civilians and their families;



- distributed plastic sheeting, soap, cooking utensils, bedding, clothing and other relief items to 22,000 particularly vulnerable families in the north of Sri Lanka;
- shipped to the north medical supplies provided by the government and logistic equipment for various non-governmental organizations;
- as part of its agricultural rehabilitation programme in the east of the country, distributed 700 hoes and 1,000 seed kits to some 1,000 families, and items such as cooking utensils, soap and bedding to particularly vulnerable people;



- transported 582 people requiring specialized medical treatment from the Jaffna peninsula to the south;
- furnished the medical supplies needed to run 10 mobile health teams and 29 primary health-care centres in the Vanni region and Eastern Province, up from 10 centres at the end of 1996;



- provided pipes, pumps, chemicals and other materials for 35 new water-supply and sanitation projects and for 86 repair jobs on existing systems;



- held dissemination sessions in the field for 313 police officers, 679 government soldiers, 1,125 military officers, 106 LTTE combatants and 124 members of the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam;
- distributed 5,000 manuals on humanitarian law for instructors to members of the armed forces and the LTTE, and produced 1,800 diaries containing information on humanitarian law for officers of the Sri Lankan armed forces in addition to 25,000 wall calendars and 220,000 pocket calendars.

*cooperation with the  
Sri Lanka Red Cross*

Red Cross branches. A lecture was given at Jaffna University on humanitarian law and the work of the ICRC. The delegation also established a newsletter and once again endeavoured to convey its message through the media.

In response to the tension prevailing in the north of the country, the Sri Lanka Red Cross worked with the ICRC to organize a series of events marking World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day. These included a poster contest for school pupils on a number of Red-Cross-related subjects and cultural themes and observances.

The ICRC once again strove to engage in fruitful structural development with the headquarters of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society. It worked closely with National Society branches all over Sri Lanka, launching a cooperation programme with the Batticaloa branch to come to the aid of wounded civilians and another with the Jaffna branch to provide medical care to people returning to the peninsula, and helping the National Society set up a mobile dental clinic in Trincomalee. The ICRC and the Sri Lanka Red Cross jointly assisted hundreds of fire victims at Pettalai camp. There was also cooperation in the areas of dissemination, tracing and first aid.

## NEW DELHI

Regional delegation  
(Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar  
[until mid-year], Nepal)

Despite security incidents in Jammu and Kashmir and the disruption caused by them, the ICRC was nevertheless largely able to maintain its visits to persons arrested in connection with the situation in the state and held in police lock-ups, jails and sub-jails both there and in other parts of India. Delegates inquired into the material and psychological conditions of detention and treatment of these persons, and informed the authorities of their findings and recommendations. The ICRC also enabled the detainees to communicate with their families by means of Red Cross messages. In May, it handed over to the government of India its second comprehensive report on its visits and in November held a workshop for doctors active in prisons in Jammu and Kashmir. Delegates also carried out a number of assignments to troubled north-eastern India.

Both ICRC delegates and retired military officers were actively engaged in humanitarian law training for all ranks of the security forces. Lectures and complete courses were held for the Indian air force and navy, the Central Reserve Police Force, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the Delhi police force and the Andhra Pradesh police. A large number of events were organized for the Border Security Force. The delegation also carried on its national and regional programme to promote knowledge of humanitarian law among non-military sectors of society. The Delhi-based legal adviser continued to counsel the region's governments on how best to implement humanitarian law.

To learn more about the need for assistance in restoring contact between people separated from their relatives by conflict, the delegation organized a three-week survey in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The findings and resulting tracing guidelines were later discussed at a workshop held in New Delhi with representatives of the National Societies concerned.

A member of the delegation joined representatives of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and the Federation for a combined mission to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The delegation and the Bangladesh Red Crescent organized a one-day tracing course and three five-day workshops for National Society staff regarding tracing and other subjects. It also assisted the Red Crescent in the area of "image-building". In addition, the ICRC worked closely with the National Society to spread knowledge about the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, jointly producing a calendar promoting the Fundamental Principles

*Jammu and Kashmir*

*humanitarian law for  
Indian security forces*

*workshops for the  
National Societies*

and assisting in the setting up of a mobile first-aid team, the purpose of which was also to spread the Red Cross/Red Crescent message. The Delhi-based delegate to the armed and security forces made presentations to personnel from all branches of the armed forces in both Dhaka and Chittagong.

Prior to handing over responsibility for activities in Myanmar to the Jakarta delegation in June, the regional delegate travelled to the country for talks with National Society and government officials on the possibility of ICRC visits to security detainees and on the organization's prosthetic/orthotic programme there. This programme continued to be run by local branches of the Myanmar Red Cross Society, financed by the Republic of Korea National Red Cross and supervised by the ICRC.

*detainees in Bhutan*

In Bhutan, delegates carried out a series of visits to persons detained for "anti-national activities". As in previous years, these were conducted in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the ICRC and the Bhutanese government. For the first time, the Delegate General for Asia and the Pacific travelled to Bhutan for talks with the King and senior government representatives about the situation in the south and east of the country and proposals to spread knowledge of humanitarian law among armed forces personnel.

## IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- in India, visited 2,609 detainees (1,153 for the first time) being held in 27 places of detention in connection with the situation in Jammu and Kashmir;
- in Bhutan, visited 104 persons detained for "anti-national activities";



- collected 471 Red Cross messages (369 of them from detainees) and delivered 521 (151 to detainees);
- issued 285 ICRC travel documents;



- to enhance regional cooperation in the area of dissemination, organized a workshop in Dhaka for representatives of the National Societies of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka;
- pursued its "train the trainers" programme with 3 one-day dissemination courses for staff of the Indian Red Cross Society;



- organized events to promote knowledge of and compliance with humanitarian law for 378 members of the Border Security Force, 200 members of the Indian Air Force, 60 members of the Central Reserve Police Force and members and staff of the Indian Red Cross Society;
- as part of its ongoing effort to ensure that humanitarian law is included in the curriculum of law faculties, helped organize a workshop in Goa on humanitarian and refugee law for law professors;
- helped prepare a panel discussion for academics, legal experts, military commanders and government officials on the proposed permanent international criminal court and took part in a seminar held at the National Law School for lawyers from countries belonging to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation as well as in a number of other events organized by refugee and human rights organizations, international agencies and universities;

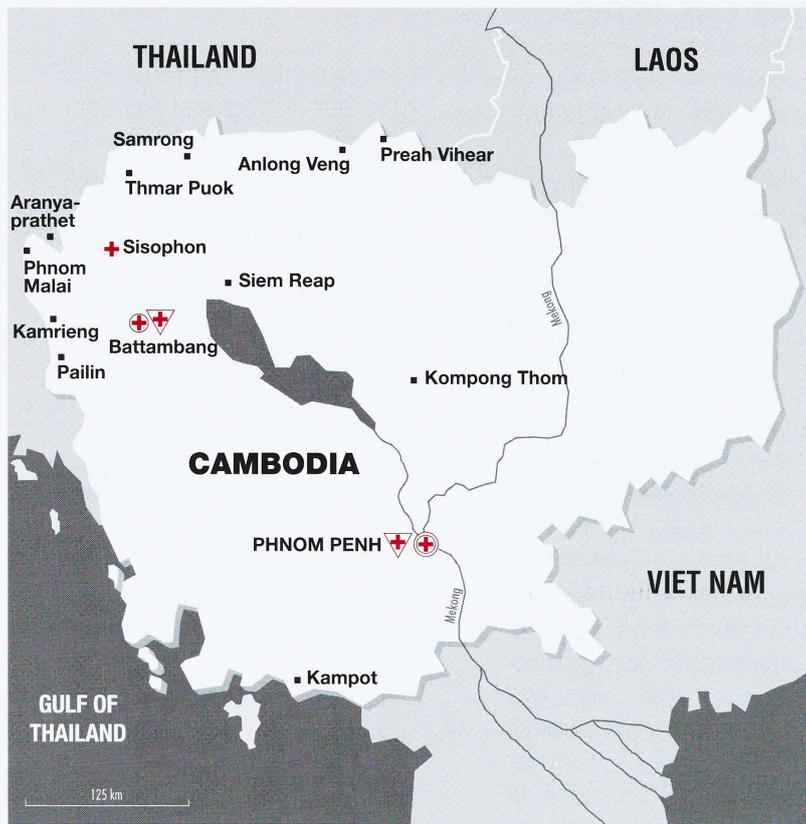
- in conjunction with UNESCO,\* organized a regional seminar in Kathmandu on the implementation of humanitarian law and cultural heritage law for government representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, thus allowing the ICRC's Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law<sup>5</sup> to make important new contacts throughout the region;
- held a three-day course in the law of war for senior officers at the Nepal Army Staff College, while an ICRC-trained team of three retired officers instructed battalion commanders and peace-keeping forces.

<sup>5</sup> See *Promotion and development of international humanitarian law*, p. 288.

\* UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

# South-East Asia and the Far East

## CAMBODIA



The year began with a tragedy for the ICRC when one of its employees was murdered while working in remote Banteay Meanchey province, despite the fact that both he and his vehicle displayed the red cross emblem. The organization suspended its activities in that part of the country until discussions with military and civilian authorities sufficiently assured it of its staff's safety that it felt able gradually to resume them.

As the year progressed, tension grew between Cambodia's two ruling parties, the Cambodian People's Party and FUNCINPEC,\* and the spectre of civil war once again haunted the sorely tried country. Violence flickered for months before finally flaring into heavy fighting in Phnom Penh in July and resulting in the forcible ouster from power of the First Prime Minister.

In the wake of the three-day battle, delegates in the capital concentrated on emergency medical assistance, distributing essential items to the capital's main hospitals, which were quickly exhausting their supplies. Many victims were taken to hospital in ICRC vehicles, which also served to evacuate both Cambodian and foreign civilians trapped by the fighting. When the emergency was over, the delegation stocked medical supplies in Battambang, Sisophon and just across the border in Aranyaprathet, Thailand, for use in the event of future violence. Delegates also assisted the Cambodian Red Cross Society in preparing relief distributions for hundreds of civilians made homeless by the events.

In March delegates completed the ICRC's first round of visits – begun the previous year – to all of Cambodia's prisons and continued with regular visits that

*violence breaks out*

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

included medical and nutritional surveys. During the July events, delegates furnished medical aid for detainees injured by the hostilities and provided food to those left to fend for themselves. They also visited some 500 soldiers and civilians captured in the fighting and being held at temporary places of detention in and around Phnom Penh.

The ICRC made representations to the relevant parties regarding victimization of the civilian population during hostilities, in particular in Battambang province. It continued to monitor conditions on the Thai-Cambodian border regarding civilians who had fled into Thailand to escape fighting and also, to the best of its ability, kept watch on the situation of Cambodians of Vietnamese origin.

Working largely in conjunction with the Cambodian Red Cross, the ICRC endeavoured in all provinces to restore and maintain contact between members of families separated by conflict in a country lacking an effective postal system and whose citizens are often too poor to travel. Only areas controlled by Democratic Kampuchea were inaccessible to the ICRC. While the forwarding of Red Cross messages from detainees visited by delegates accounted for much of this activity, remarkable breakthroughs were achieved when individuals whose relatives had been searching for them for over 20 years were finally traced in areas of the north-west controlled by the DNUM.\*

When the DNUM-controlled areas became accessible to delegates travelling by road from Phnom Penh, a survey was carried out and contacts established with DNUM officials. Offices were opened in Pailin, Samlot and Phnom Malai in order to register amputees for limb-fitting and rehabilitation, collect and distribute Red Cross messages, and liaise with the local authorities.

In conjunction with the Ministry of Health, the ICRC continued to run 14 blood-transfusion centres around the country (a new centre having been set up in Prey Veng by German Technical Cooperation), providing health-care facilities with blood tested for the presence of, among other things, hepatitis and HIV. The national blood transfusion centre in Phnom Penh, for example, provided vital supplies for the treatment of people wounded in a March grenade attack and the July fighting. The ICRC's agreement with the Ministry of Health regarding the blood programme expired in August and the programme was therefore handed over to the Ministry at the end of the year, though the ICRC continued its assistance to the Cambodian Red Cross in the realm of blood collection.

The ICRC's prosthetic/orthotic centres continued their activities, with the workshop in Phnom Penh manufacturing components that were supplied to various non-governmental organizations engaged in prosthetics, and the centre in Battambang producing a record quantity of artificial limbs as well as fitting and

*families split up by  
the conflict*

*access to the north-west*

*record number of  
artificial limbs*

\* DNUM: Democratic National Union Movement

*humanitarian law for  
armed forces instructors*

rehabilitating amputees (a dramatically rising number of whom came from the newly accessible areas of the north-west).

The ICRC and the Federation worked together to develop the capacity of the Cambodian Red Cross to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and recruit blood donors. Workshops were organized jointly with the UN Centre for Human Rights in Phnom Penh for National Society dissemination officers, who took part in a number of ICRC presentations to the RCAF.\* Many of the participants were recently integrated former soldiers of the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea.

Though the unfolding events made it difficult to organize activities to promote compliance with humanitarian law, the ICRC helped train armed forces instructors in the subject. Sessions were held for RCAF officers at the National Military Police School and for naval officers at the Royal Naval Forces School. For the first time, ICRC-trained army officers instructed soldiers in the law of war. Delegates also held seminars on humanitarian law for military officers and civilian officials in DNUM-controlled areas and organized presentations for academics, journalists, National Society staff and amputees throughout the country.

With the holding of an examination prepared by the ICRC, the law faculty at Phnom Penh University completed its first semester of courses in humanitarian law, henceforth recognized by the Ministry of Education as a regular part of fourth-year studies. The ICRC conducted a seminar on that body of law for investigators from the National Assembly's Human Rights Commission.

---

\* RCAF: Royal Cambodian Armed Forces

### IN 1997 THE ICRC:



– visited 653 detainees held in 32 places of detention and provided them with material aid where needed;



– opened 393 tracing files, resolved 221 cases and forwarded 12,427 Red Cross messages;



– collected 14,290 units of blood in 14 centres;



– produced 1,557 complete prostheses and 35 complete orthoses for its own programme, and for other organizations manufactured 1,139 knee joints, 8,577 alignment devices, 1,056 pairs of orthotic joints and 3,740 pairs of crutches;

– fitted 872 new amputees with prostheses and 20 other persons with orthoses;



– organized 130 dissemination presentations attended by 1,908 members of the armed forces and 890 government officials;

– distributed 33,000 dissemination booklets, 2,000 posters and 290 teaching files and manuals on humanitarian law;



– took an active part in Mine Awareness Day (24 February), an annual event in Cambodia, one of the most severely mine-infested countries in the world;

– produced a radio spot, placed newspaper advertisements on the campaign for a total ban on anti-personnel mines and sponsored the production of banners to be displayed around the country.

## BANGKOK

### Regional delegation

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

Throughout the year the ICRC monitored developments along Thailand's borders with Cambodia and Myanmar. In March delegates surveyed the situation of displaced civilians living on the border with Myanmar. In conjunction with the Thai Red Cross Society, the Bangkok delegation kept a close watch on the situation of tens of thousands of Cambodian civilians who had fled into Thailand following the events of July in their country. The rainy season severely restricts land travel in north-western Cambodia. Therefore, having obtained permission from all the authorities concerned, delegates travelled from Thai territory into Cambodia to survey the needs of civilians living in areas controlled by the Democratic National Union Movement.

A one-week course on tracing techniques was held in June for staff from the Thai National Society. The delegation worked throughout the year to extend its network of contacts with Thai universities in order to promote knowledge of humanitarian law, a goal it also pursued together with the Thai Red Cross.

The ICRC worked closely with the Red Cross Society of China to build the latter's capacity to restore contact between members of families separated by conflict. A jointly prepared tracing manual was completed and distributed to National Society branches around the country. In addition, the first-ever Chinese-language manual on humanitarian law was produced and distributed. In conjunction with the People's Liberation Army, delegates organized a five-day course for senior officers on the rules of air warfare. Following the return of Hong Kong to China on 1 July, the ICRC closed its office in the territory. The previous month, ICRC representatives had met with Chinese government officials to discuss expanding the scope of ICRC activities in the People's Republic to include visits to detainees. Though no significant progress was made, it was agreed that future discussions would be conducted directly through the channel of the regional delegation rather than on the basis of ad hoc meetings of experts.

There was much activity in Viet Nam in the year under review to promote adherence to humanitarian law and knowledge and implementation of its rules. Events were organized from one end of the country to the other. Delegates also worked to build the Red Cross of Viet Nam's tracing capacity. Unfortunately, though extensive discussions were held with the authorities to ensure the smooth running of the prosthetic/orthotic programme in Ho Chi Minh City, once again the year ended without a suitable partner being found to take over the ICRC's

*courses for the  
Red Cross of China*

*humanitarian law in  
Viet Nam and Laos*

role in the project, which it had been operating for seven years in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs. An agreement was nevertheless reached with the Ministry as the year drew to a close, setting out the principles to govern financing for the programme well into 1998. The ICRC's Special Fund for the Disabled continued to cover the cost of producing and fitting prostheses for destitute amputees not eligible for government support.

Together with the Lao Red Cross, the ICRC organized a round table on current challenges regarding humanitarian law. The meeting, which included discussion of measures to be taken at the national level to implement that body of law, brought together representatives from a number of government ministries.

In conjunction with the ICRC and Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japanese Red Cross Society marked its 120th anniversary by holding a two-day meeting on problems and challenges faced by humanitarian law. Both the regional delegate and the Delegate General for Asia and the Pacific made presentations at the event.

**BANGKOK**  
regional delegation



- issued 147 travel documents, the vast majority to refugees for resettlement in third countries;
- forwarded 5 Red Cross messages to the Red Cross Society of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea;



- manufactured, at its prosthetic/orthotic centre in Ho Chi Minh City, 1,743 artificial limbs (including 1,050 for destitute amputees), with 2,082 persons remaining on the waiting list at year's end;



- took part in 2 basic training courses: one for Japanese Red Cross staff and one for staff of the Republic of Korea National Society selected for secondment to international field operations;
- in conjunction with the Federation, held a three-day course on the Movement and humanitarian law for 40 representatives of the North Korean National Society;
- took part in a meeting of Portuguese-speaking National Societies held in Macao in July;



- held a four-day seminar on the law of war in Da Nang attended by representatives of the Red Cross of Viet Nam, the civil service and the military (the latter sent 30 senior instructors);
- in conjunction with Mongolia's Institute of Strategic Studies, held a one-week course on humanitarian law in Ulan Bator for 30 high-ranking military officers (delegates also had the opportunity to meet with representatives of government, the media and the Red Cross Society of Mongolia, and a workshop on humanitarian law was later held for National Society staff).

## JAKARTA

### Regional delegation (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia/East Timor, Malaysia, Myanmar [as of June], Singapore)

The focus of the delegation's work remained threefold: detainee-welfare activities, fostering knowledge of and compliance with humanitarian law and cooperation with the National Societies.

#### *visits to detainees*

Once again, Jakarta-based delegates visited places of detention in various parts of Indonesia. Working in conjunction with the Indonesian Red Cross Society, they provided material and medical assistance where necessary, enabled detainees to contact or remain in touch with their next of kin and organized family visits to detainees being held far from their homes. The ICRC also followed up individual medical cases and in certain instances provided financial assistance for their hospitalization.

Though initially cleared by the authorities, visits to persons held at military bases in Aceh were suspended in March, when further access was denied. Other field work in the Aceh area also became impossible. As the period under review ended, no solution had yet been found despite numerous high-level meetings with government representatives.

Delegates collected and processed tracing requests, forwarded Red Cross messages and joined the Indonesian Red Cross in organizing a tracing/message service workshop attended by National Society employees from all over Sumatra.

#### *clashes in East Timor*

Disturbances continued in East Timor – particularly in connection with the Indonesian elections in May – with attacks and clashes between rival groups of youths and between security forces and the armed opposition. Large-scale arrests ensued. The ICRC visited places of detention both as part of its six-monthly series of visits and on an ad hoc basis. It played the role of neutral intermediary and monitored respect for humanitarian law in a number of situations.

The ICRC/Indonesian Red Cross water and sanitation teams carried on their work, engaging in projects that ranged from the sinking of individual wells to the building of large distribution networks. National Society staff assisted by an expatriate health worker continued the programme of public health education and monitoring. Two mobile teams travelled throughout East Timor to promote prevention and adequate treatment of common but dangerous diseases, with positive results being noted in a number of areas. These infrastructure-development and health activities required a constant ICRC presence in remote parts of the territory. Staff took advantage of this presence to promote knowledge of humanitarian law among local people.

As Portugal had no diplomatic representation in Indonesia, the ICRC issued travel documents and made arrangements for the transfer to Portugal of East Timorese who had sought asylum in foreign embassies, former civil servants in the Portuguese colonial administration and a number of hardship cases. Delegates forwarded Red Cross messages between Timorese living in East Timor and relatives living elsewhere, and helped reunite Timorese families who had been separated by the situation.

The ICRC and the Indonesian armed forces organized the first-ever dissemination seminar for the Special Forces, at which 50 officers discussed humanitarian law and human rights with delegates and an outside expert. ICRC staff took part in a number of similar events organized by and in conjunction with the military and universities. These included sessions for personnel of the security services in East Timor. The ICRC dissemination delegate also addressed a symposium held by the Indonesian Red Cross for representatives of the nation's government, military and civil society.

*seminar for the Indonesian armed forces*

JAKARTA  
regional delegation

### IN 1997 THE ICRC:



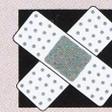
- visited 69 detainees (19 of them for the first time) in 16 places of detention in Indonesia and 433 detainees (328 of them for the first time) being held in 51 places of detention in connection with the situation in East Timor;
- financed 95 family visits to 72 detainees;



- issued 38 travel documents;
- organized the transfer to Portugal of 38 East Timorese;
- forwarded 158 Red Cross messages in connection with East Timor;



- visited and assisted 13 drought-stricken villages in Irian Jaya, with a total population of some 8,000 people;



- carried out regular visits to promote health in 35 remote villages;



- harnessed 8 new sources of fresh water and maintained 7 existing water-supply systems in East Timor.

*drought and skirmishes  
in Irian Jaya*

In September, a joint ICRC/Indonesian Red Cross team surveyed a mountainous area of the troubled region of Irian Jaya hard hit both by drought associated with the El Niño weather pattern and by ongoing skirmishing between the OPM\* and Indonesian security forces. The team found that the water shortage combined with the resulting crop failure had already produced malnutrition in one out of four residents in the areas surveyed and that many among the weakened population were falling victim to malaria and various infections. The ICRC and the National Society therefore launched a logistically challenging operation to assist the communities most vulnerable to the drought – isolated mountain villages – by improving access to food, safe drinking water and medical care. Delegates also visited detainees in a number of prisons in Irian Jaya.

*seminar for  
National Societies*

In February, the ICRC, the Malaysian Red Crescent Society and the Singapore Red Cross Society held a two-day seminar in Singapore on promoting respect for humanitarian law and Red Cross/Red Crescent principles. The ICRC President and the Secretaries-General of nine National Societies from the ASEAN\* region took part in the seminar.

An ICRC representative attended the second Asia/Pacific workshop for National Society information officers, held in Kuala Lumpur in April. In June, the Malaysian Red Crescent organized, in conjunction with the ICRC, a workshop on humanitarian law for National Society instructors.

Responsibility for ICRC activities in Myanmar was transferred to the Jakarta delegation from the New Delhi delegation at mid-year. Assistance for the war-disabled in Myanmar continued to be supervised on a regular basis by the ICRC's prosthetic/orthotic coordinator based in Cambodia.

---

\* OPM: *Organisasi Papua Merdeka*, or Free Papua Movement

\* ASEAN: Association of South-East Asian Nations

## MANILA

### Regional delegation

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

Though dogged by difficulty and occasional violence, and sometimes stalled completely, peace negotiations were pursued by the Philippine government and a number of insurgent groups. The agreement reached in 1996 between the government and the MNLF\* held; accordingly, the latter's combatants started being integrated into the Philippine security forces.

In its protection work, the ICRC continued to focus on registration and follow-up of people arrested in connection with insurgency and secessionist activity in the Philippines. In the course of their annual series of visits, delegates assessed the material and psychological conditions of detention and forwarded Red Cross messages in order to restore or maintain contact between the detainees and their families. When necessary they monitored developments by means of supplementary visits. In conjunction with the Philippine National Red Cross, the ICRC organized and financed trips by families lacking the means to visit their relatives being held in far-away places of detention.

In Mindanao, thousands of families were displaced by clashes in January and as many as 60,000 were forced to flee fighting in June and July, in both cases between the Philippine armed forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The Philippine Red Cross and the ICRC swung into action, distributing food and other essential items to a total of some 40,000 people in need. The ICRC also covered the medical expenses of civilians wounded in skirmishes between the NPA\* and security forces in various parts of the country. The upsurge in violence in Mindanao prompted the ICRC to assign a delegate to the area full time.

An unprecedented seminar on landmines was held in Manila in July. Organized jointly by the ICRC, the Philippine Red Cross and the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, the event was attended by senior military officers, defence analysts and mine-clearance experts from 18 countries worldwide. The ICRC also organized a four-day session on humanitarian law held as part of the Philippine

*thousands displaced  
in Mindanao*

*seminar on landmines*

\* MNLF: Moro National Liberation Front

\* NPA: New People's Army

armed forces' Command and General Staff Course, which brought together military officers from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. In October, the ICRC organized the first-ever workshop on humanitarian law for Philippine military instructors. Dissemination continued to be very much a part of the delegates' general field work. Sessions to promote compliance with the rules of warfare were held on all sides, notably during training for the integration into the national security forces of former MNLF combatants. The ICRC President travelled to the Philippines in December to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the National Society. There he met with various officials of the National Society, government and civil society.

Throughout 1997, the ICRC maintained regular contact with the authorities of Papua New Guinea regarding the situation on the conflict-ridden island of Bougainville and the offer of services it had made to them in 1996.<sup>6</sup> As the year drew to an end, however, there was reason to believe that a lasting peace settlement was likely to be agreed upon in the near future.

The National Societies of Kiribati and Palau were accorded official recognition by the ICRC in 1997.

<sup>6</sup> See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, pp. 159-160.

**MANILA**  
Regional delegation

### IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- visited 417 detainees (108 for the first time) in 86 places of detention in the Philippines;
- where needed, distributed recreational and personal hygiene articles and supplied places of detention with items required to maintain the detainees' health;
- financed family visits to 188 detainees in the Philippines;



- distributed 150 tonnes of relief supplies to 40,000 people displaced by fighting in the Philippines;



- organized dissemination events for 184 members of the armed forces, 686 members of National Societies and more than 500 civilians;

- though the situation in Bougainville made it difficult to spread knowledge of humanitarian law, 2 one-day workshops were held for 50 officers of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force and dissemination sessions were organized for staff and volunteers of the Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society.

