



# sierra leone

The ICRC has maintained a presence in Sierra Leone since 1991. Since the end of the armed conflict in 2002, the organization has adapted its operations in the country. It monitors the conditions in which detainees are held and provides the authorities with substantial technical support in promoting respect for IHL and its integration into national legislation. It also focuses on ensuring the welfare of the children who remain separated from their families, and supports the development of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society.

## EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	2,487
Assistance	19
Prevention	909
Cooperation with National Societies	1,603
General	-

► **5,018**

of which: Overheads 307

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	94%
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## PERSONNEL

10	expatriates
82	national staff (daily workers not included)

## KEY POINTS

### In 2007, the ICRC:

- ▶ helped strengthen the capacity of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society to take the lead in Red Cross matters and to fulfil its traditional peacetime role
- ▶ promoted IHL and the incorporation of relevant IHL treaties into national law
- ▶ addressed the needs of unaccompanied minors by helping them to restore family links disrupted by past conflict
- ▶ visited 2,001 detainees, monitoring 40 of them individually, and discussed detention conditions with the authorities concerned
- ▶ supported penal reforms by providing technical input in the areas of water and sanitation

## CONTEXT

Sierra Leone held parliamentary and presidential elections in August, which were pronounced fair by international and national observers, although sporadic election-related violence was reported in the south-east. The former opposition party, the All People's Congress, emerged the victor, and the transfer of power to the new president, Ernest Bai Koroma, and his administration went smoothly.

The socio-economic situation remained precarious, with widespread poverty and unemployment, particularly among youth. Government efforts to provide basic services to the population still fell short of the needs. Various initiatives, including a youth employment scheme and small-scale, countrywide development projects, brought little in the way of sustained improvement.

The international community continued helping prevent a relapse of conflict and supporting government efforts to tackle the underlying causes of past conflicts. Multi- and bilateral funding schemes were maintained or stepped up. The UN Peacebuilding Commission adopted a peacebuilding cooperation framework for Sierra Leone to guide partnerships and address challenges crucial to sustaining and consolidating peace. The mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) was extended to 2008.

Trials for crimes against humanity and IHL violations committed during the 1991–2002 conflict continued at the Special Court for Sierra Leone and, in the case of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor, in The Hague.

The Sierra Leonean authorities kept a close eye on the situation in neighbouring Guinea. The heads of State of the Mano River Union continued to seek a peaceful solution to the dispute between Guinea and Sierra Leone over the border town of Yenga.

## MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

	Total
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>	
Detainees visited	2,001
Detainees visited and monitored individually	40
Number of visits carried out	46
Number of places of detention visited	20
<b>RESTORING FAMILY LINKS</b>	
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>	
RCMs collected	640
RCMs distributed	734
People reunited with their families	5
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>	
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	13
<i>of whom females</i>	8
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance</i>	6
Tracing cases closed positively (persons located)	24
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2007 (people)	6
<i>of which for females</i>	4
<i>of which for minors at the time of disappearance</i>	2
<i>Unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and separated children (SCs), including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers</i>	
UAMs/SCs newly registered by the ICRC	2
UAMs/SCs reunited with their families by the ICRC	5
UAM/SC cases still being handled at 31 December 2007	23
<b>DOCUMENTS ISSUED</b>	
People to whom travel documents were issued	3
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	5

## ICRC ACTION

Over five years having passed since the conflict ended, the ICRC had substantially reduced its presence in Sierra Leone and prepared to wrap up its operational programmes by the end of 2008.

Alongside other Movement partners, the ICRC concentrated on helping to strengthen the capacity of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society to take the lead in Red Cross matters within Sierra Leone and to conduct traditional National Society peacetime activities. In coordination with other components of the Movement, the ICRC supported the National Society in implementing major internal reforms. In anticipation of possible election-related violence, the ICRC helped train staff and volunteers in the Safer Access approach and first aid. It extended financial support to National Society programmes for victims of past conflicts, including the Child Advocacy and Rehabilitation Programme.

Years of work with the armed forces paid off with the full integration of IHL into training at all levels, and sound knowledge of IHL became a precondition for military promotion. At the army's request, the ICRC provided expertise for the re-establishment of a military court. To complement the work of other organizations, the ICRC provided the police force with technical support in incorporating human rights law and IHL principles into the training of all recruits and officers. Together with the authorities, the ICRC raised the awareness of private security companies of their responsibilities as weapon bearers.

To boost the country's expertise in IHL, the ICRC promoted the introduction of IHL in university curricula and familiarized civil society and the media with this body of law. It helped foster good working relations between all stakeholders and IHL experts, focusing

on the nascent cooperation between military IHL instructors, universities, the Justice Ministry and the Special Court.

While still visiting security detainees and monitoring prison conditions, the ICRC shifted its attention to providing expertise to support penal reforms. It worked closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Justice Sector Development Programme of the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and the UN programme of support to the prison administration. The ICRC concentrated on building prison staff's technical capacities concerning health, water and sanitation in detention. It advised other stakeholders on adjustments to be made in the prison administration and helped forge links between ministries to optimize the government's management of health, water and sanitation in prisons.

The ICRC continued dealing with humanitarian issues related to the past conflict. It was the only organization providing country-wide and cross-border tracing services for families separated by conflict. With little chance of resolving the few remaining tracing cases, it intensified dialogue with the authorities and child protection agencies to find lasting solutions for children whose relatives could not be found.

Guided by a 2006 assessment, the ICRC sought to raise the authorities' and communities' awareness of the plight of families of people still missing in relation to the conflict (notably households headed by women). It identified organizations offering specific services needed by these families – including psychological and social support – and promoted the creation of a support network to which families could be referred. It discussed with the government and the military the need to put in place measures to prevent the disappearance of people in future conflicts.

## CIVILIANS

The ICRC remained the sole organization offering tracing services to people affected by conflict. However, the demand for such services dropped, given the gradual improvement in freedom of movement throughout the sub-region, the completion of UNHCR's repatriation of refugees and the closure, at year-end, of refugee camps.

UNHCR convoys repatriating over 11,000 Liberian refugees were screened by the ICRC before their departure so that it could identify and register any unaccompanied children for follow-up in Liberia.

The ICRC cooperated closely with international and national child protection agencies and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, to whom children could be referred for further assistance, such as vocational training, help with schooling and psychological support. Some 200 previous beneficiaries of the ICRC's family reunification programme continued to receive visits to monitor their well-being and ensure their successful reintegration into their families and communities.

- ▶ 206 RCMs collected from and 447 RCMs distributed to civilians, including 12 from and 20 to unaccompanied/separated children
- ▶ new tracing requests registered for 13 people (including 8 females and 6 minors at the time of disappearance); 24 people located; 6 people (including 4 females and 2 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- ▶ 2 unaccompanied/separated children registered (including 1 demobilized child); 5 reunited with their families; 23 cases of unaccompanied/separated children still being handled
- ▶ 3 people issued with an ICRC travel document

A study on missing persons in Sierra Leone carried out by the ICRC in 2006 established that little was known at government and community level about the particular needs of families with relatives unaccounted for in connection with conflict. In 2007, the study's main findings and recommendations were shared broadly with the national and local authorities, urban and rural communities, and NGOs. Families across the country had taken advantage of visits by ICRC field officers to break their silence, asking questions about the fate of their loved ones and discussing their situation. The National Commission for Social Action, which presided over the government's reparation fund for war victims, promised to look into the possibility of including families of the missing in their definition of a war victim, thereby entitling them to reparation grants.

During discussions with the ICRC, women's organizations deepened their understanding of the constraints and challenges facing women heading households that had lost the main breadwinner.

Through advocacy efforts targeting the Centre for Victims of Torture, Handicap International, the International Rescue Committee and other NGOs, agreements were reached whereby the organizations would include in their existing programmes initiatives to address the psychological, social and economic needs of families with missing relatives.

## PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

The authorities made progress, albeit slowly, in reforming the penal system, with international support, notably from DFID, the UN and the ICRC. With the authorities' go-ahead, the ICRC shared selected findings on prison health-related issues with DFID and the UN, to help ensure that these were taken into account in their programmes.

Technical staff of the health department and prison administration and the ICRC jointly conducted 11 visits to prisons. The visits provided an opportunity to increase the staff's capacities to assess health services and water and sanitation facilities in prisons. They learned how to identify shortfalls and solutions, prioritize them and report their findings to their supervisors. Five ICRC workshops on water and sanitation in prisons, supported by DFID, enabled the staff to broaden their newly acquired knowledge, leading to the formulation of strategies for the way forward. Furthermore, the prison administration, the Ministries of Health and Internal Affairs, and the ICRC held several working sessions and two round-table discussions, which resulted in the compilation of a standard list of drugs for prisons and the initiation of a dialogue on cooperation between the two ministries.

Detainees continued to receive visits from ICRC delegates. A number of security detainees held in Pademba Central Prison were followed individually for protection purposes, while the material conditions of all inmates were monitored. The eight detainees held at the detention facility of the Special Court for Sierra Leone on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and IHL violations allegedly committed during the conflict were also followed individually. When appropriate, detainees were given the opportunity to communicate with their families through the RCM service.

- ▶ 2,001 detainees visited, of whom 40 monitored individually, during 46 visits to 20 places of detention
- ▶ 434 RCMs collected from and 287 RCMs distributed to detainees and 2 phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative
- ▶ 5 detention certificates issued to former detainees or their families

## AUTHORITIES

The installation of a new government brought changes in parliamentarians and political authorities, most of whom were not familiar with the ICRC's work or objectives. The delegation nonetheless maintained contacts with officials in the Foreign and Justice Ministries to prepare the ground for the incorporation of IHL treaties into national legislation.

- ▶ a government representative attended an Economic Community of West African States/ICRC seminar on IHL in Abuja, Nigeria (see *Abuja regional*)
- ▶ the relevant sectors of UNIOSIL and the ICRC maintained good working relations
- ▶ Mongolian soldiers attached to the UN Mission in Liberia contingent based in Freetown attended a session on IHL and peacekeeping

## ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

### Armed forces

In line with the objective of developing a pool of IHL instructors from different military units, 23 officers attended a refresher course on IHL to prepare them to take over responsibility for teaching the subject independently. Plans were laid to produce an IHL instructor's manual and establish an IHL office within the Defence Ministry. With these developments, the ICRC began phasing out its IHL training support.

As recommended in the ICRC study on missing persons, the army launched an initiative to provide its personnel with identification tags so that families could be informed of relatives killed in action. It began adapting its operating procedures to prevent disappearances during future conflict. International donors were encouraged to support the process.

The Special Court, supported by the ICRC, organized a moot court competition for the police and army, with the National Society's legal adviser acting as judge. Some 680 officers and troops attended sessions organized by the ICRC and the National Society on IHL, war crimes, the ICRC and the Movement.

### Police

With ICRC support, the police force integrated human rights and humanitarian principles into all staff training. Thirty-eight officers attended a course on human rights and humanitarian principles. In conjunction with the National Society, 941 officers and recruits countrywide, including 20 earmarked for peacekeeping in Darfur, Sudan, were briefed on humanitarian principles, the ICRC, the Movement and peacekeeping.

### Security companies

Over 50 security guards from private agencies were briefed on IHL and the ICRC, in coordination with the Sierra Leone Office of National Security and the Union of Private Security Companies.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

With the continuing downsizing and phasing out of ICRC operational programmes, mechanisms were put in place for the Sierra Leonean Red Cross to take over responsibility for interacting with civil society on IHL and Red Cross matters. With ICRC support, the National Society made introductory visits to media outlets leading to increased coverage of the Movement. A group of journalists, created specifically to cover Red Cross activities, participated with the National Society and the ICRC in national and local radio discussions on IHL and humanitarian issues.

Over 50 college and university students participated in an IHL lecture and in the third annual ICRC moot court competition. The winning team was sponsored to participate in the Pan-African moot court competition in Arusha, Tanzania (see *Nairobi regional*). Subsequently, more colleges expressed an interest in taking part in future competitions.

- 756 college students and auxiliary nurses attended sessions on the ICRC and the Movement
- academics and members of the Special Court mobilized to advocate IHL inclusion in university curricula

## RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

As part of internal reforms supported by Movement partners, the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society appointed a new secretary general and personnel responsible for communication and fundraising. Following an ICRC-sponsored meeting for key field and headquarters staff, the National Society integrated its tracing service into its disaster management programme.

With the International Federation closing its delegation in Sierra Leone in 2008, Movement partners began reassessing their support strategies to the National Society and future Movement coordination.

With ICRC support, the National Society:

- trained 150 personnel in first aid and the Safer Access approach and deployed 300 volunteers countrywide during the elections
- through 2 Child Advocacy and Rehabilitation Centres, trained and counselled 300 children affected by conflict
- constructed 13 wells and latrines and organized communities to discuss development projects
- familiarized over 20,000 civil society members with IHL and the Movement and adapted a dissemination handbook for use in Sierra Leone
- trained 84 staff and volunteers on presentation techniques and devised a tool to streamline communication activities
- assumed ownership of the programme on restoring family links and consolidated tracing skills, including through staff and volunteer training
- reviewed tracing services and transferred tracing cases to branches, freeing headquarters for its supervisory role
- produced and distributed 2,000 brochures on tracing
- organized a workshop for 40 members of its governance and management and a youth camp for volunteers
- participated in the Council of Delegates and the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent