



THE ICRC IN SRI LANKA

25 ICRC in Sri Lanka
years
of humanitarian action

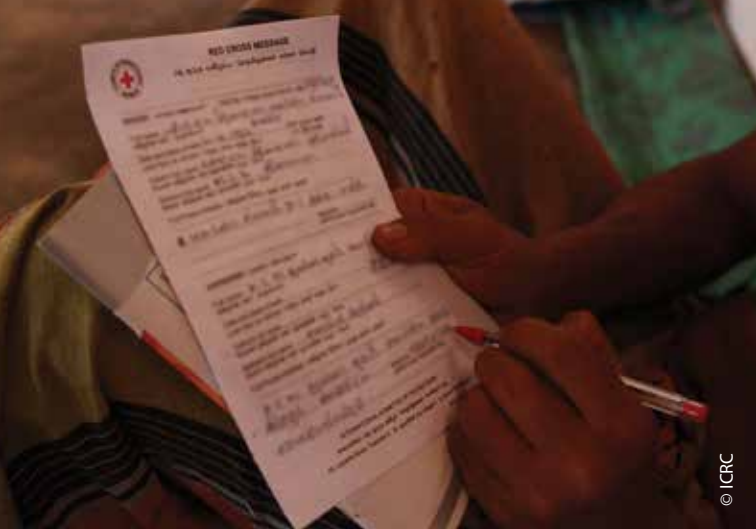


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IN BRIEF



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Our action

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been present in Sri Lanka since 1989. During these years it has been responding to humanitarian needs, initially to those from the uprising of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in the South and thereafter from the conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the North and East of the country.

Today, in Sri Lanka, the ICRC focuses on addressing the remaining humanitarian needs of persons affected by the past conflict, in addition to promoting international humanitarian law (IHL) among Sri Lankan armed forces, national authorities and academia.

Support to authorities to ensure the welfare of persons in places of detention

Worldwide, the ICRC visits persons deprived of their freedom on the basis of a strictly humanitarian mandate to support detaining authorities in their endeavours to ensure adequate conditions of detention and treatment of detainees, and to enable detainees to maintain family links. Following its visits, the ICRC shares any findings and recommendations with these authorities on a bilateral and confidential basis.

In keeping with this mandate, since 1989, the ICRC has been visiting places of detention in Sri Lanka to:

- help persons in detention maintain contact with their families through the exchange of Red Cross Messages;
- contribute to small scale infrastructure rehabilitation or construction such as toilets, overhead water tanks, kitchens, prison wards, installation of solar panels, improving ventilation systems, and in some instances, repair roofing;
- distribute basic hygiene items, clothing, mattresses, and recreational items.

Re-establishing family links

The ICRC supports the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) in its Restoration of Family Links (RFL) programme for migrants and families separated due to natural disasters.

Assessing the humanitarian needs of families of missing persons

Since 1990, the ICRC has been collecting tracing requests from families of persons unaccounted for in connection with the past conflict. In the framework of its bilateral and confidential approach, the ICRC has established a regular dialogue with Sri Lankan authorities on the comprehensive response required to address the multifaceted needs of these families. From its worldwide experience of working with these families, the ICRC is aware that even after conflicts come to an end, parents, brothers, sisters, spouses and children usually face a host of problems, such as psychological, legal, administrative, health, social, economic and the need to clarify the fate of their missing relatives.

The ICRC is preparing to carry out an island-wide assessment to understand the needs of families of missing persons and, based on this, make recommendations on how to address these needs.

Promoting respect for humanitarian principles

Over the years, the ICRC has promoted international humanitarian law (IHL) by:

- supporting national authorities, Sri Lankan armed forces and academia integrate principles of IHL into their trainings and curriculum;
- sponsoring members of these institutions to participate in IHL seminars, workshops and conferences overseas to enhance their understanding of IHL;
- organising annual national moot court competitions to enable undergraduates of law to gain an insight into IHL;
- in view of Sri Lanka's role as a contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, conducting briefings on IHL for members of the armed forces to be deployed on peacekeeping missions abroad.

Integrating humanitarian principles into training, doctrine and practices

The ICRC also supports the Sri Lanka Police Department with trainings for its officers on community-oriented public order management linked to the use of force and firearms and on international human rights law.



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Economic security for vulnerable households and communities

A Community Based Livelihood Support Programme has been launched to improve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable as a result of the past conflict, and returnee communities in the Northern Province. The assistance is designed based on beneficiaries' needs and priorities and primarily supports the fisheries, agriculture, livestock, and small business livelihood sectors.

Individual households headed by women, persons disabled as a result of the past conflict and released rehabilitees in the Northern Province have consolidated and/or restored an existing or started a new livelihood, through ongoing Micro Economic Initiative programmes.

Improving living conditions, access to safe drinking water and sanitation

In the Anuradhapura, Batticaloa, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Polonnaruwa districts the civilian population has benefitted from the construction of toilets and overhead water tanks with pipe networks, the renovation and construction of open-dug wells, and well cleaning campaigns.

Working in cooperation with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS)

The ICRC supports its national partner, the SLRCS, with financial, technical and material support for the restoration of family links between families separated by the past conflict or natural disasters, the dissemination and promotion of fundamental humanitarian principles and values, and to develop the emergency response capacity of its volunteers in first aid, search and rescue and rapid assessment. The ICRC has also helped the SLRCS to re-establish its Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu branches.

Mission

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



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