

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

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ICRC/B. Heger

Over the past few years the ICRC has opened prosthetic/orthotic workshops and rehabilitation centres in the southern Caucasus to assist amputees, especially landmine victims. In 1997 the ICRC fitted more than 7,000 of these victims in its workshops and provided other limb-fitting centres with some 19,000 orthopaedic components.

Eastern Europe

ICRC regional delegations:

Kyiv
Moscow

The Caucasus

ICRC delegations:

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia

Central Asia

ICRC delegation:

Tajikistan

ICRC regional delegation:

Tashkent

Staff

ICRC expatriates:¹ 117

National Societies:¹ 35

Local employees:² 753



Total expenditure

Sfr 65,538,137

Expenditure breakdown

	Sfr
Protection/tracing:	16,057,924
Relief:	26,455,200
Health activities:	7,128,945
Cooperation with National Societies:	1,798,822
Promotion/dissemination:	5,537,457
Operational support:	5,130,373
Overheads:	3,429,416



 ICRC regional delegation  ICRC delegation

ICRC / AR 12.97

EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

¹ Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

² Under ICRC contract, as at December 1997.

In 1997, for the first time in many years, cease-fire agreements were in place in all the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia previously affected by the conflicts that had ensued after the break-up of the former Soviet Union. These included Tajikistan, where a cessation of hostilities had been concluded in late December 1996, followed by the setting-up of a National Reconciliation Commission. In most cases, however, open fighting was replaced by "no-war-no-peace" stalemates and no lasting solution was found to the actual problems at the heart of the conflicts; sporadic outbursts of violence and the lingering threat of landmines continued to claim many victims, and no real progress was made at the political level which would preclude fighting breaking out again over old, unresolved issues. The consequences of this situation in humanitarian terms were especially severe, given the extreme and deepening economic hardship caused by the collapse of the former Soviet system and the transition from a planned to a market economy, which had impoverished the population and paralyzed social services. The absence of negotiated political settlements exacerbated the plight of the population and made it even more difficult to find solutions to the acute humanitarian problems: hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people were still afraid of returning to their homes, which, in any event, had often been either destroyed or occupied by others; many persons detained in relation to conflicts were still held captive in spite of the fact that hostilities had stopped and agreements for their release had been signed; and in some areas, armed blockades remained in place, resulting in a further deterioration of economic conditions and the complete isolation of the affected population.

In this context the ICRC pursued its efforts to protect and assist detainees and civilians still affected by the aftermath of armed conflicts in the region, particularly in the northern Caucasus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. In Armenia and Azerbaijan a group of prisoners held in relation to the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh was released in May under the auspices of the ICRC. Protection and assistance activities were developed further in Armenia and Georgia, where the organization had full access to all places of detention. In parallel with the existing tuberculosis programme for detainees in Azerbaijan, a similar project got off the ground in Georgia. In both countries tuberculosis was the leading cause of death among prison inmates.

In support of its ongoing attempts to shed light on the fate of those who remained unaccounted for in connection with the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, the ICRC submitted to the authorities concerned a list containing the names of more than 2,200 missing persons. Throughout the region, the extensive Red Cross message network continued to be an essential means of communication for families split up by hostilities.

To assist the war-wounded and people injured during sporadic fighting, medical and surgical supplies were distributed to health facilities caring for

them, while the prosthetic/orthotic workshops in Baku, Tbilisi and Gagra continued the production of artificial limbs for amputees.

As in the previous year, the need for safe drinking water was greatest in Chechnya and Nagorny Karabakh. To prevent widespread disease and provide sufficient water for small-scale farming in areas affected by conflict, substantial distributions, repairs and maintenance work were carried out in both regions. The people who suffered most in the fighting, particularly minority groups and the elderly, benefited from ongoing relief programmes. In Abkhazia and Chechnya these took the shape of community kitchens and support for state bakeries, while in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorny Karabakh and Tajikistan traditional distributions of food, clothing and other supplies were carried out. Special programmes included the rehabilitation of schools and kindergartens in Armenia and Azerbaijan, which were aimed at enabling classes to continue during the cold winter months. Assistance was not, however, limited to the distribution of food and other items: as part of a drive to restore long-term self-sufficiency, agricultural tools, seeds and fertilizer were provided for conflict victims in Abkhazia, Nagorny Karabakh and Tajikistan.

The numerous violations of international humanitarian law committed in the course of the armed conflicts that took place in the region were a clear sign that spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law to as wide a spectrum of audiences as possible should remain an essential component of the organization's activities. Even greater efforts therefore went into making political, military, educational and academic circles aware of humanitarian rules and principles, using communication tools specifically tailored for each target group. To assist States in integrating into domestic legislation all international obligations arising under humanitarian law, the ICRC continued to offer governments in the region specialist legal advisory services on the drafting and implementation of laws, notably in Armenia, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

As in the past, the ICRC continued to step up its active cooperation with the National Societies of the region, particularly in the northern Caucasus. Support and training were given to bolster their operational capacity in the areas of tracing, dissemination and relief and to promote long-term development.

Throughout the year, activities in Eastern Europe and Central Asia were overshadowed by the murder of six ICRC delegates in the hospital of Novye Atagi on 17 December 1996, which had brought home the true extent of the volatile security situation in the region, with all its consequences for ICRC operations. The ICRC maintained close contact with the relevant judicial and political authorities, in both Grozny and Moscow, so as to underline the need to pursue the investigation into the murders and to identify the perpetrators. As 1997 came to a close, however, no official information regarding the circumstances surrounding these tragic events had been received.

Eastern Europe

KYIV

Regional delegation

(Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine)

Most of the countries covered by the Kyiv regional delegation continued to experience economic and social hardship as well as their share of political tension. In its second year of operation, the delegation maintained contact with a broad range of authorities in the region, with the goal of promoting international humanitarian law and familiarizing them with ICRC activities. Through its presence, the organization was also in a position to monitor any changes in the humanitarian situation.

On 29 September, the President of Lithuania paid an official visit to the ICRC headquarters in Geneva, during which he announced his country's willingness to support its National Society and to cooperate in implementing humanitarian law at the national level.

As part of its limited protection activities, the delegation continued to follow the situation of members of the "Ilascu group" held since 1992 in Tiraspol, in the self-proclaimed "Dniestr Republic" in Moldova, who were last visited in 1994. It also monitored the situation of vulnerable minority groups.

*assistance of ICRC
Advisory Service*

The assistance of the ICRC's Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law was again offered in incorporating humanitarian law into national legislation, with technical support, special seminars and other advice on the drafting or amendment of laws being given to the governments of Belarus, Estonia, Lithuania and Ukraine. To help the implementation process along, the ICRC arranged for the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols to be translated into Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian. As a follow-up to the seminar on implementation of humanitarian law held in Kyiv in September 1996, the delegation maintained contact with the Ministry of Justice in Ukraine to promote the setting-up of an interministerial committee for national implementation.

*dissemination to
the armed forces*

After the teaching of humanitarian law was made compulsory in all military training programmes, new manuals on the rules of combat and the law of armed conflict were published in Ukrainian with ICRC support. Teaching aids were also provided to the military department of Kyiv State University, where the head of the law faculty started a 40-hour course for advanced trainee officers, following his participation in three ICRC seminars over the preceding few years. At the invitation of the Lithuanian Ministry of Defence, representatives of the ICRC and the Lithuanian Red Cross were invited to take part in a regional field exercise called

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



– kept up efforts to regain access to the three detainees of the “Ilascu group”, held since 1992 in Tiraspol, in the self-proclaimed “Dniestr Republic” in Moldova;



– arranged for a Ukrainian soldier who had been with the Soviet armed forces in Afghanistan to return home to his family;



– under cooperation programmes, provided financial support and training for the tracing, dissemination and information services of all 6 National Societies of the region;

– financially supported National Society publications: a leaflet on the Red Cross, 5,000 copies of a new internal newsletter in Belarus, and 3,000 copies of a newsletter and 5,000 copies of a poster for World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day in Ukraine;



– organized for the third time an international one-week course on the law of armed conflict, attended by 19 officers from all 12 countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Bulgaria, Estonia and Latvia;

– held 2 three-day seminars on the law of armed conflict for more than 70 high-ranking Ukrainian officers;

– in Belarus, gave a presentation for 25 officers from the Minsk barracks;

– in Belarus, organized a seminar on national implementation of humanitarian law attended by 45 participants from 20 ministries and national institutions, and distributed a report on the conclusions of the seminar to the relevant authorities;

– in Belarus, participated in the first meeting of the interministerial committee for the implementation of international humanitarian law;

– under its university dissemination programme, enabled lecturers from all countries covered by the Kyiv delegation to attend the second ICRC Russian-language course on humanitarian law held in Moscow in November;

– organized 7 dissemination seminars for Red Cross branches and local institutions in Ukraine, and 3 in Belarus;

– published some 100,000 copies of a new manual on the rules of combat and 7,000 copies of a manual on the law of armed conflict in Ukrainian.

*cooperation with the
region's National Societies*

Amber Hope for peace-keeping troops from Lithuania, Poland and Denmark. Delegates were able to present basic principles of humanitarian law and carry out simulated ICRC operational activities, which were fully integrated into the field exercise. Two high-ranking Ukrainian officers participated in the first Russian-language course on the law of armed conflict held at the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy.

From 1 January, the delegation started to give full technical assistance for the tracing services of both the Latvian and the Lithuanian Red Cross Societies. The services continued to be financed by the British Red Cross. Cooperation agreements covering a range of activities were renewed with the National Societies of the region. Training as well as material and financial support were provided to help strengthen their operational capacity, notably in the areas of tracing, dissemination and information. The ICRC also assisted in the preparation and publication of the National Societies' internal bulletins so as to enhance contact between branches and headquarters and to spread basic knowledge about the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and humanitarian law. In the second half of the year special attention was paid to the Crimea, Ukraine, which had seen the return home of mainly Tatar communities who had been deported to Central Asia at the end of the Second World War; many of these people were living in particularly difficult conditions. Emphasis was laid on strengthening and extending a network of National Society nurses, who assisted all the most vulnerable groups among the civilian population.

MOSCOW

Regional delegation

(Russian Federation, with specialized services for all countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia)

The end of hostilities in the northern Caucasus and the relative political continuity in Moscow enabled the regional delegation to keep focusing on the promotion of international humanitarian law. To promote respect for humanitarian law and facilitate the ICRC's activities in the region, dissemination to a broad spectrum of audiences, including the armed and security forces, federal authorities, universities and schoolchildren, remained the mainstay of the regional delegation's activities.

Between 1 and 4 June, the ICRC President paid an official visit to Moscow at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In addition to the Minister and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, he met the Ministers of the Interior and Education, the Speaker of the State Duma, the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Russian Federation, the Secretary of the Security Council and the First Deputy Chief of Staff. The discussions centred mainly on the humanitarian consequences of the war in Chechnya, including issues such as the conduct of the hostilities, protection of the civilian population and the fate of prisoners and missing persons; they also touched on the development of cooperation between the ICRC and the authorities of the Russian Federation in disseminating humanitarian law to the armed forces and at schools and universities, and on support by the Russian Federation for ICRC activities in various parts of the world. The ICRC President also met the Chechen First Deputy Prime Minister, with whom he raised, among other things, the question of detainees held in relation to the Chechen conflict, and the issue of ICRC operations in the northern Caucasus. The question of the outcome of the enquiry into the 1996 murder of six ICRC delegates in Chechnya was discussed with both the Federal Russian and Chechen interlocutors. In the latter regard, the ICRC President again emphasized the importance of identifying and prosecuting the perpetrators.

As part of its activities to promote humanitarian law, the regional delegation was able to establish and develop contacts with high-level representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education and Justice, the President's Office and Parliament. A study of national legislation and implementation of humanitarian law, carried out by a group of experts in the field, got under way.

Further support was given to national efforts to integrate the law of armed conflict into the training, instruction and combat procedures of the armed forces. Despite numerous meetings and seminars, existing cooperation agreements signed

visit by ICRC President

*promoting humanitarian
law among the armed
forces*

with the Ministries of the Interior and Defence could not be fully implemented. In contrast, new contacts were developed at the executive level of the military hierarchy and several extensive new cooperation programmes were agreed upon, including one with the federal border guard service. Dissemination sessions and seminars on the law of armed conflict were held for various military units and institutions, and military instructors in the northern Caucasus. With support from the ICRC, three high-ranking officers took part in the first Russian-language course on humanitarian law held in San Remo, Italy.

dissemination at universities

Progress was achieved in making humanitarian law an accepted part of the federal curricula for international law and journalism faculties, as compulsory courses on the subject were incorporated into the teaching programmes of several universities and other institutes of higher learning. A new second-year course on war and the media was held by the journalism faculty of Moscow State University, which, with support from the ICRC, was able to send a lecturer to a symposium in Boston, United States. Material on humanitarian law was systematically made available to Russian universities. A highlight of the year was the first-ever De Martens moot court competition on humanitarian law, which drew participants from 10 law and international relations faculties in the CIS* region that had participated in an ICRC Russian-language course on the teaching of humanitarian law in 1996. The second such course, again held in Russian, was organized in November. The delegation also convened an international conference on the promotion and dissemination of humanitarian law in cooperation with the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, and arranged for a senior lecturer from the journalism faculty of Moscow State University to participate in a seminar held in San Remo, Italy, on the role of the mass media in armed conflict.

schools programme

The ICRC's vast schools programme, now in its third year, was designed with a view to familiarizing secondary school students in most of the CIS countries with the basic principles underpinning both international humanitarian law and the mandate and activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. To ensure integration and acceptance of the programme it was decided to incorporate a selection of texts illustrating human behaviour in situations of violence into the existing, official course on national literature. Carried out under cooperation agreements signed with regional and federal education structures, the programme was assessed in the first half of the year. On the basis of the results, work started on similar teaching material for 13 to 14 year-old pupils and in October the first copies of a pilot version textbook were distributed for testing in 74 Russian regions.

A travelling exhibition entitled *People and War*, which showed 140 photographs from the ICRC archives spanning the period from 1859 to 1996, toured

* Commonwealth of Independent States

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



– helped 5 people living in former conflict areas to be reunited with their families in the Russian

Federation;

- forwarded 62 Red Cross messages between civilians in the southern Caucasus region and their families in the Russian Federation;



– covered 18 salaries and part of the running costs of the Russian Red Cross Society's tracing

service;

- organized a seminar for the heads of the tracing services of the 15 National Societies of the former Soviet Union;
- carried out support missions to each of the CIS National Societies receiving ICRC assistance;
- provided financial backing for the national Red Cross museum, which gave some 100 presentations on the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement for school classes and nursing students;
- assisted in the production and financially supported the publication and distribution of two issues of the new version of the Russian Red Cross magazine;
- furnished local Red Cross committees with a range of dissemination materials;



– set up a second international course on the law of armed conflict, held in Moscow and

attended by 16 representatives from 13 CIS countries;

- organized a travelling exhibition on humanitarian law entitled *People and War*, which aimed to promote understanding of humanitarian law and Red Cross activities carried out on behalf of war victims; (the exhibition toured 5 cities, including 2 in the northern Caucasus, and was visited by 3,000 to 8,000 people in each location);
- presented seminars on the implementation of humanitarian law for representatives of the authorities, federal institutions, members of parliament and the Russian Red Cross;
- organized 3 Russian-language seminars attended by representatives of the Ministries of Defence of CIS countries, the Baltic States and Bulgaria;
- held several seminars on the law of armed conflict at numerous military schools and institutes in the Russian Federation, the southern Caucasus, Belarus and Ukraine;
- under the schools programme, produced and distributed textbooks and manuals reaching 2.3 million fifth-form students and 115,000 teachers in the Russian Federation;

– launched 7,000 copies of a pilot textbook for sixth-form students and 300 accompanying teachers' manuals;

- organized in Moscow a second seminar on the teaching of humanitarian law for 40 junior lecturers and assistants from law and international relations departments of universities in the Russian Federation and 10 other CIS countries;
- distributed comprehensive sets of Russian-language ICRC publications on humanitarian law to over 1,000 academic libraries across the Russian Federation;
- published more than 168,000 copies of books, reports and other documents, notably 4,000 copies of a university textbook on humanitarian law, and 1 issue of the ICRC periodical *Challenges*, which covered operations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

*dissemination to
the general public*

several Russian towns, including Moscow, St Petersburg, Rostov and Nalchik. It drew thousands of visitors, among them high-ranking representatives of the authorities and the armed forces, as well as children participating in the ICRC schools programme. Media coverage and round-table discussions further enhanced its impact.

*cooperation with
the National Society*

Cooperation with the Russian Red Cross Society continued largely unchanged. As in the past, efforts concentrated on two main areas: operational support to Red Cross branches in the northern Caucasus (which was expanded to include the districts of Stavropol and Krasnodar) and substantial material assistance for the National Society's tracing services and dissemination programmes. The volume of Red Cross messages and tracing requests was relatively modest; all Red Cross messages addressed to destinations in the Russian Federation were handed over to the National Society for distribution, with the exception of those messages exchanged between detainees in the southern Caucasus region and their families in the Russian Federation. To assist with the development of tracing services in the broader region, follow-up missions were carried out to the southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Joint ICRC/Russian Red Cross dissemination activities were kept up as in previous years. A decision was taken to convert the National Society's magazine (*Review of the Russian Red Cross*) into a teaching aid so as to facilitate the "training the trainers" scheme, one of the cornerstones of dissemination in the Russian Federation which had encountered difficulties owing to the vastness of the country and the resulting large number of local Red Cross structures. The scheme, developed under a cooperation agreement with the Russian Red Cross, was financially supported by the ICRC. The National Society was also associated with the ICRC's schools programme.

The Moscow delegation continued to function as a decentralized publishing unit for Russian-language texts used by government officials, legal experts, teachers, military instructors, the National Societies and ICRC delegations throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Northern Caucasus

The situation in the northern Caucasus remained a source of concern even though no major military action took place in the region. The Chechen presidential and parliamentary elections in January went ahead as scheduled, but discussions held during the year between Moscow and Grozny on the future status of Chechnya did not yield any significant results. Very difficult security conditions prevailed in the eastern republics of the northern Caucasus, with assassinations and kidnappings a common occurrence despite tougher law-enforcement measures being taken by the Chechen and Russian authorities.

ICRC operations in the northern Caucasus were considerably reduced, following the murder of six delegates at the Novye Atagi field hospital in December 1996³ and owing to the rise in crime in the area. After the tragedy, the ICRC, which had been one of the few organizations active in the region throughout the conflict, withdrew all its expatriate staff from Chechnya, Daghestan, Ingushetia and North Ossetia, and regrouped its operational base at the sub-delegation in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria. In the course of 1997 every available opportunity was taken to enquire about progress made with the authorities' enquiry into the assassinations. In February and May, the Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia met the President of the Chechen Republic for discussions in Grozny. The issue was also raised by the ICRC President during his official visit to Moscow in June. By the end of the year, security conditions and the lack of progress regarding the enquiry still precluded a permanent expatriate presence in Chechnya and its neighbouring republics.

However, in view of the manifest needs of the population, assistance was continued. A team of expatriates was maintained at the sub-delegation in Nalchik so that health and relief programmes were able to continue in all five republics, carried out by local ICRC staff and local committees of the Russian Red Cross from Chechnya, Daghestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia. To report on the implementation of these programmes, ICRC local staff paid weekly visits to the ICRC sub-delegation in Nalchik; in addition, ICRC delegates carried out one-day visits as well as ad hoc missions to monitor the situation and follow up ongoing ICRC activities. In May, a revised plan of activities for the period up to the year's end was drawn up, thus formalizing the adjustments that became necessary after the events of December 1996. Under the plan, cooperation was also extended to the Red Cross committees in the autonomous republics of Karachayevo-Cherkesskaya and Adygea, and in the districts of Stavropol and



³ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p. 198.

Krasnodar, thus enabling the ICRC to channel assistance to even greater numbers of internally displaced people and to vulnerable groups affected by the conflict in Chechnya. First contacts were established in the republic of Kalmykia in December, with a view to developing cooperation with the local Red Cross committee. Traditional cooperation programmes, such as the home visiting nurses programme and basic relief assistance, were kept up as in the previous year.

*protecting detainees
and the civilian
population*

Protection work declined significantly owing to the fact that delegates were withdrawn from Chechnya and the three neighbouring republics, and the fate of people captured during the hostilities remained a source of great concern to the ICRC. Contacts with a number of organizations dealing with this issue were maintained. The delegation, on behalf of the families concerned, also requested the Russian federal authorities to provide information on the whereabouts of prisoners previously visited by the ICRC. A comprehensive report on the conduct of hostilities during the war in Chechnya was submitted to the relevant authorities, so that appropriate lessons can be learned from the events, notably as regards training combatants in the law of armed conflict.

*importance of
Red Cross messages*

As there was an ongoing need to restore family links and in view of the disrupted communication system, the ICRC assisted the local committee of the Red Cross in Chechnya in setting up its own tracing service. The Red Cross message network resumed operations in the republic during the summer. As part of general cooperation activities, contact was maintained with local Russian Red Cross branches in the northern Caucasus so as to assist them in their tracing work. Delegates also kept in touch with the representatives of official and private committees set up to deal with enquiries about missing persons, and stood ready to assist both former parties to the conflict in ascertaining the fate of missing people. The ICRC's assistance, however, was not requested.

To monitor the situation of civilians affected by the Chechen and Ingush-Ossetian conflicts, relevant information was gathered from local ICRC employees, the local committees of the Russian Red Cross and through contacts with the authorities. Following a flare-up in violence in the Prigorodny district in summer, the head of the Nalchik sub-delegation met with the Ministers of Internal Affairs, Security, Social Protection and Health of North Ossetia to discuss the humanitarian consequences of the tensions.

*long-term dissemination
approach*

After the conclusion of emergency dissemination activities designed to facilitate humanitarian operations and access to victims during the conflict, emphasis shifted to developing longer-term plans for raising awareness of humanitarian law. In light of the clear threat to humanitarian assistance in the northern Caucasus, a priority was to gain widespread acceptance of ICRC work and personnel. To build up a comprehensive dissemination and communication approach, use was made of a dense network of contacts and partners in the region, with the aim of reaching

all strata of society and of obtaining reliable information about the situation on the ground. In the first quarter of the year, local staff were trained at the Nalchik sub-delegation to become dissemination officers for Chechnya, Daghestan, Ingushetia and North Ossetia.

Despite the reduction in activities, delegates maintained contact with the federal armed forces in the northern Caucasus. Seminars on humanitarian law were held throughout the year for troops stationed in the region, civil defence instructors in North Ossetia and first-aid trainees of the local Red Cross committee in Nalchik. At the invitation of the officer responsible for education and training in the northern Caucasus military district, the ICRC prepared a range of lecture material which was published in a training officers' journal and in this manner distributed to all units of the federal forces in the district. Other dissemination tools included crossword puzzles and quizzes on humanitarian law and the history of humanitarian action. Contacts were stepped up with universities and institutes in Kabardino-Balkaria, where the travelling exhibition *People and War* was shown in Nalchik in December. The schools programme⁴ covered the entire northern Caucasus, with the exception of Chechnya.

After ICRC health activities were officially suspended in Chechnya, all remaining medical supplies were handed over to the Chechen Ministry of Health for distribution to local medical facilities. To be able to respond rapidly in the event of an epidemic or other emergency, the ICRC kept a contingency stock of medicines and medical items at the sub-delegation in Nalchik. All new equipment purchased by the organization for Hospitals No. 4 and No. 9, the Respublika Hospital and the general surgical centre in Grozny, which were badly damaged in the war, was delivered and installed. In addition, substantial one-off deliveries of medicines were made in the course of the year to help medical facilities meet the needs of the population. Outside Chechnya, limited activities continued: in Daghestan, for example, the refurbishing of the children's tuberculosis hospital in Khasavyurt was completed. Owing to the continued widespread lack of medical supplies, the presence of large numbers of internally displaced people and sporadic violence causing numerous wounded, ad hoc deliveries were made to hospitals and other medical facilities in Daghestan throughout the year.

The Novye Atagi field hospital, scene of the tragedy in 1996, was officially handed over to the Chechen health authorities in September. At the same time an agreement was concluded with the Chechen Ministry of Health, which precisely defined the authorities' responsibilities towards patients, staff and equipment.

To formalize the end of direct ICRC involvement in the rehabilitation of the blood transfusion centre in Grozny, a Memorandum of Understanding was concluded with the Ministry of Health in October. The construction work was virtu-

support for health facilities

*Novye Atagi
surgical hospital*

Grozny blood bank

⁴ See pp. 210-211.

*visiting nurses
programme extended*

ally completed by the end of the year. To ensure that back-up blood screening services would be available until the transfusion centre becomes operational, appropriate materials and other supplies were given to Hospitals No. 4 and No. 9.

Throughout the year, regular financial and material support was provided for the visiting nurses programme. As in the past, the programme was managed by local branches of the Russian Red Cross in Chechnya, Daghestan, Ingushetia,

Northern Caucasus



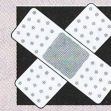
– handled 583 Red Cross messages in Chechnya;



- in all, provided the local committees of the Russian Red Cross Society with more than 2,200 tonnes of relief for distribution to particularly vulnerable groups;
- in the winter months, furnished warm clothing and shoes for distribution to vulnerable groups, including internally displaced people in Chechnya, Daghestan and Kabardino-Balkaria;
- gave food and other supplies to 26 social-welfare and medical establishments caring for 6,800 people;
- supplied books and writing and knitting materials to 70,000 schoolchildren in Chechnya;

IN 1997 THE ICRC:

- provided 720 patients cared for under the visiting nurses programme in Grozny and Gudermes with family parcels, wheat flour and hygiene kits;
- provided 32 collective centres housing internally displaced people in Khasavyurt with assistance such as repair materials, ovens, stoves and disinfectant;
- until March, in a total of 17 community kitchens in Grozny, Argun and Gudermes supplied 1 meal a day, 5 days a week, for some 8,200 beneficiaries;
- through the local branch of the Russian Red Cross, distributed food and hygiene articles to a total of 30,000 vulnerable people living in mountainous areas of Chechnya;
- under the bread programme supplied 117 tonnes of wheat flour, enabling up to 8,000 beneficiaries to collect 3 loaves of bread a week from state bakeries;



- gave financial and material support for the visiting nurses programme run by the local branches of the Russian Red Cross in the republics of Chechnya, Daghestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Adygea and Karachayevo-Cherkesskaya; (up to 99 nurses provided medical care for over 1,200 patients);
- delivered medical supplies to the general surgery, eye surgery, paediatric, maternity and burns units of 4 hospitals in Grozny;
- delivered medical supplies to 5 hospitals and 12 other health facilities in Daghestan, and to the central hospital and an orphanage in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria;
- supplied medicines to 14 sanatoriums in Kabardino-Balkaria, enabling them to treat some 6,000 internally displaced people sheltered there;

Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia, providing for elderly and housebound people to be assisted at home by nurses dispensing quality care and medicines, as well as hot meals and food parcels. Minor repairs were carried out in the homes of several hundred beneficiaries. In the second half of the year, the ICRC extended the programme to the local committees of the Russian Red Cross in the Adygei and Karachayevo-Cherkesskaya republics.

- carried out a one-off distribution of medical supplies to the 400-bed military hospital in Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia, the Nazran Respublika Hospital in Ingushetia, and to hospitals in Krasnodar caring for victims of the conflict in Chechnya;
- provided the Respublika Hospital in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, and 2 hospitals in Stavropol with one-off deliveries of medical material to enable them to give free emergency care to a total of 10,000 internally displaced people;



- provided technical equipment for repairing 15 boreholes linked to the main water-treatment plant in Grozny;
- in Grozny, produced 52,000 cu. m of chlorinated water;
- provided basic equipment such as tools, pumps, engines, spare parts and protective clothing to

- the Grozny water board to help it maintain the sewerage system;
- donated 6 water trucks to the local administration in Grozny;



- supported medical and social-welfare programmes of the local branches of the Russian Red Cross in Chechnya and 7 neighbouring republics;
- organized a seminar on strategic planning and institutional development, attended by the presidents and other representatives of 11 local Red Cross committees of the northern Caucasus and southern Russia;
- held a first-aid training seminar for the 5 Red Cross committees in the northern Caucasus in cooperation with the Russian Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies;



- appointed a Chechen specialist to carry out a study on Chechen customary law and traditions of warfare, with a view to strengthening acceptance of humanitarian law by finding parallels in the local culture;
- organized 9 seminars on the law of armed conflict attended by 730 soldiers and officers stationed in the northern Caucasus military district;
- gave presentations on the ICRC and humanitarian law to education and training officers of troops falling under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior;
- distributed 20,000 wall and pocket calendars with humanitarian-law themes;
- provided the libraries of military units with publications on humanitarian law and the ICRC;
- presented the travelling exhibition *People and War* in two cities.

*assistance relating
to water-supply
and sewerage systems*

Even though the fighting had stopped, there was no improvement in the disastrous state of the public utilities in many localities, notably Grozny. The poor condition of the sewerage and water-supply systems presented a major public health hazard and left the population vulnerable to epidemics, especially during the hot summer months. Local staff continued to carry out ICRC projects to upkeep pumping stations in Grozny and Gudermes, thus providing the population with safe drinking water. The ICRC fleet of six tanker trucks was donated to the local administration for use in delivering water to the population; in addition, clean water was transported by the non-governmental organization Merlin and private distributors. To assist the city's administration in addressing the chronic sewerage problem, material assistance in the form of tools, pumps, spare parts and other items that could not be purchased locally was given to the Grozny water board. In parts of the town flooded by sewerage, pumps were provided to enable residents to evacuate waste water from their basements.

Since no immediate end to the water and sewerage crisis was in sight, the sub-delegation in Nalchik, in cooperation with the Chechen committee of the Red Cross, organized an information campaign to make the population aware of the health hazards associated with drinking contaminated water and encourage them to boil water supplied by the municipal system. No cases of cholera were reported in Chechnya during the summer. However, following an outbreak of dysentery and typhoid in Daghestan, a special distribution of chlorine was made to disinfect water tanks in villages surrounding Khasavyurt. Hospitals in the region received supplies of the necessary medicines until the epidemic was under control. To prevent another similar incident, pumps were provided to the affected villages, chlorine tablets distributed in schools and information posters displayed.

*contingency stock
of relief supplies*

As in the case of medical supplies, the sub-delegation in Nalchik maintained a contingency stock of relief items, which would enable it to meet the needs of 20,000 to 25,000 beneficiaries for two to three months.

Since the needs of vulnerable groups did not stop with the fighting, relief distributions, primarily in the form of food, hygiene articles and winter clothing, were carried out by the local committees of the Russian Red Cross.

*new programme:
bread for the needy*

In Chechnya in particular, the situation of elderly and internally displaced people remained extremely precarious, owing to the lack of social services and the non-payment of retirement pensions. The poor purchasing power of these vulnerable groups limited their access to food, especially in urban areas. As a result, in September the ICRC launched a new assistance programme, carried out in cooperation with the Chechen branch of the Russian Red Cross, under which almost 8,000 Russian and Chechen beneficiaries received one loaf of bread three times a week. The bread programme replaced the community soup kitchens in Grozny, Argun and Gudermes, which had been supported until March and then closed as planned.

Southern Caucasus

ARMENIA/ AZERBAIJAN

Armenia and Azerbaijan failed in 1997 to reach a negotiated settlement of the issues dividing them. In the course of the year the OSCE* Minsk group, under the new chairmanship of France, Russia and the United States, made repeated but unsuccessful attempts to inject new life into the deadlocked negotiations. Fresh rounds of talks took place at the end of September, after the Nagorny Karabakh elections, and again in November, but in both cases without any tangible results.

Although the cease-fire agreement concluded in 1994 continued to hold, numerous clashes and other violent incidents occurred throughout the year. April, July and October in particular saw a rise in tensions along the northern border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and along the Nagorny Karabakh cease-fire line, with hundreds of casualties and disappearances of military personnel and civilians reported on both sides. Sadly, no progress was made in enabling some half a million internally displaced people and refugees in Armenia and Azerbaijan to return to a normal life. As in previous years, the political deadlock was compounded by severe economic problems, although the humanitarian situation in Nagorny Karabakh did improve gradually towards the end of the year.

In March the Minsk group, without prior consultation with the ICRC, appealed to all the parties concerned to release and repatriate people who had been registered by the ICRC and were still being held captive in connection with the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. Subsequently the Armenian, Azeri and Nagorny Karabakh authorities released a total of 26 detainees. The ICRC supervised the releases and provided air transport for the repatriations.

* OSCE: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe



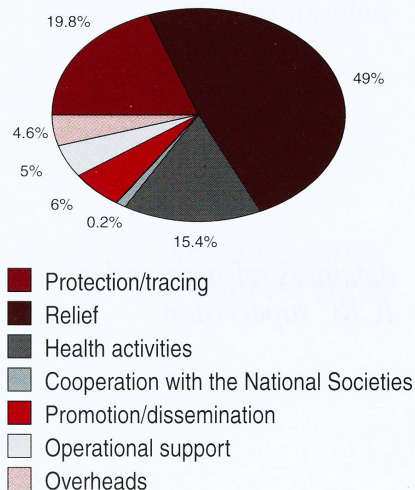
*detainees released under
ICRC supervision*

efforts to ascertain the fate of those missing

ARMENIA/AZERBAIJAN

Total expenditure in 1997:

Sfr 14,027,595



It also kept up its efforts, with limited success, to gain access to and obtain the release of all persons detained in relation to the conflict who had either been arrested before the release of the group of 26 and to whom access had not been granted, or who had been arrested afterwards. As part of these efforts the Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia carried out a mission in June to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh. Top-level talks were held on the humanitarian consequences of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, in particular the issue of missing persons.

Many families had still not received any news about relatives who had been unaccounted for since the flare-up of fighting in December 1993 and May 1994, or even earlier phases of the conflict. Consolidated lists of all persons who had gone missing before the 1994 cease-fire, comprising more than 2,200 names and based on individual applications by the families concerned, were submitted to the three parties. The lists were accompanied by a request to provide information regarding the fate of these people, which highlighted the authorities' obligation under humanitarian law to do so. Although further representations in the matter were made after the submission of the lists, no information had been provided by the end of the year that might help shed light on the cases in question.

In Armenia, delegates were able during the year to visit a total of 60 detainees held in connection with the Nagorny Karabakh conflict and the country's internal situation. All detainees were given the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families and received material assistance, most importantly food and medicines. In Azerbaijan, in contrast, visits to persons held for internal security reasons were still not authorized, despite offers of services having previously been submitted to the authorities. Twenty-two persons detained in relation to the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh were visited regularly. Delegates also kept an eye on the situation of minority groups in the Baku region and in a number of cases made representations to the authorities so as to help people of Armenian origin to deal with discrimination and administrative obstacles.

In Nagorny Karabakh, delegates kept up visits to seven persons detained in relation to the conflict and supplied two prison dispensaries with regular monthly assistance in the form of basic medicines and dressing materials.

After months of sustained efforts, a cooperation agreement on dissemination was signed in May between the Armenian Ministry of Defence and the ICRC, covering international training courses for senior officers, regular dissemination sessions as part of military training and the translation of reference texts on the law of armed conflict.

To improve knowledge of the law of armed conflict in military units stationed near the front lines, contact was maintained with the Azeri government ministries responsible for the various armed units present in the area. Presentations on humanitarian law were given at regular intervals to units in the field. The Ministry

of Defence still refused access to military schools, where the ICRC wished to have the law of armed conflict integrated into regular military training. It did, however, allow a presentation to be held for military instructors from the naval academy and an officers' school.

In Armenia, courses on humanitarian law, given by an ICRC-trained lecturer, were introduced at the law and journalism faculties of two private universities and a nursing college. Negotiations with Yerevan State University and the Ministry of Education to hold a similar course paid off in the second half of the year, when humanitarian law was officially included in the curricula of the faculties of law, international relations and journalism.

Contacts were also maintained with universities and other institutes of higher learning in Azerbaijan, where humanitarian law was already being taught at Baku State University. Lecturers from the State Universities of Baku and Yerevan participated in the second ICRC Russian-language course on humanitarian law held in Moscow.

Under agreements with the respective Ministries of Education,⁵ ICRC textbooks and manuals introducing the basic principles of humanitarian law were distributed to all fifth-form pupils and teachers in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh. Training for literature teachers started immediately after the distributions.

In the course of the year an Armenian and an Azeri legal specialist recruited by the ICRC undertook a complete study of the national legislation of their respective countries with a view to the incorporation therein of international humanitarian law.

The ICRC's mine-awareness campaign in Azerbaijan, carried out as a project delegated to the Swedish Red Cross, continued with a view to making people living in the front-line districts and camps for internally displaced persons aware of the danger of landmines and unexploded ordnance. Mine-awareness training sessions were held for schoolchildren and community leaders, who also received related material for distribution. The campaign reached more than half a million people in the course of the year.

Whenever tensions flared along the cease-fire line in Azerbaijan, military and civilian hospitals in the front-line districts were provided with medicines and other medical supplies to treat the wounded and to set up contingency stocks. To prevent shortages of essential medical and surgical supplies in Nagorny Karabakh, the ICRC visited and assisted hospitals, which treated victims of landmine explosions and other war-wounded, civilian medical facilities in remote areas and prison dispensaries.

The tuberculosis treatment programme run by the ICRC at the prison hospital in Baku was kept up with the active involvement of local staff. Numerous patients who had completed their treatment remained TB positive, thus adding to fears

*promotion of
humanitarian law*

mine-awareness campaign

health assistance

*the battle against
tuberculosis*

⁵ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p. 208.

*water for front-line districts
and Nagorny Karabakh*

that the disease had become drug resistant. The delegation intensified its efforts to make the authorities aware of the scale of the problem, urging them to take action at the national level. To this end, the ICRC, a Russian specialist and WHO* representatives carried out a joint mission in April to meet with the Ministries of Justice, Internal Affairs and Health. The involvement and commitment of the authorities was made a condition for the continuation of ICRC activities in this field. As a first step, the Ministry of Justice arranged for repair work and extensions to be carried out on the hospital and laboratory facilities.

The training programme for volunteer first-aid instructors in eight front-line districts, carried out by the American Red Cross in cooperation with the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan, was completed in September. Efforts were made to coordinate the training with plans by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the National Society to extend the programme to the rest of the country.

Water shortages remained a source of concern in the front-line districts and Nagorny Karabakh. In Azerbaijan, activities at the start of the year concentrated on water storage and distribution systems in the Fizuli district. Repairs were carried out and installations set up to improve the water supply for internally displaced persons and returnees and in villages destroyed by the fighting. In May the ICRC programme entered its final phase as the European Union launched its proposed large-scale infrastructure rehabilitation programme in the area.

In Nagorny Karabakh, water and sanitation engineers, with the help of local communities, restored wells and carried out extensive repairs to supply networks, thus providing much-needed water for the many vegetable gardens which were a significant source of food and income for villagers. On the basis of an impact assessment the programme was continued in eight villages and a town.

*rehabilitating the
war-disabled*

At the ICRC prosthetic/orthotic centre for war amputees in Baku, Azerbaijan, output increased following the arrival of new equipment. The centre was run in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. In the second half of the year, the cooperation agreement concerning the workshop and patients' dormitory was renewed with the Ministry. Authorization to fly in patients from other countries, however, was withdrawn in May. Until that point, some five patients a month from Tajikistan had been fitted with prostheses and orthoses. However, on the basis of an agreement concluded between the Azeri and Chechen authorities, 28 Chechen amputees were fitted with artificial limbs between August and December.

Surveys conducted during the year showed that by and large, the food security situation had improved in regions where the ICRC was conducting major assistance programmes.

* WHO: World Health Organization

In Armenia, four distributions of food and other supplies, benefiting some 30,000 people living in 17 front-line villages and one town, were carried out until April, when the activity was taken over by the American Red Cross as a renewed delegated project. It was completed as planned at the end of September 1997. Since one of the stated aims of relief efforts was to revive agricultural activity and restore self-sufficiency, beneficiaries in rural areas also received seed potatoes, vegetable seed kits and food preservation sets. A programme to repair combine harvesters was completed in time for the harvest with a view to increasing the yield from the 1996 wheat seed distributions. In the Fizuli district of Azerbaijan, assistance concentrated on internally displaced families and those who had recently returned to their homes. All received regular twice-monthly distributions of food rations and other items, seed potatoes and vegetable kits. Food distributions in the district were, however, discontinued in the second half of the year, after the delegation was unable to reach an agreement with the authorities about the revision of beneficiary lists and monitoring activities.

*relief assistance and
agricultural rehabilitation*

The project delegated to the American Red Cross in Azerbaijan, which provided relief to 12,500 vulnerable people in the eight front-line districts bordering on Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh, was maintained. To address needs caused by heavy rains and widespread flooding in summer, one-off emergency food distributions were made to vulnerable families and camps for internally displaced persons in the area.

To enable poor families in the front-line districts of Armenia and Azerbaijan to send their children to school during the cold winter months, warm jackets and shoes were provided and an extensive rehabilitation programme undertaken. Depending on needs, buildings were repaired and latrines set up, and food and other items delivered. As similar needs were identified in other front-line areas of Azerbaijan, eight school rehabilitation projects were launched in a further four districts. Community involvement was an important aspect of this activity.

helping schoolchildren

In Nagorny Karabakh the "Teamwork" programme, which combines emergency measures and agricultural rehabilitation, continued. Seed potatoes, vegetable seed and insecticide were supplied to beneficiaries, and selected villages received a small number of beehives. Wheat seed was distributed to collective farms which had experienced a poor harvest, and potato and wheat-seed multiplication programmes were launched. This assistance was supplemented with food parcels and food preservation kits to tide families over until the next harvest. By the end of the year, 14 of the assisted villages were found to have reached an adequate level of self-sufficiency and steps were taken to phase out assistance accordingly.

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- visited 89 detainees held for conflict-related and security reasons in 29 places of detention, and supervised the release and repatriation of 26 detainees;
- provided treatment for 198 patients enrolled in the ICRC-run tuberculosis treatment programme for detainees at the prison hospital in Baku;



- organized the exchange of some 2,400 Red Cross messages between detainees and their families and between relatives separated by the conflict;
- submitted to the relevant authorities some 2,200 tracing requests from families of missing persons;



- in Armenia, supported a relief project delegated to the American Red Cross, for some 9,400 families living along the north-eastern border with Azerbaijan;
- in Nagorny Karabakh, distributed 164 tonnes of seed potatoes, 142 tonnes of wheat seed, 4,474 vegetable seed kits, 13 beehives, 5,625 food parcels and 16,364 food preservation kits to some 5,400 families living in 43 villages and one town in the districts most affected by the conflict;
- in the front-line districts of Azerbaijan, supported a project

delegated to the American Red Cross which provided some 9,150 vulnerable families with 1,432 tonnes of food and 257 tonnes of other supplies;

- in the Fizuli district, distributed 341 tonnes of food, 10 tonnes of soap and detergent, 3,213 vegetable seed kits and 67 tonnes of seed potatoes to some 3,000 families;
- enabled some 18,000 children in Armenia and the Fizuli district to go to school in winter by providing food, warm clothing and shoes, furniture and heating materials and rehabilitating schools and kindergartens;
- under a revised construction programme in Nagorny Karabakh, provided building materials to specific, small projects in the neediest villages;
- jointly with the Azeri Red Crescent, carried out relief distributions in the 8 front-line districts of Azerbaijan;



- provided medical supplies for 10 military and civilian health facilities treating war-wounded in Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh, and essential supplies for civilian dispensaries in Nagorny Karabakh;
- under the American Red Cross training programme for first-aid instructors in Azerbaijan, held 10 training sessions attended by 124 people living in the front-line dis-

tricts (92 volunteers from 61 villages successfully completed the course);



- in Baku, manufactured 404 artificial limbs, including 99 for mine victims, and fitted 319 new amputees;
- manufactured 64 orthoses, including 2 for mine victims, and fitted 39 new patients with orthoses;
- manufactured 786 pairs of crutches;



- in the Fizuli district of Azerbaijan, installed 12 submersible pumps, 3 reservoirs and a number of pipes, and rehabilitated 3 irrigation pumps;
- in Nagorny Karabakh, restored the water supply for 20,000 people in 8 villages and 1 small town situated near the front lines;
- rehabilitated the water distribution system for a prison hospital in Yerevan;



- signed cooperation agreements covering tracing, dissemination and general activities with the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan;
- provided material support, including office equipment, to the Armenian Red Cross Society and Azeri Red Crescent;
- arranged for an Armenian Red Cross tracing officer to receive

practical training in Moscow and for a dissemination officer to participate in a regional training course held in Tbilisi;

- enabled an Azeri Red Crescent dissemination officer to attend a one-week workshop held by the Moscow regional delegation;



- arranged for an Armenian officer to attend the ICRC's second international course on the law of armed conflict held in Moscow in March;

- enabled an Armenian and an Azeri officer to attend the ICRC's third international course on the law of armed conflict held in Kyiv in November;
- enabled an Azeri senior officer, designated by the Ministry of Defence, to participate in the first Russian-language course on the law of armed conflict held in San Remo, Italy;
- in Armenia, held a seminar on humanitarian law for 110 senior officers at the armed forces general staff headquarters in Yerevan, and organized dissemination courses for military police units across the country;

- in Nagorny Karabakh, organized dissemination sessions on the basic rules of humanitarian law for more than 700 officers and soldiers, and for the staff and patients of an ICRC-assisted military hospital;

- in Azerbaijan, gave several presentations on humanitarian law for soldiers belonging to military units stationed close to the front lines;
- in Armenia, gave a one-day presentation on humanitarian law as part of a human rights seminar;
- arranged for 2 lecturers each from Yerevan and Baku State Universities to participate in the ICRC's second Russian-language training course on humanitarian law, held in Moscow in November;
- organized a three-day seminar on humanitarian law to launch the introduction of the subject into the curricula of the law, journalism and international relations faculties of Baku State University, and arranged for the participation of a professor from the University of Grenoble, France;
- published 73,000 ICRC supplementary literary textbooks relating to humanitarian law for fifth-form students and 6,300 accompanying teachers' manuals, in Armenian and Azeri;

- held a series of 31 training seminars for fifth-form literature teachers in Armenia and Azerbaijan;

- arranged for the Geneva Conventions to be translated into Armenian and Azeri and for an ICRC leaflet on the emblem to be translated into Armenian;
- published and distributed 15,000 leaflets in the Azeri language explaining ICRC activities in Azerbaijan;



- as part of its mine-awareness campaign, distributed 15,000 leaflets, 120,000 brochures, 16,000 posters and stickers, 25,000 exercise books for schoolchildren, helping to alert more than 500,000 people to the danger of landmines.

GEORGIA

The positive trend set in the previous year continued in 1997: relative political stability prevailed and the cease-fire was generally respected. Nonetheless, the situation along the separation line between Georgian and Abkhaz forces remained tense and large segments of the population continued to suffer from the after-effects of the conflict, in particular some 250,000 displaced people who had fled the fighting in Abkhazia in 1993 and had been stranded in western Georgia ever since. Living conditions for them and other vulnerable groups worsened as international aid steadily declined. From July onwards, skirmishes involving Georgian partisans and the Abkhaz authorities reached deep into Abkhazia as far as Sukhumi. Although the civilian population in Abkhazia in general was affected by a widespread rise in violent crime, members of minority groups living alone were especially vulnerable and became targets for

various forms of harassment. Security in southern Abkhazia gave cause for particular concern on account of landmines, bomb explosions, kidnappings and rampant crime. The ICRC suffered two security incidents in spring and autumn of the year.

A summit for heads of CIS States took place in March in Moscow, during which the mandates of the CIS peace-keeping forces stationed in the buffer zone between Georgian and Abkhaz forces and of UNOMIG* were confirmed and extended, initially until 31 July 1997 and later until 31 January 1998. Notwithstanding the positive start to the year, tensions rose in April as the Abkhaz authorities declared their opposition to a CIS summit resolution to extend the security zone along the Inguri river to the Gali region, which was under Abkhaz control. The parties met for several rounds of talks, and a joint declaration



* UNOMIG: United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia

to resolve differences peacefully was eventually issued in August. As part of the discussions, a first-ever meeting took place between the Georgian President and the leader of Abkhazia, spelling progress at the diplomatic level. The negotiation process moved another step forward during a conference held in Geneva in November, with the establishment of a coordination council set up under United Nations auspices. A joint peace declaration was also signed in November by the leaders of Georgia and South Ossetia, who undertook, among other things, to work towards the return of refugees from their respective territories.

The ICRC was able to continue to carry out its protection activities for detainees under favourable conditions. Delegates enjoyed unrestricted access to all inmates in every place of detention, including both people held for conflict-related or security reasons and penal law offenders, and were able to talk freely with all detainees. In the course of the year visits were conducted to all permanent and temporary places of detention in Georgia and Abkhazia and, for the first time since 1994, to the preliminary detention centre of the Georgian Ministry of Security. In addition, ad hoc medical and material assistance was delivered to places of detention. On some of their visits, delegates were accompanied by a prosthetist, who fitted detained amputees with artificial limbs.

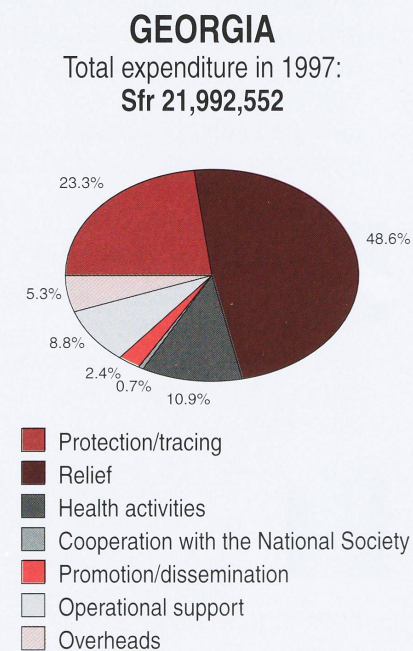
Under the family visits programme, launched in late 1996, the ICRC was able to arrange for detainees to be visited by their relatives, whom it provided with transport and accommodation. Visits also took place across the front lines.

In Abkhazia, the situation of non-Abkhaz minority groups, mainly elderly and isolated persons of Georgian, Armenian and Russian origin, remained a source of deep concern. While delegates continued their regular visits to representatives of these groups in order to collect and pass on to the Abkhaz authorities allegations of harassment, robbery and other crimes, many people started visiting the delegation on their own initiative. At times, forming a clear picture of the situation was difficult, especially in the Gali region where security conditions were particularly unstable.

Given the ongoing absence of postal services within and out of Abkhazia, the ICRC's Red Cross message network was maintained, with over 75,000 messages being exchanged in the course of the year. The network was run partly in cooperation with three local branches of the National Society, which were responsible for collecting and distributing Red Cross messages in the country. The number of family reunifications carried out under ICRC auspices declined overall.

Making Georgian, Abkhaz and Russian troops stationed along the front lines more aware of the rules of international humanitarian law remained a top priority. To this end, contact was maintained with the Georgian and Abkhaz armed and police forces, as well as the Russian peace-keeping troops. The Georgian Ministry of Defence completed translating the ICRC teaching file on the law of armed conflict into Georgian.

access to detainees and family visits



An agreement having been reached with the Abkhaz authorities, a short test run of the schools programme⁶ took place in seven schools in Abkhazia in May and June. From July the programme got into full swing, reaching all 2,500 fifth-

⁶ See *Moscow regional delegation*, pp.210-211.

GEORGIA

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- conducted visits to 333 detainees (including 127 registered for the first time) in 21 places of detention under the responsibility of the Georgian authorities;
- carried out visits to 61 detainees (including 41 registered for the first time) in 10 places of detention under the responsibility of the Abkhaz authorities;
- arranged for 6 family visits to detainees across the front lines;



- forwarded 76,174 Red Cross messages and organized 43 family reunifications;
- held 2 training workshops on tracing for 2 local Red Cross branches;



- distributed food parcels, including 5-10 kg of flour per parcel, to some 43,000 beneficiaries in towns and 25,000 in rural areas;

- in the summer, provided 53,000 food preservation kits consisting of sugar, salt, oil and jar lids;
- as part of a potato multiplication scheme, distributed 15 tonnes of seed potatoes and 19,000 vegetable kits in Abkhaz villages;
- handed out 16,700 blankets, 279,000 candles, 3,200 kg of wool, 1,780 pairs of children's rain boots, as well as 179 bales and 2,499 sets of children's winter clothing;
- supported 24 community kitchens run by the local administration and local Red Cross branches, which daily provided 6,500 people with a hot meal comprising 2,200 calories;
- opened 4 new community kitchens;
- provided 55 schools in central Abkhazia with 6,980 school kits, and 3 schools with plastic sheeting for repairs;
- supplied winter jackets to all beneficiaries of the community kitchens;

- distributed seed and fertilizer to 10 collective farms, purchased part of their harvest and used it to supply the community kitchens;



- assisted 6 medical facilities to treat some 673 war-wounded in western Georgia and Abkhazia;
- assisted 2 polyclinics and a dispensary in the Sukhumi district by providing medical supplies, fuel and a vehicle to enable staff to conduct 4,248 home visits, provide personal hygiene and house cleaning services, deliver cooked meals and carry out more than 127,000 consultations;
- provided the Ministry of the Interior with one-off medical assistance to help it combat a dysentery epidemic in an Abkhaz prison;
- provided the Institute of Pneumology in Tbilisi with laboratory materials and staff training and carried out repairs;

form students in Abkhazia. With the start of the new school year in September, the programme resumed in Georgia and was extended to 4,000 additional students in Russian, Armenian and Azeri schools who study Georgian as a second language. While evaluations of the first textbook were carried out, preparations for providing teaching materials geared to seventh-form students got under way.



- in the Tbilisi and Gagra workshops, manufactured 669 prostheses, including 184 for mine victims, and fitted 479 patients with artificial limbs;



- signed a three-year cooperation agreement with the Red Cross Society of Georgia and provided technical and financial support for its tracing and dissemination activities;
- supported the home care programme for elderly and displaced people run by the Red Cross branches in Sukhumi and Tkvarcheli, Abkhazia;
- gave legal advice to the Georgian Red Cross, which was officially recognized after draft laws were passed on the National Society and on protection of the emblem;



- enabled a representative of the Ministry of Defence to take part in the third international one-week course for legal advisers to the armed forces, organized by the ICRC in Kyiv;
- held numerous presentations on humanitarian law for Georgian, Abkhaz and Russian troops stationed on the front lines;
- for the first time, gave presentations on humanitarian law for the Abkhaz police force and authorities;
- organized a seminar in Abkhazia for 30 high-ranking officers of the Russian peace-keeping troops stationed on the front lines;
- held 2 regional training workshops on dissemination, one for dissemination officers from the Armenian, Azeri and Georgian National Societies, the other for the dissemination team based in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria;
- in extending the schools programme to Abkhazia, distributed

more than 3,000 textbooks for fifth-form pupils and accompanying teachers' manuals, organized 5 teacher-training seminars and visited 70% of schools to brief the teachers about the ICRC and the schools programme;

- produced 10,000 pocket calendars for Abkhazia containing references to humanitarian principles in the local culture, and 2,000 similar table calendars for Georgia;
- produced video clips and short films on the schools programme, the prosthetic/orthotic centre, the red cross emblem and the ICRC's activities, partly in cooperation with national television;
- gave a presentation, broadcast by a private television network, to 25 Georgian television and newspaper reporters to promote ICRC activities and respect for humanitarian law.

implementation of humanitarian law

A study of Georgian national legislation with a view to incorporating humanitarian law therein, for which the ICRC had appointed a legal expert from Tbilisi, was completed towards the end of the year. The delegation continued to encourage the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to pursue its preparations for the establishment of an interministerial committee on the implementation of humanitarian law.

assistance for hospitals treating the war-wounded

As in previous years, assistance continued for hospitals treating the war-wounded, including victims of landmine explosions (73 new cases were registered by the ICRC) in western Georgia and Abkhazia; people who were injured in the Gali district were taken to hospital in Zugdidi by UNOMIG ambulance. Because of the ongoing economic embargo in Abkhazia, many health facilities had no reliable sources of medical or surgical supplies and depended entirely on ICRC assistance. As of July, a military dispensary in Ochamchira was included among the facilities visited and supplied on a regular basis, as was the Zugdidi polyclinic, which served some 60,000 internally displaced persons. Medical facilities in Abkhazia which ran home care programmes for elderly and displaced people received material support, technical assistance and staff training to enable them to hold consultations and carry out home visits. In addition, the ICRC health delegate checked on vulnerable people in their homes to see whether they had access to medical care.

the battle against tuberculosis

As part of a general anti-tuberculosis campaign carried out in Georgia by the Ministry of Health with the cooperation of the WHO, the first phase of an ICRC-assisted TB programme for detainees got under way in July. In light of the results achieved with a similar programme in Baku,⁷ a modified approach was chosen to tackle the problem in Georgian prisons. The first step was an assessment of the prevalence of TB in places of detention and its resistance to drug treatment, carried out by an ICRC medical team in cooperation with the Ministries of Health and the Interior. Negotiations were subsequently held with the Ministry of the Interior about reorganizing the prison hospital in accordance with WHO recommendations. As a concrete measure, a training seminar was organized for laboratory staff to facilitate correct diagnosis and implementation of treatment methods.

In March, the ICRC and the Ministry of Health signed a one-year extension of their cooperation agreement for the two prosthetic/orthotic projects in Tbilisi and Gagra. Both workshops provided artificial limbs free of charge for amputees in Georgia and Abkhazia. As demand was on the rise, the premises of the facility in Tbilisi were extended, new trainee technicians were taken on, and a new prosthetic/orthotic service was introduced for amputees in the Gali region of Abkhazia who were unable to reach the other two ICRC centres.

⁷ See *Armenia/Azerbaijan*, pp. 221-224.

Relief programmes again focused on Abkhazia, whose regional economy remained paralyzed by the blockade and structural economic problems. Although the entire population was affected, vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled people, orphans and large families were hardest hit. Following the completion of winter relief distributions in late January, a round of supplementary food distributions was started in February. Vegetable kits were handed out in rural areas, as were food preservation kits to enable families to conserve produce grown in the summer and reduce their dependency on relief in winter.

Support was kept up for more than 24 community kitchens run in Abkhazia by the local administration and the local Red Cross branches, with the aim of providing the elderly, the disabled and other vulnerable groups with one hot meal a day. In September the programme was delegated to the Finnish Red Cross, while the ICRC-supported home care programme for elderly and bedridden patients in Sukhumi was, in turn, delegated to the Swedish Red Cross. As in 1996,⁸ 10 collective farms in Abkhazia received seed, seed potatoes and fertilizer from the ICRC, which purchased a part of their output for the community kitchens.

In September, the ICRC, the Red Cross Society of Georgia and the Federation met with the authorities to discuss a draft law on the use and protection of the emblem, and a separate draft law on the Georgian Red Cross. Both laws were passed and on 6 November the ICRC recognized the National Society.

*food distributions and
community kitchens*

⁸ See the ICRC's 1996 Annual Report, p. 218.

Central Asia

TAJIKISTAN

The highlight of the year was the substantial progress made in peace negotiations between the government and the UTO,* which culminated in the signing of a peace agreement in Moscow on 27 June, officially bringing to an end five years of civil war. The implementation of the agreement got under way in September, with the return to the capital Dushanbe of the UTO leader and the start of the activities of the National Reconciliation Commission established in December 1996.

The cease-fire signed in December 1996 was generally respected during the year under review, with both parties appearing committed to the peace process. The cessation of hostilities enabled thousands of internally displaced persons and some 10,000 Tajik refugees who had sought safety in Afghanistan to return to their homes.

The only area where tensions ran high throughout the year was Kofarnikhon district, east of Dushanbe, where local opposition groups clashed with government units on several occasions.

The most serious cause for alarm, however, was the fierce fighting between rival groups within the government forces that shook Dushanbe and the south-western parts of the country in August. Two hundred people were injured in the fighting and many others were affected by the ensuing breakdown in law and order.

Notwithstanding the suspension of military operations, the general security situation deteriorated steadily. Several cases of kidnapping were reported, and in the last quarter of the year Dushanbe was shaken by a wave of bomb explosions.

Humanitarian organizations were not spared, either: in February a militia group, which had already taken hostage and subsequently released several UN



⊕ ICRC delegation + ICRC presence

* United Tajik Opposition

military observers in December 1996, struck again, seizing 14 expatriates, including two ICRC staff members. Although both workers were released after two days, the ICRC suspended its activities until all the other hostages had been freed. It resumed work in early March.

Following two further serious security incidents in June and July in central Tajikistan the delegation's activities were scaled back considerably: in June two delegates working in the Tavildara region of central Tajikistan were deliberately fired at; two weeks later, on 1 July, two ICRC vehicles were shot at in the Karategin valley, fortunately again without resulting in any casualties. This prompted the ICRC to withdraw its staff from its office in Garm and to suspend its activities in central Tajikistan, pending guarantees that an enquiry would be made and that measures would be taken to avoid such incidents in the future.

In November ICRC delegates returned to the Tavildara and Garm areas, following a meeting between the Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the head of the UTO and chairman of the National Reconciliation Commission. Relief and medical assistance were immediately brought to the areas. However, a new hostage crisis involving expatriate humanitarian staff, which erupted in November and during which one French national was killed, forced the ICRC to reduce its expatriate staff.

Despite renewed discussions with the Tajik authorities at all levels, the delegation made no headway in its efforts to obtain access to government-held detainees in accordance with customary ICRC procedures. The main unresolved issue was the authorities' unwillingness to allow delegates to interview in private detainees awaiting trial.

In contrast, successful approaches were made to the opposition, with a view to gaining access to prisoners held by it. In January 1997, delegates were able to visit again the group of government soldiers detained by the opposition, who had already been registered and seen by the ICRC in December 1996. All of them were subsequently released. Delegates also had renewed access to the front-line town of Tavildara, which had passed into the hands of the opposition, to discuss the possibility of seeing any detainees held there. In June, visits took place to 158 government soldiers in the Mionadu valley. Red Cross messages were exchanged between detainees and their relatives, and detainees who had been released by the opposition were visited in their home villages.

Following the mid-year suspension of activities, visits to detainees held in the Garm and Tavildara valleys resumed in early December. Delegates found that only 33 of a group of government soldiers seen by the ICRC in June were still detained by the UTO, the others having been released during the summer and autumn. Owing to the harsh winter climate, the remaining detainees were provided with clothes, shoes and blankets.

mid-year suspension of activities

visits to detainees

*protection of the
civilian population*

mine awareness

*dissemination – essential
support for other activities*

Protection of the civilian population and of wounded combatants was a major concern for the ICRC during and immediately after the fighting in August in the south and west of the country, including the capital. Through observations and interviews it was able to bring the problems faced by the population to the attention of the relevant military and civilian authorities, both locally and in Dushanbe. In addition, ICRC delegates delivered emergency medical supplies to health facilities treating people wounded in the fighting. They also monitored the situation during clashes east of Dushanbe in October.

As the threat of landmines persisted in central Tajikistan, additional mine-awareness leaflets were printed in Tajik and Russian to alert internally displaced persons returning to their homes in the region. To form a clearer picture of the landmine problem in the country, a data collection system was set up to formalize the gathering of relevant information.

For humanitarian law to be respected it was more important than ever before to ensure that combatants and civilians throughout the region knew and accepted its principles and rules. With this in mind, in addition to existing cooperation programmes with the Ministries of Defence and the Interior and the presidential guards, long-term cooperation agreements on instruction in the law of armed conflict were signed early in the year with the Tajik border troops, the police forces and the 201st Motor-Rifle Division of the Russian Ministry of Defence, deployed in Tajikistan as part of the CIS peace-keeping forces. An ICRC training manual for military instructors was approved by the Tajik Ministries of Defence and the Interior, and distributed to military units throughout the country.

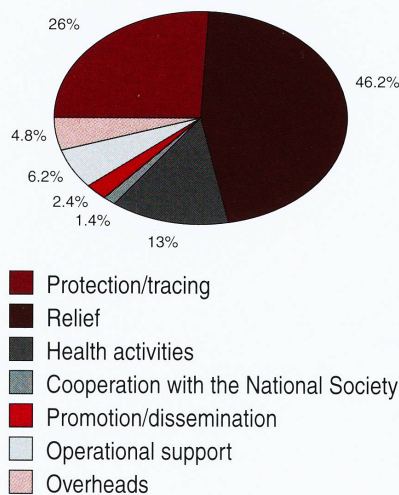
Cooperation with the Ministry of Education continued with a view to incorporating humanitarian law into the curricula of higher educational institutions, particularly in faculties of law and military studies. Further working contacts in this regard were established with Tajik State University and Khodjent State University, where mandatory courses on humanitarian law were introduced for students of international law. A series of national seminars were held to present humanitarian law and its implementation to the Tajik legal community.

For the secondary schools programme,⁹ the Tajik-language books produced by the ICRC in cooperation with the Ministry of Education were distributed to schools in various regions of the country for testing and evaluation.

In August the government officially accepted the competence of the International Fact-Finding Commission, set up in accordance with Article 90 of Additional Protocol I. It also took measures to revise the criminal code and to establish a national commission for the implementation of humanitarian law. Working contacts were made with the legal departments at the President's Office and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Justice.

TAJIKISTAN

Total expenditure in 1997:
Sfr 10,954,076



⁹ See *Moscow regional delegation*, pp. 210-211.

As hostilities died down in the first half of the year, assistance to medical facilities in Dushanbe, to which war casualties from conflict areas had previously been referred, was gradually reduced. Nevertheless, deliveries of surgical supplies for the treatment of long-term injuries, bullet wounds and landmine casualties were kept up, including to hospitals treating people injured during the August fighting in and around Dushanbe.

assistance to medical facilities in Dushanbe

Apart from the periods in which activities were suspended for security reasons, hospitals in former conflict areas received regular assistance. A primary-health-care programme in Ciafark, in the Shugnau valley, was started in October to meet significant medical needs reported there. However, owing to the changes in the conditions that had prompted the start of this activity and because of security constraints, the delegation was forced to suspend the programme at the very end of the year. In contrast, monthly drug distributions, training and specialist assistance resumed in November for hospitals in Garm and Tavildara, following a survey of medical facilities along the old front lines and in areas cut off from regular medical supplies.

medical programmes in former conflict areas

In the absence of an extension of the agreement with the Azeri authorities, the programme under which amputees were flown to Baku for limb-fitting had to be discontinued in the first half of the year.¹⁰ To meet the needs of amputees in Tajikistan the ICRC decided to rehabilitate an existing prosthetic/orthotic centre in Dushanbe. Work on the project started in November.

In early 1997, six months after the start of an emergency nutritional programme launched to ensure the survival of the approximately 7,000 detainees¹¹ in the country, a comprehensive report detailing ICRC findings about the nutritional situation in Tajikistan's 14 prisons was handed over to the authorities. This first assessment revealed that the level of malnutrition among detainees remained high. A second survey carried out in summer showed that although ICRC assistance had succeeded in reducing the mortality rate in prisons, the overall situation was still far from satisfactory: in many places of detention ICRC food supplies had become the only source of nutrition, instead of being used as a means to tide prisons over until the authorities had taken the measures necessary to make up the shortfall in food. In a new effort to alleviate the problem, the ICRC set up a therapeutic feeding programme for some 800 malnourished detainees. Offers were also made to help the prison administration start its own food production by providing seed and fertilizer. Representations were made repeatedly to prison staff and management, as well as to the Ministry of the Interior to reiterate that the care of detainees was the responsibility of the detaining authorities. Some improvement was noted in the last six months of the year. However, having care-

nutritional programme for detainees

¹⁰ See *Armenia/Azerbaijan*, p. 222.

¹¹ See the ICRC's *1996 Annual Report*, p. 222.

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



– visited 200 detainees held by the Tajik opposition and enabled them to exchange 758

Red Cross messages with their families;

- under the nutritional rehabilitation programme covering some 7,000 detainees in 14 Tajik prisons, provided essential medicines, 250,000 vitamin tablets, 547.5 tonnes of wheat flour, 348.5 tonnes of beans and lentils, 189.7 tonnes of rice, 54.1 tonnes of vegetable oil, 25.6 tonnes of high-energy biscuits, 1.4 tonnes of enriched milk, plus 7.9 tonnes of soap, 1,729 blankets, 7,981 pullovers and 5,074 pairs of shoes;



– distributed relief assistance consisting of 1,033 tonnes of food and 498 tonnes of other supplies, such as blankets, clothes, candles, soap and plastic sheeting, to some 22,000 internally displaced persons and groups otherwise affected by the conflict, as well as to people requiring assistance following a minor earthquake in December;



– until June, provided medical and surgical supplies to 14 hospitals and several first-aid facilities caring for government soldiers and opposition fighters;

- as of June, gave regular supplies of medical materials to hospitals in Dushanbe and in November made

ad hoc distributions in the south of the country;

- during the fighting in August, delivered emergency medical assistance to health-facilities treating the wounded;
- provided public health facilities for displaced people in 3 shelters in Dushanbe with medical supplies and recruited a doctor to give assistance;
- initiated training programmes and provided ad hoc support to hospitals in Ciafark, Garm and Tavildara;



– flew 14 war amputees from Tajikistan to Azerbaijan for the fitting of artificial limbs at its

Baku prosthetic/orthotic centre;



– jointly with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, brought food and other relief to 355

people whose houses had been destroyed during the August fighting in Dushanbe and Kurgan-Tube;

- together with the National Society, helped 1,363 families return from Gorno-Badakshan to the Hatlon region;
- jointly with 55 branches of the National Society, provided 21.5 tonnes of warm clothes and 85,400 pullovers for vulnerable groups throughout the country;



– arranged for the head of the legal department of the Ministry of Defence to take part in

the third international ICRC seminar on the law of armed conflict held in Kyiv in June;

- gave presentations on the law of armed conflict for officers and soldiers under the authority of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior, the presidential guards and the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, and helped prepare training materials on the same subject for troops and military instructors;
 - arranged for a study to be carried out on national legislation with a view to implementation of humanitarian law and submitted the findings to the government;
 - at the request of the government, conducted an assessment of the Tajik criminal code;
 - assisted in introducing substantial courses on humanitarian law at 2 Tajik State universities;
 - to launch the pilot phase of the schools programme in 5 regions, produced and distributed 2,000 copies of the Tajik-language textbook for pupils, as well as 100 copies of the teachers' manual;
 - supported the production of 12,000 copies of the *Code of conduct for combatants: Tajik border troops* in Tajik and Russian;
- printed 10,000 mine-awareness leaflets in Tajik and Russian to inform the population about the threat of landmines.



fully weighed up the situation and after submitting to the highest authorities a comprehensive written assessment, the ICRC confirmed its decision to phase out food assistance to prisons in June 1998.

To address hygiene-related problems and combat disease, basic medicines and assistance in the form of blankets, soap, shoes, clothes and plastic sheeting were provided. The medical assistance was minimal, and the ICRC strongly and systematically emphasized the fact that the prison authorities must resume full responsibility for detainees' health care.

At the beginning of the year food and other supplies were distributed to some 4,000 families who had been displaced or were otherwise still affected by the hostilities. Towards April and May people realized that the cease-fire was holding and started returning home. The ICRC facilitated their return and, in coordination with UNHCR, provided further assistance at the various places of origin only, so as to support the repatriation process. Some 3,500 persons who had taken refuge in Gorno-Badakshan and could not return home because of landmines and harsh winter were helped by the sub-delegation in Khorog until June, when they were able to move.

Following the resumption of ICRC operations in the Garm and Tavildara areas in November 1997, a last round of food distributions was carried out for people in Tavildara district in December. Furthermore, in view of the approaching hard winter, warm clothes and shoes were delivered to the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, for distribution to especially vulnerable groups. This marked the end of the assistance programme, carried out in cooperation with branches of the National Society throughout the country.

To carry out its relief efforts the delegation once again had to overcome tremendous logistical obstacles. Owing to the destruction of key bridges and the insecurity in the central regions, convoys were unable to travel directly from Dushanbe to Garm and Khorog, but had to make a lengthy detour that involved moving into and out of neighbouring Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and crossing mountain passes at an altitude of more than 4,000 metres.

Cooperation with the National Society continued, notably in the area of tracing and dissemination, for which training and other support were provided. The ICRC recognized the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan in November.

*assistance for
vulnerable groups*

TASHKENT

Regional delegation

(Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)

As in years past, the Tashkent regional delegation focused on disseminating international humanitarian law and strengthening the operational capacity of the region's National Societies, in addition to providing logistical support for the ICRC operation in Tajikistan.

Senior military instructors representing the Ministries of Defence of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan took part in the second international course on the law of armed conflict held in Moscow for CIS countries, while one officer each from the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Uzbek armed forces attended the third such course, aimed at legal advisers to the armed forces and organized by the ICRC's delegation in Kyiv.¹² A general from the Kazakh Ministry of Defence attended the first Russian-language course on the law of war held in San Remo, Italy, at the end of the year.

Discussions were held with representatives of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior, the border guards and the national guards of all four countries covered by the regional delegation with a view to setting up regular training programmes on humanitarian law and on integrating the law into military combat training and procedures. Following regular contacts with the Ministries of Defence of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan the ICRC participated in the training of a battalion scheduled to take part in a UN peace-keeping exercise. Several high-level meetings held with the Ministries of Defence and the Interior in Kyrgyzstan at the end of the year resulted in the setting up of training programmes on humanitarian law for the Kyrgyz armed forces. Dissemination sessions were also carried out throughout the year in all four republics, ranging from introductory presentations for officers to training seminars for military instructors. Specifically, numerous seminars on humanitarian law were held for officers of the Kazakh armed forces involved in peace-keeping operations in Tajikistan.

To promote awareness of humanitarian law and its incorporation into regular lecture programmes, further contacts were established with academic circles. After talks held with representatives of several universities in all four countries, the ICRC, together with lecturers, started to work on preparing courses on humanitarian law for various faculties; the first such courses were held at the start of the academic year at the law faculties of the Turkmen and Kazakh State Universities. The regional delegation also organized seminars and talks for students at various universities and institutes of higher learning.

¹² See *Kyiv regional delegation*, p. 207.

As part of ongoing efforts to familiarize children with Red Cross and Red Crescent values and the fundamental humanitarian principles,¹³ cooperation agreements were signed with the Uzbek and Kyrgyz Ministries of Education to develop textbooks for a compulsory secondary school course entitled *Man and Society*.

Follow-up missions were carried out to promote the establishment of national commissions for the implementation of humanitarian law. The government of Turkmenistan subsequently decided to set up such a commission. A study on humanitarian law and its implementation in national legislation was carried out in all four countries covered by the delegation, and a number of recommendations were submitted to the relevant authorities.

Efforts to encourage the authorities to adhere to the 1980 UN Convention prohibiting or restricting the use of certain conventional weapons were partly successful, insofar as Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan declared their intention to ratify the Convention or Protocols thereto. Furthermore, Turkmenistan declared its full support for a global ban on anti-personnel landmines and was among the signatories of the Ottawa treaty. To support incorporation of the treaty into the national legislation, the government was provided with appropriate documentation. At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, the ICRC organized a seminar on landmines in Bishkek, which was attended by representatives from various authorities concerned by the issue.

The National Societies of the region received support in developing and promoting their activities, notably in the areas of dissemination and tracing, and in raising their public profile. As dissemination in particular was a priority, joint plans of action in this area were drawn up with all four National Societies early in the year. Activities focused on internal dissemination to National Society staff and the organization of competitions on humanitarian law for two important target audiences, namely young people and journalists. The ICRC recognized the Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan in March.

¹³ See *Moscow regional delegation*, pp. 210-211, and the ICRC's *1996 Annual Report*, pp. 225-226.



– provided the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies with 2,500 family parcels to assist a sudden influx of Afghan refugees seeking shelter in Turkmenistan;



– provided the region's National Societies with training and guidance for the restoration of family links and gave them material assistance in the form of office equipment and salaries;

- signed formal cooperation agreements regarding tracing activities with the National Societies of the 4 republics covered by the regional delegation;
- financed the salaries of a dissemination officer in each National Society;
- organized a three-day seminar for the dissemination coordinators of the National Societies of the 5 Central Asian States;
- assisted the National Societies in training dissemination officers in their regional branches and organizing dissemination sessions for the authorities and young people, so as to raise awareness of their activities and of the basic principles of humanitarian law;

IN 1997 THE ICRC:

- provided material support for the Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan to produce a video film and a brochure about its work;
- supported National Society efforts to translate several ICRC publications into the national languages;
- supported the National Societies of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in organizing drawing competitions for schoolchildren in connection with World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day;
- provided funding for the Kyrgyz National Society's summer camp attended by 28 leaders of the Red Cross Youth, who were made familiar with the basic principles of humanitarian law and the Movement, and were taught how to set up social-welfare projects;



- in all 4 countries covered by the regional delegation, carried out studies on humanitarian law and its implementation in national legislation;
- held 2 seminars in Tashkent for the legal specialists recruited in the 5 Central Asian States to carry out the study;

- provided documentation and teaching materials for university libraries and the Centre for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at Tashkent State University;
- continued to translate basic humanitarian law treaties into the national language of each of the countries covered by the regional delegation;
- held a one-week course on humanitarian law for instructors from the military academy of the Turkmen Ministry of Defence;
- paid for a participant each from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to attend a seminar for lecturers of humanitarian law organized by the ICRC in Moscow;
- helped organize a one-day seminar on the implementation of humanitarian law in national legislation, which was attended by some 50 representatives of different ministries and universities in Uzbekistan.

The Near East

1948-1949

1948-1949: occupied territories and the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli War

1950-1951

1952-1953

1954-1955

1956-1957

1958-1959

1960-1961

1962-1963

1964-1965

1966-1967

1968-1969

1970-1971

1972-1973

1974-1975

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2004-2005

2006-2007

2008-2009

2010-2011

2012-2013

2014-2015

2016-2017

2018-2019

2020-2021

2022-2023

2024-2025



AND NORTH AFRICA

1948-1949: occupied territories and the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli War

1950-1951

1952-1953

1954-1955

1956-1957

1958-1959

1960-1961

1962-1963

1964-1965