

SRI LANKA

SUPPORT TO MEDICOLEGAL INSTITUTIONS

JANUARY 2022



Under the joint infection prevention and control (IPC) project of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS), 17 mortuaries recommended by Sri Lanka's Ministry of Health were provided with hygiene and disinfection materials, personal protective equipment (PPE) and material for the management of the dead. Along with the College of Forensic Pathologists of Sri Lanka, joint assessments were conducted at recommended mortuaries that would benefit from minor renovation and material support.

The SLRCS, assisted by the ICRC, will monitor and provide complete support to two mortuaries in Chilaw and Batticaloa selected under the IPC project. The project aims to help mortuaries in Sri Lanka maintain safe operational continuity in the face of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ICRC also provided 20 steel storage units to the Institute of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology (IFMT) in Colombo for refurbishment of its centralized records room. This initiative will contribute towards the management and protection of information within the facility in line with best practices, while ensuring that information relating to unclaimed and unidentified bodies is systematically archived for future reference.

During October and November, the ICRC also donated 2,000 body bags to the Ministry of Health to support the management of COVID-19 fatalities.

TRAINING SESSIONS ON INTERNATIONAL RULES AND STANDARDS FOR POLICING



Training sessions on international standards of law for law enforcement officials (LEOs) were conducted from October to December for police and Special Task Force (STF) personnel. The in-person and online sessions

aimed to raise awareness of the judicial guarantee process, ill-treatment and torture, arrest and detention, use of force and firearms, search and seizure and public order management.

The training sessions were attended by over 4,500 law enforcement officers, including newly recruited police officers, STF officers, as well as the STF Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team, medical unit staff, newly promoted chief inspectors and instructors from all police colleges in Sri Lanka.

REMOTE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS



To continue to support the families of missing people amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICRC's mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programme in Colombo was adapted to the remote mode. Working jointly with local partner organizations and accompaniers trained by the ICRC, families were reached via Skype and telephone.

While the use of virtual communication methods proved challenging at times, accompaniers were able to build a good rapport with the families through a sense of community and trusting relationships. In this manner, a total of 6,246 individual sessions between accompaniers and families were conducted in Batticaloa, Gampaha and Jaffna during 2021. Families of missing people were also offered support to engage in projects or activities in memory of their missing loved ones.

The guidance provided by accompaniers helps families of the missing to cope with their complicated mental state. Many families consider the accompaniers “friends” who give them an opportunity to be heard again. The support provided through remote mode during this challenging time was appreciated by the families.

Families of missing people also received multipurpose cash assistance through the Emergency Relief Programme to help them cope with the economic challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 2,600 families of missing people have been assisted through this initiative to date.

“I am so happy I was able to speak to someone who understood my mental struggles and with whom I could be so open about my feelings. I felt relieved”- Wife of a missing person from Gampaha district

SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS FROM SRI LANKA PARTICIPATE IN ICRC'S GLOBAL WORKSHOP ON RULES OF WAR



The ICRC delegation in Sri Lanka facilitated the participation of six senior military officers from the Sri Lanka's tri-forces in the 14th annual Senior Workshop on International Rules governing Military Operations (SWIRMO) from 1 to 4 November 2021. SWIRMO, a high-level workshop on international humanitarian law (IHL), focuses on the application of IHL in the decision-making process of military operations.

This year's workshop focused on the role of IHL in urban warfare, partnered military operations and influences on battlefield behaviour. Participants also had the opportunity to use a new video game simulation created by the ICRC that puts officers and soldiers in scenarios resembling real life where

military objectives need to be balanced against the risk of civilian harm. The participants from Sri Lanka were briefed on the application of the theories and rules of IHL in the context of the changing nature of warfare, a result of advancements in military and communication technologies.

Commenting on the event, a participant from Sri Lanka said: "The workshop offered a common platform to share our thoughts and ideas about IHL with participants from other countries. IHL is not applicable only to senior officers at the strategic level. Its knowledge must be transferred to each level of command so that all stakeholders are aware of its application. The role played by the ICRC to promote respect for IHL among the armed forces around the world is commendable."

The 14th edition of SWIRMO brought together 400 senior military officers from more than 90 countries through online discussions and in-person sessions. Workshop participants were able to deepen their understanding of the most pressing aspects of IHL while recognizing the need to integrate international legal considerations into operational practice.

The ICRC is formally entrusted under the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols with protecting the victims of armed conflict and with promoting IHL. SWIRMO is organized annually to further this mandate.

FACTS & FIGURES (SEPTEMBER- DECEMBER 2021)



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS

- 650 relatives of missing persons received weekly psychosocial support through 2,988 remote sessions, and 117 of them were referred to service providers for assistance with economic, legal and administrative, educational and health needs;
- 129 families were provided with cash grants to improve their access to income through Micro-Economic Initiatives;
- 1,550 families from agriculture and fisheries sectors received cash and inputs assistance to improve their access to income;
- 171 families affected by COVID-19 related measures received additional support to revive livelihood projects while 2,812 families received multi-purpose cash assistance through the Emergency Relief Program.

STRENGTHENING FORENSIC CAPACITY

- 26 anthropology casts, 2 anthropology equipment and 21 forensic related scientific reference publications were donated to the University of Jaffna;
- Cleaning, disinfection materials and equipment were donated to the District General Hospital in Chilaw, Teaching Hospital in Batticaloa and the IFMT along with medical equipment;
- 500 copies of the practice guidelines for "Management of the unclaimed and unidentified dead bodies" were printed and donated to the IFMT;
- Supported Pre-congress session on Forensic Anthropology conducted by the College of Forensic Pathologists of Sri Lanka (CFPSL) for 41 participants.



MONITORING THE CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

- 299 detainees were visited individually throughout the country, and findings and recommendations shared confidentially with prison authorities;
- 222 families were provided a travel allowance to visit their relatives in detention;
- 7 places of detention were provided ad hoc assistance in the form of hygiene and recreational items for the benefit of 5,264 detainees;
- Worked with prison health services to help prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 in prisons by donating PPE to the Prison Headquarters and Welikada Prison Hospital. These items included over 19,600 protective gear and 330 liters of liquid soap and detergent;
- Laboratory equipment including 100 microscope slides, 50 staining troughs, 1000 cover slips, a centrifuge, a hematology analyzer and a rack for tubes were donated to the Mahara Prison hospital.



PROMOTION OF IHL

- Universities and law colleges were invited to take part in virtual national rounds of the Henry Dunant Memorial Moot Court Competition. The final competition was held on 23 December where the team from University of Colombo emerged champions;
- 6 senior officers from the tri-forces attended the SWIRMO virtual course for South-East Asia from 1 to 4 November;
- 108 army officers benefited from Military in Internal Security Operations (MISO) workshops;
- Over 4,500 participants from the police, including STF officers, participated in 7 online and 2 face-to-face training sessions on the international rules and standards of policing for law enforcement officials.






SUPPORT TO THE SRI LANKA RED CROSS SOCIETY

- 488 public spaces in 6 districts were disinfected as part of preventive measures to control the spread of COVID-19;
- 107 volunteers from 4 district branches were trained in disaster response techniques;
- 78 candidates participated in the advanced First Aid training;
- 13 sessions on humanitarian principles and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement were organized;
- SLRCS delivered a camp management training to 100 military personnel focusing on addressing humanitarian needs in times of disasters;
- 43 participants benefitted from the annual Safer Access refresher workshop; 25 awareness sessions on Safer Access were delivered to volunteers at the district level.

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