

SRI LANKA

PROMOTING PRACTICAL UNDERSTANDING OF IHL

MARCH 2023



The University of Peradeniya (UoP) won the 16th National Henry Dunant Memorial Moot Court competition, while the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) bagged the runners-up prize at the event held in Colombo from 6–7 October 2022.

Organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in partnership with the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo (UoC), the competition gave undergraduate students an opportunity to test the application of international humanitarian law (IHL) across diverse scenarios. Teams from four state universities – UoC, OUSL, UoP and the University of Jaffna (UoJ) – took part in the event and presented written submissions on humanitarian law, demonstrating their knowledge of the subject.

The winning teams went on to take part in the South Asia regional round of the competition in Kathmandu, Nepal, from 18–20 December 2022, where OUSL bagged the fifth place among ten teams from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. OUSL participated in the Asia-Pacific IHL moot court competition in Hong Kong in March this year.

We also restarted vernacular moot court competitions for law undergraduates studying in their native language. On 6 December 2022, we organized the competition in Sinhala, in partnership with the Faculty of Law, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU), where UoJ emerged champions, competing with UoC, OUSL and KDU. A moot court in Tamil was held for the first time in Jaffna on 20 December 2022, in partnership with the UoJ's Department of Law, and the host university came first, competing against UoC and OUSL.

Promoting the study of humanitarian law among future decision-makers is vital for ensuring that the life and dignity of people affected by conflict and other violence are respected.

160 YEARS ON THE SIDE OF HUMANITY



On 17 February, the ICRC marked 160 years of its work to provide relief to millions of people affected by armed conflict and other violence. For 160 years, we have been on the side of humanity, protecting the lives and dignity of victims of conflict and helping to reduce their suffering. We mark this milestone with our partners in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The ICRC is at the foundation of international humanitarian action and international humanitarian law. We have a unique mandate, as set out in the Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols, to protect and help people affected by armed conflict and violence. In fulfilling this mandate, we are guided by our principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality so that we can help those who are most in need.

In 2022, we reunited over a thousand families separated by violence, disaster or migration, visited hundreds of detainees, supported thousands of hospitals and provided access to clean water, food, hygiene items and other essential services to millions of people in over 100 countries. This includes our work in Sri Lanka, where we have been present for over 30 years and are now responding to the humanitarian needs resulting from the past conflict. Our work in the country addresses the multifaceted needs of the families of missing persons, promotes forensic best practices among the medicolegal community, helps authorities improve the living conditions and treatment of people in detention and promotes humanitarian law among the armed forces, academia and religious circles. We also partner with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) to support their humanitarian work.

Today, there are more than 100 armed conflicts in the world and our work is of vital importance. With the nature of war evolving, raising new challenges for humanitarian action, we continue to adapt our humanitarian response. However, our commitment to ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance to the most vulnerable people across the world remains unchanged.

We have come a long way, but there is still a long way to go. On this historic occasion, I would like to extend my deep appreciation to all of you for your continued support throughout this journey.

Séverine Chappaz
Head of Delegation
Sri Lanka



EMERGENCY RELIEF TO VULNERABLE FAMILIES



As part of our humanitarian response to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, the ICRC and the SLRC provided support to vulnerable households to ensure that they can

access food and other essential items through the Emergency Relief Assistance programme.

We reached 6,173 highly vulnerable households in 12 districts (Ampara, Batticaloa, Galle, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Matara, Monaragala, Puttalam, Polonnaruwa, Trincomalee and Vavuniya) with government authorities. We provided multipurpose cash assistance through bank transfers to 2,498 households and multipurpose cash vouchers to 3,675 households. Each voucher was worth 18,000 Sri Lankan rupees and could be redeemed at selected supermarkets to purchase essential items.

DISPLACED PEOPLE FROM RAKHINE RECONNECT WITH THEIR FAMILIES



The ICRC together with the SLRCS assisted displaced people from Rakhine to re-establish contact with their families, upon request, following their arrival in Sri Lanka.

A total of 105 displaced people were rescued by the Sri Lanka Navy off the coast of Jaffna on 18th December 2022. Upon their transfer to the Immigration Detention Centres in Mirihana and Welisara, the ICRC and SLRCS facilitated telephone calls to their families through Restoring Family Links (RFL) services. Eighty-two people who wished to be reconnected with their families were able to inform them of their whereabouts.

The ICRC and the SLRCS continue to monitor their situation and needs, particularly their need to communicate with their loved ones.

ICRC SUPPORTS INPALMS IN COLOMBO



We provided financial and technical support to the 14th International Congress of the Indo-Pacific Association of Law, Medicine and Science (INPALMS) held in Colombo in December 2022 to strengthen Sri Lanka's medicolegal system and promote a regional medicolegal platform.

We contributed to a symposium on missing persons and jointly organized a workshop on forensic anthropology with the College of Forensic Pathologists of Sri Lanka (CFPSL). We also organized "Management of the Deceased in Mass Fatality Situations" workshop with the CFPSL and the National Police Academy and conducted a half-day workshop on forensic action in humanitarian settings, drawing experiences from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines.

SAFE KITS FOR MEDICOLEGAL UNITS



To ensure the continuity of medicolegal services during the economic crisis, and at the request of CFPSL, we provided 450 customized Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence (SAFE) kits to be distributed among 45 medicolegal centres across Sri Lanka. The kits were designed by CFPSL to reduce wastage. Each kit consists of material to collect evidence for ten medicolegal examinations.

195 POLICE OFFICERS TRAINED ON INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS



We held four training programmes on the International Rules and Standards for Policing for 195 police officers from 40 police stations. The sessions were conducted in Colombo and Kalutara districts between November and December 2022. The topics covered international standards and references on arrest, detention, torture and ill-treatment and the use of force and firearms.

WORKSHOPS ORGANIZED WITH THE SRI LANKA JUDGES' INSTITUTE



The ICRC and the Sri Lanka Judges' Institute organized a series of workshops for judicial officers in the country on remedial and preventive measures to reduce prison overcrowding, the role of the judiciary in preventing and

addressing torture and other forms of ill-treatment of detainees, and medicolegal processes.

Around 200 judges took part in five workshops held between August 2022 and February 2023. Representatives from the higher judiciary and government institutions, including the National Authority for the Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses, the Attorney General's Department, the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board, the Department of Probation and the Department of Community Based Corrections, also contributed in the workshops. The CFPSL jointly organized the workshop on medicolegal processes. The series will continue till June 2023.

SUPPORTING HEALTH CARE IN DETENTION



The ICRC and the Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka organized a two-day seminar on health care in detention in Colombo on 3 and 4 November 2022. The topics covered at the seminar entitled "Capacity-Building Seminar for Prison Medical Officers" included medical ethics for doctors working in detention facilities and the management of tuberculosis, psychiatric diseases and non-communicable diseases. Thirty-seven prison medical officers working in 17 prisons across the country joined the seminar.

IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS OF FAMILIES OF THE MISSING



In response to the economic crisis, we initiated a community based livelihood support programme (CBLSP) to help improve the incomes of vulnerable farmers in the northern, eastern and north central provinces.

As part of our mandate to respond to people affected by the past conflict and integrate the families of missing persons into the community, the programme helped farmers enhance their food production and consumption. In partnership with the Rural Development Foundation and the PALM Foundation, we gave 2,201 households from 16 farming communities agricultural materials including over 115,300 kg paddy seed and 17,100 kg of ground nut seed.

The programme was designed and implemented keeping the needs of the communities at the centre while also promoting climate-resistant agricultural practices. The District and Divisional Secretariats, Department of Agriculture, Mahaweli Authority and the Department of Agrarian Services helped coordinate the programme besides providing technical support.

FACTS & FIGURES

(OCTOBER 2022–JANUARY 2023)



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS

- **462** families were contacted to follow-up on tracing enquiries and **40** cases of missing persons were registered
- **771** psychosocial support sessions (individual and group) were provided through companions from partner organizations to **712** relatives of missing persons. Of them, **64** people were referred to other sources for help with economic, legal/administrative, educational and health needs
- **190** families were provided with support to restart or develop their businesses through microeconomic initiatives
- **2,882** households from **20** communities received agricultural and fisheries materials through the community based livelihood support programme in coordination with government authorities
- **150** households benefitted from business management skill training, helping them to link their businesses with markets and service providers
- **936** most vulnerable families received multipurpose cash assistance (LKR 18,000 each) to cover food and other essential expenses through the emergency relief assistance programme
- **617** households benefitted from temporary employment through projects to repair agricultural infrastructure under the cash-for-work programme

STRENGTHENING FORENSIC CAPACITY

- Gave a presentation on the ICRC's integrated approach to address the missing and their families at the Indo-Pacific Association of Law, Medicine and Science Congress (INPALMS) in Colombo
- Upgraded **1** mortuary at the Institute of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology (IFMT) to improve infection prevention and control



MONITORING THE CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

- **22** visits were made to **17** places of detention and the findings and recommendations were shared confidentially with prison authorities
- **97** detainees across the country were visited individually
- **80** families were provided a travel allowance to visit their relatives in detention
- **23,920** detainees were provided with hygiene items and educational and recreational materials
- Roofs of **2** wards at the Welikada prison were revamped, benefiting **295** female detainees
- We also supplied milk powder for pregnant women and new mothers and children in **5** prisons
- **16** visits were conducted with a focus on health care in **8** places of detention (Boossa prison, Colombo Remand Prison, Mahara prison, New Magazine prison, Wellampitiya police station, Welikada female prison, Welikada male prison and Welikada Prison Hospital)
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) items and hospital appliances were donated to Mahara and Welikada prison hospitals. These included **130** hospital mattresses, **4** wheelchairs, **2** pieces of furniture for people with physical disabilities, **5,000** gloves, **3,000** FFP2 masks, **80** litres of hand disinfection liquid, **15** litres of detergent and a printer



PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

- **187** army personnel deployed to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for Force Protection Security received a UN peacekeeping briefing in October 2022
- **374** army personnel (Combat Convoy Contingent) to be deployed to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) benefited from a UN peacekeeping briefing in November 2022
- **115** army officers, part of the junior command and senior command courses at the Army War College in Buttala, benefited from a one-day seminar on international humanitarian law in October 2022
- **36** officers attended a two-day Military Information Support Operations (MISO) training programme at the Security Forces Headquarters (Central) in Diyatalawa in November 2022
- **28** IHL instructors (24 from the Army, 2 Navy, 1 Air Force, 1 STF) participated in the three-day advanced IHL course at Institute of Peace Support Operations Training Sri Lanka (IPSOTSLS) in Kukuleganga in November 2022
- **37** officers (32 from the Army, 1 Navy, 2 Air Force, 1 Special Task Force, 1 Police) who were following the UN Observers' Course at IPSOTSLS, benefited from a session at Kukuleganga on 5 December 2022
- **8** Buddhist scholars, including two monks, attended a [conference on reducing suffering during armed conflict](#) held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 9–10 December 2022, where they presented papers






SUPPORTING THE SRI LANKA RED CROSS SOCIETY

- **77,300** oxygen masks, **300,000** face masks, **9,000** paraffin compresses and **2,950** thoracic drains were donated to the Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka with the SLRCS
- **5,677** pregnant women and new mothers in **10** districts were provided with supplemental nutrition packs
- **114** volunteers were trained in branch disaster response techniques and camp management
- **21** awareness-building sessions on humanitarian principles and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement were organized for **750** students, professionals and the general public
- **9** first-aid services were delivered at district-level events
- **25** awareness sessions on the Safer Access Framework were conducted at the branch level
- **20** SLRCS volunteers working on Restoring Family Links (RFL) services attended the SLRCS's annual national workshop on RFL organized with support and technical input from the ICRC
- We helped the SLRCS RFL focal point to participate in the Asia-Pacific regional meeting held in Bangkok from 30 November–2 December 2022

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