

SRI LANKA

ACCOMPANIMENT PROGRAMME: 350 FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS IN JAFFNA TO BENEFIT

OCTOBER 2022



Since its inception in 2015, the Accompaniment Programme of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has supported, connected and empowered hundreds of “accompaniers” and thousands of families of missing persons in Sri Lanka.

Implemented across all 25 districts, the programme helps families of missing persons deal with emotional challenges as well as economic, legal and administrative issues arising from the uncertainty surrounding their missing loved ones. In the Northern Province, a total of 3,270 families of missing persons (in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaithivu and Vavuniya districts) have received support through 194 trained accompaniers. Seven years since its launch in Jaffna, the last phase of the programme is being implemented in the Northern Province, providing support to 350 families of missing persons in the Jaffna Peninsula and surrounding islands through 22 trained accompaniers.

Families of those missing are faced with a constant dilemma: they often wonder if their loved one is alive and will return someday. Accompaniers trained by the ICRC help the families cope with this ambiguity. “Accompaniment is about being a ‘helpful friend’. I realized that families had so much to share but didn’t have anyone to listen to them,” says an accompanier from Jaffna.

Built on mutual trust and empathy, the bond between accompaniers and relatives of missing persons often lasts well beyond the duration of the programme and connects families of missing persons so that they can help each other. “I’m glad that my accompanier visits me. I can talk to her about my missing loved one. I have so many worries; it’s a relief that she is there to listen to me,” shares a relative of a missing person.

DONATION TO MINISTRY OF HEALTH



As part of its humanitarian response, the ICRC, together with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS), donated 10,000 blood bags to the Ministry of Health of Sri Lanka in July 2022 to address the shortage of medical equipment and supplies. The blood bags were handed over to Dr Anver Hamdani, director of Medical Technology Services, and coordinator for Health and Care Donor Activity of the Ministry of Health.

SUPPORT FOR DETAINEE WELFARE



Recognizing the importance of ensuring appropriate hygiene levels for the physical and psychological well-being of people deprived of their liberty, the ICRC distributed 22,520 hygiene kits, as well as cleaning materials, in 25 places of detention across the island amidst the economic crisis in the country.

FISHING GEAR FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES



The ICRC provided fishing gear to 326 fishermen to develop and improve their livelihood activities. The recipients included families of missing persons, women-headed households, people with disabilities and extremely vulnerable households in the Uriyankaddu GND of Vakara DS Division in Batticaloa district. The distribution was done with community-based and partner organizations and the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Batticaloa.

WORKSHOP: ROLE OF MEDIA IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES



The ICRC, together with the Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI), organized a workshop on the “Role of media in humanitarian crises” on 19 August. The workshop consisted of three sessions: understanding humanitarian crises and media, data-driven humanitarian reporting and solution-based reporting. The sessions were conducted by specialists in the fields of journalism and humanitarianism, benefiting 20 local journalists. The workshop took place in concurrence with ICRC’s 2022 virtual media summit “War reporting: Navigating an ethical minefield”.

FACTS & FIGURES

(MAY- AUGUST 2022)



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS

- **227** families were contacted to follow up on their tracing enquiries and **9** cases of missing persons were registered
- **1,841** weekly psychosocial support sessions (individual and group) were provided through our partner organizations to **705** relatives of missing persons. Of these, **151** people were referred to other sources for assistance with economic, legal/administrative, educational and health needs
- **1,028** vulnerable families of missing persons received multipurpose cash assistance (18,000 Sri Lankan rupees per household) to cover their daily food and nutrition needs and to protect or restore their hygiene conditions for up to two weeks
- **65** destitute families of missing persons received additional multipurpose cash grants to cover their immediate needs (food and other essential expenses)
- **210** households received fishing gear to restart and develop livelihood activities through the Community-Based Livelihood Support Programme (CBLSP)
- **227** people who are part of CBLSP received training in business management skills in coordination with the government's veterinary and agriculture departments

STRENGTHENING FORENSIC CAPACITY

- With the ICRC's support, the College of Forensic Pathologists of Sri Lanka facilitated a workshop on the draft National Manual on Forensic Anthropology for **39** postgraduate trainees in forensic medicine to enhance the practice of skeletal examinations. Additionally, donations, including precision instruments and reference materials, were also made to nominated medical facilities
- Personal protective equipment and disinfection materials were donated to the departments of forensic medicine of **5** universities



MONITORING THE CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

- **14** visits were made to **12** places of detention and the findings and recommendations were shared confidentially with prison authorities
- **179** detainees across the country were visited individually
- **220** families were provided with a travel allowance to visit their relatives in detention
- **15,478** detainees were provided ad hoc assistance in the form of hygiene items and educational and recreational material
- Guidelines on international recommendations and domestic legal framework on prisons were finalized
- Basic medical equipment was provided to **5** prison hospitals (Dumbara, Kalutara, Mahara, Negombo and Welikada)
- **4** representatives from the Ministry of Health and Department of Prisons attended the 1st World Conference on Health in Detention in Geneva, Switzerland
- Milk for pregnant or lactating women and children was supplied to **5** prisons
- **100** masks were donated to Kegalle Prison Hospital to support COVID-19 preventive measures when carrying out high-risk procedures
- **4** tables, **13** chairs and **2** metal cupboards were donated to Mahara Prison Hospital
- An ECG machine and printer were donated to Welikada Prison Hospital



PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

- 2 briefings on United Nations (UN) peacekeeping were conducted for 93 army personnel going to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and 166 air force personnel (aviation contingent) joining the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in June
- 6 officers of the tri services (1 legal and 1 operational) attended a three-day online Operational Law Course for operational and military legal officers conducted by the Centre of Military and International Humanitarian Law (CoMIHL), Kuala Lumpur, from 19 to 21 July
- 108 chief inspectors participated in two virtual training sessions on International Standards on Policing and Public Order Management as part of their job orientation at the National Police Academy
- 49 investigation officers from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Counter-Terrorism and Terrorism Investigation Division (CTID) benefited from a one-day training programme on International Rules and Standards for Policing held in August
- 230 newly recruited sub-inspectors benefited from a one-day training programme on International Standards on Policing held at the Sri Lanka Police College in August






SUPPORTING THE SRI LANKA RED CROSS SOCIETY

- 10,000 blood bags were donated to the Ministry of Health to address the humanitarian needs arising from the economic crisis
- 113 volunteers were trained in branch disaster response techniques and camp management
- 24 awareness-building sessions on humanitarian principles and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement were organized
- 7 first-aid services were delivered at district-level events
- 47 volunteer first-aid instructors joined a refresher course on first-aid techniques

International Committee of the Red Cross
29, Layards Road, Colombo 05, Sri Lanka
T + 94 (11) 250 33 46
F + 94 (11) 250 33 48
E-mail: colombo@icrc.org www.icrc.org

Vavuniya Office
70, Vairavar Kovil Road
Vairavarpuliyankulam, Vavuniya
T +94 (0) 24222 28 55
F +94 (0) 24222 25 37

Batticaloa Office
Manresa Road, Kothukulam, Pillayaradi
Batticaloa
T +94 (0) 65 222 70 70

 facebook.com/icrc
 twitter.com/icrc
 instagram.com/icrc



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