



# ICRC IN NEPAL



ICRC

IN BRIEF



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### Introduction

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) first opened a delegation in Kathmandu in 1961 to assist Tibetan refugees. This delegation closed in 1963 once the refugee crisis subsided. The ICRC re-started humanitarian activities in the country in 1998 in response to the outbreak of armed conflict, operating from its Regional Delegation in New Delhi, India. The delegation in Kathmandu was re-opened in 2001.

During the ten-year civil war (1996-2006), the ICRC's activities included visiting people who were detained by both parties to the conflict; improving water and sanitation in

detention facilities, villages and hospitals; supporting health structures with medical training and supplies to treat the wounded; providing assistance to displaced people and communities affected by the conflict; and promoting respect for international humanitarian laws and principles.

The ICRC maintains a presence in Nepal today to address the residual humanitarian consequences of the conflict, and to assist the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), the Government of Nepal and other institutions to improve their emergency preparedness and response capacities.





## ASSISTING THE FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS

More than 1,300 people remain unaccounted for since the end of the armed conflict. Their families do not know whether these missing persons are dead or alive, and live with the anguish of uncertainty. Most of these families say that their primary need is to obtain answers and proof of what happened to their relatives so that they can move on with their lives. The ICRC acts on behalf of the families of the missing by:

- Seeking answers as to the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives through confidential dialogue with the former parties to the conflict.
- Promoting awareness of the needs of the families of the missing among state authorities, the public and others who can assist them.
- Providing Mental Health and Psychosocial support to the families of missing persons through an accompaniment programme called 'Hateymalo' since 2010. The programme, implemented in collaboration with the NRCS and non-governmental organizations, delivers psychological, economical, legal/ administrative and socio-cultural support to them. With support groups being at the core of its multi-faceted interventions, the programme helps families cope with their specific problems and rebuild social and community bonds. The programme also includes building solidarity networks of other service providers locally and mobilizing them to include families of the missing in their assistance, primarily for economical, legal and administrative support. By 2014, the programme is expected to cover almost all families of the missing.
- Working closely with the NRCS to maintain contact with the families of the missing in order to keep them informed of any developments of concern to them and to facilitate their access to governmental assistance.
- Strengthening forensic expertise in the event of exhumations which will help clarify the cases of missing persons through the identification of mortal remains (or in the event of a disaster resulting in missing persons and identification needs).



## PREPARING FOR AND RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

### Supporting the Nepal Red Cross Society

The ICRC supports the NRCS in strengthening its organizational and operational capacities as first responders to the needs of people affected by violence or disasters such as an earthquake. This involves:

- Training and equipping Red Cross Action Teams in the needy districts in the country.
- Improving NRCS skills in operating in tense situations to ensure safe and unhindered access to those in need of humanitarian assistance.
- Joining the NRCS in hosting discussions with all those concerned to protect health care by preventing the misuse of ambulances and promoting respect of their unhindered movement during general strikes (bandhs).
- Developing the capacity of the NRCS to trace the whereabouts of persons separated from their relatives and to restore family contact.
- Providing training in dead body management to ensure that the mortal remains of the victims are properly identified, handled with dignity, and returned to their families for the last rites.

### Supporting other institutions

The country remains prone to political and communal violence and seismic activity, any of which could provoke dire humanitarian consequences. To improve the emergency preparedness and response capacity of Nepal health and rescue services, the ICRC collaborates with health institutions and state authorities on the following initiatives:

- Training medical personnel to enhance their expertise in the management of emergency trauma cases and the handling of mass casualties. This helps reduce the incidence of trauma-related morbidity, mortality and disability among injured people. The ICRC runs courses in partnership with the Dhulikhel Hospital of Kathmandu University.
- Providing medical materials to health structures during emergencies for the treatment of victims.
- Giving emergency first aid training to security forces: Trained instructors of the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force replicate the skills at lower level.
- Developing the capacity of the Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force in the management of dead bodies after disasters through instructors training.





## PHYSICAL REHABILITATION

The ICRC and the NRCS identify and refer people who were injured or sustained disabilities during the armed conflict to two physical rehabilitation centres: the Green Pastures Hospital in Pokhara and the Yerahity Rehabilitation Centre run by the Nepal Army in Kathmandu. These centres are supported by the ICRC with equipment, consumables and training to provide custom-made artificial limbs and assistive devices (orthoses), crutches and wheelchairs. Recipients receive physiotherapy to learn how to use their new devices and regain full mobility.

The ICRC also sponsors Nepali students to attend a three-year training course at the Cambodian School of Prosthetics and Orthotics in Phnom Penh.

## PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR

Although the conflict has ended, unexploded weapons such as improvised explosive devices continue to kill and maim civilians. The ICRC supports the NRCS' Emergency Mine Risk Education Programme which aims to prevent injuries through improved community awareness of the dangers posed by these devices.

The ICRC also encourages the Nepal Government to ratify the Ottawa Treaty (the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention) which, among other things, prohibits the use and production of anti-personnel landmines.



## PROMOTING RESPECT FOR HUMANITARIAN LAW AND PRINCIPLES

The ICRC promotes knowledge of and respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and humanitarian principles among government institutions, the armed and security forces, academic institutions and key civil society actors. The ICRC supports:

- The Government of Nepal in its efforts to accede to IHL treaties and to adapt the national legislation accordingly.
- The Nepal Army to integrate IHL into its training and operational planning.
- The Armed Police Force to integrate specific aspects of International Human Rights Law (IHRL) such as maintenance of public order, use of force and firearms, and arrest and detention into its training and operational planning.
- Selected universities in the teaching and integration of IHL into their curricula.
- The promotion of international humanitarian law in the media and civil society.

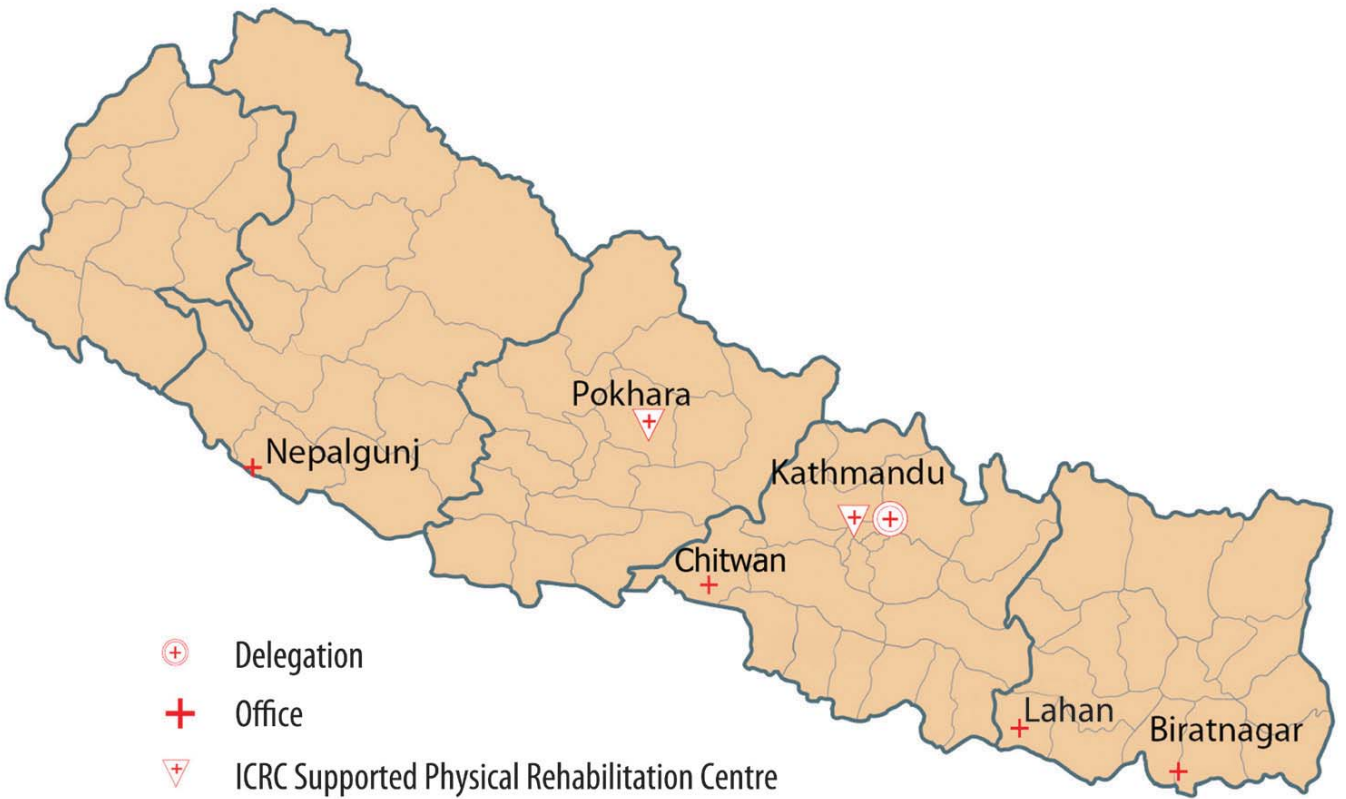
## ASSISTANCE TO BHUTANESE REFUGEES

In association with the NRCS, the ICRC enables Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal to stay in contact with and visit their relatives detained in Bhutan.





Arnaud Galent/ICRC



## MISSION

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

Biratnagar  
T 021 470639/471358  
F 021 470476

Chitawan  
T 056 523118

Lahan  
T 033 562322

Nepalgunj  
T 081 522262/525560  
F 081 524456



**ICRC**

International Committee of the Red Cross  
GPO Box: 21225, Meen Bhawan,  
Naya Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal.  
T +977 01 4107285/4107279 F +977 01 4107137  
E-mail: [kathmandu@icrc.org](mailto:kathmandu@icrc.org) [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)  
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