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Ongoing violence in parts of South Sudan, in particular in Jonglei, has forced thousands of people to flee their homes. In recent months, ahead of the rainy season, the ICRC has distributed aid and provided health care for people suffering the effects of the violence.

"We are worried about the humanitarian situation in Jonglei state, where continuing violence has forced thousands of civilians to flee their homes," said Adrian Zimmermann, deputy head of the ICRC delegation in South Sudan. Jonglei is a vast territory, a large part of which is not accessible by road between June and November because of the rain, so it can be extremely difficult to reach people.

"People need medical care, food, clean water and seed. We are doing the best we can to provide these basic necessities despite the seasonal logistical constraints," said Mr Zimmermann. The ICRC has a rapid-response surgical team in the country, and emergency surgical care has also been provided by a surgical team seconded by the Canadian Red Cross.

"Although needs, both in terms of assistance and protection, can be readily identified, the problem of access to the vast majority of the civilian population in large tracts of Jonglei state remains a source of concern," said Mr Zimmermann. The ICRC, like other humanitarian organizations on the ground, has repeatedly sought to meet people's needs, but for a variety of reasons relating to security and logistics has not always been able to do so.

Since January, ICRC surgical teams have been sent to Nasir, in Upper Nile state, and to Pibor, Bor and twice to Walgak, in Jonglei state, to perform emergency surgery. The ICRC has also treated wounded people from Jonglei in the Malakal Teaching Hospital in Upper Nile state. In the last four months, over 150 wounded patients have been treated throughout the country by the ICRC. Over 320 surgical emergencies have been handled at Malakal Teaching Hospital. The ICRC has been providing hospitals in Pibor, Bor and in the capital Juba, as well as Malakal Teaching Hospital, with consumables and other supplies for treating the wounded and the sick.

Distributions of food and other essential items

In March, the ICRC provided fishing equipment for around 12,000 people suffering the effects of the violence in Pibor and Gumuruk, in Jonglei state, and for about 2,500 households in Upper Nile state and in Western Bahr el Ghazal at the border with Sudan. In addition, ICRC water engineers repaired eight hand pumps in Pibor which provide clean water for over 4,000 people.

At the end of May, ICRC staff delivered over 80,000 kg of food and other items to Pieri and Waat, in Jonglei state, which have suffered from regular cattle raiding. Over 4,000 displaced people were given sorghum, beans, salt, sugar and oil to help tide them over for the next month. Items such as kitchen tools, mosquito nets, tarpaulins, blankets and soap were also distributed. These distributions were organized in close cooperation with community elders, who provided lists of the neediest people to the ICRC and informed the population ahead of time that the deliveries would take place. One woman said: "Thanks to the food we received the trees can have some rest now." She was referring to the fact that the lack of food had been so severe in recent weeks that many people had been forced to eat leaves.

Further aid distributions took place regularly in various parts of Upper Nile state and Western Bahr el Ghazal near the Sudanese border. Food was provided for over 15,000 people, household essentials for around 20,000 people and seed for around 50,000 people. In the Shilluk Kingdom of Upper Nile state, around 30,000 people who had been forced to flee their villages owing to armed violence were given sorghum, oil, beans, sugar, salt and seed with the support of volunteers from the South Sudan Red Cross. These distributions took place by boat.

More than 1,800 detainees visited

Under a memorandum of understanding signed in November 2012 with the Ministry of the Interior, the ICRC has been granted access to all civilian places of detention in the country to assess conditions and treatment. Within the last four months, ICRC delegates have visited more than 1,800 detainees in the state prisons of Juba, Malakal, Bentiu, Bor and Yambio.

"The aim of the visits is to bring about improvements in the conditions of detention and the treatment of the detainees. The ICRC shares the findings of its visits confidentially with the authorities and makes recommendations," explained Agnès Coutou, who coordinates the ICRC's detainee-related activities in the country. The ICRC is also prepared to help the

detaining authorities comply with international standards, in particular those relating to health services and sanitary facilities. On the basis of its mandate under the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC has served as a neutral intermediary in the repatriation of five prisoners of war from Sudan to South Sudan since the beginning of this year. Other detainees have been visited in military places of detention. The ICRC delegation continues to discuss a memorandum of understanding on detainee-related matters with the Ministry of Defence.

Within the past four months, the Juba Physical Rehabilitation Reference Centre run by the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare with the support of the ICRC has admitted 514 physically disabled patients, including 355 amputees. In addition to manufacturing prostheses and orthoses, the centre provides physiotherapy and other services.

Links with South Sudan Red Cross strengthened

Cooperation between the ICRC and the South Sudan Red Cross has been strengthened by a partnership framework agreement signed on 14 June. The agreement lays the long-term foundation for joint programmes such as those that help restore contact between family members separated from one another.

In 2012, the ICRC and the South Sudan Red Cross succeeded in reuniting 12 unaccompanied minors with their families within South Sudan and a further 20 with their families in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The ICRC and the South Sudan Red Cross have also worked together to set up emergency action teams comprising volunteers capable of providing first aid for the wounded or sick in emergencies. Since the beginning of the year, emergency action teams have been organized in Maban, Nasir, Mayom, Tonj South, Gok Machar and Nyamlel.