

# RCRC

Red Cross Red Crescent

Issue 1 · 2017 [www.redcross.int](http://www.redcross.int)

**Cities on the front line**

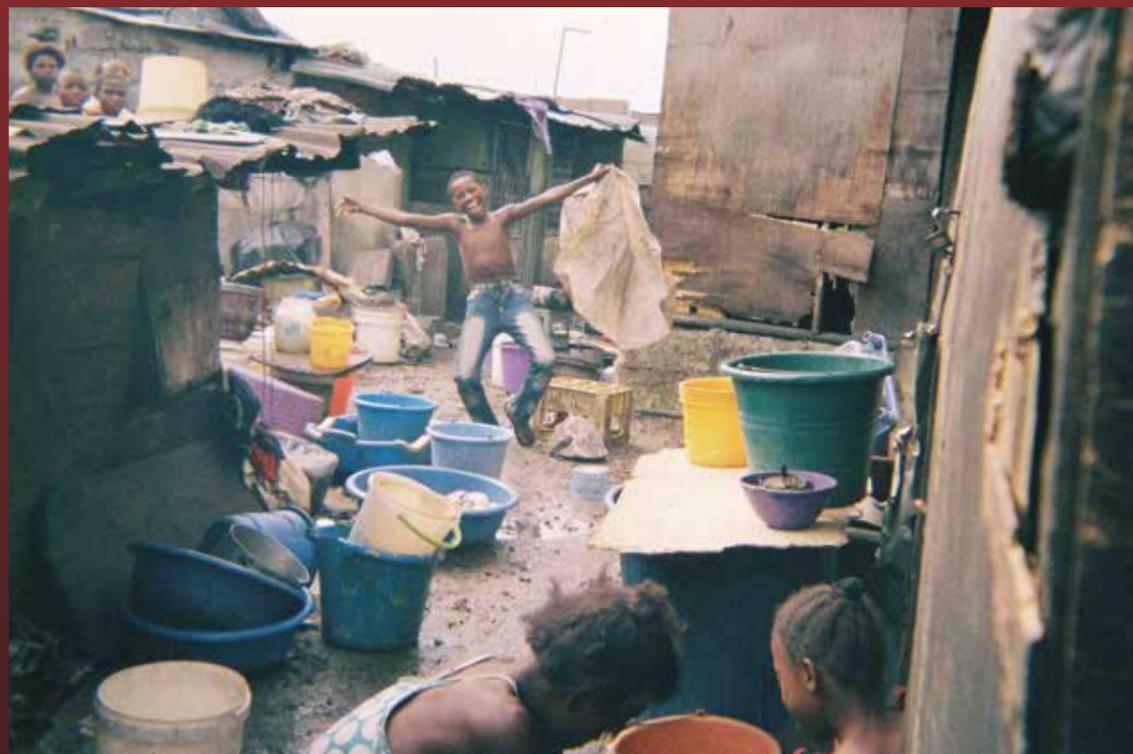
When urban areas become battlegrounds

**Resilience, a guided tour**

Mapping a city on the move in Dar es Salaam

**City speak**

City leaders around the world talk urban risk and resilience



Life is extremely hard in Prison Waterfront, a shanty town built on marshlands between a prison and a creek on the outskirts of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Along with the suffering brought on by extreme poverty, there are also many moments of happiness, love, laughter and good friendship. This is just one of the things that 25 young people wanted to show the world when the ICRC gave them disposable cameras to document their daily lives. See more on page 14.

Photo: Endurance Adolphus

# Cities of misery and hope



THE MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

# The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is made up of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the National Societies.



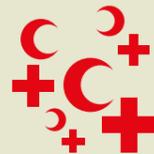
ICRC

**The International Committee of the Red Cross** 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.



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network, reaching 150 million people each year through its 190 member National Societies. Together, the IFRC acts before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. It does so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions. Guided by Strategy 2020 — a collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade — the IFRC is committed to 'saving lives and changing minds'.



**National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** embody the work and principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in more than 190 countries. National Societies act as auxiliaries to the public authorities of their own countries in the humanitarian field and provide a range of services including disaster relief, health and social programmes. During wartime, National Societies assist the affected civilian population and support the army medical services where appropriate.

## The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

is guided by seven Fundamental Principles:

**humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.**

All Red Cross and Red Crescent activities have one central purpose:

**to help without discrimination those who suffer and thus contribute to peace in the world.**

# Urban resilience: a tale of two cities

**W**ITH MORE THAN HALF the world's population living in urban areas, it's often said that we live in the era of the megacity. But we could also say that today's rapid urbanization is a tale of two cities. The first is a story of shining high-rises, symbols of power, commerce and wealth. The second, a tale of sprawling shanty towns, erected haphazardly by desperate people in unsafe areas — prone to flooding, landslides and infectious disease.



Photo: Fouad Bendimerad

These two very different cities often exist side by side. Yet they are growing farther and farther apart as the gaps between the urban rich and urban poor continue to widen. Those in between — the middle class — are being squeezed as wages stagnate and costs rise while those at the bottom are increasingly disenfranchised.

One way to break this cycle is by fostering something we call 'urban resilience' — people's basic ability to weather unforeseen shocks so that hard-won gains in income, health, shelter or education are not erased when disaster strikes. This makes eminent sense. But if we are really serious about urban resilience, we can't just address specific risks and vulnerabilities with projects and programmes. We must also address the core drivers that trap people in urban poverty.

It's true that for many people at the bottom, life is improving. In recent years, poverty has been reduced and many more have access to education, clean water and healthcare. In the meantime, humanitarian and development organizations are becoming more proactive, working to reduce risks and vulnerabilities before disasters or pandemics strike. They are also more sophisticated about encouraging locally owned, sustainable models of risk reduction and development. Inner city neighbourhoods and so-called slums or shantytowns — whose own vibrancy and capacity for innovation is often overlooked — are themselves developing pioneering solutions sometimes with outside support, sometimes not.

The problem is that while these proposed solutions may indeed build resilience, they do not address, let alone reverse, the overarching trends that perpetuate income and wealth inequality at the bedrock of urban vulnerability. People are gaining a little more in wages now, but the cost of living — housing, healthcare, education, food and water — is increasing all the time.

Consider the typical, low-income urban family, which now spends more income than ever before on housing, with large portions also going to basic necessities such as healthcare, education and nutrition. Meanwhile, that most precious of urban resources — land — is harder and harder to come by. As land prices soar, pressure to build often trumps basic building safety provisions as well as protections for the natural resources that help safeguard cities during disasters.

So what do we do?

First, cities must work harder to provide safe and affordable housing. This requires long-term political will based on the premise that the investments will act as a 'rising tide' for all. Cities will save money over the long term through smart master planning, investment in earthquake-resistant buildings, and providing critical services such as clean water and sanitation that ultimately reduce healthcare spending.

We must update and improve laws governing how countries and cities prepare for,

and respond to, crisis. In 2010, for example, the Philippines passed a national disaster management act that requires cities to set aside 5 per cent of revenue for disaster risk reduction. Such reforms are already making a big difference in many Philippine cities.

Cities must both update and enforce building regulations. While awareness about building codes is growing, enforcement lags in many cities where millions of people live in substandard houses and buildings. Cities must also better balance the pressures of development with safeguarding natural resources that protect cities from predictable, natural crises.

Lastly, we must all work harder to ensure that the great destroyer of urban promise — urban conflict — is avoided at all costs. People living through urban warfare today show incredible resilience in the face of the most unimaginable hardship. Many humanitarians take heroic steps to support them. But unless there is a radical rethink about the way militaries interact with densely populated cities, we cannot fool ourselves into thinking urban warfare is compatible with urban resilience.

These are ambitious, even daunting, goals. But they are necessary and achievable. After major disasters, money flows. Societies mobilize and politicians make pledges. Today, we need that same urgency to prevent urban crises and build resilience. This will take leadership and courage. Fortunately, the growth of cities also comes with a silver lining. Long at the forefront of innovation, cities now command more power, resources and influence. The time has come to leverage that influence for a more resilient future for all urbanites, rich, poor and in-between.

**By Fouad Bendimerad**

Fouad Bendimerad is executive director of the Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative, a private scientific consulting group that focuses on urban disaster risk reduction in megacities and fast-growing urban areas.

## Movement rocked by more aid worker deaths

Since the beginning of the year, a total of 17 Movement workers or volunteers have lost their lives in attacks by warring parties in various parts of the world. In early February, six staff members of the ICRC were killed in Afghanistan when their clearly marked convoy was attacked on its way to a distribution in Jawzan province. Two other staff members were still missing at the time of writing. Also in February, two members of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent were killed along with two people who had come to receive aid at a distribution centre in the town of Hamadaniya. Several others were injured. In January, two Mexican Red Cross paramedics were murdered by armed gunmen while carrying out humanitarian duties in Ixtapaluca, Mexico. Also in January, an accidental air strike on a camp for displaced people in

Rann, Nigeria killed more than 70 civilians, including six aid workers from the Nigerian Red Cross Society. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement strongly condemned the attacks insisting that fighting parties take all necessary steps to ensure that humanitarian workers are never targeted.

## Deadly avalanches

Following heavy snowfall in parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan in February, at least 120 people were killed by avalanches that destroyed or damaged dozens of homes. In the north-eastern Afghan province of Nuristan, bordering Pakistan, at least 45 people in one village perished under an avalanche. "In the village of Afsye, Bargematal district, 70 houses have been destroyed by the avalanches," said Muhammad Mahab Khan, head of operations for



Photo: Julie Schneider/ICRC

## Struggling to survive in South Kivu

Due to relentless fighting between the Democratic Republic of the Congo's armed forces and armed groups, whole communities are facing serious food shortages because they no longer have access to their fields and crops. In December, the ICRC distributed urgently needed food to more than 8,500 people in the affected area. Some 3,500 of the people who received this emergency aid had fled to villages in the hills that were also seriously affected by the conflict. Agriculture is the main source of income for many households and being cut off from their fields has led to a shortage of food and a sharp rise in food prices. To compensate for the loss of income, some people work in the region's open-pit mines or transport goods over long distances for local traders.

the Afghan Red Crescent Society. Windstorms and frozen ground slowed rescue efforts and made building provisional shelters a challenge. Just weeks earlier, Italian Red Cross search-and-rescue teams battled dangerous conditions to bring 14 people to safety after a major avalanche engulfed a hotel in Italy's Pescara province, killing six people.

## Empty nets in Gaza

The life of a fisherman is rarely easy. But the fishing boats of Gaza face a particular challenge: they are only allowed to fish up to six nautical

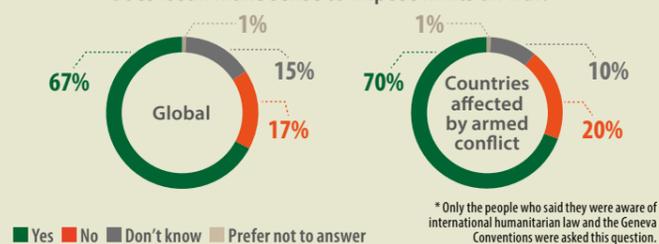
miles off the coast, due to the Israeli naval blockade. Fishing is an essential part of Gaza's economy, but restrictions have undermined the sector for the past ten years. "Earning a living is extremely hard nowadays, especially with the limited resources," says 20-year-old Fahmi Bakr, who studies law at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. He is newly married and works as a fisherman to pursue his education and support his family. "I work all night long and put my life at risk, but unfortunately I cannot meet the basic needs of life with the little amount of fish we catch."

## Humanitarian index

- 70:** percentage of the world's population expected to live in cities by 2050.\*\*
- 70:** number of bodies of drowned migrants recovered in one day by Libyan Red Crescent in early February.\*
- 80:** percentage of diseases in developing countries caused by poor sanitation and unsafe drinking water.\*\*
- 100,000:** number of people estimated to move every day to an urban slum in the developing world.\*\*
- 1.5 billion:** number of people currently believed to be living in informal settlements and slums without adequate access to healthcare, clean water and sanitation.\*\*
- 2 billion:** number of individuals aged 60 years or above by 2050, three times more than the estimated 2000 figure of 600 million people in that age group.\*\*
- 2.5 billion:** number of people worldwide who still lack crucial water and sanitation facilities.\*\*

Sources: \*Libyan Red Crescent/IFRC; \*\*United Nations; \*\*\* International Organization for Migration

The 1949 Geneva Conventions were adopted just after the Second World War, nearly 70 years ago. Warfare today is very different, does it still make sense to impose limits on war?\*



## Survey finds most people support rules of war

A majority of people questioned in a recent ICRC-commissioned survey feel that rules of war developed in the second half of the 20th century still make an important difference in protecting lives during conflict. According to a survey of 17,000 people in 16 countries conducted by WIN/Gallup International, some 80 per cent of people in countries at war believe that civilian deaths are unacceptable and not simply an inevitable part of war. However, the survey also found some troubling trends: an increasing number of people (and the average number in all surveyed countries) feel that civilian deaths in conflict zones are an inevitable part of war (from 30 per cent in 1999 to 34 per cent in 2016). See our Resources section, page 29, for more about the People and War survey.

## Voices

*"The feeling you have when you save somebody cannot be imagined."*

**Yasser Lakhmouh**, a Syrian Arab Red Crescent first-aid volunteer, in an interview just weeks before he was killed while on duty in Idlib, Syria in December 2016. Lakhmouh had worked for the Syrian Arab Red Crescent's Idlib branch for more than three years.

ISSUE 1 · 2017 · www.redcross.int

<p>■ Cover story <b>Cities of misery and hope</b> In many growing cities, migrant communities lack access to key services and live in neglected, sometimes uncharted neighbourhoods. In the <i>villas miserias</i>, or shanty towns, of Buenos Aires, the Argentine Red Cross builds the foundation for urban resilience.</p>	4
<p>■ Special focus: urban resilience <b>City speak</b> In this edition, we focus on urban crisis and resilience. Throughout the magazine, city and community leaders tell their city's story of risk and resilience. The mayor of a boomtown in western Uganda, page 7. An urban village in the Philippines makes ripples, page 13. A district in Cameroon's capital, Yaoundé, cleans up, page 21. See more at <a href="http://www.rccmagazine.org">www.rccmagazine.org</a></p>	8
<p>■ Urban warfare <b>Front-line city</b> As cities have taken on greater importance as population centres and economic hubs, they have also become the front lines in most of today's conflicts — with extreme humanitarian consequences.</p>	8
<p>■ Focus <b>48 hours in 'Prison Waterfront'</b> Twenty-six young people were given disposable cameras and two days to document their lives in Prison Waterfront, a shanty town, built on marshlands between a prison and a creek, which has grown up along the waterfront of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Through their words, and their viewfinders, they share their stories.</p>	14
<p>■ Eyewitness <b>Life on Syria Street</b> The largely urban conflict in Syria has had a major impact on cities in neighbouring countries. Lebanon, for example, is already divided by complex confessional fault lines. The fighting in Syria, which has pushed 1.2 million Syrian refugees into Lebanon, has increased tensions. A case in point is the ironically named Syria Street, the main thoroughfare in Tripoli, Lebanon.</p>	16
<p>■ Health <b>Urban outbreaks</b> Today's growing cities are proving to be efficient incubators for infectious disease. How should cities, humanitarian organizations and local communities avoid the next urban pandemic?</p>	18
<p>■ Disaster preparedness <b>Mapping a city on the move</b> Cities are never static. They boom and bust, they grow and shrink. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania swells by some 35,000 people every month. Now, a mapping project is helping local communities to reimagine their path to resilience, alley by alley, street by street.</p>	22
<p>■ Migration <b>A walk through Kigogo</b> Using an online map developed with local residents, Tanzania Red Cross volunteers offer a tour of the risks and assets of Kigogo, a neighbourhood in Dar es Salaam.</p>	24
<p>■ Migration <b>Stateless in the city</b> A programme supports stateless Shan people living in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Meanwhile the Thai Red Cross Society reaches out to migrants on the margins with free dental care.</p>	26
<p>■ Resources People and War survey updated, healthy ageing toolkit, an e-briefing on nuclear weapons, and more.</p>	29

Articles, letters to the editors and other correspondence should be addressed to:

**Red Cross Red Crescent**  
P.O. Box 303, CH-1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland  
E-mail: [rcc@ifrc.org](mailto:rcc@ifrc.org) ISSN No. 1019-9349

**Editor**  
Malcolm Lucard

**Production Officer**  
Paul Lemerise

**Design**  
Baseline Arts Ltd, Oxford, UK

**Layout**  
New Internationalist, Oxford, UK

**Printed**  
on chlorine-free paper by Artgraphic Cavin SA, Switzerland

**Editorial board**  
**ICRC**  
Mohini Ghai Kramer  
Dorothea Krimitsas  
Nicolas Von Arx

**IFRC**  
Joanna Brent  
Benoit Carpentier  
Matthew Cochrane

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of researchers and support staff of the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies.

The magazine is published three times a year in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish and is available in 190 countries, with a circulation of more than 60,000.

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Unsolicited articles are welcomed, but cannot be returned.

*Red Cross Red Crescent* reserves the right to edit all articles. Articles and photos not covered by copyright may be reprinted without prior permission. Please credit *Red Cross Red Crescent*.

The maps in this publication are for information purposes only and have no political significance.

**On the cover:** A child and her mother in their home on the outskirts of Chiang Mai, Thailand, where the IFRC is part of an effort to help stateless migrants cope with life without legal status. Photo: Mirva Helenius/IFRC  
Photos on this page, from the top: Facundo 'El Sike' Cobbe/IFRC; Gift Ataiyong Nathaniel; Brandon Tauszik/ICRC; Mirva Helenius/IFRC; Mirva Helenius/IFRC.



4. Cities of misery and hope



14. 48 hours in 'Prison Waterfront'



16. Life on Syria Street



18. Urban outbreaks



26. Stateless in the city



# Cities of misery and hope

In many growing cities, migrant communities face multiple levels of marginalization, lack key services and live in neglected, sometimes uncharted neighbourhoods. In the so-called *villas miserias* of Buenos Aires, the Argentine Red Cross builds the foundations for urban resilience.

IN THE MIDST OF BUENOS AIRES' most extreme heatwaves, a group of Red Cross volunteers walks through the narrow alleys of Barrio Mitre, one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Argentina's capital city.

In this small enclave, nestled in the thriving Saavedra district and just two blocks away from an upscale shopping mall, Julia and Aristóbulo Picón welcome two volunteers who have come to check the couple's blood pressure.

"So nice you came on such a hot day!" says Julia. "Come on, sweetheart, we've been waiting for you. Do you want something cool to drink?"

"Thanks," replies one of the volunteers, looking for a chair to sit on in order to start the procedure. "We just want to know if Aristóbulo has behaved well this week and ate fruit and healthy food as he promised."

"I've been a bit nervous lately," Aristóbulo replies, "and I couldn't sleep well because last night some noisy people were rehearsing for carnival until midnight right across the street. Sometimes I think I should move back to my home in Catamarca [a province 1,200 kilometres away] and live alone in the middle of the mountains."

"But then these nice girls wouldn't visit you every Saturday," his wife teases.

Like Julia and Aristóbulo, many residents of Barrio Mitre are not natives of Buenos Aires. Originally built during the 1950s as a provisional home for a group of neighbours who lost their houses in a fire, Barrio Mitre was never considered an official neighbourhood of the city.

Over the years, while surrounding neighbourhoods grew more prosperous, residents of Barrio Mitre were increasingly marginalized. Meanwhile, its population — many from rural areas and other Latin American countries — kept growing. As the area's needs increased, the Argentine Red Cross stepped in to provide basic health services and to work to reduce risks that disproportionately hit the city's poorest.

"We focus specially on the situation of elderly people as most of them live alone," explains Ayelén Gómez, who has been a volunteer for ten years and has been working in Barrio Mitre for the last seven. "We come here every Saturday and people are very grateful."

Gianni Bellone, another of the team of Red Cross volunteers, adds: "Checking their blood pressure every week allows us to be in contact with them, to try to find together solutions for their vulnerabilities."

The volunteers' work started some seven years ago but it increased dramatically after a pivotal event in 2013. On 2 April, after heavy rains, the homes of nearly all of Barrio Mitre's 4,000 residents were completely inundated.

"We lost everything and it was a miracle we escaped that day," recalls Julia Picón. Born in Para-

## CITY SPEAK

### Urban resilience

There are many upsides to the increasing urbanization of the world's population: cities offer billions of people new opportunities for economic growth, education, healthcare and improved quality of life. But the world's burgeoning cities are also becoming the main stage for new and very severe manifestations of social ills that have long plagued humankind: poverty, disease, violence and even warfare.

The same concentration of human energy that has long made cities great also means that major disruptions — from natural or man-made disaster, or violence — greatly magnify the human costs. The earthquakes in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in 2010, the tsunami in north-eastern Japan in 2011 and the ongoing, largely urban conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Yemen are just a few cases in point.

Cities are by nature vulnerable. Despite being economic powerhouses, they are largely dependent on outside supplies of food and water, as well as centralized services such as electricity, water and sanitation. Violence, war, natural disaster and major crises can disrupt these services, leaving urban populations malnourished, lacking in basic hygiene and vulnerable to disease. The damage caused by urban crisis, meanwhile, can take decades to repair.

But rapid urbanization also means that cities are becoming the world's new power centres. Combined with their capacity to innovate, this puts them in a unique position to lead the movement towards a more resilient future. In this edition, as we focus on urban crises and resilience, we ask urban community leaders around the world what cities need to do to achieve the elusive goal of urban resilience.

guay, she has lived in her house for more than 40 years, which she now shares with her husband, her daughter and two of her grandchildren. "I don't know how to swim so I would have gone with the water if it weren't for my family helping me. It was a nightmare and I still feel afraid every time it rains."

Both neighbours and Red Cross representatives agree that in Barrio Mitre the bonds between them strengthened after those floods. "We were there for weeks after the floods," Gómez says. "People opened their homes for us to teach them how to clean properly once the water receded. We distributed first-aid kits, which they keep and take care of."

The real goal, however, is not just to respond with aid in cases of emergency, but to help the community prepare itself more effectively. "What we want to achieve is resilience so that they themselves are better prepared to face emergencies," says Gómez.

Volunteers for the Argentine Red Cross teach first aid to children in Villa Fraga, an inner-city slum or *villa miseria* as they are known in Argentina. The National Society engages in numerous efforts to help such communities improve their health, prevent violence and disease, and prepare for emergencies.

Photo: Argentine Red Cross

In the long-established *villa miseria* of Barrio Mitre, Argentine Red Cross volunteers offer routine health checks to senior residents as part of regular health prevention and disaster preparedness efforts.

Photo: Facundo 'El Sike' Cobbe/IFRC





☞ First-aid sessions, sports, art and other social activities are also a way to reach out to youth in marginalized communities, say local volunteers.

Photo: Facundo 'El Sike' Cobbe/IFRC

In neighbourhoods such as Barrio Mitre, that means starting with the basics, things that most residents of Buenos Aires would take for granted, such as street signs. In one recent initiative, the Argentine Red Cross worked with locals to post street signs at every corner in order to allow people, including emergency personnel, to navigate Barrio Mitre without getting lost.

"It's something very simple, but before, if you didn't come from Barrio Mitre, there was no way to know where you were or to find a specific direction," Gómez says. "In fact, ambulances wouldn't come when someone called in an emergency because they couldn't find the address."

### Cities of poverty

The floods of 2013 in Barrio Mitre revealed the dire situation of all those living in the *villas miserias* or shanty towns in Buenos Aires: in a city where 3 million people live in the downtown metro area (and roughly 9 million in surrounding areas known as 'Greater Buenos Aires'), up to 400,000 people live in substandard housing, without access to public services such as electricity, sewage systems or natural gas. In addition, residents contend with a raft of social issues, from violence, drug addiction and human trafficking to unemployment, overcrowding, xenophobia and poor access to both health and education systems.

This image of sprawling shanty towns and makeshift houses huddled in the shadow of lofty, glittering high-rises is an increasingly familiar sight in cities across Latin America as more and more people migrate to regional urban centres to escape drought or violence, or simply to find a job.

Some 4.6 per cent of Argentina's population — roughly 2 million people — are foreigners, according to a 2015 study issued by the United Nations. The latest national census, meanwhile, reports that up

to 13.2 per cent of those living in Buenos Aires are immigrants (mainly from Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru), many of whom enter the country illegally and therefore end up without access to essential services.

While much of the global media coverage of migration focuses on northerly migration, there is "a long-term history of internal immigration within the [South American] continent" and a considerable amount of migration to and within the Southern Cone, says Alexandre Claudon de Vernisy, head of Country Cluster Support representing Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay for the IFRC.

Many of these migrants live without proper legal documentation in their adopted cities, without access to traditional pathways to education, employment or other government services. Many Latin American National Societies, such as the Argentine Red Cross, make particular efforts to reach out to these migrants, many of whom move to neighbourhoods already falling through the cracks of rampant urbanization.

The Argentine Red Cross has identified nine such urban communities where it works on a range of issues, from routine health screenings to reducing stigmas around issues such as HIV/AIDS and providing first aid. It also works alongside communities to increase their ability to deal with crisis, providing some basic emergency equipment, helping them map their communities and develop evacuation plans and even training people how to carry injured people to places that are accessible to ambulances.

One overarching goal is to develop a constant presence by building a local volunteer base and gaining acceptance by working with a range of local organizations, from communal dining rooms to churches, temples, schools, assistance centres, government agencies and even gang members. As a neutral auxiliary to the government, the National Society works under an agreement with authori-

**"What we want to achieve is resilience, so that the communities themselves are better prepared to face emergencies."**

**Ayelén Gómez**, volunteer for the Argentine Red Cross, who works in Barrio Mitre

ties that allows it to offer services to help migrants access available services and integrate into city life.

### Villa Fraga

In Villa Fraga, one of the newest and most populated *villas miserias* in the heart of Buenos Aires, nearly 5,000 people live on a piece of land belonging to the national train system, near the railways. Divided in nine sectors, and considered by experts as one of the most hazardous shanty towns of the capital due to fights between immigrant gangs from different countries, there is only one way in or out of Villa Fraga.

Red Cross volunteers are making inroads here by offering educational activities for children: for example, games aimed at helping them prevent domestic accidents or learn how to prevent diseases such as dengue and Zika.

Precarious houses, with makeshift repairs, rise alongside the small muddy paths. On Sundays in the summer, most of the neighbours sit outside, trying to deal with suffocating temperatures that reach up to 38° Celsius.

"According to their needs and demands, we come and share information on first-aid techniques," says volunteer Celina Quinn. "We give workshops on preventing home accidents or how to carry an injured person because ambulances don't come into Fraga."

One local resident, Luisa, sits at the side of a modest cement football court and watches a group of 20 children paint, guided by Red Cross volunteers, while other youngsters study posters with information about diseases.

"It's amazing how concentrated they are right now," says Luisa pointing at another group of children who are listening to a volunteer explain cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

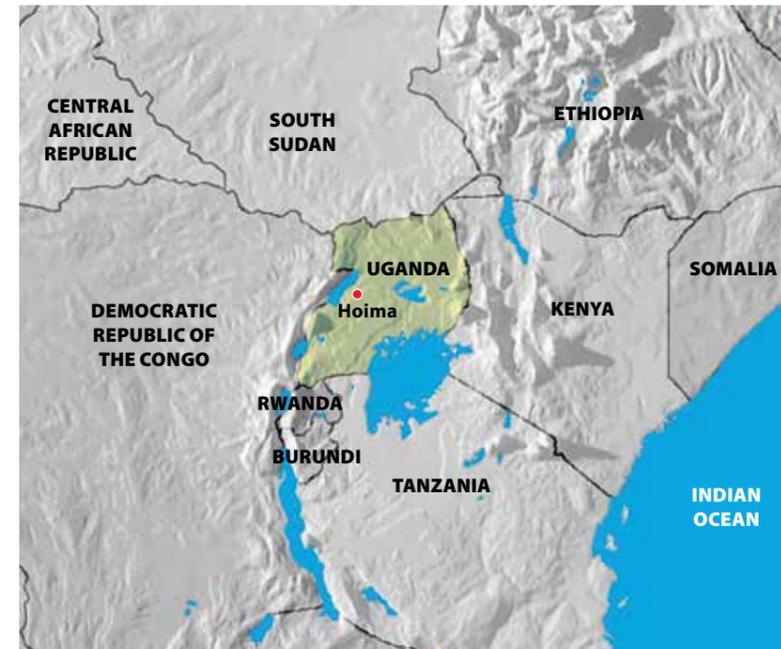
Due to her strong personality, Luisa has become a representative for Villa Fraga and her neighbours look for her when they have problems. On many occasions she has met with city authorities to negotiate better living conditions for the neighbourhood.

Like many of her neighbours, Luisa came to Argentina from Peru to complete her studies. She wanted to be a nurse, but it didn't work out. Now she works as a cleaner at a gym and is also an associate of a cooperative of city scavengers that collects recyclables in different neighbourhoods.

"I want these little kids to live better, I want them to have streets where they can move about safely. I don't want them full of mud every time it rains," she says. "In this neighbourhood we lack nearly everything but we have the right to progress. I think of that every night before I go to sleep." ■

By **Maria Agustina Larrea**

Maria Agustina Larrea is an editor and freelance journalist based in Buenos Aires.



### CITY SPEAK

## Boomtown blues

Not all rapidly growing cities are massive megacities. In fact, the bulk of urban growth is in small to mid-sized cities. Hoima, Uganda is a case in point. Located in western Uganda only 50 kilometres from the country's border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Hoima's population now stands officially at 106,000, up from 46,000 only five years ago. During the day, the city's population doubles as people from nearby rural areas arrive to buy goods, load up on water or sell produce.

The reason behind Hoima's boom is the discovery nearby of massive oil and natural gas reserves, which has placed the city on the map as one of Uganda's 'strategic cities' and drawn people from around the country looking for work. Grace Mary Mugasa, Hoima's first-ever mayor (the municipality was only formed in 2009), is optimistic about the city's growth but she says there are many challenges because, despite the boom in population, jobs and revenue won't materialize until 2020.

"Even though there aren't jobs now, people are coming because they know that if they are strategically placed here when production begins, they may get more of a chance than others [to find a job]," she says.

Land speculation caused by the boom has pushed many into the town centre, while ongoing drought has also forced many rural dwellers to sell their livestock and try to make ends meet in town. Now a growing slum area is vulnerable to severe windstorms and transmission of HIV, meningitis and other diseases.

In response, the city is putting in place better processes for land-use planning, fiscal management, resource mobilization and enforcement of building codes. "This way we will have good roads and avoid hazardous developments," she says. The town also receives support from organizations such as the Uganda Red Cross Society, which provides emergency assistance and education on health issues such as HIV/AIDS. But her real reason for optimism is Hoima's people. "The people of Hoima are vibrant and open," she says. "They are open to doing business and embracing the changes that need to come." Read more at

[www.rccmagazine.org](http://www.rccmagazine.org)



Photo: Courtesy Grace Mary Mugasa



# Front line city

As cities take on greater importance — as population centres and economic hubs — they have also become front lines in most of today's conflicts.

**L**OCATED IN SOUTH-WESTERN YEMEN, only an hour's drive from the Red Sea, the ancient city of Taiz was once known as the country's industrial base, a centre for the production of coffee and Yemen's cultural capital.

Today, Taiz is a city of ruins, with many of the city's trademark brown-and-white bricked buildings reduced to rubble. Streets are littered with burned-out cars and debris. Its famous governor's palace — a castle built on a conical mountain — is now just piles of dirt.

The city's inhabitants — some 600,000 people — have suffered deeply, enduring shelling, sniper fire, street-to-street combat and aerial bombardment.

A relative stalemate between opposing forces means the front lines have not moved significantly in many months, placing the population in the midst of a protracted, bitter standoff.

City streets, once vibrant with traffic, cars and

market stalls, are places of fear, of life and of death. "We were deeply happy until the war broke out in the city," says Hanan Addahbali, a widowed mother with a newborn baby girl.

Now, people with no involvement in the fighting have been surrounded by destruction, blood, fear and loneliness. "I would hug my baby girl when there were clashes and shelling [and] take her to the other room where sounds of bullets and shells were less [loud]," adds Addahbali.

"On one of those difficult days, my husband went out to buy some stuff for the house. While he was on his way back home, he was shot and killed by one of the snipers on the rooftop of a nearby building. My husband was not a fighter. He did not even know how to carry a weapon.

"That day, my life came to an end," she says, adding that without her husband's income and the loss of her job as secretary in his dentistry practice,

Before the conflict in Yemen, the Salah district in Taiz used to be a quiet but thriving residential neighbourhood. Photo: Khalid Al-Saeed/ICRC

she could no longer afford her rent and had to move in with her parents. "There was nothing left for me in this life, except for mere memories and a city which was, once, full of life."

## The human toll of urban warfare

The pain this woman has endured, along with the saga of Taiz itself, are examples of an increasingly common phenomenon in the world today: protracted and highly destructive urban conflict. The Syrian city of Aleppo is the most well-known recent example. But it is far from alone.

There is now a long list of cities that have suffered — or continue to suffer — from the devastating impacts of urban warfare. Here are a few: in Syria, there are Homs, Daraya, Deir Ezzor and Palmyra; in Yemen, there are Aden, Taiz and Sana'a; in Iraq, there are Fallujah, Mosul, Ramadi and Baghdad, among others.

A new report by the ICRC, 'I saw my city die' (expected to be released in early May), details the human toll of urban warfare (including the story of Hanan Addahbali above). It also explains some of the causes and makes a forceful set of recommendations to reduce the impact on civilians and the cities that support them. The report focuses on the Middle East, in particular Iraq, Syria and Yemen, where conflicts have been almost entirely defined by fighting over urban territories.

Why are all these conflicts playing out in an urban environment? According to experts interviewed for the report, fighters sometimes use the urban landscape for tactical purposes, to hide from opposing forces or to draw them into a situation of relative vulnerability. While insurgents in past decades have tended to hide themselves in mountainous areas or under the cover of jungles, the wide-open topography of the Middle East makes cities a logical place to base their operations according to some observers.

Warring parties, on the other hand, often say they must fight in urban areas to defend the local population or their own territory. Cities also have symbolic and strategic value and warring parties vie for control of populations, industrial and economic resources and propaganda points.

## Catastrophic consequences

Whatever the reasons, fighting in the urban environment has catastrophic consequences. In just one 72-hour period in November 2016, for example, the main hospitals in Taiz reported receiving an average of 200 wounded patients per day many of whom suffered from blast injuries. Many had to have limbs amputated.

Another tragic fact is that this kind of overwhelming demand for urgent medical care often comes just as public health systems in conflict-ridden cities



As cities take on greater importance — as population centres and economic hubs — they have also become front lines in most of today's conflicts. In Taiz today, no public health centres remain open, according to the ICRC's Taiz delegation, while the city's only two hospitals — one government-run, the other private — function with minimal resources and dwindling staff. Health workers in these hospitals endure long hours, frequent power outages and shelling due to their proximity to the front lines.

Given that the hospitals must prioritize people with life-threatening injuries, there is little time or resources left to deal with public health concerns, such as maternal and infant health, routine vaccination or monitoring of infectious diseases. Field hospitals run by armed groups similarly focus mainly on war wounded.

Meanwhile, standard ambulance services are virtually non-existent and warfare frequently interferes with the ability of medical and humanitarian workers to reach people injured in the fighting. In addition, any emergency field mission requires multiple negotiations by telephone and at checkpoints controlled by various armed groups operating in the city.

Because so many people live in small areas, urban warfare can cause high numbers of casualties very quickly. In addition, "the very nature of the man-made environment — closed-in areas made of steel and concrete — creates particular hazards," says Mauro Dalla Torre, a veteran ICRC war surgeon

Volunteers for the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in Aleppo transfer people in need of medical assistance across the front lines. Photo: Islam Mardini/SARC

***"The very nature of the man-made environment — closed-in areas made of steel and concrete ... reflect[s] the shockwaves of explosive devices in an even more deadly manner than in open areas."***

**Mauro Dalla Torre**, a veteran ICRC war surgeon who now works as an expert on explosive weapons' wounds

who now works as an expert on explosive weapons' wounds with the ICRC's weapons contamination team. "These closed-in or semi-enclosed urban spaces reflect the shockwaves of explosive devices in an even more deadly manner than in open areas."

### **Forced to flee or trapped in hell**

Today's powerful explosive weaponry can cause not only numerous casualties but can displace large numbers of people very quickly. When warring parties deliberately or systematically target civilians, the bloodshed and displacement are often much greater. In densely packed urban neighbourhoods, the numbers of displaced people can rapidly overwhelm the ability of nearby cities, or even countries, to absorb and adequately host the displaced population.

For those trapped by the fighting, the situation can be even worse. While the cities are often economic engines that power regional economies in normal times, they are also largely dependent on external resources in order to meet basic needs such as food, water and heat.

### **States of siege**

Conflict in towns and cities today has also been characterized by increasing instances of an ancient form of urban warfare: the siege. The eastern portion of Aleppo, for example, was subject to a siege that lasted 190 days and other blockages of humanitarian assistance in the city caused massive suffering for the civilian population. But many lesser-known

Syrian cities and towns — Deir Ezzor, Daraya, Foua, Kefraya and Madaya — also came under siege of rebel or government forces at various times during the conflict.

Throughout these sieges, people suffer tremendously but also show incredible resilience. With no functioning power supply, people often rely on lights powered by lead batteries, which they recharged by generator every two or three days. Living and going to school in basements for their own safety, many young children, in some cities have suffered from vision impairment due to spending so much time in the dark.

With no petrol to be found, priority buildings such as schools and hospitals are kept up and running with talqa, a fuel made through a makeshift process of boiling and refining small pieces of plastic.

In the Yemeni city of Taiz, a state of siege caused the collapse of the local economy. "Most markets in the city have closed and in the few markets that still have some food, the prices are so high that people cannot afford to buy anything," says Nancy Hamad, head of the ICRC's subdelegation in Taiz. "Malnutrition cases have increased drastically, especially among children.

"We've seen people eating from the garbage because they do not have the means to get food," says Hamad. "We've seen women picking leaves from trees and boiling them just to give children some hot soup. In this culture, where there is so much pride in their cuisine, to pick food up from a garbage heap or to boil leaves means you've reached your absolute limit."

Easing the hunger pains of populations under siege poses tremendous challenges for humanitarian organizations, which continue to make urgent appeals in order to gain access to besieged cities and deliver desperately needed food and medical supplies.

They have also had to be creative. With humanitarian food aid blocked from Taiz, the ICRC began supporting 29 local bakeries in August 2016 to provide bread directly to the most needy families. Residents who participate receive up to 18 free loaves of bread from certain bakeries, which are then reimbursed by the ICRC. While this is far from meeting the full nutritional needs of Taiz's population, it is making an impact. Today, the programme reaches roughly 13,000 households (35,000 people) and the next phase is expected to extend to 25,000 households.

### **Interconnected services**

People who live in cities are also heavily dependent on complex networks of services that are deeply entwined. Water delivery is dependent on reliable electricity, which may rely on oil production and

***"These people have been through dreadful experiences; they need as much support as we can give."***

**Mahdia**, a 29-year-old psychosocial volunteer for the Iraqi Red Crescent Society

petrol delivery. If any part of the complex systems that supply water or electricity, or that process waste, are damaged, destroyed or intentionally targeted, many thousands, or even millions, of people could be at risk of infection from otherwise preventable deadly diseases.

Humanitarians, therefore, must work with a wide range of service providers to help cities cope. In Aleppo, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, ICRC and local water boards worked to develop an alternative water network by repairing or drilling more than 120 boreholes, says Michael Talhami, head of water and habitat for the ICRC in the Middle East.

"When the violence in Aleppo in 2016 cut off water services for up to 2 million people, this alternative water supply was relied upon," Talhami says. "Because of the ongoing and indiscriminate escalations, half of these boreholes were damaged and were impossible or difficult to reach."

### **A risk-filled landscape**

Maintaining these systems also poses many risks. Whenever explosive weapons are used, a certain percentage of them do not detonate on impact. Before any work on repairing urban areas can begin, the ground must first be cleared of unexploded bombs. This is costly, time-consuming yet critically important work. It adds to the many challenges of restoring life to normal after urban warfare.

The destruction caused by urban warfare can take a very long time to repair. City landscapes in many cases have taken decades or even centuries to build. During intense fighting, these accomplishments, along with important local institutions and landmarks, can be destroyed in a matter of seconds, leaving scars that will take billions of dollars in investment and decades of work to heal.

The increasing frequency of urban conflict has also led humanitarian organizations to rethink and improve the way they help cities prepare for intensive violence. In Iraq and Ukraine, one of the steps taken by the ICRC's weapons contamination unit, for example, is to identify industrial sites and other places where toxic chemicals or other dangerous materials may be stored.

This information could be critical when preparing for possibility of mass casualties if toxic chemicals are released in densely populated urban areas.

This concern was highlighted recently by the use of a toxic chemical agent during fighting around Mosul, where 15 people — including children — were admitted to hospital showing clinical symptoms consistent with an exposure to a blistering chemical agent.

In light of these cases, and subsequent allegations of uses, ICRC teams remind all parties to the conflict

that there is an absolute prohibition against the use of chemical and biological weapons and their obligations to comply with international law. At the same time, the ICRC has worked to build the capacity of two health facilities near Mosul with training and protective equipment to help them safely treat patients who have been contaminated.

If used in cities, such weapons could result in a tremendous loss of life and would likely overwhelm local health systems. Toxic chemical agents or biological pathogens are not only potentially harmful or lethal to the person directly affected, they could also contaminate health workers, ambulances, operating rooms, even entire hospitals, rendering these critical facilities entirely useless just when they are needed most.

“Once hospital workers suspect that a chemical agent has been used, they now have the training and equipment to know how to protect themselves and how to deal with it before the person is admitted to the hospital,” says Johnny Nehme, head of ICRC’s Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear response team.

### More than streets and buildings

Ultimately, cities are far more than just buildings, streets, water systems and hospitals. And the wounds people suffer are not just physical. Warfare in urban areas often means the break-up of communities and the fracturing of social networks.

The intense, relentless trauma of urban conflict — ongoing fear, extreme violence and sense of helplessness — can cause deep psychological wounds. Yet there is a profound lack of psychological services for people still trapped by fighting, as well as for those in camps and in cities in neighbouring countries.

For this reason, the humanitarian response is also aimed at people’s mental well-being. In the Khazer camp for displaced people, east of Mosul, a group of Iraqi Red Crescent Society psychosocial volunteers from the nearby Dohuk branch try to bridge that gap. They put extra emphasis on helping children, who make up almost half the camp population and have not been to school for two years.

“These people have been through dreadful experiences; they need as much support as we can give,” says 29-year-old volunteer Mahdia.

One of the survivors is Buthina, a mother of three, who tells an Iraqi Red Crescent psychosocial volunteer how she escaped Mosul with her husband, children and 14 others in her brother’s car. The family was forced to leave their home, their city and all their belongings behind. “We know that we are now safe,” she says. “Those possessions are not important.” ■

By **Malcolm Lucard**

Malcolm Lucard is editor of *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine. This article was prepared with additional field reporting from Mosul by Joe Cropp, IFRC, and by Fareed Al-Homaid in Taiz for the ICRC.

**“There was nothing left for me in this life, except for mere memories and a city which was, once, full of life.”**

**Hanan Addahbali**, widow and mother living in Taiz, Yemen

☺ Iraqi Red Crescent Society staff and volunteers provide food, relief supplies and psychosocial support to families in the Khazer camp, set up for people who fled Mosul and surrounding towns.

Photo: Safin Ahmed/Iraqi Red Crescent Society



☺ Residents ride on makeshift rafts during flooding in Malabon, Metro Manila in August 2012.

Photo: REUTERS/Erik de Castro

## CITY SPEAK

# Ripples of resistance

An urban village in the Philippines takes on the floodwaters.

Some 6,000 of the 9,000 families living in a *barangay* (suburb) of Potrero, a community in Malabon City in Metro Manila in the Philippines, are informal settlers living in high-risk areas along the Tullahan River.

“Our village is one of the areas most affected by floods in the city and floods have occurred more frequently in recent years,” says Sheryl Nolasco, chief of Potrero village, which has a population of about 54,000.

Because sections of the river upstream are silted or clogged with debris, flood cycles are aggravated. In 2009, Potrero experienced extreme flooding caused by Typhoon Ketsana and, in 2012, incessant rainfall again submerged many communities.

After those floods, highly urbanized Metro Manila was largely paralysed, says Sindy Obias, executive director of Assistance and Cooperation for Community Resilience and Development, Inc. (ACCORD).

“With rapid population growth and urban migration, 12 million people are exposed” when floods occur, she says. “Ketsana claimed lives and livelihoods, destroyed homes, disrupted Metro Manila’s transportation and communication and cut off lifelines such as electricity and water supply, with its impact extending beyond boundaries. This complexity underscores the need

for a holistic approach towards urban resilience.”

Between 2011 and 2015, the community of Potrero and the local government unit of Malabon City — supported by ACCORD and other civil society organizations — worked together to improve the resilience of this urban village. “A comprehensive process of analysing our risks was the most important step we undertook towards resilience building,” says Nolasco. “It gave

us a clearer picture of our situation and helped us identify immediate and long-term solutions.”

The activities facilitated by ACCORD, she says, included community risk assessments, risk-reduction planning, establishing an early warning system based on rainfall- and water-level monitoring at eight locations, reforestation efforts, solid waste

management and bio-intensive gardening. The project also included collaboration with state and local government agencies, communities, civil society organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders beyond Potrero.

Building resilience starts small, says Nolasco, but needs to spread much wider to neighbouring villages in order to succeed. “We know the problems do not

lie solely in our village but in the entire landscape we live in,” she says. “We started with small steps. When we were able to show positive results, more people and organizations became willing to join. Making ripples of transformation among communities is necessary because our efforts to reduce vulnerabilities will be futile if they are done only at our level.” Read more at [www.rccmagazine.org](http://www.rccmagazine.org)



Sheryl Nolasco  
Photo: Joseph Echano



Sindy Obias  
Photo: ACCORD

# 48 hours in 'Prison Waterfront'

Built on marshlands between a prison and one of the thousands of creeks that make up the Niger delta, the Prison Waterfront neighbourhood is one of many shanty towns to grow up on the outskirts of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Some 70 per cent of Port Harcourt's 1.8 million people live in informal settlements, which span the length of the waterfront, and have little or no access to public services such as sewage systems and clean drinking water. Trash and human waste, along with a slick of oil from illegally tapped pipelines, coat the inlets and marshes. That means people cannot use nearby natural resources — the waterways and marshes — for food or to make a living. Plagued by chronic poverty, lack of education and armed violence, residents are exposed to many daily dangers. The ICRC has been working in Prison Waterfront for almost two years, supplying drinking water, making small improvements in infrastructure and providing micro loans to women. In November 2016, the ICRC gave disposable cameras to 26 young people to get a glimpse into how they saw themselves, their community, their daily lives and their hopes for the future. Here are a few examples of what they saw through their viewfinders.

**Gift Ataiyong Nathaniel**

☺ "There is a picture I took when two children were hugging each other. With that picture I was showing people the love that is between us despite the environment that we find ourselves in."



**Gift Ataiyong Nathaniel**

☹ "One photo I took is of a girl crossing a bridge to fresh water. One thing I hope to achieve with these photos is [to raise awareness so] that people would give us a good road, so we can go get fresh water. That place, it's just a plank. Someone can fall off from there."

**Gladys Ikura Braide**

☹ "I want people to know that we are living here and we are not happy about some things we are seeing. So I took these pictures to show how we are living, to show how I feel about this place, that it is not so comfortable for me."

"Many people have money and they don't know what to do with it, while some don't have money and the little that they have they use to buy things to sustain themselves. So I took a picture of the things we lack . . . of children using cups to take some water from the tap that the ICRC set up for us. Before, we fetched our water from wells. But now it becomes easy for us to open these taps to get fresh water."



**Mercy Athanasius**

☹ "I never liked snapping [pictures]. Each time friends would ask me to snap, I would be like, 'I don't like snapping, I don't like snapping.' But after the [ICRC photo training] workshop, I felt comfortable snapping. It's fun. I enjoyed it."

"[With these photos] I want to spread the message around the world how people in the shanty towns go through hard work before they get food on their table. Yes, people must work before putting food on the table but I want to live in a more advanced way."





# Life on Syria Street

The largely urban conflict in Syria has also had a major impact on cities in neighbouring countries. Lebanon, which hosts some 1.2 million Syrians, is dealing with complex confessional fault lines. Now the fighting in Syria is increasing tensions between each side of Tripoli's main thoroughfare: Syria Street.

With 18 different religious denominations all held together in fragile harmony, many argue that Lebanon is the most religiously diverse society in the Middle East. Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest city, is also incredibly diverse. And it has long been the scene of recurrent outbursts of armed violence between the marginalized neighbourhoods of Bab el-Tebbaneh and Jabal Mohsen.

Although the neighbourhoods are calm now, over the past ten years, more than 20 episodes of violent clashes between the Sunni Muslim residents of Bab el-Tebbaneh and the Alawite Muslim inhabitants of Jabal Mohsen have left more than 200 people dead.

As Syria's civil war rages just 40 minutes away, these two adjacent communities remain divided along political lines in their conflicting opposition to or support of the Syrian government.

## Ahmad Ibrahim Ali

Resident of Jabal Mohsen neighbourhood

I am Syrian but I was born here in Jabal Mohsen and my wife is from el-Tebbaneh, so we are all mixed. Before the clashes began, I practically lived in Tebbaneh. I would consider it my home. But after the clashes I don't have the courage to be there like that. I used to sell coffee by the mosque in Tebbaneh. That was when people didn't care about my background. Now I must sell goods on this side of Syria Street.

Before this all erupted, I came upon a proverb: "The seeds are planted there, the fruits ripen here," meaning that the conflict erupts in Syria but the consequences spill over here in Lebanon. It became true. I just wish we could get rid of sectarian thinking and all unite.

## Rami

Resident of Bab el-Tebbaneh neighbourhood

Syria Street means so much to me. It's really the lifeline for both Bab el-Tebbaneh and Jabal Mohsen. But the street will never return to its previous status when it comes to commerce and its role as a place to unite Sunnis and Alawites together. It has been the dividing line for the clashes and now carries many bad memories.

The clashes here have personally affected me from the very beginning. During the fighting in 2008, my house was burned down while my siblings were still inside. Since then, we no longer fear anything, feel anything or care about anything. We are alive simply because we haven't died yet. We have no jobs and we even struggle just to get water.

The truth is that both of these neighbourhoods have been neglected and deprived by the government, which makes it

easier to manipulate the youth here. I first began hanging out in the street with the fighters when I was only 17. When boys grow up seeing their fathers running after what little income they can find, they too will not end up on a good track. I know men here that can get paid US\$ 100 to pick up a gun and open fire, then take that money to feed their family. If someone has seven or eight children, he will do anything to get US\$ 100.

After the clashes began to die down last year, we began to realize that each neighbourhood had many misconceptions about the other. We discovered that we weren't all that different from one another. The Alawites even pray like us, fast like us, and now I even have some friends over in Jabal Mohsen. We all just want to live in our home with dignity and without needing other people's help.

## Hana Awad

Resident of Bab el-Tebbaneh neighbourhood.

Syria Street used to be called the 'Golden Street' because it was buzzing with business. But due to violence all the major stores moved to other parts of Tripoli. You can still see the old signs, but the shops are empty and there is no life.

As the clashes worsened, customers who used to come from Beirut stopped coming out of fear. My husband used to have a nice car showroom on Syria Street. He eventually had to close down the shop, but we have seven children and quickly spent all our savings. My husband fell into depression and stayed at home, so I decided to leave the house and earn an income for the first time.



*"Syria Street used to be called the 'Golden Street' because it was buzzing with business. But due to violence all the major stores moved to other parts of Tripoli. You can still see the old signs, but the shops are empty and there is no life."*

Hana Awad, a resident of Bab el-Tebbaneh neighbourhood in Tripoli, Lebanon

## Malak Jaafar

Communications Officer, ICRC Lebanon

I was too young to understand. As my parents drank their afternoon coffee on our balcony in Beirut, I would point to the three bullet holes in the wall and ask my dad where they had come from. "Why would anyone shoot at someone else's home?" my 8-year-old self would ask.

His answer was always the same: "Lebanon's 15-year civil war." But I was born after the war. I didn't understand what civil war even meant or, more importantly, that the war had done more damage than those three bullet holes over our balcony door.

The older I got, the more I realized that being born after the ceasefire didn't matter: the war was the background theme to everyone's life — young or old — in Lebanon.

You saw it in the bullet-riddled buildings across the country and in the people who bore its physical and mental scars. You heard about it in your parents' childhood stories and in most descriptions of Lebanon, which too often start with "Before the war..."

With the onset of the Syrian crisis next door, I joined the ICRC as a communications officer. I wanted to be part of the organization

that alleviated some of the burdens that my parents had experienced during times of conflict.

When I visited Jabal Mohsen and Bab el-Tebbaneh for the first time, what I saw felt like a slap in the face. I thought the Lebanese war was over. Why did these two areas look like they were stuck in the past? Civilians were caught in the crossfire and their homes, businesses and even schools were all turned into battlefields.

Like my parents and most people who had lived through the civil war, residents struggled to explain how they could live peacefully during the day then target one another at night.

In one of the homes on Syria Street, we were filming with a family who was part of an ICRC project that aimed to help locals bolster their livelihoods and the mother was showing us her daughter's bedroom. The pink and purple furniture was riddled with bullets. As she was telling us her story, her 11-year-old daughter interrupted her: "Why would anyone shoot at someone else's home?"

See the whole story at [www.syriastreet.com](http://www.syriastreet.com)

Stories and photos by **Brandon Tauszik**, a photographer based in San Francisco, California.

# Urban outbreaks

Today's growing cities are proving to be efficient incubators for infectious disease. How should cities, humanitarian organizations and local communities avoid the next urban pandemic?

Epidemics and cities have had an uneasy relationship for centuries. In 430 BCE, smallpox killed a fifth of Athens' population and, in 1334, the plague wiped out a third of Florence's 90,000 inhabitants in six months. In the mid-1800s, a cholera epidemic devastated London and helped shape some of the earliest urban public health strategies.

"A hundred years ago, large urban outbreaks were resolved not by medication but by sanitation and garbage removal," says Amanda McClelland, IFRC's Senior Officer for Public Health Emergencies.

"Many of today's new urban centres are sprawling slums with large populations and don't have the infrastructure that stopped disease before. Are we moving back to the risks we faced in the 19th century?"

What crippled London then — poor sanitation, overcrowding, rapid population growth

📍 Louise Marie Daniel, a team leader for social mobilization for the Haiti Red Cross Society, introduces residents to cholera kits and explains how to treat water in Tiburon, Haiti, following Hurricane Matthew in 2016.  
Photo: Maria Santto/IFRC

from migration — is frighteningly similar to what drives urban epidemics today. According to the United Nations, poor sanitation and unsafe drinking water cause some 80 per cent of diseases in developing countries. Yet worldwide, 2.5 billion people lack these crucial facilities. Many of those without services live in cities. Over half the world is already urbanized but by 2050, more than 70 per cent of the world's population is expected to live in cities.

Most of the deadly disease outbreaks in recent years had urban dimensions that encouraged spread and complicated containment. Both the 2014–2015 Ebola outbreak in western Africa and yellow fever in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2016 caused grave challenges in overcrowded urban environments.

From South-East Asia to Latin America, mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue, Zika and chikungunya thrive in densely populated cities with weak infrastructure and inadequate waste management. Meanwhile, cholera is making a comeback in many parts of the world, largely in crowded neighbourhoods with poor sanitation.

## Benefits and risks

Urbanization also has benefits. Cities can use resources more efficiently and sustainably, providing schools, hospitals and jobs for millions in relatively small areas. In a crisis, help can come quickly. In industrialized countries, according to the medical journal *The Lancet*, the health of people in cities has improved. This so-called urban advantage is largely due to improved access to healthcare and infrastructure, such as sanitation and education. Cities also provide greater social cohesion and support, which is usually associated with better health.

In many developing countries, however, these opportunities come with a price. Migration to cities overloads urban services and systems. It is estimated that 1 billion people live in low-quality housing on land not suitable for building, with few services and little infrastructure to keep them safe from disaster or disease. Many are there illegally, surviving without electricity or water, hidden from the prying eyes — and potential benefits — of health and social services.

Amid these makeshift dwellings and squalid streets, tiny microbes find fertile ground in dirty water or solid waste or on mosquitoes, which show no respect for municipal boundaries. These microbes, which cause diseases such as Zika, Ebola, cholera and yellow fever, prosper where people live crammed together in insalubrious shanty towns.

As actors in these epidemics, urban environments play a dual role by helping transmission and then hampering the response to it.

Take Zika, relatively harmless in rural Africa until it hit the crowded streets of Brazil's cities. The 80 per cent urbanization rate in the Americas made a major Zika outbreak increasingly likely. By the end of 2016, the Americas had reported more than 500,000 suspected cases.

The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, responsible for both yellow fever and Zika, can breed almost anywhere. It loves garbage and pools of water, like those that collect in abandoned tyres, bottle caps and clogged gutters.

"Flight range studies suggest that most female *Aedes aegypti* may spend their lifetime in or around the houses where they emerge as adults," according to the World Health Organization. "This means that people, rather than mosquitoes, rapidly move the virus within and between communities and places." In the crowded cities of the Americas, Zika advanced quickly.

"Someone may be infected in one neighbourhood but they'll move around to another one quickly, spreading the infection," says Juan Carlos Alvarez, vector control consultant with the IFRC's Zika operation in the Americas. "Zika was jumping from one neighbourhood to the next in just a few hours."

The Zika response faced other challenges. In the countryside, people were receptive to hearing about



📍 In the Liberian capital of Monrovia, Liberian Red Cross Society volunteers engage with market-goers to explain the need to continue Ebola prevention activities.  
Photo: Stephen Ryan/IFRC

Zika. In the city, there was message fatigue and engaging communities was more difficult. Often, there simply wasn't the person power available to quickly reach all the households in densely packed neighbourhoods. Additionally, in the male-oriented society of the Americas, reaching women was difficult when the men were away working.

## Surveillance — when people count

In an outbreak, knowing who and where illness strikes can save lives, so the breakdown of surveillance in parts of Port-au-Prince during Haiti's 2010 cholera epidemic was a serious setback.

"A person with cholera was considered a 'dirty person' so people who became sick often tried to hide their symptoms," says Angeline Brutus, IFRC Community Health Coordinator for Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. As a result, not all cases were reported, and while this stigmatization also existed in rural areas, in the city it prevented proper tracking of the rapidly spreading epidemic.

In Haiti, specialized hospitals were overwhelmed by a tenfold increase in new cholera cases, which quickly outpaced the number of volunteers and staff, especially in the slums of Port-au-Prince. The combination of stigma and insufficient resources worsened an already dangerous situation.

With accurate counts impossible, the Haiti Red Cross Society, along with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF, worked to empower communities to manage their own surveillance.

"We created a network — volunteers, of course, and health workers but also religious leaders, schoolteachers, midwives, anyone who could bring people together," says Brutus. "They checked for cases of diarrhoea and provided first aid and initial care. In the end, the community monitored itself. The system became much more efficient and the number of cases decreased considerably."

Armed with mobile phones and using everything from text messaging to door-to-door visits, local people were taught to alert the Red Cross or a health worker whenever they spotted a case of

**"Zika was jumping from one neighbourhood to the next in just a few hours."**

Juan Carlos Alvarez, vector control consultant with the IFRC's Zika operation in the Americas

diarrhoea, setting off a chain reaction that would result in a timely intervention. While a crowded city made it easier to reach a greater number of people efficiently, it also made surveillance more difficult. Without this strong communication backbone, surveillance efforts would have faltered.

### Good communications matter

Nowhere was the need for good urban communication as evident as during the 2016 yellow fever outbreak in Angola. An old disease, yellow fever had disappeared in the Americas but lingered in rural Africa with occasional, modest outbreaks — until it appeared in the capital, Luanda, in whose shanty towns it flourished.

Still recovering from a lengthy civil war, Angola's infrastructure was inadequate. Without proper plumbing, many people in slums stored their water in open containers, a favourite breeding ground of *Aedes aegypti*. The proximity of people to one another made it easier for mosquitoes to spread the disease.

The Angola Red Cross threw itself into a major government vaccination campaign, yet the epidemic continued. In part this was due to the scarcity of vaccines, but lack of communications played a significant role. Because vaccines were traditionally identified with women and children, men had not been specifically approached. "But the men were mobile for work and they were moving and trading, and this took the disease across the whole country and into DRC," says the IFRC's McClelland.

Through focus groups, surveys and feedback from the community, the Red Cross was able to counteract the situation and adjust its approach, while community workers and volunteers delivered

**"In the end, the community monitored itself. The system became much more efficient and the number of cases decreased considerably."**

**Angeline Brutus,**  
IFRC Community Health Coordinator for Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti

**In Tuguegarao City, the Philippine Red Cross distributes hygiene kits and mosquito nets as part of aid distribution following Typhoon Haima in October 2016.**

Photo: Mirva Helenius/IFRC

crucial health messages that helped turn the yellow fever campaign around. The government expanded vaccination hours to accommodate men who had jobs — back in their village they might have been able to put down their tools for a few minutes and attend to their health.

### Keeping up traditions

People who migrate to the city bring along their rural traditions and customs.

When someone died of cholera in Haiti, for example, friends and relatives converged upon the victim's house, coming in close contact with each other and encouraging infection. People would then go home and spread the bacteria throughout their own neighbourhoods.

Traditional burial practices in West Africa also involved visits from many relatives, as well as extensive touching of deceased bodies. Since Ebola is transmitted through contact with bodily fluids, the more people around, the greater the risk. Given the crowded conditions of West African cities and the lack of proper sanitation, Ebola was even more likely to spread there than in the countryside, where houses are more distant from one another.

Stigma also hampered the Ebola response in urban areas. Rather than admit someone had just died, families hid the bodies at home, fearing potential rejection from neighbours. When ambulance drivers went in search of the dead, they often came away empty-handed — or worse.

At the time of the Ebola epidemic, Roselyn Nugba-Ballah was a supervisor of safe and dignified burial teams for the Liberian Red Cross Society in Monrovia. She remembers the hostility.

"Our teams were often attacked and we had to bring police officers with us. One of my teams was chased with machetes, and another was kept hostage in their car. Sometimes when we found the bodies, they had been kept so long by their families that they were decomposing."

The traditional hand-washing of bodies was so dangerous Red Cross burial teams used plastic bags instead, rekindling difficulties eventually brought under control.

"We did community engagement before burials, and we followed the entire traditional process — apart from washing. When we explained, local people began to understand why the tradition of washing was so harmful," says Daniel James, who served as head of National Safe and Dignified Burials for the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society during the Ebola crisis.

By working closely with communities, volunteers and health workers in all these epidemics were able to claim victories and save lives. They spoke local languages, painstakingly outlined what should and shouldn't be done, and debunked myths, for example, that illness was brought in by aid. Ultimately, they succeeded in upending the general lack of knowledge that can develop when people live in crowded and unsanitary conditions and in poverty, with few services and not enough information.

### The great unknowns

A thousand years ago, caravans travelled leisurely along the Old Silk Road that bisected Asia and Europe. Traders would inch forward, selling here, buying there, pushing towards the edge of their known world over many months.

Now, a similar trip takes only hours. In today's globalized world, diseases that would likely die out in transit fly directly to their destination, fed through the airports that ring every large city.

All it takes is a single infected person, perhaps undiagnosed, to board a flight.

Globalization is one of the new frontiers of infectious disease, a threat few could have predicted only decades ago. The spectres of bioterrorism, anti-microbial resistance and the potential impact of climate change are equally new and even less understood. Even better-known diseases can harbour surprises: no one expected Zika to do such damage, after all.

"Since 2010 some 87 new infectious diseases have been discovered," says McClelland. "Take *Aedes aegypti*, which likes the urban environment so much. That mosquito transmits Zika and dengue and chikungunya and yellow fever but potentially other diseases too, any of which could easily become the next epidemic and whose consequences we don't know." ■

By **Leyla Alyanak**

Leyla Alyanak is a freelance writer based in Geneva, Switzerland.



Local volunteers dig garbage from a blocked water drain in a hillside neighbourhood in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Photo: Yaoundé District 6

## CITY SPEAK

# Breaking the cycle of floods and illness in the hills of Cameroon's capital

In Cameroon's capital, Yaoundé, people searching for a place to call home often settle on hillsides or along creeks that meander through once verdant valleys. Roughly 60 per cent of these new arrivals live in informal settlements, which now make up more than 70 per cent of Yaoundé's total land area.

Already prone to flooding, landslides and water-borne diseases, many of these also lack reliable drinking water, solid waste disposal services and waste-water management, says Jean-Jules Nkengne Sitchiewock, focal point for disaster risk reduction and climate change for the commune of Yaoundé 6, a district with many informal settlements.

"In these areas, sources of contamination, such as traditional latrines, household waste, domestic waste water and cemeteries, are in the direct vicinity of wells and natural water sources," he notes, adding that studies conducted by Yaoundé's National Polytechnic School of Engineering revealed a high incidence of diarrhoea, intestinal worms, amoebic dysentery and typhoid among children under the age of 5 in two such neighbourhoods.

"The disposal of household waste has reached a crisis point," he says. "The municipal rubbish collection service does not operate in these areas because either there are no roads or they are in very poor condition. As municipal bins are too far away, households throw their rubbish into nearby drainage ditches or watercourses. This waste clogs up drainage channels and causes flooding."

Communities are taking action however. Volunteer associations have organized rubbish pre-collection services while two pilot projects, supported in part by the IFRC, aim to reduce urban risks in Yaoundé 6 by repairing drainage channels, installing new standpipes and raising awareness about good hygiene. The Cameroon Red Cross Society, meanwhile, raises awareness on HIV/AIDS prevention, how to avoid diarrhoeal diseases and the importance of proper handwashing. It also helps communities prepare for crisis by providing first-aid training and assisting with early disaster warning and response drills, among other things. Read more at

[www.rccrmagazine.org](http://www.rccrmagazine.org)





# A walk through Kigogo

Using an online map they helped developed with local residents, Tanzania Red Cross volunteers offer a tour of the risks and assets of Kigogo, a neighbourhood in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

IN THE KIGOGO NEIGHBOURHOOD of Dar es Salaam, some 57,600 people live in an area of less than two square kilometres, according to 2012 census data. (The number is likely much higher now due to rapid population growth.) Almost half of that area — which houses 4,400 buildings, including four schools and one hospital — is prone to heavy seasonal flooding.

It wasn't always that way. First established on a rise between two river valleys, Kigogo's more recent settlements have expanded into lower-lying, flood-prone valleys. As riverbeds fill with makeshift houses or get used as de facto trash dumping grounds, the risk of flooding increases at an alarming rate.

A lack of properly constructed drainage channels has also worsened Kigogo's flood risk. Thanks to the community mapping project Dar Ramani Huria, local activists, leaders and city planners can address those problem areas much more effectively because they now know more precisely what needs to be done and where.

"The residents can use the maps to familiarize themselves with problems affecting rivers, bridges and other infrastructure," says one Red Cross volunteer from the district. "It has really helped us get to know Kigogo better."

To get a sense of what they've learned from the mapping process, we asked volunteers from the Tanzania Red Cross National Society to take us on a tour of Kigogo, using the open-source map as a guide. At each stop, they explain what they see and why they decided to put it on the map.



## 1 Gonzaga Bridge: overrun by floods

Standing in the middle of the Gonzaga Bridge, local activist Zaharani Omary explains how, during the rainy season, fast-running water often crests the bridge, rendering it useless for vehicles and pedestrians. A sharp bend in the river exacerbates the flooding, which also inundates nearby houses. A school and church are also at risk.

"We put this place on the map to show the problems affecting the neighbourhood," says Omary, an activist who identifies problems affecting local rivers. "Residents here are greatly affected by floods and must relocate during rainy seasons."



Nyambiri Kimacha/Tanzania Red Cross National Society



## 5 Kibangu River: a threatening diversion

"This area was put on the map because the Kibangu River has diverted its direction and no longer passes under the bridge," says Miraji Simba, a local resident, standing where a bridge connects Kigogo with the Mburahati Barafu neighbourhood. "This has led to the destruction of many houses."

"During the rainy seasons, the floods destroy property and sometimes cause death," says Simba, one of many local members of Water Witness International, which works to protect rivers against pollution. "We rehabilitate ditches through community services to minimize the effects of floods. On my left, there is a ditch that was repaired by the Community Infrastructure Upgrading Program. The society needs to find ways to retrieve the original course of the river. The residents cannot solve these issues on their own; we need help from the government and volunteers."

## 4 Kigogo Road: a safe haven

Local water activist and Tanzania Red Cross volunteer Miraji Simba stands along Kigogo Road, home to both small and large businesses as well as the administration offices for the district chief and subchief. "On my left are Kigogo and Mkawa schools," says Simba. "On my right side, there is the Masjid Mosque. Victims of floods seek refuge in the schools and mosque."

"This place is safe because it is not in a valley. The schools are also surrounded by ditches, made by the Community Infrastructure Upgrading Program, a project funded by the city government, the World Bank and others, for draining water into the ocean."

"The area has been added to the map because of the roles played by the schools and the mosque in providing safe shelter in times of crisis."

## 3 Putting Mapera on the map

"This place is not directly affected by floods, but it gives shelter to victims of floods from the nearby Bondeni neighbourhood," says Omary. "The residents are very kind and welcoming. The victims return to their homes once the flooding subsides. We have schools, pharmacies, a cemetery and other amenities that can be helpful in times of crisis. Still, Mapera has its own challenges and needs. Many residents are squatters and their houses are in bad condition," notes Omary. Infrastructure has yet to be developed and there is a need for better services such as garbage collection.

Still, some improvements such as new drainage ditches have been installed and have been particularly effective during the rainy season. However, some are in need of repair, something that can be noted on the map. "These ditches are narrow and often destroyed by vehicles," Omary notes. Putting these features on the map, he says, helps alert authorities and local volunteers to problems that are not always obvious. "Then, they can work together to repair or improve critical infrastructure."

## 2 Msimbazi River: walling in the water

At our second stop in the tour, Omary points out a flood prevention wall built on one side of the Msimbazi River, which separates one part of Kigogo from the adjoining Buguruni neighbourhood. Unfortunately, the wall has caused as many problems as it has solved.

"This place is on the map because the infrastructure is in bad shape," says Omary. "Initially, the effects of floods were not so pronounced because that flood wall had not been constructed. The wall has narrowed the spread of water, leading to destruction of ditches that would drain water away."

The regular flooding here is a particular hardship for the people who live in this part of Kigogo, most of whom consume just one meal a day. "There is no market in this part of Kigogo," says Omary, "and during the rainy season, it is difficult for them to reach the market because of floods."



Jonas Maheto/Tanzania Red Cross National Society

# Stateless in the city

Working together to support stateless Shan people in the urban outskirts of Chiang Mai, Thailand.

An ethnic Shan from Myanmar, 23-year-old Tee Nayord works on behalf of fellow migrants at a resource centre supported in part by the IFRC in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Photo: Mirva Helenius/IFRC

**T**wenty-three years ago, after five days spent crashing through dense jungle, a heavily pregnant Shan girl set foot on Thai soil for the first time. Fleeing unrest and poverty in Myanmar, Nang Ou was exhausted and frightened. She did not know what the future would bring.

Fortunately, it did bring something good — her son Tee Nayord. But the confused young mother knew nothing about the importance of civil registration for her son. She had crossed the border illegally and was too afraid to go to the hospital to register her son's birth.

Today, Tee Nayord is 23, one of many stateless ethnic Shan migrants from Myanmar living in Thailand, and works on behalf of other migrants at a new resource centre for migrants in Chiang Mai, in north-western Thailand — something that made his mother worry that he would be exposed to legal problems.

Before joining the centre, he worked as a labourer carrying bags of rice for a few Thai baht every day — just enough to make ends meet. "That work was purely physical and required no thinking. I simply followed my boss's orders," recalls Tee Nayord.

"Working on this project has prompted me to think about larger topics that impact myself, my family and my community. This has been a big positive change for me."

Of the estimated 3 to 4 million Myanmar migrants in Thailand, some 300,000 live in the greater Chiang Mai area. The majority are ethnic Shan who came to Thailand in search of a safe place to live, work opportunities and better prospects for themselves and their families.



The centre helps Shan migrants in the villages on the outskirts of Chiang Mai understand how to fit into Thai society, learn the language and understand legal options and obligations. Chiang Mai, the 'Rose of the North', is not only a hotspot for tourists but also a thriving centre for construction, agriculture, garment and hospitality industries seeking cheap labour. Unfortunately, in their pursuit of profits, local recruiters do not always afford migrant workers the benefits, rights and protections enshrined in Thai labour laws.

Shan migrants frequently face a high level of prejudice, isolation and discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity and legal status in Thailand. Despite her young age, 19-year-old Nong Harn has already experienced this first-hand: often her background limits her access to labour market. "Employers should judge you by your skills and not the nationality on your identity card," she says.

As in many other countries, migrants in Thailand are often left to cope with their problems alone. In spite of a government complaints mechanism for migrant workers recently established in Chiang Mai, Shan people, especially those lacking legal papers and Thai language skills, still opt for help from civil society and migrant communities.

## Inspiring leadership

These are all reasons the Life Skills Development Foundation helps to empower migrants with training, education and other guidance. "Migrant leaders

✦ Migrant village leader Suchat, 49, and his daughter sitting in the only classroom of a village school for the migrant community on the outskirts of Chiang Mai. Photo: Mirva Helenius/IFRC

with proper skills and knowledge can help Shan communities understand their rights and entitlements, and support them in difficult situations," explains Kreangkrai Chaimuangdee, executive director of the Life Skills Development Foundation.

"They are the best resources for developing services for migrants because being part of the community gives them the best knowledge about migrants' real needs and concerns.

"Originally this project was developed for migrants. But today it has evolved into a project owned and run by the migrants themselves."

Supported by the IFRC, the Life Skills Development Foundation has established five resource centres. Every day these centres open their doors to offer migrants training in Thai, English and Shan languages as well as workshops to build self-esteem and motivation, and leadership, organizational, computer and planning skills. The beauty of this programme is that the training courses are designed and delivered by migrants for migrants.

Pattama, 22, works at a launderette from 08:00 till 18:00 for a salary of 7,000 baht (about US\$ 200) a month. She is also one of the migrants attending the free Thai lessons. She came to Thailand six years ago with her sister, while their mother stayed behind in Shan state.

"When I arrived in Thailand I could not speak any Thai, so my first purchase was a pocket dictionary," Pattama says. "I always wanted to do Thai language courses but I could not afford them, so I really

appreciate these free lessons. With better language skills I hope to get a better paid and less physically demanding job.”

Civil society organizations like the Life Skills Development Foundation and the MAP Foundation run radio programmes in Shan language. In addition to receiving important information, migrants can phone in and discuss issues of importance for their communities. Now that the centre is gaining greater acceptance in the community and with authorities,

even Tee Nayord’s mother is more at ease with his work with stateless people.

“In the very beginning I was not very positive about his engagement in this project, because I was worried that he was doing something risky,” says Nang Ou. “But today I am very proud of my son. He is a good person and works hard to help other migrants.” ■

By **Elena Nyanenkova**

Elena Nyanenkova is an IFRC communications specialist.



Photo: Mirva Helenius/IFRC

## Thai Red Cross brings dentists to doorsteps

For more than a decade, the Thai Red Cross Society has been providing free dental care to migrants and other underprivileged groups through mobile dental care clinics. These fully-equipped clinics can be packed into a vehicle, taken where they are needed and set up to operate on the doorsteps of the people who need their services.

“We bring this service to the people directly where it is needed the most. It is free of charge and quick but also a high-quality service,” says Pavinee Yuprasert, who is assistant director of the relief division at the Thai Red Cross’s Relief and Community Health Bureau.

Located an hour outside of Bangkok, Samut Sakhon province is among the largest industrial seafood processing areas in Thailand. It is estimated that up to 200,000 migrants from Myanmar work in Samut Sakhon in the fish and seafood industry. Many of these migrants live and work in Mahachai, a port about 45 kilometres south-west of Bangkok. Mahachai also has one of the biggest fish markets in the country.

Once a month, the Thai Red Cross sets up a mobile dental clinic where most of these migrants work and live. From early morning on, people wait their turn,

many returning for the second or third time to continue their treatment. During each visit to Mahachai, the Thai Red Cross mobile dentists provide migrant-friendly services for about 20 patients. Complicated cases, especially the ones requiring surgery, are referred to the city hospital.

Many of the migrants working in the fish industry have long, irregular working hours, making it difficult to them to leave the work site for long periods.

One of these workers, 45-year-old Mao, has lived in Mahachai for five years now, first working as a fisherman on the boats. Now, due to his age and health, he can’t do that kind of heavy labour any more, but has been assigned to clean the fish baskets.

“I work 364 days a year — only New Year’s Day is off. I’m on call all the time to go to work when the boat arrives,” Mao says.

He has medical insurance, but finds it difficult to leave the port for matters that are not urgent, such as dental care. “It would take hours and I would risk problems at work if I’m not available. So I prefer this service that is very close to my workplace and the room I sleep in,” says Mao.

# Resources

## PUBLICATIONS

### Humanitarian Futures for Messaging Apps

ICRC, 2017

Today, more than 2.5 billion people around the world communicate via messaging apps such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Snapchat. These and other apps have the potential to make a positive impact in situations of crisis but also to introduce risks relating to security, data protection and privacy. Humanitarian organizations need to better understand these opportunities and risks in order to develop responsible, effective and safe ways to use messaging for humanitarian purposes. Produced by the ICRC with the social networking groups The Engine Room and Block Party — and with support from three United Nations humanitarian agencies and the IFRC — this report analyses current and potential humanitarian uses of messaging apps. Available in English

### People on war Perspectives from 16 countries

ICRC, 2016

This survey of 17,000 people from 16 countries analyses their views on a range of issues relating to war. The results are both reassuring and alarming. Most people living in countries affected by armed conflict believe the rules of war matter. More than two-thirds of people living

in these countries as well as those from countries that are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Switzerland think it makes sense to impose limits on how they are fought. Almost half of those surveyed in conflict-affected countries believe the Geneva Conventions prevent wars from getting worse. Available in English and French

### Market Analysis Guidance

ICRC, 2016

This publication features processes and tools that can be used to integrate market assessment into the different phases of the project cycle, taking the Movement’s existing technical documents into account whenever possible. Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish

### Philippines — Typhoon Haiyan: Three-year progress report

IFRC, 2016

Three years have passed since the strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines left 6,300 people dead and affected more than 16 million lives. Typhoon Haiyan packed winds of up to 300 kph and caused storm surges and five- to six-metre high waves at its peak, destroying economic assets and infrastructure, especially in coastal villages across the Central Visayas region.

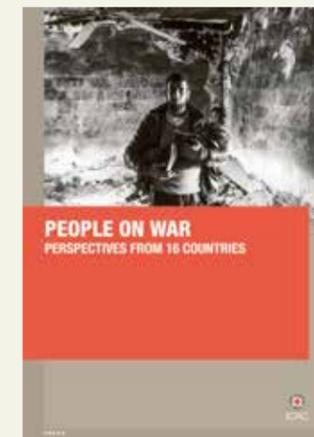
Available in English

### Urban Violence and the ICRC’s Humanitarian Response

ICRC, 2016

The destructive force of urban violence on people’s lives and livelihoods — and the suffering it causes — is a major concern of the ICRC in many countries around the world. This new briefing paper explains the ICRC’s approach to a form of violence that will be one of the defining features, and key challenges, of the 21st century.

Available in English and Spanish

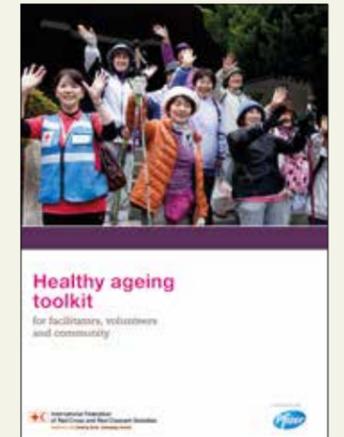


ICRC materials are available from the International Committee of the Red Cross, 19 avenue de la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland. [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org). IFRC materials are available from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, P.O. Box 303, CH-1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland. [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org).

### Healthy ageing toolkit

IFRC, 2016

By 2050, the number of individuals aged 60 years or above will have tripled from 600 million in 2000 to 2 billion; 80 per cent of them will live in low- or middle-income countries. While these statistics highlight the scale of the challenge society faces, an ageing population provides countless opportunities. Older people are, and will continue to be, vital assets to their families, friends and communities. Available in English



### Teaching, Debating, Researching International Humanitarian Law, Action and Policy in Universities

ICRC, 2017

How can professors, lecturers, researchers and students foster respect for and implementation of international humanitarian law? How can they promote and enhance neutral, independent and impartial humanitarian action? Addressed to the academic community worldwide, this leaflet presents the ICRC’s approach to working with universities and think tanks, and the tools available to support those efforts.

Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish

### History of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Volume V: From Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City

ICRC, 2016

Drawing on archives recently opened to the public, this study provides a broad chronological and geographic overview of the ICRC’s activities from 1966 to 1975, and traces the development of its policy on visits to political prisoners. It also provides an account of the ICRC’s work aimed at further developing international humanitarian law — leading to the adoption of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions.

Available in English and French

## ONLINE TOOLS

### E-briefing on nuclear weapons

ICRC, 2017

This e-briefing shows the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. These consequences have been known to the world since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Yet for many, a full appreciation of the effects of nuclear weapons in humanitarian terms has faded. Paradoxically, we know more than ever before about the impact that even a limited nuclear war would have on people and the environment. We also know, thanks to studies conducted by the ICRC and other organizations, that there is a lack of a humanitarian response capacity in most countries and at the international level if nuclear weapons were ever to be used again. Available in English