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150 years of humanitarian service and volunteerism

2009 is a truly special year for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. On 8 May, National Societies and their volunteers across Asia and Pacific gathered to recognize the 150th anniversary of our founding. From 23 to 28 June, young people from around the world, tomorrow's leaders of our Movement, gathered in Italy to build strong networks for voluntary action and to mark out a brighter future for humanitarian service, a future to which those same young people have committed themselves. Then, on 12 August, the world celebrated sixty years since the adoption of the Geneva Conventions.

Throughout 2009, from Afghanistan to the Solomon Islands, events celebrated a common dedication to building safer and more resilient communities, promoting International Humanitarian Law and our fundamental principles and engaging vulnerable populations in responding to today's Solferinos.

In the months ahead, the global campaign – Our world. Your move. – will continue to inspire action in disaster risk reduction, protection of civilians during conflicts, preparation for health emergencies and increased volunteerism across the globe.



Bagpipers leading the way for the global campaign opening ceremony in Malaysia on 8 May, at the National Art Gallery. This was followed by the launch of an ICRC photo exhibition titled Our World at War.

“This global campaign has brought the world together as we celebrate our 150th year of humanitarian service,” said Alistair Henley, Head of the Asia Pacific zone for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

“In addition to inspiring actions through its innovative web portal at www.ourworld-yourmove.org, the campaign has brought members of the International Federation family together around a common focus and sense of purpose. This is powerful and will help to build our strength and our impact for years ahead,” he continued.

China: Centre to unite the RCRC across the globe

More than 150 people from around the world gathered on a hot and humid morning on Hainan Island, China to inaugurate the Red Cross Society of China's (RCSC) brand new International Conference Centre.

Built for and donated to the Red Cross by a local real estate company, the four story centre features offices, meeting spaces and an impressive historical exhibition that traces the evolution of the Red Cross in China and around the world.

Officially opened by the RCSC President and their Executive Secretary, the centre is intended to bring Red Cross and Red Crescent members from across the globe together to make the humanitarian work of the organization even stronger.



Young musicians greeted leaders at the RCSC Conference Centre.

Twenty-two year old Zhang Xiao Rui is a college student and volunteer at the centre's exhibition hall.

On this morning, she led nearly thirty International Red Cross and Red

Crescent leaders on a tour of the photos and information on display. "I saw the Red Cross in China respond after the Sichuan earthquake and I was inspired to join as a volunteer.

"I particularly enjoy showing people the section of the exhibition called 'Fraternity without Boundaries;' it makes me feel part of something global and powerful," she shared with a beaming smile.

Mongolia: Red Cross brings comfort

As part of an essential social care programme, Mongolia Red Cross Society volunteers regularly make home visits to see Sosorbaram, an 82-year-old woman with lung cancer in the Khanuul District.



Sosorbaram relies on the compassion of MRCS volunteers. Photo Rob Few/IFRC

She lives alone because her husband died in 1985 of throat cancer and her daughter died in 1999 of lung cancer.

She used to live with her deceased husband's relatives, but after a lifetime of work, she desperately wanted a place of her own.

The Mongolian Red Cross helped her to get state assistance for her own yurt, or tent, and also a state allowance for firewood.

Unfortunately, Sosorbaram is now being evicted with her yurt from the land on which it stands, but the MRCS is helping her find somewhere to go.

"I am very happy with the Red Cross because they are always helping and supporting me. I am lonely and so grateful to Red Cross people for sharing my loneliness."

The Mongolian Red Cross assistance to Sosorbaram and others like her includes daily home visits, food, cooking oil, buying firewood and other items, transporting her to the hospital and assistance with state benefits.

Republic of Korea: Volunteer going strong after 11 years of service

Kong Young Jin has been volunteering for the Red Cross in the Republic of Korea for 11 years, notching up more than 13,000 hours of service.

She helps to cook lunches for delivery to seniors and others in need. Kong Young Jin is happy when cooking, especially when she knows the food is being delivered to the older people who need it.

Asked if she ever gets tired with all this work, she just smiles and shakes her head. She says, "I never get bored. If I wasn't happy, I wouldn't do it." The average age of volunteers here is 50, but Kong Young Jin is a healthy 69.

She plans to continue volunteering as long as her health permits.



Kong Young Jin forms part of Korea's vital volunteer network. Photo Rob Few/IFRC

Indonesia: Psychosocial assistance for children

Four-year old Mutia Alifia's face was so cheerful. Surrounded by her friends, this pre-schooler was busy garnishing her loaf of bread with candy and chocolate. When she had finished, Fia as she is called, exhibited her work with a big grin. "I made this one by myself," she said, lifting it up.



Fia decorates loaves of bread.

Decorating loaves of bread is one of the many psychosocial activities organized by the Indonesian Red Cross, or PMI, in collaboration with other organizations. The activity is part of the recovery process carried out by the Psychosocial Support Program (PSP) team to help Fia and other children, who are survivors of the Gintung Lake flood, cope with their emotional challenges.

The old dam on Gintung Lake broke after midnight on 26 March and caused massive flooding, taking many lives and traumatizing children.

Eleven-year old Roy Cahyo, said he gets fearful every time he hears the dawn Islamic call for prayer. "It was during the early morning prayer when it happened," recalls the secondary

student from the Lebak Bulus School. He never forgot how his best friend, Lana, was swept away by the flood waters.

"The children may seem happy, but it doesn't mean that they are as they were before the disaster. If we do not assist them quickly, it could be worse," explained Leo Patiasina, PMI PSP coordinator.

Leo said the survivors' traumatic experiences are better managed with such programmes. "The environment and surrounding community are supportive in helping the victims. This can speed up the recovery process of the survivors," he said.

Malaysia: A jewel is lost, but first receives Henri Dunant Medal

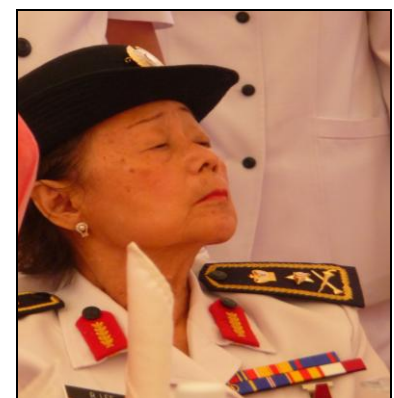
Datuk Datin Paduka Ruby Lee was best known as the "Jewel of the Malaysian Red Crescent." Just before she recently passed away, she was the recipient of the extremely prestigious Henri Dunant Medal, the highest honour bestowed by the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement upon only a very small number of its most devoted members.

At a ceremony held in Kuala Lumpur in her honour, Malaysian Red Crescent Chairman Dato' Shahrizan Tunku Sulaiman had this to say of Ruby Lee: "The Malaysian Red Crescent is made up of great people who do extraordinary things. But every once in awhile we have the opportunity to work with an extraordinary person who does truly great things. Datuk Datin Ruby Lee is, indeed, one of those extraordinary people."

She joined the MRCS in the early 1950's as a volunteer and retired from her position as the Secretary General in 1996, at the age of 69. When the Vietnamese Boat People fled their

country and landed on Malaysian shores, Datuk Ruby's personal experience as a refugee in India during the Second World War compelled her to champion their plight.

She successfully managed the demanding task of providing shelter, care and repatriation for 250,000 affected people with unwavering dedication.



Datuk Datin Paduka Ruby Lee at her Henri Dunant Medal ceremony.

Datuk Ruby also had a profound impact internationally. According to Carl Naucner, head of the East Asia Office for IFRC, who worked closely with Datuk Ruby Lee for eight years when he was head of the Asia region, "She was always the one that global leadership turned to, to solve difficult issues during conferences and negotiations. She had an inclusive humanitarian approach that built her great reputation as a problem solver over many years."

Her good friend Dato' Dr Nellie Tan-Wong, after reading out a special citation to the several hundred people in attendance, shared that it was Ruby Lee who first inspired her to become involved with the MRCS.

"She always encouraged us to do well for those in need, not just here in Malaysia, but around the world. She was a great inspiration for me and for many of those who would become our youth members," said Dato Nellie.

New Zealand: A healthy Red Cross breakfast offers a kick start for improved learning

Every morning in nearly 50 primary schools across New Zealand, more than 1,600 children receive a healthy breakfast to kick start their learning day thanks to the *Red Cross Breakfast in Schools* programme.

The programme, launched nationally on World Red Cross Red Crescent day in May 2007, is a partnership between New Zealand Red Cross and corporate partner Countdown Supermarkets.

Every morning at participating schools, children have the choice of toasted bread, cereal and a hot drink, all served by Red Cross volunteers.



Kimberly Kyte eats breakfast from the Red Cross five times a week.

Sara Williams, Community Services Manager, says the programme was initiated nationally two years ago following a vulnerability and capacity assessment that identified in the area surveyed that a large percentage of young children would benefit from the opportunity to have a breakfast meal before they started their learning day.

“There was a wide range of reasons why children go to school hungry. By addressing the problem in this way, we are giving vulnerable children the chance to start their learning day with a full tummy, giving them a better chance of reaching their full potential,” says Ms Williams. Since the *Red Cross Breakfast in Schools* programme

started, over 250,000 meals have been served and the programme continues to expand across the country. Teachers from participating schools say the programme is making a real difference with participating children showing better concentration levels and more settled behaviour in class.

“One little girl was continuously late to school by 10 or 20 minutes every day. Since *Breakfast in Schools* she is on time for breakfast as well as class, so her learning time has increased,” says a teacher at one of the schools participating in the programme.

“She seems more attentive in the mornings where previously it was hard to motivate her to participate in class activities.”

Tonga: Red Cross aids ferry disaster survivors

The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) provided vital support to those affected by a maritime accident on 6 August, when the MV Princess Ashika was lost at sea. Reports indicate that 129 people were on board the ship when it sank. 54 people survived.

The Tonga Red Cross Society initially launched a response through their branch in Ha’apai. Nearly 20 volunteers worked closely with the Tongan Police Force to respond to the immediate needs of the survivors who were evacuated to a church building.

The Red Cross provided food, drinks and blankets. TRCS also set up a Restoring Family Links unit operating around the clock to help members of the Tongan community to locate family members involved in the accident.

In Tonga, 45 volunteers and staff have been trained in psychosocial support, including those from the outer islands.

PSP and other services have been provided with funding from Ausaid.

Fiji: Walk for Humanity draws nation’s leadership

On the first of August, Acting President of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, His Excellency Ratu Epeli Nailatikau led close to 100 friends, volunteers and staff of Fiji Red Cross and the IFRC on a 10 kilometre *Walk for Humanity* from Red Cross House in Suva.

The walk, which got underway at 6.30AM, included businesses and individuals who made the early start along with his Excellency and the Red Cross team from the National Office.

In his address at the start of the walk, Ratu Epeli, a former National Vice-President of the FRCS, said that the event was not only to raise funds for the Society’s Hibiscus Charity Chest but to also commemorate the 150th year for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the 60th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions.



His Excellency Ratu Epeli Nailatikau arrives at the first checkpoint and greets an FRCS volunteer.

“By participating in this walk you have showed your support and solidarity for the work of Red Cross in Fiji and internationally – be it in times of disaster, war or peace,” said the Acting President. “The money that you have helped to raise will also go back into the Fiji Red Cross Society that provides free services to the community.”

Pakistan: Youth inspires “Our world. Your Move.”



**Our world is in a mess.
It's time to make your move.
ourworld-yourmove.org**

Amidst the festive atmosphere of World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day celebrations on 8 May in Pakistan, one message stood out loud and clear: “Unity among men. Peace among nations.”

The call reverberated throughout a drama competition held at the Pakistan Red Crescent Society’s (PRCS) auditorium as students aged 7 to 15 portrayed the challenges faced by a world dominated by violence.

The stage plays touched the hearts of the audience. “It’s really horrible what is happening around us. Our children feel the pain of the victims,” remarked one of those in attendance. “We have to put a stop to it,” she sighed as she leaned back in her seat.

On stage, the voices of the actors echoed throughout the room: “Let there be peace on earth and let that peace begin with me.”

One of them paused, reached for the globe and held it high, as other players in the group joined him, each waving a placard calling for unity, discipline, courage, dignity and respect for life.

The drama competition was organized by the PRCS on World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day to put into action the global campaign of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, “Our world. Your Move.”

“It is a very timely campaign. We are happy to be part of it,” says Amna Rehan, the winning team’s teacher from Army Public School.

Maldives: Her mind is set on helping

The Maldivian Red Crescent General Assembly met on 16 August to elect its volunteer governing board, bringing the new National Society into a family of 186 other National Societies around the world.

Earlier, the PRCS conducted a poster-design contest for elementary and high school students with *Our world. Your move.* as the theme.

The participants came up with creative presentations of what they can do to make the world a better place – from properly throwing rubbish into waste cans, to sharing food with the hungry, giving first aid or donating blood.

“Drawing is always fun. I have been doing it as a sort of game since I was in grade one. Now it’s my hobby,” says first prize winner Marwan Hafeez who caught the attention of the judges as she drew with ease with her mouth using straw and water colour.

“It’s easier to draw with my mouth than with my hand,” 14-year old Marwan said when asked why she uses her mouth to draw. “Maybe that’s one move I can make, teaching children how to draw with their mouth,” she added, her eyes sparkling.

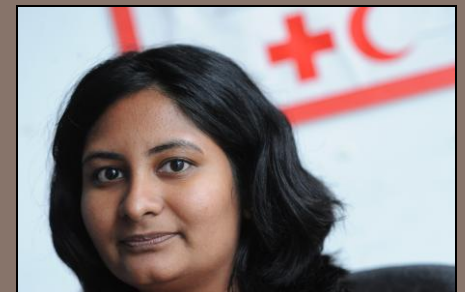
Nepal: Floods take lives

On August 15, heavy rains and flash floods in Djhapa took the lives of six people, displaced more than 1,800 families and threatened the livelihoods of many more living in Eastern Nepal. Nepal Red Cross Society volunteers helped to rescue 1,000 stranded people and have provided clothing and other relief supplies to more than 300 surviving families.

Alistair Henley, head of IFRC’s Asia Pacific Zone Office, was in attendance and said that he hoped that the Maldivian Red Crescent “will go from strength to strength.” He urged partner and sister national societies to step forward and provide the new society with much-needed support that will build on the momentum created by the tsunami.

A week after returning to the Maldives from studying in Malaysia in 2005, Aishath Noora Mohamed became one of the first Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers to help people affected by the Indian Ocean Tsunami.

Noora volunteered for the Disaster Management Center in the Psychosocial Support Program (PSP) Unit. She received training from several Red Cross PSP experts and eventually joined the staff of the American Red Cross a year later.



“When the Red Cross is mentioned, the first word that comes to my mind is volunteers,” says Noora. She then became one of the focal points for the formation of the Maldives Red Crescent.

The various tsunami programmes implemented by the Red Cross Red Crescent created a volunteer pool in the Maldives who could be easily mobilized for the new National Society.

“The volunteer spirit can be sustained in a more practical manner because the Red Cross Red Crescent looks at volunteers as a very noble thing,” adds Noora.

G8 Summit promises much on Disaster Risk Reduction

Leaders of the world's eight main industrialized countries at the recent G8 Summit meeting were urged to apply their 'considerable influence, resources and political will' to advance five major action points on disaster risk reduction (DRR).

This pivotal event in the international calendar took place at a moment when decisive action is needed to adapt to climate change, with people already suffering from extreme weather.

As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted at the recent Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, "Investing in risk reduction is a triple win: against poverty, against disasters and against climate change."

His words were echoed in a joint statement issued by the seven international agencies and organizations, including the IFRC, which form the oversight board of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction partnership (ISDR). The statement specifies five action areas for G8 attention and follow-up:

1) Helping disaster-prone countries in incorporating disaster risk reduction as a strategic and programmatic development instrument, integral to all national strategic initiatives.

2) Promoting effective measures to reduce the number of people living with chronic food insecurity by strengthening livelihoods particularly at the community level.

3) Ensuring the research needed at all levels to develop, disseminate and apply climate forecast information, early warning systems and ecosystem essentials – particularly in developing countries – through improved water resource management and increased sustainable agricultural, fisheries and forestry productivity.

4) Enabling a global structural and functional assessment of all schools and hospitals, coupled with firm action plans for safer health and education facilities implemented in all disaster prone countries – with disaster risk reduction included in all school curricula as standard.

5) Making unequivocal financial commitments to disaster risk reduction, for example to allocate a minimum of 10% of all humanitarian and reconstruction and a sizeable portion of climate change adaptation funding to disaster risk reduction.

For information on the IFRC's Disaster Management programmes, visit http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/index.asp?navid=04_03

H1N1: The global call to action

On 17 August, the IFRC joined three leading global organizations in issuing a call to action to reduce the impact of H1N1. The IFRC, the World Health Organization, OCHA and Unicef will work together with partners such as Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, NGOs and civil society to support governments and communities.



Volunteers share vital information on reducing the impact of pandemic.

To reduce the impact of pandemic, the call to action includes the following guidance:

- Identify populations at increased risk of disease and death, including those in crowded settings and with poor access to health care.
- Reduce death by treating acute respiratory illness and pneumonia.
- Reduce the spread of disease by spreading risk communication messages on individual and societal prevention measures.
- Continue critical services and plan for the worst by developing continuity and contingency plans and ensuring 8 to 12 weeks of buffer stocks of essential medicines.
- Plan and coordinate efforts, as no one agency can provide all priority interventions.

For more information, on H1N1, this global call to action, and methods to ensure preparedness, visit <http://www.ifrc.org/what/health/relief/influenza.asp>



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