



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



## Joint Media Release

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# World Red Cross Day 2011 Volunteering: the spirit of humanitarian action

COLOMBO, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2011 – Whether its floods, drought, war, famine, landslide or manmade disasters across Sri Lanka or be it Haiti, Pakistan, Libya, Syria, Egypt, Japan; the world watched each of these humanitarian crisis evolve. Volunteers from the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and from the Red Cross Movement across the globe were among the first to respond. From rescuing the sick and wounded to providing first aid, water and food to those in need, our volunteers have been putting community first for more than 150 years.

This year marks both the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Year of the Volunteer as well as the European Year of Volunteering. For the Red Cross and Red Crescent, this is an opportunity to promote and recognize the role volunteers have played in enabling our Movement to become the largest humanitarian network in the world. Today, one in every 2,000 people, volunteers for the Movement. This means nearly every community on the globe has a Red Cross or Red Crescent volunteer supporting it. That's a truly inspiring statistic and something that we are proud of.

In Sri Lanka over 60,000 volunteers who are currently in active service has given their valuable time to serve the public of Sri Lanka in times of disasters. In the past 75 years of existence of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, volunteers have been the corner stone of our aid to the people.

"The services rendered by the volunteers are immeasurable. In times of disaster we always rely on our volunteers to give us the edge in order to assist the most vulnerable people in Sri Lanka. We need to recognize their efforts on this World Red Cross day and thank them for their valuable service" say the Jagath Abeysinghe the President of Sri Lanka Red Cross Society.

Meanwhile the Head of Delegation of the International Federation of the Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies Sri Lanka Delegation, Bob McKerrow says "It's worth pointing out that volunteers are often themselves the victims of the very same crises they are responding to. The courage and sense of solidarity it takes to put one's own suffering aside and take action to help others is quite simply remarkable. Time and again, it's the volunteers who roll up their sleeves, wrap a reassuring arm over the shoulder of a distressed neighbour and put their hearts into making things better."

"Volunteers are the backbone of Red Cross humanitarian action both during and after a disaster, be it natural or manmade", said Yves Giovannoni, Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Sri Lanka. "Alongside stepping up cooperation with the National Society, the ICRC is supporting it to enhance its capacity as well as those of its volunteers to address humanitarian needs that resulted from the armed conflict and still remain following the end of active hostilities in Sri Lanka".

We at the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society along with our partners the IFRC, the ICRC and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement globally would like to emphasize the importance of volunteers. They don't just respond to emergencies. On a day-to-day basis they are working quietly around the globe, engaging communities in the very spirit of togetherness. Our commitment, as a Movement, is to work with governments and partners to better protect, promote and recognise the critical role our volunteers play, often in the face of great personal sacrifice.

Please join us on 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2011 in offering thanks to the volunteers in your community and showing appreciation for all forms of voluntary service.

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