



Presentation
by
Dr. SP Agarwal,
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At
The AGM of the
Indian Red Cross Society / St. John Ambulance
(Business Session)

Dr. D.S. Kothari Auditorium
DRDO Bhavan, New Delhi
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Hon'ble Chairman Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad and Hon'ble Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, Dr. Kamla Gidwani, Vice Chairperson St. John Ambulance (India), members of the national managing body of Indian Red Cross Society and National council of St. John Ambulance (India) representatives of state and union territory branches throughout the country, observers, volunteers and friends...

I would like to begin by again thanking each and every one of you for making time from your busy schedules to join this Annual General Meeting here in New Delhi. Whether you have travelled from near or far, you are very welcome here in New Delhi.



I would also like to congratulate those who receive awards today in recognition of your daily efforts to better the lives of those that the Red Cross serves, for your years of commitment to the organization, and for your efforts in enabling others to experience the joy of service to mankind through the Red Cross. You are an inspiration to us all.

The Hon'ble Chairman deserves high praise for his work for the Indian Red Cross Society, particularly in recent years. Since the last AGM, thanks to his personal interventions, the society has obtained tax exemption for donors here in India, as well as income tax exemption for national headquarters on a perpetual basis. I have no doubt that this will afford our society with greater opportunities for raising funds for our programmes which serve vulnerable people for many years to come. The hosting of the ceremonial session at Rashtrapati Bhavan this morning is also due to his keen interest in the work of Indian Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance (India). Across India, our relevance as a humanitarian agency has continued to grow. Indian Red Cross Society is delivering programmes which meet the needs of the communities of which we are a part. Since our last AGM, we have begun a number of new initiatives, all aimed at making communities safer, healthier, and more resilient. As ever, we have continued to be called upon to respond to a number of disasters in various parts of the country, including the Sikkim earthquake in 2011 where our volunteers were among the first to respond. Following severe flooding in Assam, our volunteers were again called into action. Following both disasters, our National Disaster Water and Sanitation Team were able to deploy water purification units to some of the most remote areas, with the assistance of the Indian Army providing air transport in Sikkim. Other significant disasters since our last AGM include cyclones Thane and Nilam, where again the strength of the Red Cross could be seen. During the cold wave that swept across northern India earlier this year, Red Cross volunteers were out in force distributing blankets, either from the stock of 10,000 provide by national headquarters, from their own emergency stocks, or from those received as donations from the public.



Of course, state branches themselves have managed and responded to many disasters in their areas. I would be grateful if those present here today pass on our thanks on behalf of national headquarters to all of those who have taken part in emergency response action in the recent past.

Keeping in mind that many disasters and emergencies require urgent local response, Indian Red Cross Society national headquarters has developed a new programme, whereby first medical responders will be trained and certified in a variety of areas related to emergency response, including emergency first aid, public health in emergencies, water, crisis management, and more. This programme will form a major component of the overall disaster management approach of Indian Red Cross Society in the years to come, eventually rolled out to every branch and every district.

Health has remained a significant area of focus for the National Society and our state branches. Our TB prevention and control programme has again expanded, now being carried out by seven state branches. The number of patients supported has increased, and a number of the state branches involved have agreed to expand their community engagement activities to urban clusters and suburban areas; reducing stigma, spreading the message that TB is curable, and ensuring patients access treatment through DOTS centres established by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare under the RNTCP. Malaria too has seen action, with long lasting insecticide nets distributed in two districts where malaria has been prevalent in both Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

Indian Red Cross Society is also carrying out social mobilization support for the government's measles catch-up campaign. The Red Cross aims to reach up to two million people, and assist in ensuring that 350,000 children are vaccinated against measles across the 20 districts covered by this programme in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

As ever, our blood services continue to be a significant contribution of Indian Red Cross to health needs of India.

In order to continue to modernize and to increase learning opportunities and cooperation between state branches as well as with national headquarters, we have made available video conferencing facilities in at the state branch offices of the most disaster-prone states of the country. We are now looking towards developing partnerships to facilitate online learning, so that all branches, volunteers and members can improve their knowledge and skills in the most cost efficient way.



Together with the new opportunities offered through online learning, national headquarters will continue its academic programmes, namely the one year part-time postgraduate diploma course in disaster preparedness and rehabilitation, of which we are now nearing the completion of seven batches. We will also continue our health promotion through

ayurveda and yoga course, which has become extremely popular. In addition to these education opportunities, we will soon commence educating home health care assistants. As our society changes, Indian Red Cross Society has an important role to play in ensuring that the elderly, who have spent their whole lives giving can be cared for properly, where possible, in their own homes. We will make a special effort to encourage younger people to be trained through this programme, so that they can also benefit from the wisdom of their elders.

Indian Red Cross Society is also part of a global family. Our family is a large one - 187 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies throughout the world. We are fortunate indeed that many of our family share our view of better services to vulnerable people and disaster affected communities and of a stronger Indian Red Cross Society.

German Red Cross has been been a key partner of Indian Red Cross Society for many years, working together with us on programmes including the Odisha disaster mitigation programme, which has resulted in building safer and more resilient communities across Odisha. The programme has been so successful that the model put in place has been replicated across the region. The World Bank has noted that through the construction of

cyclone shelters and establishment of community committees, thousands of lives have been saved. I have seen the results myself when I visited the project locations in recent times, and I must say that the work is a credit both to the German Red Cross, and the state and district branches involved.

German Red Cross has also been extremely supportive of our junior and youth development programme, through community members are sensitized by youth peer volunteers. These peer volunteers were trained by the society's youth peer educators. In addition, German Red Cross supported IRCS national headquarters to enable us to upgrade the blood bank to a state of art facility, which now benefits countless people throughout the national capital region.

We have also worked closely with the Spanish Red Cross in the delivery of the post-tsunami short-term recovery programme livelihood support from March 2008 to March 2013. They have supported the Indian Red Cross by providing training to build the capacity of fishing communities of a number of tsunami-affected districts.

I on behalf of Indian Red Cross Society, I wish to sincerely thank the German and Spanish Red Cross societies for the support extended to Indian Red Cross and look forward to continue our work of cooperation with them in future.



As long-standing partners complete their work here in India, new partners who share our vision of a stronger Indian Red Cross Society and have a common interest in development are coming on board. Since the beginning of this year, Belgian Red Cross (Flanders) has based a delegate here in New Delhi at national headquarters. This

partnership is focused on developing new evidence based practices in first aid and other health related issues. Already, this partnership is showing promise towards a longer-term collaboration, one which will benefit each and every volunteer in our organization, and beyond, by improving practices in first aid and health, and ensuring that Indian Red Cross Society remains at the forefront of setting the highest standards in in emergency healthcare and first aid education.

Since our last AGM, we have also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Turkish Red Crescent Society, which aims to facilitate long-term collaboration on a variety of issues of mutual interest, including development and disaster response. This agreement came to pass following the first ever roundtable meeting of Red Crescent societies of the gulf region in South Asia, held here in New Delhi.



My friends, I would like to remind you all that 8 May next week is World Red Cross Red Crescent Day. The theme for 2013 is "150 years of humanitarian action". Although 150 years have passed since the birth of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, its volunteers and members

remain committed to provide relevant and timely humanitarian service to vulnerable communities throughout the world, now and into the future. We can count the volunteers of Indian Red Cross Society as among the most committed humanitarians in the world of Red Cross.

The Hon'ble Chairman for also been instrumental in securing funding for the work of the Red Cross overseas. The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society is now one of the partners of the Government of India in the construction of thousands of houses in the north of its country. Through this, our Hon'ble Chairman has placed India in the top three donors to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and further illustrated the commitment of the Government of India to community development both at home and abroad.

Ladies and gentlemen, our society is stronger today than ever before. Through sustained efforts, the society is now secure in its financial position, and is transparent, complying with the best practices in financial management thanks to the placing of all pending audited accounts on the table of parliament. Even after releasing funds to facilitate capacity building by state branches, Indian Red Cross Society has also been able to raise funds in response to the Haiti earthquake and Japan earthquake and tsunami, underlining our important role as part of the global family of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Sir, on behalf of the millions of members and volunteers of Indian Red Cross Society, as well as on behalf of the global Red Cross Red Crescent family, I sincerely thank you for your support and guidance. We are truly lucky to have a leader of your eminence as our Chairman.

The future of Indian Red Cross Society has the promise of being brighter than any of us imagine, but for this future to be realized, we must be flexible, we must work as a team, and embrace all that modern technology can offer us, particularly in terms of training and communicating effectively during disasters and other emergencies, and we must be creative. Often, it is young people who are the most creative among us – I strongly encourage you to engage young people not only as beneficiaries of our programmes, but as service providers, and even as decision makers. When given such responsibility, together with guidance from those with greater experience, I am sure that they will rise to the challenge, and carry the light of the Red Cross far into the future.

Thank you





