FIRST AID
Towards safe and healthy living
### ISSUE

**Millions** of people are hurt or killed by injuries every year due to inadequate response or lack of timely assistance.

Most accidents requiring first aid occur in places where people feel secure.

**Road crash mortality projection 2020**

- After cardiac arrest, with each minute that passes, the likelihood of survival decreases by 10%
- Permanent brain damage occurs within four to six minutes after cardiac arrest
- More than 50 per cent of death from traffic accidents occur in the first few minutes after the crash

These statistics make it clear that having someone trained in first aid on the scene makes a real difference and saves lives.

### HOW WE HELP

**Red Cross Red Crescent first-aid work at national and community levels**

- Face-to-face training
- E-learning
- Smart phone and web applications
- Campaigns
- Community-based health and first aid
- Armed conflict and violence
- Large gatherings
- Disasters (including psychological first aid)
- Emergency

### IMPACT

- In less than **five minutes**, first-aid volunteers and trained people can take decisive steps.
- Red Cross Red Crescent first-aid training is crucial in providing a more efficient response to emergencies.
- **17 million** people received short first-aid courses (less than six hours) given by 52 National Societies in 2009
- **36,000** active first-aid trainers globally in 2009
- **90 per cent** increase in number of first-aid courses given in Europe between 2006 and 2009

Source: IFRC, First aid for a safer future: updated global edition, September 2010
ISSUE

Millions of people are hurt or killed by injuries every year due to inadequate response or lack of timely assistance. First aid is by no means a replacement for emergency services; it is a vital initial step in providing effective and swift action that helps to reduce serious injuries and improve the chances of survival. Taking immediate action and applying the appropriate techniques, while waiting for professional help, can considerably reduce both deaths and injuries and their impact during disasters and everyday emergencies.

Many people living in war-torn or disaster-affected areas are rarely given the opportunity to be trained in basic first aid. First aid awareness is lacking in many vulnerable communities, where a very basic idea of how to treat an injury, or in the worst-case scenario keep someone alive, would have real impact.

HOW WE HELP

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world’s leading first aid provider. For more than 100 years, first aid has been one of the principal services provided by Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers to injured people. We believe that first aid is an essential pillar in building safer, more resilient communities which in turn are best placed to increase the impact of disaster preparedness and reduce exposure to health hazards.

At the global level
The IFRC provides technical support and capacity building to National Societies. It oversees the development of tools, training packages and guidelines, such as the First Aid and Resuscitation Guidelines, issued in 2011. These guidelines, which are based on evidence, recognized practices and international standards, aim at harmonizing and improving first aid techniques. As part of our quality assurance role, we invest in research and innovation initiatives in close partnership with academic institutions, researchers and practitioners, such as the IFRC Global First Aid Reference Centre.

The IFRC plays a central role in advocating with partners and governments for the recognition of first aid as a humanitarian act that should be accessible to all. World First Aid Day in September is one of the main advocacy initiatives used to encourage first aid as an easy-to-learn and inexpensive way to promote healthy lifestyles and save lives.
At the national and community levels

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are the world’s most important first aid educators and providers. They support country authorities by promoting basic skills in first aid. Today, first aid is a core activity for almost all 187 National Societies. Their first-aid activities include:

- face-to-face training in different settings (training centres, workplaces, schools, communities, etc.) for various target groups (e.g., volunteers, the general public, health professionals, the private sector, vulnerable people, children)
- e-learning in several languages, usually complementary to face-to-face training and for refresher purposes
- smart phone and web applications for immediate access to information about what to do in different first-aid scenarios and for refresher purposes, and
- awareness and communication campaigns, such as demonstrations, competitions, media events and street theatres.

In addition, several National Societies have specialized in targeted first aid services, such as in armed conflict and other situations of violence, disasters (including psychological first aid services), emergency ambulance services and road safety, for large gatherings (e.g., the Olympics) and community-based health and first aid (CBHFA).

More than 17 million people were trained worldwide by National Societies in 2009, representing a 20 per cent increase compared to 2006.

Investing in first aid training and education not only saves lives, but it is also cost effective. First aid reduces the severity of injuries and, as a result, the high cost of medical treatment and the long-term consequences for severely injured people.

The IFRC is striving to make first aid accessible to everyone, including the most vulnerable people, and to become an integral part of a wider developmental approach that values and prioritizes prevention.

“Thousands of people could be given a chance to live every year if more people knew first aid.”

Bekele Geleta, Secretary General, IFRC
Case study

A collection of first aid experiences

First aid reduces vulnerabilities and helps build stronger communities. The IFRC actively promotes suitable and accessible learning opportunities throughout the world. Below are three examples of projects initiated by the IFRC.

The IFRC Global First Aid Reference Centre was initially created in 1996 as a European reference centre, managed first by the Belgium Red Cross and then by the French Red Cross in 2002. The centre promotes first aid teaching around the world and facilitates the sharing of expertise in the field between National Societies and their partners, in order to help them increase the number and the quality of their first aid programmes. The European centre was fundamental in harmonizing first-aid gestures in Europe and in creating the European First Aid Certificate. This certificate will soon be transformed into a global certificate, which means that, in the near future, if a person successfully completes a first aid course in Russia or Ghana, his or her diploma will be recognized worldwide.

The British Red Cross identified disabled people as a group that could benefit from access to first aid training. It has set up a project which aims to train 5,000 disabled people in practical first aid over three years, with the help of some 40 disabled volunteers. These volunteers were recruited and took courses to become peer educators and trainers in first aid. The programme is a major step in integrating disabled people as volunteers.

The Ghana Red Cross Society and its partners are behind a proposal to convince the authorities to make first aid mandatory for drivers. In a country where traffic accidents are estimated to kill more than 1,800 people annually, such legislation would make Red Cross first aid training a prerequisite for applicants before they are admitted to take the driving test.
Humanity The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.