We Live for Humanity!

Volume 5, No.12 2019

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the largest volunteer based humanitarian organization in the world. The movement, inspired by the 31 year old Swiss businessman, Henry Dunant (1828-1910), was founded in 1863, four years after the battle of Solferino that became the cause of Dunant’s famous book written in 1862: The Memory of Solferino. In 1901, Henry Dunant was the first Nobel Peace Prize winner for his outstanding humanitarian and peace service.

In 1948, the International Red Cross Red Crescent Federation (IFRC), in recognition of Dunant’s contribution, has proclaimed Dunant’s birth day, May 8, as the World Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) Day.

The day is annually celebrated bringing forth the cause it serves and the principles it embodies. It is dedicated to the people who suffer from all forms of natural and human made calamities. Every year it is celebrated with a theme that promotes the priceless value of human being and the significance of humanity. ‘Love’ is the theme for the 2019 World RCRC day. The theme aims to raise the understanding of the public about the universality of the movement and the enormous effort it is exerting to make the world a better place.

There is also a room for member countries to consider individual context and drive their own theme. Today RCRC has 200 member countries.

The Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) that was founded on 8 July 1935 has become the 48th member of the IFRC. ERCS celebrates this year’s Day for the 61st time, with the theme: ‘Peace for Humanity’. We believe the inner most of love is the prevalence of peace- a mission among others the Movement has made it clear since day one.

The Society officially celebrated the RCRC Day at the Addis Hilton on May 9, 2019, in the presence of Her Excellency Sahlework Zewde, President of the FDRE and the Patron of ERCS.

In her opening remarks President Sahelework Zewde emphasized on the vitality of Peace for the effectiveness of humanitarian activities.

“There is a great nexus between Humanity, peace and development. Whatever we do in assisting those displaced or vulnerable societies we have to take all these issues into consideration. At the end of the day what we need is peace to move our country forward.”

By: Hiwot Beka
The Patron also inaugurated the Arts for Humanity Exhibition of sixty renowned and upcoming painters and sculptors who dedicated their art pieces for sale - the proceeds of which should fully go to support displaced people.

The various activities on this RCRC Day in Ethiopia was also marked by another important event that uphold love, peace and humanity; i.e. a half day panel discussion. It was an opportunity for the Society to map out the role of humanitarian organizations in the process of peace building. The panel was attended by civic society, faith based, academic and public authority representatives, among other partners, volunteers, members, the arts community, and donors to mention some.

Participants discussed on how to promote the culture of peace and minimize human suffering; they also raised the nexus between the humanitarian, development and peace and urged to put more effort in preventing the occurrence of conflicts that give a rise to massive humanitarian crises. It is told that humanitarian assistance alone cannot be a goal anymore, unless there is stability, peace and development. The ERCS as the main stakeholder in the humanitarian work is asked to adopt the humanitarian, development and peace nexus approach.
Recently conducted studies indicate that over 135 million people around the world have needed urgent humanitarian assistance; in 2017 war, conflict and violence displaced close to 70 million people mostly women and children. Over 40 million people were internally displaced by violence within a country.

In Ethiopia, a study conducted this year shows a total of 8.86 million people require humanitarian assistance. Out of this number close to 3 million people were internally displaced people (IDPs).

ERCS, in the 2018/2019 fiscal year, has provided emergency response assistance to 1.9 million beneficiaries; and over 371 thousand people also benefited from ERCS development projects. For both 260 million Birr was spent.

Moreover, ERCS has provided free ambulance and first aid service to half a million persons throughout the country with its over 500 ambulances; while 3.5 million persons benefited from ERCS low cost essential drug program via its 50 drug outlets and pharmacies in the country. Both has enabled ERCS to spend over 143 million additional costs.

41 thousand volunteers were mobilized for the humanitarian interventions stated above.

Currently ERCS has 5.4 million fee paying members.
2017 was a tough year for residents of Kindo Koisha woreda, Wolayta Zone in the Southern Nations Nationalities and People’s Region. Drought hit the area so hard and life got unbearable. The district which was known for its production of maize seized growing vegetation. Dwellers had a little or no food at their stock – that may last for three months or less.

The drought made it difficult to feed themselves and their cattle. What made things worse was the shortage of water.

Ayisha Momina - a mother of five children- is a 25 years old woman living in Dadakare kebele of the woreda. She remembers the severe water shortage of the previous years. She and her neighbors walked for two hours to a nearby village to fetch water. They had to dig the earth to get a sandy water for drinking, cooking and washing. Aisha says the family was exposed to water borne diseases.

Things were no different for Yohannes a 39 year old man, who says his cattle were starving to death due to lack of water and fodder.

ERCS’s immediate response was water tracking and fodder distribution to 28 thousand beneficiaries. But this emergency response wasn’t enough, nor sustainable.

ERCS came up with the idea of solving the water problem in the area. In partnership with the Canadian Red Cross Society the Society constructed the Dadakare water project which dramatically changed the lives and livelihood of the Kindo Koisha woreda community.

The project which is part of the Response for Drought Project includes two water points, reservoir and purifier that gives clean water access for two Kebeles of the Kindo Koisha district.
The Charter of the ERCS stipulates that Head of State of Ethiopia is the Patron of the Society. Accordingly, President Sahlework Zewdie has become the Patron of the Society since her assumption of the Presidency in October 2018. The Patron, on 1st of August, 2019 has paid an official visit to the Society’s Headquarters where she has witnessed the multi-dimensional activities of the Society’s Emergency Operation Center, Essential Drug Program Warehouse and Training Center.

During her visit at the Headquarters, ERCS Secretary General Meshesha Shewarega (PhD) has briefed the Patron about the evolution of the Society, and its short and long-term aspirations.

Dr Meshesha stated that the Society aspires to double the number of its members from the current 5.4 million, while the numbers of volunteers that currently stands at 46 thousand will grow to one million this year.

President Sahlework Zewdie's stopover at the Ethiopian Red Cross Society:

By: Bezawit Eyoel

Consuming an estimated amount of ninety four thousand Canadian Dollars (94,000 CAD), the water project is expected to directly benefit more than one thousand people and additional three hundred people indirectly with a capacity to expand.

Dwellers of the area have contributed whatever they could to make the project a reality. Ato Mengistu, a 65 year old farmer, has given away his two hundred meter square farmland for the pumping area and a generator house. Similarly, many have taken part in the building of alley road taking to the site. The inauguration ceremony which took place on June 16, 2019 was the happiest of moments for many of Dada Kare residents. Aisha says having a clean drinking water facility by her door is unbelievably exciting. For her, it doesn't only mean having a clean water to drink but saving her children’s lives.

It was an equally delightful day for Yohannes. He immediately went on to wash his clothes at the place allotted for the residents to wash their clothes. Yohannes says he has never imagined to see their water shortage curbed in his life time.
A delegation from Zambia Red Cross Society (ZRCS) paid an exchange learning visit to the Ethiopian Red Cross Society’s Pneumonia Reduction Project implementation sites in South Gondar Zone of the Amhara Regional State.

Financed by the Netherlands Red Cross Society (NLRS) the Pneumonia Reduction Project aims at reducing under-five morbidity and mortality due to Pneumonia and Acute Respiratory Infections.

The Ethiopian Red Cross and Zambian Red Cross Societies are among the five African Red Cross Societies implementing the project. Interventions of the project include awareness raising of communities, health promotion, support of vaccination programs, material provisions and introduction of cook stoves among others.

Being implemented in selected districts in Amhara, Oromiya and Somali Regional States in Ethiopia, the project targets to reach 56,000 under-five children from each region every year.

The visiting team took time to discuss with officials of Zonal Red Cross Branches, Health Centers & Health Posts and witness income Generating activities by zonal and district branches in addition to a stop over to the direct beneficiaries of the Project.

Head of the delegation and Health Board Chair of the Zambian Red Cross Dr. Evaristo Kunka says the visit has been a success in terms of emulating best experiences to take back home as well as comments to be considered in the course of the project.

ZRCS Health Project Manager Cosmas Sakala says they were especially impressed by community sensitization works of the project which is customized to the communities’ culture. The Cook Stoves which are being produced from cement in Ethiopia are also worth duplicating as they appear to be more durable than the ones in Zambia which are made of clay. Yet, introduction of chimney was suggested to make it more favorable.

NLRS Project Manager Selam Seje says such visits offer opportunities to augment the effectiveness of projects. According to the Project Manager, the recent visit has met its mere objectives in terms of exchange of good practices and the comments forwarded from the visiting team would be customized and implemented depending on the context.

A team drawn from the Pneumonia Reduction Project has paid similar learning exchange visit to Zambia in April this year.
A sheer smile fills Fatuma Hassan’s face when talking about a clinic built by the Ethiopian Red Cross society in her vicinity. Found in Chiro town of the West Hararghe Zone in the State of Oromia, the clinic has been there for nearly eleven years.

Fatuma, 58, has come here the second time. She is delighted over the professional treatment she has received.

“They treat you with respect,” Fatuma says with excitement. “They are professional. Everyone here is phenomenal.”

Fatuma at times fal short of words.

“They make sure my diabetes level is okay. They’re all nice . . . they are like a family to me. I couldn’t thank them enough,” Says Fatuma adding every one there is nice to her and other patients.

Not only the professional care, but the low cost clinical treatment makes it unique. The Clinic offers check-ups, screenings, testing and medication; all free of charge for those who can’t afford the pay.

In 2018/19 fiscal year it has provided a free clinical service for 1,463 people. It has also managed to render free medical services to internally displaced people resided in the Zone.

Hamza Abdulfeta is the Medical Director of the Clinic. He says most patients have as similar stories as Fatuma’s.

“We render services for free for those who can’t afford to pay” Hamza explains. “Everybody is so appreciative. People come here when they have nowhere else to go and I enjoy being a part of the clinic and part of their lives.”

The Clinic is also the only medical facility which provides care to tropical dermatology patients in the zone. The physician offer this service voluntarily three times a week, coming from Dire Dawa Hospital. There are twenty volunteers including eight medical doctors, health officers and nurses working in the clinic doing the best they can to cure their patients.
As part of its ongoing effort to making quality health care convenient and affordable, the clinic hopes to expand its service delivery.

“We are looking forward to expansion. We aspire to reaching out to patients who seek our assistance by upgrading this medium clinic into higher clinic,” says Hamza Mohammed Seid, Head of ERCS West Hararge Zonal Branch notes that shortage of skilled human power and medical equipment are the hindrances to overcome for a better service delivery. He called upon donors’ assistance in capacity building and material support for them to compete with private health care facilities in the area.

High cost of drugs has been burdening the community before ERCS West Hararghe Zone Branch Drug Store came to the relief of many. It supplies medicines at half cost compared to similar private pharmacies in Chiro town. The Drug Store has delivered its services to 49,380 people last year alone.

“It was sad that people were not getting care because of high cost medication. We are glad that the Red Cross Clinic and Drug Store came to our rescue.” says Fatuma speaking of the benefits of the Clinic and the Drug Store to her and the community at large.

The Clinic has served for 55,695 people in 2018/19 fiscal year; 108 percent of its plan according to information from the Zonal Branch.
The Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) has supported 650 households to breed 2000 goats and 250 heifers worth USD 306,075.95.

This nine month pilot project of Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) funded by Qatar Fund for Development on livelihood resilience was kick-off in January 2019 and implemented for the most vulnerable drought affected and food insecure communities, covering four kebeles of Doba and Tulo woredas of West Hararghe zone, Oromia region.

Fatuma Ebrahim, a mother of six children who lives in Chefe kebele, Tulo woreda said that her life became a difficult journey of hardships and she lives by collecting and selling fire wood. She never dreamt of that she would own anything of value.

However, a new dawn has arrived for Fatuma. She is now a proud owner of a heifer, thanks to the Ethiopian Red Cross Society and Qatar Red Crescent Society life-saving livelihood support.

“Words are not enough to express my feeling about the support. I have been in different social and economic problems. My children have stopped their education since I couldn’t afford their school fee. I hope they will go back to school henceforth,” told Fatuma.

She said that no one was provided such assistant previously and it plays a role to improve her family life.

“The project is one of the fifteen disaster risk reduction ERCS projects. This was achieved through the distribution of goats and Borena breed heifers. We are very impressed with the achievement of the project and grateful to the QRCS because its partnership with us has helped many needy people in the area,” said Engida Mandefro, Deputy Secretary General for Disaster Risk Management of ERCS during his visit at the project sites.

The Deputy Secretary General added that the ultimate goal of the project is to make our beneficiaries become self-reliant, and later on by collaborating with other donors and partners ERCS will also plan to implement this type of projects to other parts of the country.

Head of Qatar Red Crescent Society Delegation to Ethiopia, Khawater Makki, on her part said that commitment of the community and the ERCS West Hararghe Zonal branch office for the achievement of the project is wonderful and QRCS is very much interested to work with ERCS in developmental sectors in the country.
The other beneficiary from this programme is a 36-year-old India Hassen who is a resident of Wolkituma Woji kebele, in Doba woreda.

“The goats I have received will change the life of my household,” said India. “You know, my husband is patient and left behind to take care of our six children alone,” she added.

India said that the support is the best opportunity to have livelihood access to women. She also thanked ERCS and the National Partner Society for providing her with the lifesaving livelihood support to build the resilience of her family.

“Sixty two heifer and 100 goat beneficiary households are selected from each kebeles and 72 percent of the total beneficiaries are women. Representatives from religious leaders, government officials, Aba Gedas (The Head of Geda system) and ERCS staffs are participated in the free, fair, credible and inclusive selection process,” said ERCS West Hararghe Zonal Head, Mohammed Seid.

He noted that ERCS has distributed 2000 goats for 400 households – one male and four female goats for each beneficiary, and 250 heifers for 250 households. He added that the Society has also provided a meter cubic desho grass seedling, animal drugs and vaccine, and construction of flood diversion structure.