



4/21 a.m.
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT
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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
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Plenary

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THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS
AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

Statement by Brynjulf Mugaas
Alternate Deputy Permanent Observer for the
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent
to the United Nations

New York, April 21, 2004

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES SOCIÉTÉS DE LA CROIX-ROUGE ET DU CROISSANT-ROUGE

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE SOCIEDADES DE LA CRUZ ROJA Y DE LA MEDIA LUNA ROJA

الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

Thank you Mr. Chairman, for giving me the floor to address an agenda that is very much linked to the core activities of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

World-wide we provide local communities and victims of disasters with 20 million liters of water per day benefiting some one million people in 30 programs. Our network now spends about 50 million Swiss francs each year on water and sanitation.

These programs are developed and implemented in the framework of the UN Millennium Goals, especially with emphasize on MDG 2, 3, 4 and 7.

Allow me to give a few examples of what we are doing:

[MDG (2): Achieve universal primary education]

Water and sanitation facilities are needed at schools worldwide. In the disaster scenario when IFRC supports rehabilitation or reconstruction of schools, we ensure there is a safe water supply and that sanitation facilities are established. During or after a disaster, wet feeding programmes at schools are often undertaken for which a safe water supply is crucial.

In the developmental context, we know that many schools will be closed by authorities if water and sanitation is not provided. We therefore work with Red Cross volunteers and community members to re-opened or kept schools open by building latrines or establishing water points near to schools.

To further encourage school attendance, particularly for female students, adequate sanitation has shown to be a factor which adversely affects attendance.

To make it possible for young girls to attend school is of course also linked to MDG 3 – gender equality.

Furthermore, women and children often bear the task of water collection from great distances. By ensuring that women are properly represented and engaged in community water and sanitation committees, they can influence the positioning of water supplies to reduce to a minimum the distances they have to walk.

It is now standard practice when our water projects are implemented that women are properly represented in community structures and are given the same training opportunities as men.

[MDG (4): Reduce child mortality]

A recognized primary cause of under five mortality is poor water and sanitation linked to unsafe hygiene practices. Not only can this be significantly reduced by establishing safe water and sanitation facilities, but the window that Water and Sanitation can give to encouraging better hygiene have an even greater impact.

Hand and body washing, cleanliness at home and surrounding environment, safe water and food storage, washing hands after using the toilet are all potential means to reduce mortality significantly. Water and Sanitation combined with better nutrition, immunization and disease control delivered in an integrated manner has the potential to make a big impact on child mortality.

[MDG (7): Ensure environmental sustainability.]

Community empowerment and engagement linked to our global network of volunteers can increase the coverage of sustainable safe water and sanitation among the world's poorest.

IFRC, already contributing in this fashion, intends to scale-up its activities considerably.

In addition to this approach, the use of low-technology options as for example non-fossil fuel water pumping systems that do not threaten the environment, is a key element in our policy and strategy.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your attention.