

'4 Healthy Habits': mobilizing volunteers to help fight noncommunicable diseases

Geneva, 19 May 2014 – The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies ([IFRC](#)) and the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations ([IFPMA](#)) launch today, during a side event at the 67th World Health Assembly, a global initiative, called '4 Healthy Habits'. This innovative partnership will provide Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers information and tools to change behaviours, promote healthy lifestyles in communities around the world and ultimately to reduce the rise of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

“NCD prevention efforts need to be based not only on effective access to primary healthcare services but first and foremost on addressing the main risk factors” says Bekele Geleta, Secretary General, IFRC. “Behavioural change is a process. While the role of healthcare providers is essential to encourage healthy habits, we need to reach people more effectively by bringing the message to their homes, repetitively and on a greater scale to promote and sustain healthy behaviours.”

The four main NCDs – cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes – kill three in five people worldwide, with 80 per cent of NCD-related deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries. While 50 per cent of NCDs are avoidable, they share four main behavioural risk factors: tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, insufficient physical activity, and unhealthy diet or obesity. Successful prevention of these deadly diseases largely depends on encouraging people to lead healthy lifestyle. Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers, equipped with the necessary [tools](#), have a huge potential to help reduce preventable NCDs worldwide.

The '4 Healthy Habits' initiative is kicking off this month in Asia- Pacific and Europe, where 50 facilitators and volunteers from 33 countries have been trained to raise awareness about the dangers of NCDs, promote healthy habits and conduct basic screening among their communities, a task previously only performed by healthcare professionals.

'4 Healthy Habits' core strength is the empowerment of communities. Using simple tools adapted to local contexts, beneficiaries will be able to take charge of their own health” adds Eduardo Pisani, IFPMA Director General.

NCDs are a huge challenge, which requires a multi-stakeholder approach. The Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers' unique insights into how to engage with local communities on NCD prevention combined with the pharmaceutical industry's experience aims to reach out to approximately 3 million people worldwide to combat this growing public health challenge.

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IFRC

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network, reaching 150 million people each year through its 189 member National Societies. Together, IFRC acts before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. It does so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions. For more information, please visit www.ifrc.org. You can also connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#).

IFPMA

IFPMA represents the research-based pharmaceutical companies and associations across the globe. The research-based pharmaceutical industry's 1.3 million employees research, develop and provide medicines and vaccines that improve the life of patients worldwide. Based in Geneva, IFPMA has official relations with the United Nations and contributes industry expertise to help the global health community find solutions that improve global health. For more information, visit www.ifpma.org.