

Speech by Ms Durga Naidu Muthusamy, Director of Red Cross Youth (RCY) at the RCY Convention at Peninsula Excelsior Singapore on 4 November 2023

A very good morning to **Guest of Honour, Ms Loh Wee Cheng, Divisional Director, Student Development, Ministry of Education**, representatives from **MOE Character & Citizenship Education Branch**, Mr Benjamin William, Secretary General and CEO of Singapore Red Cross, Ms Charis Chan, Assistant Secretary General, RCY Youth Officers, Red Cross Youth Members and all members of Singapore Red Cross. It is my pleasure to meet all of you here today.

To start off, I would like to thank Mr Sahari Ani, the former Red Cross Youth (RCY) Director, for his sterling leadership and guidance in shaping the lives of youth over the past eight years. He played an integral role in unifying RCY, providing a seamless transition for youth as they advanced up the educational ladder from preschools, all the way to tertiary institutions. He is currently deployed in Egypt, working closely with the Egyptian Red Crescent to coordinate the Singapore Red Cross' aid into Gaza.

Let me give you a brief background about myself. I am Durga Naidu. Prior to joining the Singapore Red Cross (SRC), I was an Organizational Psychologist with more than a decade of management experience in different domains such as mental health, elderly, children and youth, foreign workers, inmates, research, business development and corporate. Since joining Red Cross Youth, I have been leading SRC's Youth Development department and I oversee the Red Cross Junior, Uniformed Group, Chapters, Youth Members @ District and Project Management.

The theme of this year's RCY Convention is 'Innovate, Educate, Elevate. Empowering future humanitarian leaders in an ever-changing world'. Today, RCY has 11,000 members in Singapore and we strive to nurture young humanitarians of tomorrow while revitalizing the Red Cross Youth movement. With this mission, and to empower future humanitarian leaders, we are **embarking on a comprehensive revamp** of the Uniformed Groups curriculum.

The paradigm shift will focus on **three key priorities**. Firstly, we will align the Red Cross Youth curriculum with the humanitarian services of the Singapore Red Cross to ensure RCY's continued relevance. This opens up the avenue for RCY youth members to embrace a social service-oriented mindset. Secondly, we will **bolster the appeal** of our programmes to the youth. Thirdly, we will leverage **educational technologies** to amplify the digital learning opportunities.

Aligning the RCY Curriculum with SRC's Humanitarian Services

I will take this opportunity to share more about the RCY curriculum revamp. As **mental wellness gains traction in our community**, we will be collaborating with the Singapore Red Cross Academy's Centre for Psychosocial Support to introduce a basic mental wellness syllabus for schools. This will replace the current youth leadership syllabus.

Going forward, we will be placing greater emphasis on **Service Learning**. RCY members will learn about SRC's humanitarian services such as Young Hearts, ElderAid, TransportAid, Home Monitoring and Eldercare, Red Cross Home for the Disabled and Day Activity Centre for the Disabled, Community

Health on Wheels, and International Services.

Instead of Basic First Aid, we will train and certify our youth in **Standard First Aid**. This will open up avenues for the youth to volunteer as first aiders. Our Red Cross Youth members can volunteer to provide first aid coverage at community events. They can also volunteer in the First Aider on Wheels programme to patrol parks to provide first aid treatments to park-goers in need during weekends.

For the **Disaster Management module**, we will reintroduce the syllabus, such as the Radio Communication and Field Signal syllabus that was taught previously. Radio communication is indispensable as backup communication in contingencies where smartphones are dysfunctional without electricity sources amid emergencies or disasters. Youth can look forward to a more exciting syllabus as we incorporate technology such as drones and virtual reality into the curriculum.

In the **Youth Ambassador Blood Programme**, we are working closely with the respective Bloodbanks for the resumption of the physical learning journeys. Cadets can participate in one-day attachments to enrich their learning experience while benefiting from on-the-job training.

Through our collective efforts, youth gain exposure to a kaleidoscope of SRC's humanitarian causes, paving the way for them to play active roles by volunteering for causes that resonate with them. This is integral, as SRC is a charitable organization that relies heavily on volunteers to run its programmes. Capitalizing on the escalating trend of youth volunteerism, we nurture service-oriented mindsets in our youth while gravitating towards a service-oriented culture. As our youth volunteer in a myriad of humanitarian services, we hope they will embrace the Red Cross' core value of compassion, and the Fundamental Principle of voluntary service to uplift the lives of those in need while enhancing community resilience in our midst through first aid coverage or blood donation advocacy. Through the changes in our curriculum, we strive to mould our youth into future humanitarian leaders of tomorrow.

Enhancing the Appeal of the Programmes to Youth

In this global landscape characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, it is imperative that we brace ourselves to navigate the challenges ahead. It is critical for the social service sector to respond with agility to tackle the emerging and unaddressed needs in our community and beyond.

Besides broadening the horizons of our youth through exposure to SRC's humanitarian services, we will adopt a beneficiary-centered and collaborative approach by harnessing the collective power of humanity. We will collaborate with partners to curate programmes while leveraging synergies and resources to conceive solutions tailored to holistically meet the needs of the vulnerable whom we serve.

Through these efforts, we hope to equip our youth with relevant competencies that will shape them into passionate change-makers capable of tackling societal challenges while enhancing their personal development. Through our structured curriculum, programme and activities in RCY, we also lay the groundwork for our youth to be strategic thinkers, humanitarian innovators, and collaborators of the future, capable of tackling prevailing and future societal challenges. Through these efforts, we hold the conviction that our youth will be well-poised to embark on humanitarian careers both locally and abroad in the future.

Leveraging Technology to Enhance Digital Learning

Complementing the Ministry of Education's EdTech strategy to nurture future-ready digital learners, our youth will gain exposure to a wider pool of digital learning opportunities and curricula. We are introducing a new curriculum featuring Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and drones. RCY learners will leverage technologies to spearhead humanitarian operations and aid. This develops their strength of character and imbues in them soft skills as they enhance community resilience while giving back to society. This opens the doors for them to develop competencies that stand them in good stead to chart the course and venture into the digital space for their personal and professional development.

As a leader, I hold the conviction that I should be an exemplary role model to my teammates, colleagues, and volunteers by walking the talk. Instead of merely giving directives, I go on the ground and actively get involved in the meetings, activities and events. Though it may be challenging physically, I derive this intrinsic sense of satisfaction and fulfillment in the knowledge that I have done my part to be a good role model to my team and volunteers. I hope my passion, tenacity, and indomitable spirit will inspire others to follow in my footsteps. To add on, today, RCY is also open to youth whose schools do not offer RCY as a CCA.

To all our Red Cross Youth members, aligned with our theme, I hope the knowledge, exposure, experience and skills gained through Red Cross Youth will shape you into humanitarians of our future. We hope you will also be champions of humanitarian work in your family, neighborhood, school and community. Collectively, you can make our society a kinder, more gracious and compassionate place to live in. Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who made this convention possible. Special thanks to Chow Yin, the project manager and committee of this event as well as to all the volunteers actively involved. Thank you for enabling RCY to grow.

Thank you.