

**WELCOME REMARKS BY MR BENJAMIN WILLIAM, SINGAPORE RED CROSS
SECRETARY GENERAL, AT WORLD FIRST AID DAY 2016,
AT TAMPINES HUB ON 10 SEPTEMBER AT 9AM**

Mr Masagos Zulkifli Bin Masagos Mohamad
Minister for the Environment and Water Resources
Member of Parliament for Tampines GRC

Mr Laurence Goh
Singapore Red Cross Council Member

Volunteers and friends of Singapore Red Cross

Residents of Tampines

Ladies and Gentlemen, Links and Cadets

Good Morning!

I would like to thank Minister Masagos for gracing our World First Aid Day celebration today. Your presence here underlines the importance of the message that we are promoting this morning.

The skit that took place earlier may have caught some of you off-guard. But this is the reality of the situation, emergencies happen when we least expect it. The question is, are we prepared to face emergencies? Therefore, it is important that we all know first aid, so that we can extend a helping hand, and not be helpless, in times of need.

I would also like to thank all 500 of you for joining us, to be part of a record-breaking first aid demonstration later this morning. This is just one element of first aid, we emphasise the learning of first aid. It is nice to break a record, but I hope this demonstration will also send a clarion call to the public to learn first-aid.

One First Aider in Every Home

The Singapore Red Cross advocates strongly the national goal of 'one first aider in every home'. Besides first aid training, we deliver Community FirstAid at national and community events, and we take every opportunity including this to reach out to the community- like today's outreach - to engage youth and heartlanders on the importance of learning first aid.

Since the 1960s, in the history of independent Singapore, the Singapore Red Cross has been training the public in first aid. Besides the Standard First Aid course, over the years, we have introduced many courses tailored for specific needs.

We launched the Occupational First Aid for people working more than a decade ago; Infant/Child First Aid for parents and teachers in 2009; and the Eldercare First Aid for

caregivers in 2013. In January this year, DPM Teo Chee Hean helped to launch the Citizen First Responder Programme on National Life Saving Day. This will increase our first response. We believe in innovating first aid training, and in enabling first aid learning *for everyone, everywhere*. I encourage you to find out more from my colleagues from the Academy who are here today.

But why learn first aid? You can be a life-saver. Bystander CPR is still low at 42 percent. There are still people who are unable to get the help they need.

First Aid is a life-saver

Basic first response can increase the chances of survival; reduce severity of damage to organs; or even mitigate serious injuries. When a person is first-aid trained, he or she is empowered to intervene at the most critical moments, just four minutes, often making the difference between life and death.

Builds Community Resilience

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), of which we are a member, has recently adopted the vision of “One Billion Coalition for Resilience”. By 2025, the IFRC hopes that at least one billion people around the world will have taken steps towards strengthening their resilience - personal and community.

In Singapore I believe today we face two major challenges to community resilience. Firstly, the long term impact of an aging population, and the sudden shock of a major civil emergency, including terrorist activities. In the next 10 to 20 years, 18.7 percent will be elderly. At the Singapore Red Cross, we believe that a truly resilient community is one with a robust pool of blood donors and first aiders.

Today, on top of normal civil emergencies, we are faced with personal or isolated crisis - the very real threat of terrorism. It is critical that we are prepared and we stay strong. *Civil Defence* - the first line of defence within the nation's Total Defence framework - involves training the civilian population in first aid - which is key to being a resilient community. But we believe Psychological First Aid is an important second line of defence.

In any crisis situation, besides handling physical wounds, a major challenge is managing fears and psychological wounds. That is what Psychological First Aid aims to address - the psycho social skills that are learned in PFA, empower people to care for and better understand one another, and we also help to forge stronger and closer bonds with the people around us. By being equipped with both physical and psychological first aid skills, we can be a resilient community to overcome adversities that may come our way. We believe that together, first aid and psychological first aid, are key components of the SG Secure movement. It will help build a truly united, alert and most importantly, empowered people - able to protect yourselves and your community.

Launch of Psychological First Aid

This is why today, on World First Aid Day, we are launching Psychological First Aid programme to the public - the latest offering by Singapore Red Cross Academy. We have already been training our volunteers, many will receive their certificates today.

Psychological First Aid helps victims of disasters heal psychologically and turn them from passive victims into active survivors.

I am very glad that our pioneer cohort of 37 volunteers will 'graduate' in Psychological First Aid. These volunteers serve with Red Cross Community-Led Action for Resilience, and have already undergone Standard First Aid training. With these skills, they will be befrienders and first responders in a league of their own! And the neighbourhoods in which they serve shall be the biggest beneficiaries. There are many stories of people who have helped people and played a role in enhancing community resilience.

Through today's outreach and exhibition, we hope you will understand the intimate connection between physical first aid, psychological first aid, and community resilience. Together, we can play our part to enhance resilience in our community. Together, we can keep Singapore strong.

In closing, I thank all of you for your selfless dedication. Happy World First Aid Day, everyone. Thank you.