



Media release

Australian Council for International Development

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**Aid work one of the world's most dangerous occupations
World Humanitarian Day 19 August**

Humanitarian aid work is one of the four most dangerous occupations in the world. There are increasing risks associated with humanitarian aid work such as serious injury, mental trauma or death according to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), the peak body for Australian aid and development organisations. ACFID said that August 19, World Humanitarian Day, recognised the skill, commitment and bravery of humanitarian aid workers as they seek to assist civilians affected by natural disasters or man-made conflicts around the world.

Marc Purcell, ACFID Executive Director said:

“Media reports and UN statistics show an exponential rise in violence against aid workers in the past five years. Incidents of violence against aid workers have risen by 450% between 1997 and 2008. In 2008 for example, 122 aid workers were killed. The death rate for aid workers was 42 per 100,000 in 2008 and we expect this to have increased as we have received reports of aid workers killed in recent months.”

“The situation in countries such as Afghanistan and Sudan places aid workers in very dangerous environments where UN treaties are not observed, and civilians and aid workers are exposed to violent conflict, disease and mental stress. Given the statistics, it is very lucky that no Australian aid workers are known to have been killed in the last two years.”

“Humanitarian aid workers’ capacity to respond rapidly, effectively and predictably to crises, natural or man-made, has improved dramatically in the last 20 years. This is due largely to the professionalisation of the humanitarian aid work, but also due to the dedication of the many who have devoted their lives to humanitarian work,” Mr Purcell said.

“Humanitarian organisations, local and international, demonstrate enormous skill, commitment, and courage in delivering aid to those who need it most. They appreciate the generous support the public gives via donations to humanitarian appeals, such as the current one for the terrible Pakistan floods. They value highly the many thousands of Australians who volunteer their time with aid and development organisations to support humanitarian workers overseas,” he said.

World Humanitarian Day pays tribute to aid and humanitarian workers who risk their lives in dangerous environments on a daily basis to provide life-saving assistance. The United Nations General Assembly designated 19 August as World Humanitarian Day to increase public understanding of humanitarian assistance activities worldwide. Statistics cited come from the UN’s Office for Coordination for Humanitarian Assistance report, *The Dangerous Business of Aid* (2009).

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The Australian Council for International Development is an independent national association of Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the field of international aid and development.

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