



media release

Australian Council for International Development

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Inaugural World Humanitarian Day – August 19

Australians are asked to remember the work of aid and humanitarian workers in dangerous environments as inaugural *World Humanitarian Day* falls on August 19. The number of aid workers killed or injured in humanitarian crises around the world has increased to the highest level ever according to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), the peak body representing 72 Australian aid agencies.

Marc Purcell, Executive Director of ACFID, said “According to recent statistics, 2008 had the highest toll among humanitarian aid workers with 260 violent attacks including 122 deaths. The 2008 fatality rate for international aid workers exceeds that of UN peacekeeping troops.

On this World Humanitarian Day, we should all take some time to remember those workers who have lost their lives or were injured in the course of their work.

We expect to have to face many more humanitarian emergencies in the near future. Climate change will cause more natural disasters and the financial crisis and surges in the prices of food will lead to more hunger and potentially greater instability in poor countries.

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 dedication of the many aid workers from around the world who have devoted their lives to humanitarian work.” Mr Purcell concluded.

The United Nations General Assembly designated 19 August 2009 as the first World Humanitarian Day to increase public understanding of humanitarian assistance activities world wide. Six years ago tomorrow, on 19 August 2003, the United Nations Office in Iraq was bombed and 22 people lost their lives. Sergio Vieira de Mello, at that time the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Iraq, was one of the victims.

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