



Hanoi, June 14th, 2013

To the kind attention of:

**The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner
For Human Rights (OHCHR)**

The Vietnam Red Cross Society (the VNRC) is a professional humanitarian and social organization founded on 23 November 1946 by President Ho Chi Minh. The Society is an active member of the Vietnam Fatherland Front and has been an official member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement since 1957¹. The VNRC's activities are guided by the 7 fundamental principles: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity, and Universality. The Society has an extensive network of 4 levels from central to the grassroots level acting nationwide for the sake of humanity, taking care of the poor and the vulnerable people.

The VNRC gives its priority to 4 strategic areas of activity, including: disaster preparedness and response; community based health care; blood donation; and social care/social relief. The poor, people with disabilities, people affected by Agent Orange, the victims of wars, the elderly, poor women, and orphans are those of the National Society's target groups.

While taking care for the vulnerable groups, the Vietnam Red Cross always pays more attention to the people of ethnic minorities, families with regular shortage of foods, women headed households, households having pregnant or breastfeeding women, families with children under 5, or those with people with disabilities, Agent Orange victims or the elderly... The most outstanding activities are the Campaign "Tet for the poor and the Agent Orange victims"²; "Each organization, each individual supports one humanitarian need"³; The Cow Bank project⁴; Action month for the Agent Orange Victims⁵; voluntary doctor teams providing free medical services to the poor people living in remote/mountainous

¹ The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement nowadays consists of 188 National Societies.

² On the occasion of Tet 2013 (the Lunar New Year 2013) the Society has mobilized and delivered 1,506,298 gift portions (with total value of VND 447.6 billion) to poor families and Agent Orange victims.

³ After 5 years implementation (2008-2013), 1.9 million profiles of those in need have been prepared by the Society, of which 1.5 million have found donors with the supporting value of over VND 500 billion/year.

⁴ After 3 years implementation, the Society has mobilized resources to provide 7,028 breeding cows for poor families in the poorest districts nationwide.

⁵ Within 5 years (2008-2012), 1,548,431 assistance packages have been provided to the Agent Orange victims and their families with the total value of VND 403.315 billion.



areas with limited socio-economic condition⁶; the Society's participation in the relief efforts to assist populations affected by disasters, both domestically and internationally⁷. Moreover, the VNRC has actively involved in voluntary blood donor recruitment, mobilizing more blood resources to save lives⁸; implemented programs for the comprehensive social inclusion of people with disabilities (through providing thousands of those with social and medical/rehabilitation services, vocational training and job placement; advocating the local government to seek for the equal opportunities for people with disabilities in order to get their voices heard and remove the barriers to their access to the local services); to organize community meetings and dissemination on the rights of the people having medical insurances and the policies on medical supporting to the poor and ethnic minority. Regarding the ethnic minority groups with limited socio-economic conditions, the Vietnam Red Cross has done with its great efforts to improve their lives by enhancing their access to high quality education programs, providing supports for livelihood development at household level for families to generate more incomes and therefore they can afford their children's schooling, providing water and promoting hygiene and sanitation, supporting community based disaster preparedness and response measures.

Vietnam has joined the 4 Geneva Conventions on International Humanitarian Law and the Additional Protocol I since 1957. In the recent years, the Vietnam Red Cross has been working with related ministries and agencies on the possibility to join the Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts, especially the provisions of the Common Article 3 of the four 1949 Geneva Conventions. The rights of the vulnerable groups in emergency situations to be protected through the commitments of Vietnam while joining the international conventions and treaties in humanitarian aspects.

However, in the current socio-economic situation, the vulnerable people in the community have face a number of challenges and difficulties. Most of the poorest are living in the rural, agricultural areas, their main incomes are come from agriculture works, there are no other stable sources of incomes. The rate of poor people has to leave homeland for working are still quite high. Meanwhile, the market prices and productions of agricultural foods are unstable. Due to short-term

⁶ There are 557 humanitarian clinics and 64 mobile doctor teams of 1,047 volunteers providing free health check and medication for 1.2 -1.5 million poor patients annually.

⁷ During the years 2008-2012, the Society has mobilized VND 486.1 billion (equivalent to more than USD 24 million) to support the affected populations in Vietnam and more than VND **180 billion** (equivalent to more than USD 8.92) for international disaster relief operations.

⁸ In 2012, the VNRC has mobilized and received 912,310 units of blood (including: 877,788 full units of blood, and 34,522 units of plasma), reached 107,3% of the target and increased 17,5% in comparison with 2011.



purpose, in some regions, the farmers have destroyed their traditional agricultural trees for planting the new one that caused low stabilities and low incomes for the farmers. The poor are not able to participate in long-term and contracted plantation, as it will require high scales of production or need more labor work in order to ensure the high quality of farming production. These unstable situations can cause to non-food security, low prices when harvesting and high prices when consuming.

Currently, in Vietnam, it is estimated that more than 1,5 millions people are nearly poor, with majority are ethnic minority and living in mountainous areas. According to the current criteria of the poor, many nearly poor families are considered no longer the poor, but they are still living in many difficulties. Those nearly poor families really need money for investing in family economic production, but they are not in the rank of getting favorable banking loan policies. Their family economic productions are in very small scales and depend on the natural calamities; they can easily come back as the poor after a natural disaster, such as flood and storm or animal diseases. Furthermore, the continuous natural disasters and other natural calamities have affected to the living conditions of the population in last five years, those are storms, floods, drought, intensive rain and cold. The measures of community-based disaster management are still on relief-based rather than risk management. There are still lacks of disaster risk assessment and training approaches. The disaster risk management has not yet fully integrated into the socio-economic development plan of the local authorities.

**ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT
VICE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY GENERAL**

Doan Van Thai