Red Cross Pushes HIV Precautions for Relief Workers

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The International Red Cross Federation is urging relief workers to pay particular attention to HIV in disaster relief efforts, *USA Today* reports (usatoday.com, 6/26).

According to a 250-page report published by the Red Cross on June 26, 2.1 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses in 2007 compared with a 10-year low of 23,000 killed by natural and man-made disasters such as plane crashes, storms and earthquakes.

The document advises that workers should ensure access to HIV treatment during relief efforts, protect women and children from rape and increase their efforts to screen blood, which Red Cross Special Representative for HIV and AIDS Mukesh Kapila acknowledges isn't always a top priority.

"They may run out of the reagent in order to test, or they may consider it a low-prevalence society and therefore take the risk," Kapila told *USA Today*. "It only takes one person to contaminate the supply."

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