



## Introducing: Humanitarian Partners – a new chapter for Red Cross Project Partners

Kia ora,

I'm Sarah Stuart-Black, Secretary General of New Zealand Red Cross, and I want to personally thank you for the vital role you play in helping deliver life changing support to people in need every single day.

It's thanks to your ongoing generosity that together, we can be there for people in every hour of need, here in Aotearoa New Zealand and across the world.

I've seen firsthand the impact your support makes. You help ensure our Red Cross teams are prepared to respond to emergencies, supporting former refugees as they settle into their new homes, delivering hot meals, care and connection to people who struggle to cook for themselves, deploying Kiwi International Delegates overseas and strengthening communities in the Pacific. It's all made possible by you.

You may notice a new look and feel in the way we connect with you to share the vital impact you make. Along with this, we're introducing a new name, Humanitarian Partners, to better reflect the life changing difference you make to the people we support together.

This doesn't change anything about your gift, the impact you make or our mission – it strengthens how we share it. It's important to us that you are kept up to date with the impact your generosity has. Through *Red Connect* – this newsletter – you'll continue to see stories of hope, resilience, and recovery that you make possible.

As a Humanitarian Partner, your regular gift means together we can do more as part of a global humanitarian movement that reaches across our neighbourhoods, country and the world.

When you see Red Cross teams around the world, whether through our Red Connect updates or in the news, know that your commitment to helping those in need makes the help we deliver possible.

To see more about the impact you make, I've recorded a short message for you. Simply scan the QR code below to watch the video.

With you beside us, we are there together – in every hour of need.

Sarah Stuart-Black  
SECRETARY GENERAL, NEW ZEALAND RED CROSS



### FROM ME TO YOU

Scan this QR code to see the impact you are making



# Finding strength and support in a new home

When Otie arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in November 2000, he woke to a quiet morning and realised how far he had come. The sounds were different, the air was colder, and the sky felt wide and open.

*"I didn't know where I was,"* he recalled with a smile. *"But I knew I was safe."*

Because of the generosity of our Humanitarian Partners, safety and support are possible for people like Otie as they begin a new chapter in New Zealand.

Otie's journey to Aotearoa New Zealand began years earlier, when his mother made the brave decision to move their family from South Sudan to Kenya to escape conflict. Life in the refugee camp was difficult, marked by limited resources and constant uncertainty. But his mother's determination carried them through.

*"She was the one who gave us strength,"* Otie said. *"Even when things were hard, she always found a way to keep moving forward."*

When Otie and his family arrived in Lower Hutt, everything felt unfamiliar. As a young teenager, he was adjusting to a new country, culture and way of life. The language was different, the food tasted strange, and the cold weather was unlike anything he had known before.

*"I didn't speak English, so I couldn't understand what people were saying,"* he said. *"Even small things felt confusing. But slowly I learned, and people started helping me."*

School became an important part of his new life. Otie met classmates from many different cultures and began to grow in confidence. He joined sports and community activities, forming friendships and connection through shared experiences. *"We didn't always understand each other's words,"* he said, *"but we understood kindness."*

As Otie grew older, he worked hard to support his family and build a stable life. **But painful memories from his past still followed him. There were moments when he felt unsafe or anxious, even in his new home.**

*"I was trying to do everything on my own,"* he said. *"There were times when I didn't know who to talk to or how to ask for help."*

Thanks to the ongoing commitment of Humanitarian Partners, help was there when Otie needed it most.

**Everything changed when he connected with our Refugee Trauma Recovery team.** Through counselling and regular support, Otie began to understand how his past experiences had affected him and learned ways to manage his emotions.



OTIE: *"I KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO HAVE NOTHING"*

*"They helped me talk about my story,"* he said. *"Before, I kept everything inside because I didn't want to get hurt again. Now I can talk, and it helps me feel lighter."*

Refugee Trauma Recovery also provided him with practical support, helping him connect him with community services, arranging appointments, and making sure he didn't feel alone.

*"The Refugee Trauma Recovery team never gave up on me. They listened, they gave me time, and they helped me feel valued again."*

Your regular support helps ensure this kind of care is available - not just once, but for as long as it takes to heal.

Today, Otie continues to rebuild his life with determination. *"My goal is to help others, the same way I was helped,"* he said. *"If I can support even one person to feel less alone, that means a lot."*

When asked what advice he would give to others who are struggling, his message is simple: *"Don't stay silent. Speak up, ask for help, and don't give up. There are people here who will listen and support you."*

Otie has turned challenges into strengths and continues to move forward. His journey reminds us that healing takes time, but with compassion, support and a sense of community, new beginnings are always possible.

Otie's journey is one of many made possible through your generosity. Together, in every hour of need, you help make care and recovery possible - whether it's finding the courage to speak, the strength to heal, or the hope to begin again. Thank you for being a Humanitarian Partner and for helping people like Otie find their way forward.



## You keep Will and his team ready for the next disaster

When an emergency or disaster strikes, like the recent Mangawhai tornado in early 2025, caring for people's emotional needs and wellbeing is essential alongside practical assistance.

Your generosity means together we're ready to respond with dedicated Disaster Welfare and Support Team (DWST) members.

21-year-old Deputy Team Leader Will Benefield first learned about DWST in early 2024, while looking around Volunteer Day stalls at University of Waikato. After chatting with a member of DWST, he came along to a training night, and continued from there.

*"I was keen to get into a volunteer-type role, because I do really like helping people."*

While compassion is Will's primary motivation, he also finds the skills he learns through the team training sessions are useful for regular life.

*"Psychological first aid is basically addressing someone's immediate emotional needs during a time of trauma, or perhaps like a disaster, or even a bereavement. It's the first step to addressing that trauma, and it's right there on the ground connecting with them and seeing what's the issue,"* Will explains.

Will was deployed in the aftermath of the powerful Mangawhai tornado, and along with his DWST partner were able to swiftly put their training into action.



DEPUTY TEAM LEADER, WILL BENEFIELD

*"For a lot of people it's the worst point in their lives – they've lost everything. Seeing someone who's just there to talk to them as a person, and help them through, ideally instils hope."*

*"One couple had gone through the perfect storm. They'd just got back from a funeral overseas to find a tree had gone through the house, and all their belongings had gone. We stayed with them, linking them with financial assistance, getting cleaners in, sorting out accommodation, making sure food and catering was provided for,"* Will recalls.

*"We managed to connect them to the right people to provide that human to human reassurance."*

Will's training in psychological first aid scenarios gave him confidence, so it was almost second nature to apply it for real.

*"It wasn't easy. It required all the psychosocial first aid training I had received, along with empathy, emotional steadiness, and maturity. Although, when someone thanks you with tears in their eyes, you feel like you are doing the right thing."*

Now, as a Deputy Team Leader, Will is running regular evening training sessions for the team. He knows that the resources required to respond to disasters are often strained. Your continued generosity is so important to keep the team equipped and ready.

*"We always need more equipment, we always need as much funding as we can – to keep up our training sessions, to get help to people in disasters. It's an investment in the country's future... it's helping everyone nationwide."*

Will is happy to give his time to Red Cross, alongside his study of mechanical engineering and part-time job.

His advice for being prepared should disaster strike?

*"I think everyone should have some sort of basic disaster response kit, emergency go-bag, so they can just grab it. If they don't have time for anything else, just grab that bag and leave. Keep your ears open, keep your eyes open, and use common sense."*

New Zealand Red Cross has 20 Disaster Welfare and Support Teams around the country, made up of over 400 trained team members who are also supported by our wider network of volunteers around the country.

Because of your regular support, Will and his team can stay trained, equipped, and ready to respond whenever they are needed. Thank you for helping us bring aid and comfort when it matters most.

# Red Connect

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**HUMANITARIAN  
PARTNERS**



## Create a free Will with Public Trust

For over a century, people like you have been standing alongside people in times of need – from families affected by disasters to providing hot and nutritious meals to people in our communities who struggle to cook for themselves.

Last year we celebrated our 110th anniversary. And as we welcome in the new year we're reflecting on the impact supporters like you have made, while also looking to the future and the next century of humanitarian service. As we look to the humanitarian challenges ahead, our commitment is to be present, available and ready – building a future where communities are stronger, more resilient and ready to face whatever comes next.

Preparedness is central to what we do and making sure people are supported and ready to face challenging situations.

Creating a Will is a powerful way to plan for your future and provide peace of mind, knowing your loved ones

are cared for and your wishes will be respected. Through our special offer with Public Trust – New Zealand's most experienced provider of Wills – you can write your Will easily at no cost.

That's why we're offering you a free online Will, a practical way to prepare and give peace of mind for you and your loved ones.

Once your loved ones are taken care of, you may wish to consider leaving a gift in your Will to New Zealand Red Cross. A legacy gift is a meaningful way to continue supporting families and communities who need help the most.

Whether that's through supporting people through disaster or crisis or delivering a hot nutritious meal – every gift helps ensure communities have the strength, support, and care they need to face the challenges ahead.

Because of your generosity, lives have been saved, families supported, and hope restored when it mattered most. Thank you.

### TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CREATING A FREE WILL

Simply use the QR Code, visit [redcross.org.nz/free-will](http://redcross.org.nz/free-will) or give Nigel Pounds, one of our dedicated team members a call, on 021 242 3968.

