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The Human Touch

Geneva exhibition provides message of hope

By: Will Noble

Museums typically chart the past; rarely do they linger on human emotion, or offer up messages of future optimism. Yet this is exactly what The Humanitarian Adventure – a new permanent exhibition at the Musée international de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge in Geneva – sets out to do.

Now open, The Humanitarian Adventure exhibition is divided into three areas; Defending Human Dignity, Restoring Family Links, and Reducing Natural Risks. In each, visitors are invited to understand atrocities and tragedies that have gone before.

Rather than focusing on the cold facts of events such as the Rwandan Genocide, The Humanitarian Adventure seeks to explore the negative emotional effects, and what can be done to quell these. The journey is led by 12 interactive witnesses, including a landmine victim and an erstwhile child soldier.

The exhibition goes far beyond being a mere advertisement

for The Red Cross and Crescent: It challenges us to ask what we ourselves can do for others.

The public has played a role in the museum's rebrand; between March and May a large-scale campaign – Flagships of Hope – invited Swiss residents to write or draw visions of hope on flags. A choice selection has been incorporated into the exhibition's scenography. The scenography itself has been created by an international trio of artists; Shigeru Ban from Japan, Gringo Cardia from Brazil, and Diébédo Francis Kéré from Burkina Faso.

Museum director Roger Mayou is also keen to explain that positive things happen to people all the time. One aspect of the exhibition hails the latest advances in peace negotiations, science, medicine, and current operations of the Red Cross and Crescent.

The message is clear and refreshing: It's not all doom and gloom.

The Humanitarian Adventure is open daily.