

Taking volunteers seriously

Progress report 1999–2007

The International Federation's volunteering development



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The International Federation's Global Agenda (2006–2010)

Over the next five years, the collective focus of the Federation will be on achieving the following goals and priorities:

Our goals

Goal 1: Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.

Goal 2: Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.

Goal 3: Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.

Goal 4: Promote respect for diversity and human dignity, and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion.

Our priorities

Improving our local, regional and international capacity to respond to disasters and public health emergencies.

Scaling up our actions with vulnerable communities in health promotion, disease prevention and disaster risk reduction.

Increasing significantly our HIV/AIDS programming and advocacy.

Renewing our advocacy on priority humanitarian issues, especially fighting intolerance, stigma and discrimination, and promoting disaster risk reduction.

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**Punainen Risti
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Foreword

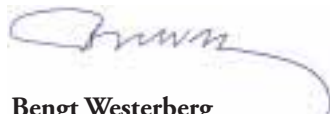
Million of volunteers who give their time to make a difference to the lives of the world's most vulnerable people in the name of the Red Cross and Red Crescent play an essential part in the support of their communities. However, although volunteers give their time freely, with no desire for gain, volunteerism is not for free. Volunteer management and development also require resources. Since 1999, we have seen a growing interest and increased efforts by National Societies to better manage and support their valuable volunteers.

This report is the result of a collective effort by the Governing Board's working group on volunteering and the International Federation secretariat, which aims to provide a picture of volunteering development since 1999. It provides a broad outline of decision-making and commitments within the International Federation and describes the situation in National Societies. External trends and key issues influencing volunteering are also considered. There are still many gaps that need to be addressed, but with this report, we have gained an important tool to help us identify and deal with these shortcomings. When it comes to managing volunteers in emergencies, experience from recent years illustrates the significant difference that preparation can make.

Achieving the aims of the International Federation will not be possible without the continued dedication and commitment of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers, staff and leaders throughout the world, as well as the resources required to support them in their work. One important conclusion is that National Societies are taking volunteering development more seriously than ever before, establishing good volunteer management systems to suit the context of their own country.

We would like to thank and congratulate everyone in the National Societies and the International Federation who has contributed to this progress report, making it an informative source for future volunteering development activities. Special thanks to the Governing Board's working group on volunteering and the Swedish Red Cross for supporting the development of the progress report.

We recommend that you read this report and share it with colleagues as it highlights the good work done and the need to increase efforts in the area of volunteering development in the coming years.



Bengt Westerberg

Chairman of the working group on volunteering and Vice-President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



Markku Niskala

Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Executive summary

Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are at the heart of effective humanitarian assistance for millions of vulnerable people. Volunteers are our strength. They are what defines us and what makes us a unique humanitarian force in the world. As a federation of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, one of our focuses is on supporting our volunteers and giving them the tools and resources they need to meet the high demands and expectations that we – and our supporters – place on them.

Following the adoption of the International Federation's Volunteering Policy in 1999 and subsequent decisions and pledges by National Societies at international and regional conferences, many of the decisions have been implemented to a varying degree. Following up on these will be essential in the coming years. There have been serious and innovative initiatives in all parts of the world aimed at pursuing volunteer-friendliness. Increasingly, volunteer management is included in strategic plans, having been recognized as an important area for the development of National Societies.

About half of the National Societies have a national volunteer policy, while slightly fewer have a volunteer development plan. Many more have dedicated human resources for volunteer management and development at national level.

How many volunteers do we have in the National Societies? Finding one answer to this key question has proved to be a challenge. The existence of a range of figures makes it hard to provide a firm answer as to the total number of volunteers. Estimates suggest there are around 20 million active volunteers worldwide. In order to obtain an accurate figure, however, precise reporting from National Societies is essential.

Volunteer management practices worldwide have improved, both in everyday and emergency situations. A number of National Societies are testing new approaches to enhance the diversity and involvement of volunteers in decision-making and implementation. Reinforcing volunteering development in general, and volunteering in emergencies in particular, optimizes the strengths of our core volunteer base.

A number of constantly changing external and internal factors influence the management of volunteers. This gives National Societies a challenging scenario to work with. Volunteering development is also cross-cutting and often opens up a Pandora's Box, revealing wider organizational development issues that need to be addressed. However, more needs to be done to improve and establish good volunteer management systems. Mobilizing volunteers to serve vulnerable people must, therefore, be one of the key competencies of National Societies. The ability of National Societies to mobilize and retain volunteers is increasingly being called into question. This report focuses on the main progress and challenges identified by National Societies with regard to volunteering development following the adoption of the Federation Volunteering Policy. The issues covered are diversity and recruitment, retention and recognition, training, health and safety, involvement, new forms of volunteering, networking and peer support.

Strategy 2010 and the Federation of the Future process reaffirm volunteering as being fundamental to the organization's vision and values. Each National Society should aspire to be one of the leading organizations in mobilizing and managing volunteers to help vulnerable people in its country in everyday programmes and crisis situations. While volunteering may be free, volunteer management is not. If

National Societies are serious about developing volunteering to better meet changing needs, then long-term organizational commitment and resources are essential.

The Global Agenda goals reaffirm the commitment of the International Federation and its member National Societies to support the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 2007 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent underpins four areas of challenge that the Movement must address:

- environmental hazards, including climate change
- migration
- violence in communities
- emergent and recurrent diseases, including HIV and AIDS

These challenges require all governments and other stakeholders to recognize the valuable contribution of volunteers to development work, as key links between communities and national and local authorities.

The partnership between the International Federation and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) has greatly contributed to the revalidation of volunteering and to concerted efforts to foster an environment that enables and optimizes the full potential of volunteering. Progress in this field has been positive and more work is needed. The way that governments and legislators act regarding volunteering and voluntary organizations clearly has a great impact on their viability and effectiveness.

Volunteering is undoubtedly a fundamental way for National Societies to meet the needs of vulnerable people. Volunteer management and development must therefore be integrated and closely linked to National Societies' everyday programme and organizational development.

The International Federation plans to address the existing and future challenges highlighted in this report through volunteering development activities in the next four years, 2008–2011. This effort is designed to help National Societies provide a favourable internal and external environment that encourages and facilitates the work of volunteers, and that promotes volunteerism across all sectors of society.

In 2008–2011, the planned volunteering development aims to:

- ensure and support National Societies to adopt volunteer management systems, procedures and practices in order to better support and manage volunteers
- develop and spread knowledge about volunteering in emergencies
- promote, celebrate and recognize the achievements of volunteers
- advocate and work to establish volunteer-friendly environments

In a world of global challenges and increasing vulnerability to disasters and diseases, this capacity is essential to accomplish the International Federation's mission and the Global Agenda in empowering vulnerable communities to respond to situations that compromise their lives and livelihoods. ■

Summary

1. Looking back and adding up

Added value of the volunteering policy

When the Federation Volunteering Policy was adopted in 1999, one of the General Assembly's recommendations was that all National Societies should review their existing policies and procedures. The policy encourages National Societies to adopt their work policies at country level, and the Volunteer Policy Implementation Guide (2002) was developed to support this process. Since then, many steps have been taken in the volunteering development of National Societies. The National Society Self-Assessment (NSSA) shows that National Societies that have adopted a volunteering policy demonstrate better volunteer recruitment and retention. The second round of the NSSA showed a significant increase in the percentage of National Societies with a volunteering policy; around half reported having a volunteering policy, while 43.5 per cent had a volunteer development plan. This shows that National Societies are taking serious steps to address the challenges of volunteer recruitment and retention.

The guide suggests that there is a need for systems to collect accurate statistics about the activities and impact of National Society volunteers. Among the tools developed are the NSSA 2000–2003 and 2004–2005, and the Youth Global Consultation 2005–2006. Although none of these can provide a full picture of volunteering in the Red Cross and Red Crescent, not all National Societies have replied, while many of the figures are estimates; it is, nevertheless, interesting to examine the results from these questionnaire-based tools.



Answers from the NSSA showed that the two main volunteering issues facing National Societies are the lack of qualified volunteers and recruitment/retention in an increasingly competitive volunteer sector.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is one of the largest humanitarian organizations in the world, with 185 recognized National Societies and a cross-country network of branches and groups in local communities. Our outreach is greater than that of any other organization, but we have difficulty demonstrating our value. Counting volunteers and volunteers' hours does not give a complete picture, but it does provide a tangible way of demonstrating the Movement's capacity.

How many volunteers and members do we have?

This may seem a simple question, but getting one answer to this key question has proved to be a challenge. A range of answers are given, depending on the setting and on the kind of question asked. Numbers can never provide a full picture of volunteering in the Red Cross and Red Crescent, but they can help. It is, therefore, important to carefully examine the results of the above-mentioned consultations.

A total of 161 National Societies have replied to at least one of the two NSSA rounds. An analysis of the latest replies shows a total of 71.9 million members and 11.5 million volunteers. In 41 of the National Societies, there is no clear definition to differentiate members from volunteers, so there may therefore be some overlap. In total, 410,000 new volunteers were recruited in the year preceding the questionnaire. About half of the National Societies reported an increase in their volunteer numbers over the past three years, 20 per cent said the number of volunteers had remained constant and another 20 per cent said numbers had dropped.

The Youth Global Consultation analysis estimates that there are a total of around 22 million, of whom at least 40 per cent are youth volunteers, based on the answers from 92 National Societies.

The range of figures makes it hard to determine the exact number of volunteers. If we want to have reliable statistics, then National Societies must establish databases and registers on volunteers. At present, only 59.6 per cent of National Societies have a volunteering database, according to the NSSA. The Red Cross Society of Côte d'Ivoire is one that has taken a first step towards better volunteer management by establishing a volunteer database.

Databases and statistics might not seem the most efficient use of a volunteer organization's time. However, statistics can help measure programme efficiency and provide simple tools to demonstrate the value of volunteer work.

Key milestones 1999–2007

The timeline below explains the key milestones in the story of volunteering development in the Movement, with the adoption of the International Federation's Volunteering Policy as the key turning-point in 1999. The past eight years have been marked by an increased focus on volunteer development and management systems.

- ▶ **1999:** Federation Volunteering Policy approved by the General Assembly; Federation Youth Policy (1991) reconfirmed
- ▶ **1999:** Federation pledge on volunteering to the 27th International Conference
- ▶ **2000–2001:** International Federation works within the UN to influence and create support for UN resolution 56/38, Recommendations on support for volunteering
- ▶ **2000:** Federation president speaks on volunteering at the UN General Assembly during the inauguration of the International Year of Volunteers, 2001
- ▶ **2000:** Western European Network for the Development of Volunteering (WENDO, later ENDOV) founded
- ▶ **2001:** International Year of Volunteers – partnerships established and International Volunteer Day (5 December) celebrated for the first time
- ▶ **2001:** The Federation plan, Volunteer 2005, created
- ▶ **2001–2003:** Africa volunteer development function based in Nairobi
- ▶ **2001:** Volunteering profiled highly at the General Assembly
- ▶ **2002:** Volunteering Policy Implementation Guide published



- ▶ **2002:** Coalition for an Enabling Volunteer Environment, consisting of the International Federation, United Nations Volunteers and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, formed to lobby governments on volunteering
- ▶ **2002:** Volunteer management included in Federation and ICRC leadership training for National Societies
- ▶ **2002:** Volunteering section created on the Federation web site
- ▶ **2004:** South American Volunteer Network established
- ▶ **2004:** Voluntary Service – Volunteer Management Cycle developed
- ▶ **2004:** European Reference Centre on Volunteering established
- ▶ **2004:** Volunteerism and legislation: a guidance note developed by the Coalition for an Enabling Volunteer Environment to facilitate discussion
- ▶ **2004:** Ad hoc group on volunteering established
- ▶ **2005:** General Assembly makes comprehensive decision on volunteer development (Item 17)
- ▶ **2005:** Asia Pacific volunteer development function based in Kuala Lumpur
- ▶ **2005:** Permanent Working Group on Volunteering established by the General Assembly
- ▶ **2005:** Development initiative: volunteering in emergencies
- ▶ **2005:** Federation plan, Volunteer Plus, (2006–2007) created
- ▶ **2007:** International Federation launches a global accident insurance scheme for National Society volunteers
- ▶ **2007:** Volunteering becomes, for the first time, a mandatory item on the General Assembly agenda

VIVA – measuring the value of volunteers

In any humanitarian organization, the best use of resources is necessary in order to reach as many vulnerable people as possible. Volunteer programmes must, therefore, be as efficient as possible. Even though volunteers work for free, a programme involving volunteers can be costly. A Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) is one way of assessing the value of volunteers' time in relation to the resources used to implement the programme. Several National Societies have started to use this simple tool. Although it does not address the important issues of quality, the impact of the volunteer programme or the real value of the work done, it does provide a means of measuring the return on money spent to develop volunteering. ■



VIVA measures programme efficiency

The Nepal Red Cross Society has used VIVA on two of its programmes: an HIV-prevention programme and an earthquake preparedness programme. The society implements an HIV-prevention programme in a district chapter. The programme has more than 20,000 beneficiaries and involves 774 volunteers. The total cost of the programme is 250,000 Nepali rupees, and the volunteers put in more than 57,000 hours, valued at approximately 2.25 million Nepali rupees. This gives a VIVA ratio of almost one to nine. In other words, for every rupee invested the society gets nine rupees in return in the form of volunteer hours. The VIVA ratio for the disaster preparedness programme shows a much lower return. This is not surprising, as disaster preparedness programmes do not involve a lot of volunteer service in normal circumstances, yet preparation is essential to relieve suffering when disasters strike.

The Nepal Red Cross Society will use the VIVA tool as a baseline for other volunteer programmes; to open up an internal discussion on improving programme efficiency; and to demonstrate to the public and to donors the financial contribution of volunteers.

2. International and regional decisions on volunteering

In 1999, the 12th session of the International Federation General Assembly approved the Volunteering Policy, which defined volunteers and members and established a set of rights and responsibilities for volunteers.

Through the policy, National Societies committed themselves and the Federation secretariat to promote, recognize and value volunteering, and to support volunteer development.

Since 1999, volunteering has been discussed at General Assemblies and many regional conferences. A number of decisions and commitments have been made.

Among the decisions implemented were the establishment of a permanent working group on volunteering and the inclusion of volunteering as a standard item at the Governing Board, General Assembly and regional conferences. Where do we stand on the others? ■

Federation pledge to the 27th International Conference (Geneva, 1999)

The General Assembly, recognizing the importance of volunteers for National Societies, and the focus on the development of volunteering in Strategy 2010, confirms the following pledge:

Volunteers are the most important strength of any National Society; they are "the power of humanity" and the champions of Red Cross Red Crescent humanitarian values. The International Federation therefore pledges the following:

- to review the current situation of volunteers and identify areas where change is needed to improve services to beneficiaries, the status of volunteers and their role in the organization;
- to develop clear policies, guidelines and best management practices for volunteers which focus on human resources development
- to ensure equal opportunities for men and women of all ages as volunteers in service delivery and National Society leadership, to bring about greater involvement of marginalized groups, and to provide the required support by paid staff
- to cooperate with governments to broaden the existing legal, fiscal and political bases for volunteering, and to mobilize increased public support;
- to expand cooperation with other volunteer organizations at all levels, and play a significant role in the International Year of Volunteers in 2001

At global and regional level, commitments have been made within the following areas	General Assembly	Africa	Americas	Asia Pacific	Europe	MENA
Encourage regional initiative, develop communication and evaluation of impact	●					
Review, further develop and implement existing policies at National Society level	●	●				
Develop guidelines, gather information on best practice, monitor implementation	●					
Ensure policy awareness and implementation to improve management and create a volunteer-friendly environment		●		●		●
Be inclusive and open to all, promote volunteer service for all groups so that the volunteer base reflects the composition of the population			●		●	●
Develop clear recruitment strategies and manage volunteers more effectively		●	●		●	
Ensure appropriate training opportunities and skills development for volunteers	●			●		●
Implement programmes to mobilize, develop and strengthen the commitment of volunteers		●				
Establish mechanisms to involve all volunteers in the decision-making process	●	●				●
Engage youth, volunteers and communities in programme design and implementation		●			●	
Develop programmes and skills to mobilize communities and involve community volunteers	●	●	●			
Strengthen volunteers to work better with communities		●				
Examine the legal protection of volunteers and ensure adequate insurance is in place	●					
Ensure reimbursement of direct costs associated with volunteering				●		
Find creative, non-financial solutions to recognize, reward and motivate volunteers	●	●		●		●
Establish regional youth network and support this network with resource mobilization						●

3. Pursuing a volunteer-friendly society

Volunteerism is an ancient and global phenomenon, and there is fairly broad agreement on the social and economic benefits of volunteering. Nevertheless, issues around volunteering and volunteers have come to be taken for granted. The International Year of Volunteers (IYV) 2001, the efforts of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and the partnership between the International Federation and the UNV have greatly contributed to the revalidation of volunteering and to concerted efforts in fostering an environment that enables and optimizes the full potential of volunteering.

Legal, sociocultural and economic conditions can also have a strong impact on the pursuit of a volunteer-friendly society.

3.1. Legal environment

Whether volunteering grows and becomes an effective force for improving the lives of individuals depends largely on the legal framework for volunteering. The IYV clarified the role of governments in creating an enabling environment for volunteering. For volunteers, this involves: ensuring that there is a legal right to and protection for carrying out voluntary work, and that the value of volunteering is publicly recognized and promoted.

For voluntary organizations this means creating an enabling environment to ensure a suitable legal basis for their establishment and operation, suitable fiscal arrangements, the removal of unnecessary regulatory burdens, and infrastructure support. However, a number of governments have yet to understand that volunteerism is a delicate and challenged concept.

At the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 1999, states committed to review and, where

necessary, introduce or update legislation so as to facilitate the efficient work of relevant voluntary organizations. In 2001, the Inter-Parliamentary Council adopted a resolution urging parliamentarians worldwide to identify and adopt policies to encourage volunteerism and to establish a legislative framework contributing to an enabling volunteer environment.

Since then, the International Federation has called on governments, parliaments, business and the voluntary sector in many countries to examine aspects of law and regulation that might influence the development of volunteerism. Red Cross Red Crescent advocates include the National Societies of Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua and Tunisia. Volunteerism and legislation: a guidance note, which was jointly published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the International Federation and UNV in 2004, further emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder participation.

In addition, the International Federation's International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL) programme has been seeking to address gaps in the legal framework for international disaster response. Studies have revealed numerous legal challenges for humanitarian personnel – including volunteers – who are involved in international disaster response. Consequently, the IDRL programme has initiated the development of guidance for legislators seeking to strengthen or improve domestic laws to anticipate and resolve these issues in advance of disasters.

In recent years, a range of legislation, resolutions and support for volunteering has emerged around the world. At national level, more countries are moving beyond publicly recognizing volunteering to establish a legal environment for volunteering through the development, revision and/or enactment of national



Colombia legislation

Volunteering law in Colombia was developed in 2001, following the IYV. It legally recognizes volunteers in informal activities. It provides a standard volunteering policy for organizations that lack a policy of their own. It also requires a mechanism to quantify volunteer contributions to GDP. Revisions to recognize foreign volunteers in the country, and the development of a policy implementation guide are on the way.

The Colombian Red Cross Society plays an active role in this process and has, amongst other things, contributed to the volunteer management cycle of this policy guide.

Furthermore, following large casualties among rescue workers (including Red Cross volunteers) in a disaster in 1999, the government has launched a national insurance scheme for volunteers.

legislation and policies. For example, Mozambique has passed laws dealing with the relationship between volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations. Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Nicaragua and Peru have passed specific volunteering legislation. In Benin, a law on decentralization encourages the promotion of volunteerism and community initiatives. In Australia, the government is seeking tax breaks for emergency service volunteers who are also part of the general workforce. In the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and in an attempt to promote volunteering, China is also drafting a law to define volunteers' rights and obligations.

Progress in this field has been positive but more work is needed. The way that governments and legislators act towards volunteering and voluntary organizations clearly has a great impact on their viability and effectiveness.

3.2. Sociocultural and economic environment

In addition to legal and political factors, volunteerism is strongly influenced by sociocultural characteristics, economic structures and wealth distribution, the institutional divisions of labour, beliefs, values, traditions and other norms. In a world of rapid change and new challenges, the nature of the sociocultural and economic environment for volunteering is also evolving. Many of these changes represent new avenues for voluntary organizations.

The International Federation pledged, at the 12th General Assembly in 1999, to review the current situation and status of volunteers and to identify areas where change is needed to improve services to beneficiaries. The Federation secretariat has since led a series of volunteering reviews to assess the volunteering situation in various countries and regions. The impact of any sociocultural and economic changes on volunteering differs from one country to another. Each National Society needs to analyse its own context and respond accordingly.

Flexible volunteering options

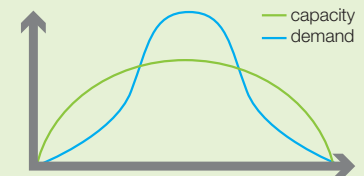
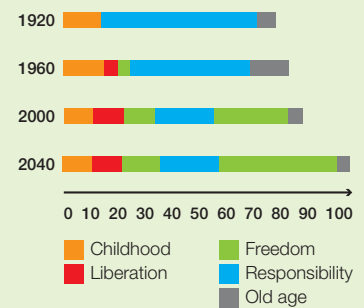
The amount of time available for volunteering is limited due to volunteers' mobility and other socio-economic conditions. Young people tend to volunteer more hours than those with young families, middle-aged workers or those approaching retirement. In the developing world, the struggle to earn a living results in limited time for formal volunteering, although informal and episodic volunteering prevails in many of these societies. Flexible volunteering options that offer specific, time-limited tasks and a possibility for families and friends to volunteer together can be more successful in ensuring diversity and recruitment. A rapidly developing concept is virtual volunteering. This allows volunteers in the developed and developing world to complete tasks online, and for volunteer managers to connect with worldwide resources. Recognition should be based on efficiency and performance rather than longevity.

Demographic changes

An ageing population and early retirement in most of the developed world has prompted programme design to serve and engage retired people and senior citizens. At the same time, with a majority of the population (1.3 billion) in developing countries aged under 25, the World Development Report 2007 claims there has never been a better time to train young people more effectively to become active citizens. Similarly, organizations may find volunteers holding on to traditional roles or key leadership positions. Volunteer management in many organizations now emphasizes ways – such as the enforced rotation of board members – of enabling newer volunteers to grow into their roles while allowing meaningful contribution from active elderly volunteers.

New life phases and demographic changes

The traditional phases that characterized life in the 20th century – childhood, the adult years of responsibility and years of old age – have taken on a new context in both developed and developing countries. The graph below shows that, for Swedes, the years of responsibility have shrunk from 50 years to about 25 in just a few decades. In practice, Swedes get established in the labour market at the same time as they start their own family. The average retirement age is around 60, while the population is getting older and healthier.



The first freedom phase in adult years has been expanded in recent decades, and starting a family and entering traditional adulthood has been pushed forward. The years between 20 and 35 consist of trying out different lifestyles, social circles and experiences. With society placing fewer demands on young adults, long-term commitments in organizations may also give way to involvement in shorter projects.

Nevertheless, many young people feel a strong need to do something meaningful and to contribute to a better world. The future of Swedish NGOs is very much dependent on their capacity to harness this desire.

(Source: SIDA)

Diversified population

Volunteerism can enhance social cohesion and reduce social exclusion. The challenges faced by multicultural societies illustrate the need for the voluntary sector to address diversity in volunteer recruitment and management. Immigrants, indigenous groups, refugees and other marginalized groups represent untapped volunteer sources in many societies. Diaspora volunteer programmes can help integration and social inclusion for new or returning migrants and refugees.

Corporate volunteering

Companies increasingly see themselves as having an active role in the community, not only through their charitable activities but also by participating in community development and implementation. Today, many companies have a corporate social responsibility policy and employee volunteer programmes linked to their business strategies. Thanks to this, employees can gain new skills and enhance their self-esteem. Community cohesion and community services are also enhanced. The employer benefits from increased employee retention and an improved public image. A UNV report shows that, while progress is positive, greater organizational support is needed to link businesses and communities, and to facilitate mutual understanding.

3.3. Strategic partnership

The success of a volunteer-friendly environment, which grows out of local culture and conditions, largely depends on joint efforts and commitments from all sections of civil society. The International Federation's pledge at the 27th International Conference in 1999 foreshadowed intensified partnership-building activities, with other organizations sharing the same commitment renewed through the IYV. This partnership-building work has involved the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Since 1901, when the first Nobel Prize for Peace was awarded jointly to Henry Dunant and Frédéric Passy, the former the founder of the Red Cross and the latter one of the founders of the IPU, this common historical path has set a tone for the two organizations to work together for peace and harmony among peoples, communities and nations. The International Federation has also developed a long and fruitful relationship with UNV to mobilize the power of volunteers in areas of common concern. Moreover, the International Federation has established a link with the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF). This link reflects the growing interest of the business community in promoting volunteerism as an integral part of corporate social responsibility. ■

4. Establishing a volunteer-friendly National Society

4.1. Introduction

Voluntary action has been at the heart of the Movement since the very beginning. Although the volunteering environment is evolving, the actions of volunteers at the Battle of Solferino continue to inspire and guide much of the Movement's work to improve the lives of vulnerable people. Mobilizing volunteers to serve vulnerable people must, therefore, be one of the key competencies of National Societies. This ability is increasingly being called into question.

The chief executive of the British Red Cross, Sir Nicholas Young, emphasized, at the 2001 General Assembly, the need for National Societies to improve their volunteer management:

We cannot take it for granted that volunteers will join us simply because we are the Red Cross, nor can we expect them to stay just because we want them to. We have to show them leadership and inspiration – like Henry Dunant at Solferino – plus the very best of modern management and developmental techniques, to keep them with us and helping those in need... Let's get serious about volunteers!

Being volunteer-friendly means ensuring policies, programmes and paid staff provide a positive, welcoming and rewarding experience for existing and potential volunteers. National Societies must actively develop and put in place proper volunteer management policies, and systems that are widely shared and openly discussed by governance, paid staff and volunteers.

Since the adoption of the International Federation's Volunteering Policy in 1999, and subsequent decisions and pledges made by National Societies at international and regional conferences,

there have been serious and innovative initiatives in all parts of the world aimed at pursuing volunteer friendliness.

About half of the National Societies have a national volunteer policy, while slightly fewer have a volunteer development plan. Many more have dedicated human resources for volunteer management and development at national level. Red Cross Red Crescent Societies face wide-ranging potential, capacities and realities in promoting volunteering around the world as they mobilize volunteers to fill gaps in healthcare provision, fight climate change, reach out to youth and the elderly, establish volunteer management systems, reshape organizations and their public image, entice corporate volunteers, prepare for emergencies, and explore the new frontiers created by Second Life on the internet.

The adoption of volunteering policies by National Societies represents an important step towards developing a coherent understanding of the role and value of volunteers. However, this alone cannot change many of the realities and challenges.

Reviews show that volunteer management practices, both in everyday and in emergency situations, have improved. A number of National Societies are testing new approaches to enhance the diversity and involvement of volunteers at decision-making and implementation levels. Some are also actively promoting volunteering legislation with their governments. Various forms of regional networks and peer support among National Society volunteer managers have enhanced the exchange of skills and knowledge.

On the other hand, some challenges have been identified, including a lack of analysis of volunteer motivation, a lack of awareness and dissemination of vol-

unteering policy, and financial constraints. Volunteering development is cross-cutting and often opens up a Pandora’s Box, revealing wider organizational development issues. This reality sometimes deters the leadership of National Societies from a commitment to volunteering development. The potential for establishing cooperation and partnership with governments and other organizations for the effective use of resources and for greater impact is, also, often undermined.

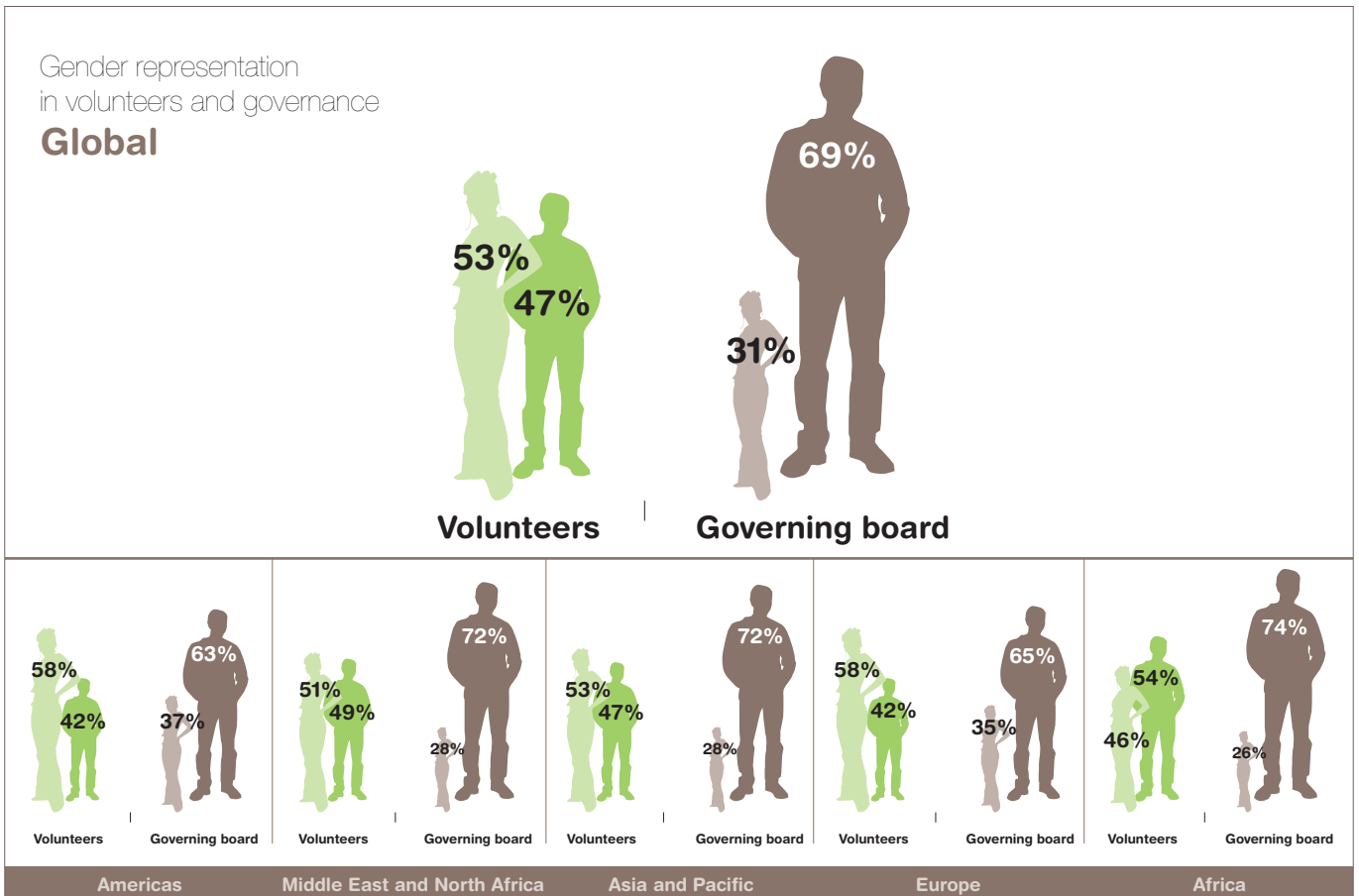
Strategy 2010 and the Federation of the Future process reaffirm volunteering as being fundamental to the organization’s vision and values. Each National Society should aspire to be one of the leading organizations in mobilizing and managing volunteers to help vulnerable people in its country. While volunteering may be free, volunteer management is not. If National Societies are serious about developing volunteering to better meet changing needs, then long-term organizational commitment and resources are essential.

The following sections examine various volunteering issues, with progress and challenges as identified by National Societies.

4.2. Diversity and recruitment

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

- recruit volunteers for specific, explicitly described roles or tasks (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.2)
- recruit volunteers on the basis of their commitment and potential (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.3)
- actively seek to recruit volunteers irrespective of their race, age, ethnicity, sex, religion, beliefs, disability or age (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.4)



- ensure that there is appropriate participation of men and women in National Society volunteer programmes for effective and gender-sensitive delivery of service and activities (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.5)

Using male and female volunteers from a range of age, ethnic and religious groups reinforces the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as well as service delivery. The International Federation's policy on refugees and displaced people also makes a clear reference to ensure the appropriate representation of refugees and displaced people among volunteers and staff. Research shows that when a volunteer organization involves people from all sections of society, including those it seeks to serve, then it is more likely to succeed.

Progress

In recent years, there has been increased awareness of diversity and creativity in volunteer recruitment. National Societies have committed themselves to recruit more volunteers, strengthening the volunteer base to reflect the composition of the population and increasing the participation of volunteers from a diversity of backgrounds in the decision-making process.

Volunteer recruitment is becoming more targeted, matching identified specific tasks with volunteers' skills and interests. Thanks to an improved volunteer management system, the Togolese Red Cross increased the number of volunteers from 210 in 2000 to 5,600 in 2006. The Argentine Red Cross's statutes and code of ethics provide clear guidance on volunteer recruitment and diversity. New advocacy activities for fair trade and sustainable development have prompted more young people to volunteer with the Swedish Red Cross.

Many National Societies use new recruitment approaches to address increasing competition and the changing expectations of volunteers. The volunteer base is being broadened with the use of modern technologies and closer links to corporate social responsibility. Numerous National Societies have launched cyber recruitment.

National Societies are working to improve diversity in volunteer recruitment. The Bulgarian Red Cross brings volunteers from Roma and Turkish communities to work together. The British Red Cross, partnering with the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, is reaching out to the Bangladeshi community in Britain. The Norwegian Red Cross involves more diverse volunteer groups through urban community centres. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), several National Societies have a quota system to ensure gender and age balance in their governance. The Uganda Red Cross Society's new constitution establishes nine seats for youth representatives on the governing board.

Screening measures are increasingly being used to improve risk management and to protect beneficiaries, volunteers and National Societies. Examples are better designed programmes, recruitment strategies, police record checks, interviews, observation of group dynamics in training, and testimonies from the community or branch.

Challenges

Identified challenges include a public misconception of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, insufficient awareness of volunteerism, diversity and gender sensitivity, and limited organizational capacity and resources.

Numerous National Societies in various regions are perceived by the public as governmental, elite, old-fashioned or response-focused organizations, restricting recruitment to certain segments of the society.



Internet recruitment

The Republic of Korea National Red Cross has launched a volunteer programme that recruits volunteers via the internet. The web page functions as a database containing users' profiles, thereby making it easy to match volunteer opportunities with available resources. Volunteers are interviewed by the nearest branch. The society plans to enhance volunteers' participation in decision-making, and to make some activities and distance training courses available online.



Thomas Barakson/Alamy/Red Cross

Risk management: screening

According to Canada's legal principle of 'duty of care', all organizations are responsible for screening their volunteers. The Canadian Red Cross Society has a volunteer screening policy. Sexual abuse is one of the identified risks and police record checks are part of the risk management cycle in volunteer recruitment.

The Sudanese Red Crescent uses testimonies from the local community or branches to screen volunteers.

Some National Societies have a limited capacity to absorb newcomers. Their openness to diverse groups varies. A lack of financial resources and recruitment strategies, weak or distant branch structures and, sometimes, stringent requirements for people wishing to become volunteers limit volunteer recruitment and diversity. Security situations and cultural issues in some countries, such as Afghanistan, also deter female volunteers. In Africa, widespread poverty means that many volunteers are young and unemployed, and financial incentives becomes an issue.

Modern technology, the corporate workforce, local volunteering traditions and marginalized populations remain a largely untapped resource. High female participation in programmes is in stark contrast to high male participation in the governance of many National Societies.

Evidently, greater effort is needed to address volunteer diversity and recruitment in all National Societies. Putting volunteer management systems into place and promoting the work of the Red Cross Red Crescent and the fundamental principles is essential. The public needs to know that we need volunteers, what we need them for, and that we are open to everyone.

4.3. Retention and recognition

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall reward and recognize volunteers whenever possible and appropriate, and provide appropriate personal development opportunities. (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.8)

The retention of volunteers is closely linked to the way in which they are managed and supported. Volunteers stay when they have a sense of belonging to the organization, when they feel satisfied and recognized, and when they learn new things or see opportunities for growth. Volunteers leave when there are no meaningful activities, when they feel unappreciated or unsupported. Other external factors that can play a part include the mobility of volunteers for personal or professional reasons, and competition from other organizations.

Volunteers have different needs and expectations. It is important to understand what motivates them and what skills and experiences they bring. Recognition is one of the key motivators and should, therefore, be an ongoing process. As well as tangible forms of recognition, other informal, everyday forms of recognition, such as a "thank you", affect volunteers' job satisfaction and performance.

Progress

Most National Societies have identified retention and recruitment as priority volunteering issues, and have made increasing efforts to improve. Greater emphasis is put on proper volunteer placement.

In South America, retention has been identified as a problem and several National Societies are conducting retention studies. The British Red Cross is also making a similar review to modernize its systems.

Providing training opportunities is an effective way to attract and retain volunteers. In southern Africa, volunteers are attracted to the Red Cross because of the training opportunities. They see the potential of using new skills for their career development. In Trinidad and Tobago, the National Society shares training resources with other organizations and tries new approaches to retain volunteers. Many National Societies are also exploring new kinds of training, such as e-learning, in order to meet the changing profiles and expectations of volunteers.

More National Societies recognize the link between volunteer retention and organizational culture. Volunteers are increasingly encouraged to voice their opinion, take more responsibility and engage in decision-making.

National Societies practise both formal and informal means of recognizing volunteers. These actions vary from one society to the other and can vary between branches. Awards and certificates for volunteers for their service are common. Other examples include letters of thanks, uniforms, representation at regional or international events, employment opportunities, nomination to the governing board and life membership for distinguished contribution during emergencies.

Some National Societies have recognition policies or standards to ensure proper coordination and coherence among branches. The newly adopted statutes of the Red Cross of Serbia and the Red Cross of Montenegro also assume the subsequent development of recognition systems.

A number of National Societies are exploring methods, such as the Volunteer Investment and Value Audit, to value and recognize volunteering inputs and outputs as a means of improving programme efficiency, increasing the recognition, recruitment and retention of volunteers, and attracting funding.

Challenges

Apart from financial challenges, poor volunteer management capacity, training and planning, a lack of awareness of what motivates volunteers and slow implementation of volunteering policies are common challenges for volunteer retention and recognition. Many National Societies do not have a clear work or training plan for volunteers. Volunteers leave because they do not feel properly recognized or involved in their National Society.

Recognition is often based on hours rather than performance and efficiency. Coherent and coordinated recording and monitoring systems are needed to ensure equitable opportunities for volunteers. This is when a good volunteer database at all levels proves useful.

National Societies dependent on external resources for financial incentives also face the challenge of sustainability. Recruitment and retention strategies need to be regularly reviewed to respond to competition and the changing expectations of volunteers.

4.4. Training for volunteers and volunteer managers

National Societies shall provide appropriate training that will enable a volunteer to meet his or her responsibilities towards the Movement, the specific task or role they were recruited to carry out, and for any emergency response activity they may be asked to carry out. (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.6)

Most volunteers require some form of training. This may be an induction into the Red Cross Red Crescent, and to specific tasks and procedures, or technical training in first aid, community mobilization, assessment, counselling etc. As a legal and moral duty to volunteers and beneficiaries, National Societies need to identify the skills required before recruiting volunteers, plan for the training and secure the funding.



Retention

The Philippine National Red Cross Laguna chapter recognizes that building a good staff–volunteer relationship is critical to retain their volunteers. Volunteers receive basic training in first aid and have regular opportunities to meet paid staff in dedicated venues. They are also encouraged in every way to say what they think and to engage in decision-making. This has greatly boosted their morale and motivation.

When Typhoon Millennium struck the area in 2006, the chapter volunteers responded in record time.



Recognition

The Palestine Red Crescent Society recognizes distinguished volunteers through its volunteers' magazine, Hisadouna (Our Harvest). The magazine also gives volunteers the opportunity to publish their ideas and thoughts. At the end of 2006, the National Society printed a poster with the photos of distinguished volunteers from that year and distributed copies to all the branches.

The Guyana Red Cross Society presents awards at volunteers' workplaces. This unexpected act, in the presence of staff and customers, was appreciated by a salon that offers hair cuts to children from a Red Cross residential home.

Volunteer managers play a critical role, with responsibility to recruit, interview, select, place, orient, train, supervise, evaluate, recognize and transition volunteers. They should understand and appreciate the Movement. They should also be experienced in human resources management, know how to work with diverse individuals and groups, be trained in programme management and competent in basic marketing principles. Clearly, volunteer managers themselves need appropriate training.

Progress

Volunteer training has been encouraged through policies and guidelines at General Assemblies and regional conferences. National Societies provide induction courses, first-aid training and peer education. Various other courses are run regularly. Some also run refresher courses for volunteers. In many National Societies, volunteers meet regularly and go on various courses. Training for volunteer managers is more sporadic and often non-existent.

Basic training courses for new volunteers are often extensive, covering a range of issues. National Societies in the Americas region are looking to standardize their induction training. Regional training of trainers is being developed to increase National Societies' capacities. In North Africa, the International Federation secretariat supports National Societies in developing training modules that focus on building a pool of in-country trainers for a more lasting impact.

Generally, there are more and more training opportunities for volunteers. In south-east Europe there are also an increasing number of manuals for training trainers, as well as a greater streamlining of training. One example is the Red Cross of Serbia, where a modular training system is currently under way with a four-hour session for beginners followed by specialized training. Training manuals are also increasingly being shared by National Societies, regionally and cross-regionally.

Many National Societies have training departments and guidelines for training volunteers. The Colombian Red Cross Society and the Bulgarian Red Cross both have systematic approaches to ensure similar curricula across the National Societies. National Societies also find ways of involving their current volunteers in training new ones. The Armenian Red Cross Society's induction training gives existing volunteers a practical role by sharing their experiences and lessons learnt with newcomers.

While volunteer training is common, courses for volunteer managers are still new in most regions. Following the adoption of the Volunteering Policy and the volunteer management cycle, greater effort has been made. Yet most National Societies do not even have volunteer managers to train. Many simultaneous needs are placed on National Societies; they need to engage volunteers while developing structures to strengthen volunteer management.

National Societies are asking the Federation secretariat for more volunteer management training. In southern Africa, the last regional training of volunteer managers took place in 2002. In the Asia Pacific region, standard sessions have been developed to help National Societies deal with the complexities of a volunteer-based organization. In the Caribbean, a greater focus on training volunteer managers was accompanied by the development of a volunteer management toolkit in 2005, which was based on the volunteer management cycle. Many National Societies in the region report more management training since then, but would like training on how best to use the kit. The volunteer management cycle also provided the basis of the volunteer management training of the British Red Cross, developed a few years ago.



E-learning for volunteer managers

The European Reference Centre on Volunteering has piloted an e-learning course on volunteer management in association with the Open University of Catalonia in Spain. The course, first developed in Spanish, has been well received by participants and is seen as relevant to their work. The English version will be piloted in 2007.

Improving volunteer management

After the Caribbean volunteer management toolkit was developed, the Curaçao branch of the Netherlands Red Cross used it to train all volunteers and to identify potential volunteer managers. The branch sees the process – driven by the new structure and a strong will to bring skilled volunteers into management – as the biggest change in the branch in 40 years.

Challenges

The most obvious challenge concerning training is the establishment of regular volunteer management training programmes and well-functioning volunteer management systems in all regions. Linked to this is the need to have proper structures in place at national and branch level in terms of human resources (volunteer managers), as well as policies and strategies to improve volunteer management. Financial constraints also limit training activities. It is difficult to find funding and, in some cases, volunteers have to pay for their own training.

In some National Societies, the rigidity of training systems also limits volunteer recruitment and development. Many National Societies need new volunteers but time-consuming training curricula sometimes discourage volunteers. National Societies need to be more flexible when involving professionals and community members.

Recent emergency responses also highlight two training issues: that the volunteer management cycle needs to be adaptable to emergency situations to ensure the efficient and recorded recruitment, training and placement of volunteers; and that international delegates need to develop a supportive and sensitive attitude towards volunteers' training needs.

4.5. Health and safety of volunteers

National Societies shall provide appropriate:

- training that will enable a volunteer to meet his or her responsibilities towards the Movement, the specific task or role they were recruited to carry out, and for any emergency response activity they may be asked to carry out (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.6)
- equipment for the task or role they are asked to carry out (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.7)
- insurance protection for volunteers (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.11)

Volunteers work in situations where they are vulnerable. Every year, volunteers are injured, traumatized or killed. In addition, volunteers can harm people and property, especially if they have not been properly trained, equipped or managed.

It is, therefore, important that National Societies have appropriate insurance policies. This was emphasized at the Federation General Assembly in 2005, where National Societies were encouraged to ensure adequate accident insurance for volunteers.

In addition, volunteers must be appropriately trained and have the right equipment to do their work, and have access to psychosocial support.

Progress

Whilst appropriate training and equipment for volunteers is ensured across most National Societies, volunteer skills are maintained through simulation exercises and regular training, and the issue of psychosocial support is becoming more common, volunteer insurance is proving to be more of a challenge. In the Middle East and North Africa region, the issue of insurance was discussed during the 2005 regional conference and National Societies agreed to work on this. Insurance is still lacking, but the issue is now being discussed and followed up. A large group of National Societies have no insurance or very limited coverage. In all regions, National Societies expressed interest in the Federation volunteer accident insurance scheme, to which the Zambia Red Cross Society was among first to sign up.

Peer support

The Austrian Red Cross launched peer support for volunteers and staff in 1998. The National Society currently has 1,187 trained peers.

Peers are trained together with mental health professionals. They perform weekly one-on-one interventions at all branches, while group interventions take place 30 to 40 times a year within each branch. The volunteers are satisfied with the system. New forms of psychosocial intervention for volunteers and staff that have been exposed to traumatic events are being developed.

The Masambo Fund: taking care of volunteers

Conscious of the unprecedented challenges that HIV and AIDS pose to organizational continuity and survival, the International Federation has created the Masambo Fund. Named after a long-serving volunteer of the Zimbabwe Red Cross Society, who did not have access to anti-retroviral drugs (ARV), the Masambo Fund provides access to ARV for Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers living with HIV. The Masambo Fund is financed through voluntary contributions from all National Societies and from private donations.

The Mozambique Red Cross Society has an agreement with local authorities and has created group insurance for a certain number of volunteers. In the Caribbean, insurance is lacking, not only for volunteers but sometimes also for staff. However, the issue of insurance is gaining in importance, partly because national laws are changing. In Trinidad and Tobago, health and safety legislation enacted in 2006 made organizations liable for their associates. As a result, insurance has become more important to the National Society.

Many National Societies provide activity-based insurance cover for their volunteers. They provide the insurance company with a list of volunteers to be insured for the duration of a particular activity. The Croatian Red Cross and the Red Cross of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia both have contracts with insurance agencies covering up to 100 volunteers a day, in addition to separate agreements for events involving a larger number of volunteers. The Venezuelan Red Cross also has a certain number of volunteers insured. Most South American National Societies need a database to have insurance. The Bolivian Red Cross has an online database which is updated by its branches, while other societies have yet to develop one.

Some National Societies have high-risk activity insurance. For example, the Bulgarian Red Cross has insurance specifically for volunteers involved in high-risk activities such as mountain rescue teams. The Red Cross of Serbia and the Red Cross of Montenegro are also developing volunteer insurance, using the project budget to cover the cost.

Challenges

The challenges regarding health and safety, particularly as it relates to volunteer insurance, are mainly financial constraints, a lack of knowledge and appreciation of these issues, and a lack of proper risk management. These challenges are related, as a poor understanding of the need for insurance results in few efforts to raise funds for this purpose. Resource mobilization is a problem in most regions, although to varying degrees. In southern Africa, this is the overarching problem. Asia and the Americas also face challenges in securing funds for insurance. In many cases, National Societies also lack appropriate security rules for working in conflict zones and dangerous situations.



Psychosocial needs and post-traumatic growth of volunteers

Scaling up actions with vulnerable communities in health promotion, disease prevention and disaster risk reduction, as well as reducing the impact of disasters and public health emergencies, is central to the International Federation's Global Agenda. Volunteers play a crucial role here. What volunteers see and experience in difficult situations may affect them, and many National Societies are increasingly ready and willing to offer support to their volunteers. Although emergencies are often the entry point for volunteer recruitment and involvement, little is known about their needs during and after disasters, and the long-term effects on their health and psychosocial well-being. Understanding this issue would enable better volunteer care and improve volunteer retention.

Are volunteers at risk?

The Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 highlighted gaps in policies and procedures. One recommendation is to reinforce psychosocial support in the recovery phase and for the increasing number of volunteers exposed to emergency work.

While research shows that 20–30 per cent of women and 8–13 per cent of men exposed to traumatic events will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or a major depressive disorder and/or substance abuse problems, the vast majority of people exposed to potentially traumatic events do not go on to develop these disorders. Many actually report post-traumatic growth, which occurs when an individual attains, and maintains, at least one perceived positive change directly attributable to a traumatic event, and feels that the event has given them increased strength to face other challenges in life. Humanitarian work involves the prospect of growing by helping vulnerable people. We would, therefore, expect many Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers to experience post-traumatic growth. To date, no study has examined this issue.

It is vital to acknowledge the broader range of volunteer work and the positive aspects of volunteering in a disaster situation without overlooking the reality of mental health problems that may persist in a minority of volunteers.

Taking a step forward

The Federation Volunteering Policy can be improved by emphasizing volunteers' physical and mental health. However, policy alone does not change reality. Section 5.1.15 of the policy mentions the "development of best practices". A good way is to quantify evidence through research. The policy states that the Federation secretariat should identify and support research projects that will help strengthen National Society activities and promote volunteering. One way of improving volunteer promotion and recruitment is to understand what contributes to volunteer well-being.

The Centre for Psychological Trauma at the University of Amsterdam, in cooperation with the Indonesian Red Cross Society, is leading a research project to identify factors contributing to volunteers' health, well-being and post-traumatic growth. The project is supported by the Federation secretariat and the Red Cross Societies of Austria, France and Iceland.

Expected outcomes

One key aim is to develop guidelines on how to recruit, select, train, support and reward volunteers to foster their resilience, post-traumatic growth, health and psychosocial well-being, and to understand the factors that help prevent adverse effects. This will be a valuable step towards improving volunteer management in the Movement.

By Sirry B Thormar,
nurse and psychologist

4.6. Involvement in programme management and decision-making

National Societies shall ensure that volunteers' views and ideas are actively sought and acted upon at all stages of programme design, development, implementation and evaluation. (Volunteering Policy, Section 5.1.9)

Volunteers know their clients and beneficiaries best. It is important that volunteers are consulted in programme design and that they are included in the decision-making process. It is also a way of recognizing volunteers, thereby ensuring volunteer retention, and of facilitating volunteer ownership of decisions.

Two organizational paradigms exist in the Movement when examining member and volunteer involvement. In the membership model, members gather around an idea, form branches and elect leaders. Active members are led or self-managed. The concept of volunteers in this model can be weak. In the service delivery model, volunteers are recruited to perform explicitly defined tasks. Local branches deliver services rather than organize members. National Societies need to determine which model is appropriate for their context.

Progress

Two kinds of volunteer participation are examined here: in programme management and decision-making. Regional and international decisions, including the 2005 General Assembly decisions on youth and volunteering, have stressed the importance of involvement. In most National Societies, volunteers are to some degree involved in programme management, although less so in disaster-driven situations. Volunteer involvement in decision-making is low, particularly at national level.

Staff often manage national programmes, while community programmes are, to a larger extent, managed by volunteers. Most National Societies see the need to involve volunteers in the planning when working with their communities and, increasingly, also in programme design at national level. The British Red Cross is giving volunteers more responsibility for staff-designed programmes. In the Middle East and North Africa, volunteers are playing an increasingly important role in planning. Smaller National Societies, with few paid staff members, generally involved volunteers more. Volunteers identify needs, implement programmes and are sometimes transformed into project staff.

Volunteer involvement in decision-making is often low at national level. Many National Societies report positive outcomes in involving volunteers, both in terms of programme influence and volunteer encouragement. However, although governance members generally carry out their work on a voluntary basis, programme volunteers are often not heard at decision-making forums. Since the adoption of the Volunteering Policy, volunteer involvement has been on the agenda and volunteers are increasingly being elected by their peers onto governance. The Afghanistan Red Crescent is one of many National Societies taking steps to include volunteers in programme planning and decision-making.

In all regions, local and branch decision-making forums have better volunteer involvement than national ones. In southern Africa, as in other regions, volunteers who become involved in decision-making at this level continue to do their normal volunteer work. Branch-level volunteers can, therefore, be involved in governance whilst planning and implementing programmes.



Increasing volunteer involvement

Under the new constitution and human resources policy of the Argentine Red Cross, volunteers are recognized as associates to the National Society in assemblies. Previously, only those who paid a membership fee were classed as associates. Now, by contributing a minimum of 100 hours per year, volunteers are given the same voting and election rights as paying members. Only one election has been held so far, but the results can already be seen in younger branch presidents and governing board members. Similarly, the Lebanese Red Cross has carried out reforms in its legal base and has given volunteers the right to vote and be elected to all levels.

Furthermore, not all volunteers are equally involved. Very often, youth volunteers are excluded from some processes as they are deemed to be lacking the necessary skills to contribute. Many National Societies are now working to improve the situation by including young people in governing bodies and by establishing youth boards and committees. The Australian Red Cross has adopted a more serious attitude towards youth involvement and is developing appropriate structures and policies.

Volunteer involvement is not just about National Societies allowing participation; it is also about volunteer awareness. In North Africa, through various activities, volunteers have become aware of their right to be involved in decision-making. As a result, more and more believe they can influence the National Society.

Challenges

There is a general need for more volunteer involvement, especially at national level and in disaster-driven situations. Volunteers are often implementers with little say in the processes that affect their work. In some cases, they may not wish to be involved, but there are a number of other barriers. Young and unemployed volunteers may not be perceived as adding value to processes. In some National Societies, governance positions are prestigious and volunteers from local communities might not be accepted. Volunteers are sometimes not included because of a lack of structures and capacity to accommodate new points of view. In some cases, leadership and staff may consider volunteer involvement to be a threat because volunteers will ask questions and demand change. Local branch structures and leadership training may facilitate this. Another challenge is linked to unclear definitions of volunteers and members, and overlapping roles between governance and management.

Financial constraints limit volunteer involvement because not all National Societies can afford to reimburse costs for volunteers to participate in assemblies and planning processes. Finally, low awareness of the Volunteering Policy and the benefits of volunteer involvement may hold some National Societies back in these processes.

4.7. Reimbursement

National Societies shall reimburse reasonable expenses incurred by volunteers in the course of carrying out approved volunteering tasks. (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.10)

National Societies shall ensure that, when people need to be paid to perform a task of work, they are recognized as employees, contract workers or casual labour. As such, they should be covered and protected by any relevant employment legislation applicable, such as minimum wages, contract protection and other legal rights and responsibilities. (Volunteering Policy, 5.1.13)

Volunteers should neither gain nor lose out financially as a result of their voluntary activity. When a National Society covers volunteer costs, this should be done in a clear manner that cannot be mistaken for the payment of a salary. According to the International Federation's definition, volunteering is not a paid activity. When paid, people should be considered staff – not volunteers – and be employed on a fully legal basis. Paid workers called volunteers are one of the barriers to volunteer development.

Progress

The reimbursement of expenses and payment of volunteers represents more of a challenge in some regions and National Societies than in others. While reimbursement mostly relies on internal finances and practices, the payment of volunteers is affected by the practices of other humanitarian actors. Systems that allow harmony and consistency are equally important to both.



Clear system

In Afghanistan, volunteers who are asked to participate in youth camps, training and workshops, the celebration of international days and similar events, have their food, travel and accommodation costs reimbursed. Payment is made in a clear and transparent manner, so that volunteers do not mistake this for a salary or wages.

Competition with other organizations

In southern Africa, poverty and competition with other organizations lead to a situation where National Societies have to pay allowances to recruit and retain volunteers, as financial incentives are sometimes used to attract volunteers from other organizations.

Many National Societies reimburse volunteers' expenses or provide an adequate allowance to cover costs related to their work. The practice varies among and within National Societies, and from region to region, as well as from programme to programme. The general agreement should be that reasonable expenses incurred by volunteers should be reimbursed.

In 2005, the Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference recommended an improvement in practices in the region, where currently some volunteers are reimbursed adequately, others excessively and some not at all. This issue is also being discussed more in all the other regions, particularly within the context of emergencies. The Kiribati Red Cross Society is one of many National Societies that notes that volunteers are more willing to perform a task if they know their costs will be reimbursed.

Many National Societies have policies or guidance notes to establish the rules of reimbursement. One example is the new regulations for youth volunteers of the Red Cross of Serbia, which specifies reimbursement practices.

There is no clear distinction between reimbursement and the payment of allowances for volunteers. In some regions, it is clear that a volunteer is always unpaid and is only reimbursed to cover costs. In other cases, volunteers are given allowances that are higher than their actual costs, or are paid and work almost as staff.

In southern Africa, the payment of volunteers has become common in some programmes, changing the spirit of volunteering. Volunteers contribute several hours a day, and are paid monthly allowances.

The creation of policies and laws has, in many cases, made payment and stipends for volunteers easier to handle. In East Africa, many National Societies have developed policies and guidelines to distinguish between employees and volunteers. The statutes and guidelines of the Argentine Red Cross also establish the difference between the two, in accordance with national legislation and Federation policies.

Challenges

A major issue is the need to make a clear distinction between reimbursement and the payment of a salary. The challenge relating to the reimbursement and pay of volunteers is financial. Other challenges relate to the practices of other organizations, differences between programmes, and definitions of volunteering.

Many National Societies cannot afford to reimburse all volunteer costs and are, therefore, hesitant to establish a system that they will not be able to sustain financially and administratively. Sometimes, stipends are used to compensate selected volunteers instead of general reimbursement. The lack of funds also affects the practice of paying volunteers. Eastern and southern African National Societies, which cannot afford to establish salaried posts, have a tendency to hire and pay volunteers to do staff work. This leads to a second concern, that many see volunteering simply as a step on the ladder to becoming staff.

Reimbursement and pay can vary from one programme to another, particularly when some projects are funded by Movement partners and external donors. Volunteers prefer to work on better-funded projects. This makes volunteers reluctant to stay with or go back to non-funded projects or unpaid positions. In cases where some volunteers are paid and others are not, unpaid volunteers sometimes react by withdrawing from the programmes. When core programmes are funded and new proj-

ects are not, this limits volunteer initiatives to develop new community programmes. Some National Societies try to ensure that donors allow project funds to benefit all volunteers, for example, by providing free training or uniforms to all the volunteers and not just to those working on the funded project.

When definitions of volunteers and volunteering vary, it is hard to establish clear practices. The principle of volunteering is, sometimes, also limiting, as the reimbursement of costs is seen as 'gain'. Often, volunteers themselves do not mind covering their costs and see this as a contribution to the Movement. The challenge comes with volunteers who cannot afford to contribute financially; in these cases, the lack of reimbursement limits volunteer recruitment.

4.8. New forms of volunteering through community empowerment

The member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the International Federation and the Federation secretariat:

- are committed to promoting volunteering as a significant and positive contribution to improving the lives of vulnerable people, and to strengthening communities and civil society (Volunteering Policy, 4.1.1)
- are aware and value informal volunteering in communities, outside the formal organization of National Society programmes and activities (Volunteering Policy, 4.1.4)

Volunteers are part of the community and bridge communities and organizations. Volunteering at community level leads to community ownership of solutions to their common problems. It empowers people and builds civil society.

Progress

Strategy 2010 places the unique global network of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers at the forefront to meet the emerging humanitarian challenges. Many National Society strategic plans have since become more responsive and focused on local vulnerabilities and capacity. Thanks to their complementary role to government and their unique position in being able to access communities that others may have difficulty reaching, most National Societies are scaling up community outreach.

Community programming tools, such as vulnerability and capacity assessment and participatory community development, have greatly enhanced community participation in the analysis, design and implementation of programmes. Three typical community approaches have been identified, depending on the National Society's mandate and capacities:

- Red Cross Red Crescent coming into communities to deliver services
- Red Cross Red Crescent involving the public in community activities
- Red Cross Red Crescent supporting activities organized by the community

As National Societies work with community health volunteers, home-based carers and village leaders on a day-to-day basis, these tools and approaches have the potential to develop volunteer/member groups, promote bottom-up branch development and build volunteer management capacity. In Ecuador, one of the local communities supporting the Red Cross response to a previous volcanic eruption approached the National Society, asking it to set up a local branch in the community. In Morocco, addressing the emerging migration issues in the region, the National Society is working on a rural community project to raise awareness and to help returning migrants reintegrate into the community. The Moroccan Red Crescent

The Red Cross Red Crescent's community approaches



Red Cross Red Crescent coming into the communities to deliver service.

The Red Cross Red Crescent's community approaches



Red Cross Red Crescent involving the public in community activities.

The Red Cross Red Crescent's community approaches



Red Cross Red Crescent supporting activities organized by the community.

Community empowerment

The Egyptian Red Crescent Society has been working for years on housing projects in the two slum areas of Zenhom and Nahda. To complement their weak local structures and resources, the National Society established partnerships with local associations. Community volunteers play an important part in the sustainability and success of the projects. Today, the communities not only have nice apartments but a smarter neighbourhood, a healthier and safer environment, and schools for their children.

Promoting branches and volunteering

With no branches across the country to help it realize its mission, the Kiribati Red Cross Society has opted for vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) to develop its network. Based on volunteers' VCAs, the National Society has developed health projects together with the community. As more community volunteers join in, volunteering issues and incoherent practices become apparent. Other Pacific region National Societies are learning from the society's experience in order to develop their own volunteer management approach.

recognizes the need for strong volunteer management capacity before implementing the project on a larger scale. Similar realities emerge in other parts of the world amidst efforts to optimize community resources and traditional volunteering values.

Community volunteers may have their own views of their Movement identity. In Samoa, the Red Cross is a leading organization in community-based first-aid training. Even when involved in activities run by other organizations, community volunteers see themselves as Red Cross volunteers and mobilize as a Red Cross response unit when disasters hit. In Britain, the strong identity of other community organizations means that its members do not assume their Red Cross role as easily. National Societies face increasing competition, and they see the potential to increase impact through partnerships with other organizations.

Challenges

The Federation Volunteering Policy defines volunteering as an activity that is organized by recognized representatives of a National Society. This institutionalized form of volunteering appears to deter volunteering development in some communities. Questions arise as to whether we should recognize community volunteers as Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers. In South America, the volunteering policies of some National Societies place specific requirements on community volunteers in terms of hours of service or training before they can qualify as Red Cross volunteers. Failure to comply may mean limited access to proper equipment, reimbursement and insurance.

Another notable challenge is that many National Societies are of the mind-set that they are working for rather than working with communities when implementing programmes. More could be done to enhance the involvement of refugees and displaced people. It has been observed that National Society branches in some better-developed countries tend to be closer to communities, while those in less-developed countries tend to locate their branches far from rural communities. This underlines the need to consider branch structure and capacity when developing community programmes to address potential volunteering issues.

The definition of Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers varies in different contexts. Nevertheless, one reality remains: few humanitarian organizations have the same outreach as the International Federation to make such a significant difference.

4.9. Networking and peer-to-peer support

The Federation secretariat shall seek to promote cooperation and partnerships with organizations in civil society and public and private sectors that encourage volunteering. (Volunteering Policy, 5.4.3)

In each region, the Federation secretariat encourages National Societies to organize volunteer development networks, run by the participants themselves according to their needs. The purpose of the networks is to share knowledge and experience and support one another in promoting good volunteer systems and management. In addition, cooperation among National Societies should be facilitated to offer volunteers and volunteer managers more opportunities to meet and exchange experiences.

Progress

Networking and peer-to-peer support in the area of volunteer development is, to some extent, taking place in all regions, whether formally or informally. Since the adoption of the Volunteering Policy and added focus on networking at international level, several functional volunteer and organizational development networks and peer support mechanisms have been established.

Currently, there are two regional volunteer networks in the Movement. The first, the European Network for the Development of Volunteering (ENDOV, originally Western ENDOV), was established in 2000. A European Red Cross Reference Centre on Volunteering has been created to keep the momentum going between network meetings. The centre offers online support through a web site. The European Youth Network also works to develop volunteering in the region.

The second of these two networks, the South American Volunteer Network, was established in 2004. Members share information by e-mail, by telephone and at meetings. The Federation secretariat facilitates network activities. The Argentine Red Cross CD-ROM for volunteer development and the Bolivian Red Cross volunteer database are examples of shared good practice.

Other networks, such as the Caribbean Regional Organizational Development Network (RODNET), also take responsibility for volunteer development. One outcome of RODNET was the volunteer management toolkit. In the Africa, Asia Pacific, and Middle East and North Africa regions, no formal volunteer networks have been established but several meetings have been arranged at regional and sub-regional level. Other networks, like the Gender and Youth Networks in MENA, include volunteer development among their objectives.

National Societies are generally interested in mutual support and information exchanges. Programme exchanges are the most common. They also contribute to volunteer development. The HIV and AIDS programme in southern Africa is one example where National Societies have developed volunteer management through joint activity training.

In East Africa, peer-supported capacity-building is the preferred method for volunteer development. In the Asia Pacific region, case studies have facilitated the exchange of experiences. In the Middle East and North Africa region, volunteer management systems and programmes have been developed through peer support. The Lebanese Red Cross and the Palestine Red Crescent Society have helped the Iraqi Red Crescent Society strengthen its new volunteer department. The Palestine Red Crescent Society and the Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates have helped the



Network support

The Bulgarian Red Cross has developed a volunteering policy, supported by the Spanish Red Cross and the Federation secretariat. The National Society became an ENDOV member in 2006 and has participated in a number of other international meetings. Currently, the policy is being implemented in ten branches. The aim is for the National Society to take a sub-regional lead on volunteer development.

Overseas branches

The Caribbean has 16 overseas branches belonging to European National Societies. Being far away from headquarters and independent actors in the region, these societies are often little informed about or involved in work going on outside their territory, and know little about their National Society, the region and the Federation. The Curaçao branch of the Netherlands Red Cross is now much better informed, thanks to its participation in RODNET. This has also increased the understanding of issues related to development.

5. Volunteering in emergencies



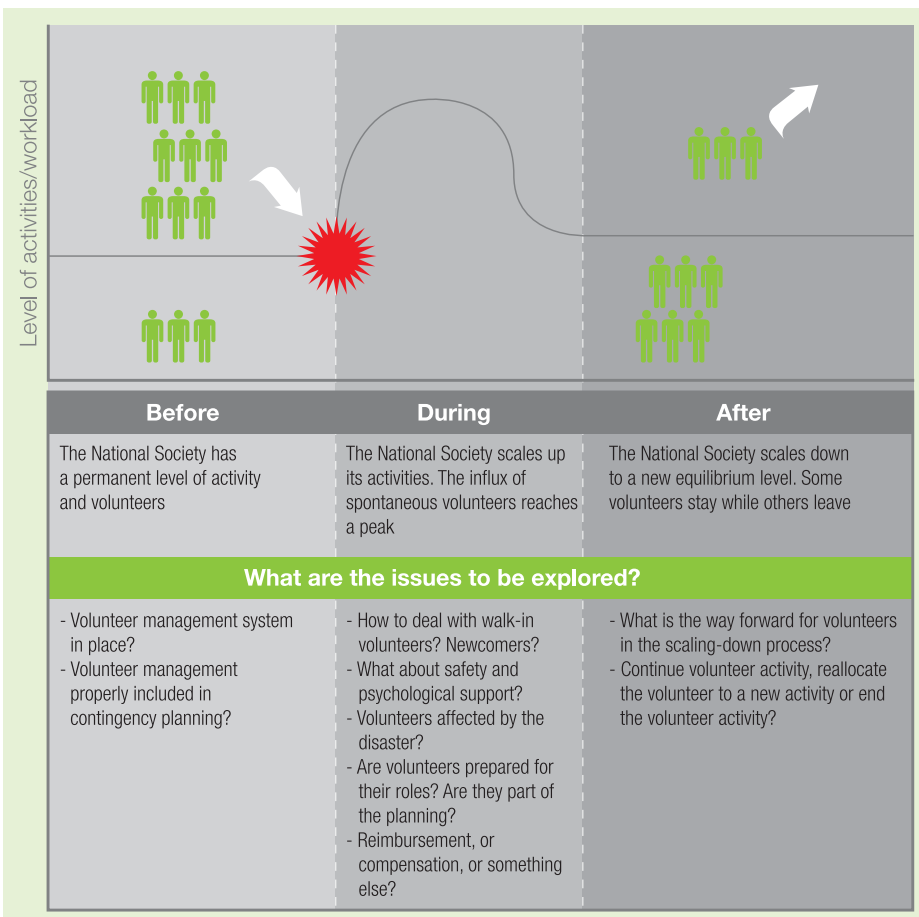
The member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Federation and the Federation secretariat recognize and value volunteering as a means of creating and supporting a network of people who are available to work for a National Society in an emergency. (Volunteering Policy, 4.1.2)

Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are at the heart of effective humanitarian assistance for millions made vulnerable by natural catastrophes, conflicts and 'silent' crises, such as poverty and disease. This unique global network of trained and dedicated volunteers has made the Red Cross and Red Crescent a leading organization and the preferred partner in disaster response. Volunteering during emergencies continues, nevertheless, to challenge the management and coordination capacity of National Societies.

Most sudden onset disasters attract an influx of people, from the neighbourhood or abroad, volunteering their time, energy and knowledge. They may be victims themselves. Spontaneous acts can save, and cost, lives. As the World Disasters Report 2001 points out, spontaneous help may not always be helpful, but ignoring it can lead to greater confusion and chaos.

In the Indian Ocean tsunami, the South Asia earthquake, Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina, the flooding in Britain in 2007, and numerous other sudden onset disasters around the world, thousands of volunteers came forward, eager to help. According to the International Federation's baseline survey, where 105 National Societies replied, around 1.3 million volunteers participated in delivering disaster preparedness and response programmes and services in their countries in 2005. In 2006, over 35,000 volunteers were directly engaged in supporting 430 emergency operations. They provided food, shelter, clean water, medical care and psychosocial support to some 4.8 million people affected by floods, earthquakes, storms, population movement, food insecurity, heatwaves and other types of emergency. These stories of volunteer response are certainly not without their challenges.

In order to manage volunteers during an emergency, it is necessary to be prepared and to ensure that all elements of the volunteer management cycle are properly observed before, during and after an emergency response.



What to do with the influx of walk-in volunteers?

In Pakistan, immediately after the 2005 earthquake, the National Society was overwhelmed by spontaneous volunteers. A staff member from the blood bank at the headquarters had to assume the task of managing newcomer volunteers. The society also had to draw on expertise from the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, given the lack of experienced volunteer managers in the disaster-affected area.

The American Red Cross disaster response mechanism includes a volunteer recruitment system. In the event of a disaster, a volunteer intake centre will be set up quickly to handle spontaneous helpers. The centre is responsible for interviewing, placing and training volunteers. The Armenian Red Cross Society has a similar measure as part of its range of response tools.

How to avoid volunteer burn-out?

In Indonesia, Satgana – the Indonesian Red Cross Society's rapid response teams – are usually deployed for a maximum of ten days. Any extension has to be agreed between the volunteer and the National Society. This makes it easier for volunteers to be released by their employers. One lesson learnt from the Indian Ocean tsunami was the need to provide psychological support to volunteers as well as to survivors. This did not take place during the response, not even after weeks of collecting dead and decaying bodies. In subsequent relief operations, Indonesian Red Cross volunteers are able to attend debriefing sessions and are given long-term psychological support, as required.

What to do with volunteers when the emergency is over?

The Philippine National Red Cross presents all volunteers with a certification letter confirming their experience, skills, performance and number of hours worked. At the end of a recent cyclone response, the National Society identified some volunteers to be absorbed into a longer-term disaster-response preparedness project. The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society's new volunteer management manual also includes a section on volunteer retention and discontinuation after the emergency phase of a disaster.

Reimbursement, compensation or something else?

Reimbursement to volunteers rarely goes beyond the 'out-of-pocket' expenses in operations implemented by individual National Societies. A high-profile operation with massive external funding, however, may see this practice being changed and risk undermining the true spirit of volunteerism. The initial per diem for South Asia earthquake volunteers was tripled during the relief phase, and was later multi-rated during the recovery phase. Many were salaried by Partner National Societies but were still called volunteers.

Should affected volunteers be treated as ordinary beneficiaries?

National Societies in the Caribbean do not always give their volunteers the same type of support as others affected by disasters. This is to avoid being seen as self-supporting or abusing resources. While volunteers subscribe to the volunteering principle of no personal gain, they generally see the need for coherent assistance when they are affected.

In Papua New Guinea, Red Cross volunteers affected by disasters are treated as ordinary beneficiaries.

Following the adoption of the Volunteer Policy in 1999, there have been a number of initiatives and discussions aimed at getting the issue of volunteering in emergencies onto the agenda of National Society policy-makers and volunteer managers. According to the *Well-prepared National Society Self-Assessment Report 2002–2004*, 78 per cent of National Societies recruit volunteers into disaster preparedness and disaster response programmes, while 62 per cent regularly test their volunteers. Recent disaster response experiences have shown improved practices in volunteer management. More needs to be done to effectively manage volunteers as a potential resource during disasters. Recent reviews draw the attention of all National Societies to the close link between the quality of emergency response and the volunteering management systems before, during and after a disaster. In addition, developing and maintaining a well-functioning volunteering capacity requires close cooperation and coordination between various departments and partner organizations. Based on the recommendations of the report and the outcomes of recent regional and global volunteering forums, a new comprehensive volunteer management cycle for emergencies has been proposed.

Reinforcing volunteering development in general, and volunteering in emergencies in particular, optimizes the strengths of our core volunteer base. In a world of global challenges and increasing vulnerability to disasters and diseases, this capacity is essential if we are to accomplish the International Federation's mission of empowering vulnerable communities to respond to situations that compromise their lives and livelihoods. ■

6. Volunteering in everyday programmes

The member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Federation and the Federation secretariat are committed to promoting volunteering as a significant and positive contribution to improving the lives of vulnerable people and to strengthening communities and civil society. (Volunteering Policy, 4.1)

Strategy 2010 and the Federation of the Future process recognize volunteering as an important contribution to the development of communities and National Societies, and as fundamental to the International Federation's own existence. The International Federation has responded to humanitarian challenges in recent years with a number of specific policies within the Strategy 2010 programming framework, all of which place people and volunteer action at the centre. In addition to youth and gender, these policies apply across a range of humanitarian activities relevant to disaster preparedness and response, recovery and rehabilitation, emergency health and development programmes such as community health, HIV and AIDS, and social welfare projects.

“Goal 3 of the Global Agenda is to increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability. This requires coordinated planning and capacity-building efforts among all Movement components, and a network of local branches and support structures to make the most of the volunteers. Effective volunteer and programme management enables National Societies to listen to the voices of volunteers and staff, harness their experience and make them feel welcomed and involved at all levels of the International Federation.”

The Global Agenda goals reaffirm the International Federation's commitment to support the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals. The International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2007 underpins four areas of challenge that the Movement must address:

- environmental hazards, including climate change
- migration
- violence in communities
- emergent and recurrent diseases, including HIV and AIDS

These challenges demand all governments and other stakeholders to recognize the valuable contribution of volunteers in development work, as key bridges between communities, national and local authorities.

Clearly, volunteering is fundamental to meeting the needs of vulnerable people. Volunteer management and development must, therefore, be integrated and closely linked to National Societies' everyday programme and organizational development.

Although Goal 3 of the Global Agenda is directly related to volunteer development, volunteering is also instrumental in achieving the other three goals and in fulfilling the International Federation's mission. ■

The Federation strives, through voluntary action, for a world of empowered communities, better able to address human suffering and crises with hope, respect for dignity and a concern for equity.

Fundamental to this is the idea that the Federation works with and not for vulnerable communities. Our volunteers – our people – are our strength.

Goal 1: Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.

Disaster preparedness and response

Extreme weather conditions bring more frequent and intense disasters. The poor, the elderly and the disabled are the most vulnerable. Disasters can destroy years of development work at a single stroke. Good preparedness, based on sustainable development at community level, does more to diminish the impact of disasters than any response and recovery efforts. The priority here is to improve local, regional and international capacity to respond to disasters and public health emergencies.

In the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society's cyclone preparedness programme its network of 33,000 trained volunteers advocates awareness of cyclone preparedness, disseminates warning signals and assists vulnerable communities in evacuation, first aid and relief. Climate change has prompted many National Societies worldwide to focus on early warning systems, resistant housing, tree-planting and evacuation plans. There is also increasing cooperation and partnership with governments and other stakeholders in advocating for neglected humanitarian crises at different levels.

Goal 2: Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.

Health and care

No single element threatens a community's sustainability more than the impact of disease. The HIV epidemic and avian influenza are among a number of global health crises. The priority is to scale up actions with vulnerable communities in health promotion, disease prevention and disaster risk reduction. A global network of community volunteers represents our added-value to address vulnerabilities through auxiliary partnerships with health ministries and other agencies. The International Federation's global health and care strategy guides National Societies in recruiting and training volunteers to carry out simple but life-saving activities in the community, such as conveying health messages. For example, the Red Cross of Viet Nam's avian influenza prevention and preparedness initiatives have enabled its volunteers to distribute messages to 2.3 million people in the country. The International Federation has recently initiated a new partnership with Professor Jeffrey Sachs, director of The Earth Institute at Columbia University, and the UN Millennium Project, which focuses on community volunteers in addressing the village-level health gap in Africa.

Goal 4: Promote respect for diversity and human dignity, and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion.

Promoting the Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values

In a world with increasing isolation, tension and recourse to violence, it is clear that National Societies must champion the individual and community values, which encourage respect for other human beings and a willingness to work together to find solutions to community problems. The priority here is to renew advocacy on priority humanitarian issues, especially when it comes to fighting intolerance, stigma and discrimination, and to promote disaster risk reduction. In this respect, southern African Red Cross Societies have developed an intensive programme, using community resources, volunteers and government support. It brings together prevention, community-based care for people living with HIV, and an advocacy campaign against stigma and discrimination. The programme aims to provide an environment where even their children and family members can be supported and protected, and realize their rights.

Goals

7. Where do we go from here?

The management of volunteers is an essential issue for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The Federation Volunteering Policy was adopted in 1999. Since then, many steps have been taken in the volunteering development efforts of National Societies. Volunteer management is increasingly being included in strategic plans, a recognition of the fact that it is seen as an important area for the development of National Societies. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to improve and establish good volunteer management systems. Furthermore, in order to have a complete picture of the current state of volunteering within the Red Cross Red Crescent, there is an urgent need to collect solid statistical data on the number of volunteers.

A number of constantly changing external and internal factors influence the management of volunteers. This gives National Societies a challenging scenario to work with. A good volunteer management system in a National Society contributes to the effective implementation of programmes, better risk management and better use of resources. The face of volunteerism is constantly evolving and volunteering legislation is becoming increasingly important. Establishing volunteer-friendly environments both inside and outside National Societies contributes to the improved implementation of activities – thereby benefiting vulnerable people.

The International Federation's Global Volunteering Development

The International Federation plans to address the existing and future challenges highlighted in this report through volunteering development activities in the next four years, 2008–2011. This effort is designed to help National Societies provide a favourable internal and external environment that encourages and facilitates

the work of volunteers, and that promotes volunteerism across all sectors of society.

With this in mind, volunteering development may be considered a means of providing people with the possibility to make a difference to their community and to improve the lives of the most vulnerable.

In 2008–2011, the planned volunteering development aims to:

- ensure and support National Societies to adopt volunteer management systems, procedures and practices in order to better support and manage volunteers
- develop and spread knowledge about volunteering in emergencies
- promote, celebrate and recognize the achievements of volunteers
- advocate and work to establish volunteer-friendly environments

Establishing good volunteer management systems in National Societies

Many National Societies have made progress to ensure good volunteer management systems, procedures and practices in order to better support and manage volunteers. However, some National Societies still face challenges and need support.

Knowledge-sharing and peer-to-peer support – that is, an experienced volunteer development practitioner in one National Society helping and supporting a colleague in another National Society – is one practical approach to support volunteering development. The European Reference Centre on Volunteering is another example of regional knowledge-sharing.

The International Federation supports various volunteering development initiatives – connecting, training and supporting people and National Societies with

the same goals and challenges. Scaled-up support began in the Asia Pacific region, and experiences are now ready to be used elsewhere. Next to follow are Africa, and then other regions.

Volunteering in emergencies

In recent decades, many National Societies have developed their technical know-how in managing disaster responses. In the 2006 baseline survey, where 105 National Societies replied, around 1.3 million volunteers annually participated in delivering disaster preparedness and response programmes in their countries.

The management of volunteers before, during and after emergencies is a fundamental task for every National Society. The International Federation has begun work on supporting the development and dissemination of good practice on how to achieve this, linking it to regular volunteer management practice.

Recognizing and celebrating the achievements of volunteers

There are many untold volunteer stories. The achievements of volunteers are, very often, not recognized by people other than those who meet the volunteers as they carry out their work. The Federation secretariat is supporting National Societies to speak out and tell these stories, identifying and valuing the contribution of volunteers. The Federation General Assembly Global Volunteer Award recognizes volunteers. Another initiative is profiling volunteers on web sites. Increasingly, National Societies are also developing their own awards and profiles.

We are just a few years away from the tenth anniversary of the 2001 International Year of Volunteers, when it will be time to celebrate together with other organizations and partners. The International Federation has already started preparing for this important event.

Establishing volunteer-friendly environments in countries

Volunteering is an essential part of every society. Volunteering enables citizens to significantly contribute to the development of their local community. There is an increased awareness among governments about the importance of the legal framework in promoting and enabling volunteering, as a factor which impacts volunteering. Some countries have launched legislative reform initiatives.

The International Federation is working with partners such as United Nations Volunteers to encourage and support National Societies to work for the establishment and adoption of legal frameworks that promote volunteerism. ■

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The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies promotes the humanitarian activities of National Societies among vulnerable people.

By coordinating international disaster relief and encouraging development support it seeks to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

The International Federation, the National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross together constitute the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.