



Volunteering Policy

Adopted by the 18th session of the General Assembly held on 23-25 November 2011 in Geneva. To be reviewed by the 21st session of the General Assembly in 2017.

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to guide volunteering in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Strategy 2020 challenges the International Federation to “do more, do better and reach further” in saving lives and changing minds. It acknowledges that people themselves are the most important resource for their own progress, which can only be sustained through their own leadership and ownership of the process.

Volunteering is identified by *Strategy 2020* as being at the heart of community building. It also contributes to sustainable human development. As National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies are trusted to serve communities from the inside, volunteering is the essential foundation for making and sustaining strong National Societies. A National Society's capacity and effectiveness is directly related to its ability to mobilise, manage and empower volunteers from across the communities that it serves. This in turn depends on the values and attitudes that the National Society reflects when it approaches communities to inspire them to volunteer.

Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers operate in a range of diverse and complex circumstances in a fast changing world where social, demographic, economic, and environmental trends as well as technological advancements are altering the shape and functioning of communities and how people volunteer. The International Federation is committed to promoting a culture of volunteering in society in general and to position the Red Cross Red Crescent as the preferred choice of people seeking to volunteer.

Defining volunteering and volunteers

A Red Cross Red Crescent volunteer is a person who carries out volunteering activities for a National Society, occasionally or regularly.

Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers work for a more humane and peaceful world. They do this by delivering services directly to vulnerable people and through seeking to prevent and reduce vulnerability and exclusion where they can. They also govern and lead National Societies and their International Federation.

Volunteering with the Red Cross Red Crescent is organised by recognised representatives of National Societies and is aimed at furthering its services and activities, always working in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. It is carried out by people motivated by free will, and not by a desire for material or financial gain, or by external social, economic or political pressure.

Protecting and supporting volunteers

National Societies have well functioning management systems and practices to supervise, support and encourage volunteers. These are adapted to the specific context of their work and responsive to new trends in volunteering that may go beyond the established structures of National Societies including, for example, informal, on-line, and corporate or other institutional forms of volunteering.

National Societies ensure that their volunteers are properly prepared to carry out their work, through providing them with relevant and timely information, training and equipment, feedback on their performance, as well as appropriately assessed safety and security measures. They insure their volunteers against accidents, and provide them with appropriate psychosocial support when required.

In certain circumstances, volunteers may themselves be vulnerable and National Societies ensure that their needs for assistance and protection are given due attention.

National Societies provide volunteers with access to accredited learning and personal development opportunities so as to help them to better undertake their agreed tasks or roles, as well as to motivate them to grow their skills and capacity and undertake future roles within the Red Cross Red Crescent.

When there is the need or opportunity for a volunteer with the National Society to carry out paid work as casual or contracted labour, the National Society recognises this change in status and ensures that the employment complies with the relevant laws of the country.

Recognise volunteers and their achievements

National Societies recognise that volunteers have a significant stake in the organisation. They take formal and informal opportunities to appreciate, individually and collectively, the work of volunteers and its impact.

National Societies encourage volunteers to participate in its decision-making and in designing and improving the work in which they are involved. A volunteer has the right to become a member of the National Society, i.e. someone who has formally agreed to the conditions of membership as required under the National Society's statutes.

Promote volunteers and volunteering

National Societies recognise the value of a diverse volunteer workforce, and actively recruit volunteers, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, disability or age. They remove physical, economic, social and cultural barriers to participation, and recruit volunteers based on their potential. National Societies reimburse volunteers for pre-approved expenditure related to their volunteering tasks. National Societies also work with governments, the corporate sector and other partners to promote an enabling environment for volunteering in national life.

Agree volunteer rights and responsibilities

National Societies provide volunteers with written guidance and rules that sets out the rights and responsibilities of both the National Society and its volunteers. All Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are expected to act, at all times, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles. Volunteers are expected to respect the regulations on the use of the emblem, and prevent its misuse. They should make themselves available to the National Society in case of emergency, according to their skills and abilities, as agreed with the National Society.

In working with vulnerable people, volunteers are expected to strive for the highest standards of quality in the services that they deliver. They fulfil their duties without discrimination, responding to the needs of vulnerable people in a compassionate and respectful manner. They respect the confidentiality of those whom they assist.

Impact of the policy

In reinforcing the importance of volunteers and volunteering, this volunteering policy serves as guidance for National Societies in creating or updating their volunteering policies in order to develop enabling environments for volunteers and volunteering.

The impact of the successful implementation of this policy is expected to be a growth in the Red Cross Red Crescent share of volunteering as measured by the increased number of people preferring to start and remain volunteering with the Red Cross Red Crescent.

This will be measured by comparison against the baseline of 2010, through the Federation-Wide Reporting System.