



Volunteering policy

Implementation guide



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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Foreword

This Volunteering Policy Implementation Guide has been produced by the Organizational Development Department of the secretariat as a resource for National Societies reviewing the issue of volunteers and volunteering. One very concrete application of the Guide will be for National Societies seeking to develop their own volunteering policies in line with the 1999 Federation Volunteering Policy (see Annex 1).

The Guide should however be seen as having wider value; firstly in the generic approach it suggests for the adoption of any policy within a National Society, and secondly through the wider questions that it raises around the subject of volunteering. In this it is a part of the secretariat Volunteering Review Project; an ongoing secretariat project to understand and suggest responses to the apparent decline in the numbers of members and volunteers in the Movement.

The Guide has been developed from a draft written for the Organizational Development Department. This draft was then revised in the light of comments from volunteers and managers from a number of National Societies. I would like to express my thanks for this constructive comment and criticism. If you have any further comments on this Guide, please send them to the Senior Officer for Volunteering in the Organizational Development Department.

The secretariat and its delegations look forward to supporting you in this crucial development work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Cherpitel', with a horizontal line underneath.

Didier Cherpitel
Secretary General (1999-2003)

1. Introduction

From the start of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, voluntary action has been at its heart. On the battlefield of Solferino, Henry Dunant carried out a task that nowadays would be known as volunteer management: he recruited people from a local community to meet local needs. Nowadays, of course, the work of the Red Cross/Red Crescent has moved beyond battlefields, but the principle that there is a value in mobilising unpaid workers to carry out relevant tasks in the community has remained central to the organization's thinking and planning. *Strategy 2010* defines the International Federation's mission to be.

to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.

Mobilizing volunteers to serve vulnerable people must then be one of the **key competencies** of National Societies.

Increasingly, the ability of National Societies to mobilise volunteers is being called into question. At the same time, competition for volunteers from small local community organizations meeting visible local needs is growing, even in regions where National Societies were among very few volunteer organizations ten years ago.

One of the key factors identified in a study determining the success of volunteer organizations in the United States of America was that there should be:

*“A positive vision – clearly articulated, widely shared and openly discussed throughout the organization – of the role of volunteers”.*¹

The 1999 Federation Volunteering Policy is a step towards such a vision for the Movement, and the development by National Societies of their own policies a step towards developing coherent understanding of the role and value of volunteers within each National Society. This Implementation Guide is a tool to support National Societies in developing thinking around issues relating to volunteers and volunteering, and to help them capture this in policy form.

Policy alone does not change reality. Each National Society should aspire to be **one of the leading organizations in mobilizing and managing volunteers to help vulnerable people in its country**. If National Societies are serious about developing volunteering to better meet the changing needs of the future, long-term organizational commitment and funding are required. In addition to these, the following are suggested as central to volunteering development in National Societies:

- A manager or department in National Headquarters responsible for volunteering development.
- Regular reviews on National Society volunteering at Governing Board and Steering Committee. A specially briefed Board member to act as volunteering “champion” in Board meetings.
- Systems to collect accurate statistics about the activities and impact of National Society volunteers.

The continued development of volunteering is long-term work that will require the commitment and support of players both inside and outside the Movement. This Implementation Guide aims to be a first step in this direction.

¹ From “*Changing the Paradigm*”, The Second Report, June 1993, Points of Light Foundation, Washington DC

2. Why develop Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteering?

From *Strategy 2010*:

“The **diverse global network of people is a valuable asset** to the Red Cross/Red Crescent; volunteers are responsible for much local service delivery and play an important part in strengthening civil society. The recruitment, training and, especially, retention of **volunteers** are issues of particular importance that National Societies must address. The Red Cross/Red Crescent can be a ‘home’ to all who wish to participate in voluntary activity and it is, therefore, important that Red Cross/Red Crescent action is inclusive and open to all people within the community. The International Federation will find ways of encouraging volunteers’ engagement in addition to the traditional membership model”.

Volunteering is at the heart of Red Cross and Red Crescent work

Encouraging local people to volunteer to meet local need was Henry Dunant’s response to the carnage following the Battle of Solferino. The idea that systematic training of volunteers should be carried out to prepare for times of war in every country was what led to the formation of National Societies.

Now, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has approximately 100 million members and volunteers worldwide. Of these, an estimated 20 million donate their time to National Societies as volunteers.

National Societies often deliver their services by means of volunteers. Volunteers help to strengthen communities by learning skills and developing social ties. Volunteering is a way of helping communities to build capacity to cope with crises.

Volunteers are essential to National Societies

Volunteers provide value to National Societies in many ways, yet this extra value often goes unacknowledged. Most people think that volunteering is a cheap alternative to paid staff, but volunteers can offer greater value, quality and opportunities than paid staff. Volunteering should not be seen as an alternative to paid staff, nor staff seen as an alternative to volunteers. They are complementary: one increasing the value and power of the other.

Consider some of the different roles that volunteers can carry out within a National Society – whether they consider themselves as volunteers or not:

- service delivery volunteer
- governance volunteer
- expert or advisory volunteer (eg lawyer giving “pro bonum” advice)
- administrative volunteer
- fund-raising volunteer
- advocacy volunteer

Without volunteers carrying out some or all of these roles in National Societies, no National Society would exist. Recognising the roles that volunteers play in a National Society, and being able to articulate exactly why the National Society wants to see this role performed by a volunteer is a key step towards developing a system in which volunteers can contribute effectively to the National Society.

The box below lists some further strengths that volunteers can bring to Red Cross/Crescent work.

What do volunteers bring to an organization?

Volunteers have perceived credibility with clients, donors, government officials, and others for the very reason that they do not receive a salary from the organisation and are therefore seen as having no financial interest in what they are advocating;

It often makes a difference to the recipient of a service that the provider is there purely because he or she wants to be.

Volunteers are insider/outsideers bringing a community perspective and a wider range of backgrounds consciously different from the employees. Because they give a few hours at a time, volunteers have a broader point of view than paid staff, who may be too close to the work to see ‘the wood for the trees’.

Volunteers bring the luxury of focus to their work. While paid staff members must spread their time and efforts equitably among all clients and projects, volunteers can be recruited to concentrate on selected individuals and issues.

Volunteers can be asked to fill special needs for which staff time cannot be justified yet which are important to individual clients.

Volunteers often feel freer to criticise and speak their minds than employees do.

Volunteers can experiment with new ideas and service approaches that are not yet ready to be funded – or that cannot be funded.

Volunteers allow you to spend every dollar/euro/franc/shilling you have – and then do more. Volunteers extend the budget – even allowing, obviously, for the funds you will need to invest in training, expenses and so on.

Volunteers also offer:

Extra hands and minds, and so the potential to do more than if you were limited to salaried staff. This might mean an increased amount of service, expanded hours of operation, or different/new types of services.

Diversity: volunteers may be different from the salaried staff in terms of age, ethnicity, social background, income, educational level, etc. This translates into many more points of view, and perhaps even a form of counterbalance to the danger of staff becoming too inward looking.

Skills that complement the ones employees already possess. Ideally, volunteers are recruited exactly because the salaried staff cannot have every skill or talent necessary to do all aspects of the job.

Community ownership of solutions to mutual problems. Especially if your organisation addresses issues affecting the quality of life, when people participate as volunteers they empower themselves to improve their own neighbourhood.

Research suggests that satisfied volunteers frequently become donors of money and goods as well. They also support special events and fundraisers by attending themselves, and bringing along family and friends.

This was adapted from "From the Top Down: the executive role in volunteer program success" by Susan Ellis (Philadelphia: Energize, inc, 1996), and reproduced in a booklet produced by the National Centre for Volunteering, London, 2000.
See www.volunteering.org.uk and www.energize.com

Volunteering seems to be declining

Strategy 2010 recognises that the Movement is facing a serious decline in the number of volunteers and members. Some of this decline can be explained by large political changes over the last fifteen years, such as the break-up of the Soviet Union. However, volunteering activity outside the Movement is not decreasing. Economic studies suggest that it has been steady over the last twenty years. This means that there must be factors inside the Movement contributing to the decline.

The Federation Secretariat is currently carrying out a *Volunteering Review Project* to investigate further the causes of this decline, and has developed the *Volunteer 2005 Plan* for systematic support to the development of volunteering in National Societies.

3. Why develop a volunteering policy?

At the 1999 General Assembly, National Society leaders agreed on a Federation Volunteering Policy (c.f. Annex 1 for full version). As part of this policy, the General Assembly agreed that each National Society should:

“provide a code of conduct agreed by the national governing body setting out the rights and responsibilities of both the National Society and its volunteers.” (Federation Volunteering Policy 5.1.1).

In addition to implementing the Federation Volunteering Policy, there are a number of reasons for which a National Society might wish to develop its own policy around volunteers and volunteering. This section explores some of them.

Defining basic principles of volunteering development

Clear policies inform and support National Society development work. Without a clear framework for the development of new structures and procedures, National Society development work may lack coherence and direction.

In general, perhaps four key principles stand out as a basis for developing volunteering:

Volunteering is part of programme development

Volunteering takes place within programmes. It is not an end in itself, but rather a tool for meeting the needs of vulnerable people. Volunteering development must therefore always be linked with programme development.

Volunteering is inherently local and based on local cultures

Volunteering is based on local traditions and cultures, so National Societies must be responsible for the development of volunteering structures and systems that reflect their own everyday realities. The Movement must respect this in supporting National Society volunteering development.

Volunteers should neither gain nor lose economically as a result of their voluntary activity.

Paid workers being called volunteers by National Societies is one of the biggest barriers facing some regions in developing volunteering. Workers are paid, volunteers are reimbursed actual expenses.

In normal situations, volunteers will work for an average of no more than three hours per week.

The essence of successful volunteer programmes is creating simple, rewarding tasks that require a short time commitment, but that combine to create visible results.

Leadership

Developing policy is one way of ensuring that National Society volunteers, staff and leadership are united around clear concepts and values relating to volunteering. As new people join these groups, a National Society can provide them with clear definitions and training, based on agreed policy.

Setting basic standards of good volunteer management

Volunteers give a considerable amount of their time to the Movement. The Movement for its part needs to recognise that it must support its volunteers, and treat them with dignity. The policy sets out some basic minimum standards of good volunteer management for National Societies.

Volunteer programme management is the design, development, management and evaluation of a programme in which volunteers are involved. A critical part of this includes the design of volunteer tasks to meet programme needs, and the training and support of volunteers in their tasks. **Volunteer management** refers to the human resource process that recruits and motivates suitable volunteers to carry out these defined tasks.

Valuing volunteering

Volunteering is an extremely important part of communities everywhere. Volunteers' contributions do not simply improve the lives of the vulnerable people they work with, but they also improve the lives of volunteers themselves and their communities. The Federation policy recognises volunteering as an important contribution to the development of communities and as fundamental to its own existence. Through the development of a volunteering policy, National Societies will be helping to recognise the enormous value of volunteers' contributions as well as sending a strong signal to current and potential volunteers, as well as external organisations, that the National Society is serious in its commitment to volunteers and volunteering.

Recognising and celebrating differences

Volunteering is widely different in different parts of the world in response to different social, political, cultural and economic conditions. The Federation policy recognises this, and does not promote any one model of volunteering for everyone, but National Societies may wish to adapt the values expressed in the Federation policy in more culturally appropriate terms.

Developing ideas

Developing policy involves consultation and debate. Discussing new ideas and arriving at consensus are important steps in deepening National Society and stakeholder understandings of the issues around volunteering.

Below are some issues that have arisen from the secretariat Volunteer Review Project as affecting National Society volunteering. National Societies might like to consider them as part of the development of a volunteering policy, or separately when looking at issues of volunteering development.

Local character

Volunteering occurs locally. One way of understanding a National Society is as an organisation that enables volunteering in a community. For a National Society to be able to mobilise a community effectively, it must respond to obvious needs. This must be done through strong and well resourced local structures of the National Society. Both local and centralised structures must be clear about their respective roles and competencies, and have good systems for the exchange of useful information and experiences.

As volunteering is based on local conditions, it is important that National Societies network with and learn from other volunteer organizations in the country. They can also learn from other National Societies working in similar social and economic conditions, or from more advanced National Societies.

Continual change

Volunteering is based in communities. Communities change and evolve with time, and so does volunteering. National Societies need to continually monitor and revisit volunteering issues to ensure that the National Society's work reflects developments in society.

Evaluating National Society volunteering

Volunteering can be evaluated from many perspectives. Can the National Society attract enough quality volunteers to carry out its present services? Can the National Society recruit new volunteers to meet a new, or unexpected need (such as an influx of refugees)? How does the National Society compare to other volunteer organizations in the same country in its work with volunteers? Are National Society volunteers content with their work? Finding appropriate ways of measuring and evaluating volunteer programmes is important for National Societies engaging in long-term volunteering development.

National Society development

Volunteering is central to the work of a National Society – it is the result of structured and focussed work. So a National Society must reflect this in its organizational structures and at all levels of the organization, both in staff structures and in governance discussions. A unit or department in the National Headquarters should be responsible for volunteering development.

Volunteering costs

Volunteer involvement in a National Society allows resources to go further, but effective volunteer involvement requires long-term investment in developing appropriate knowledge, systems and structures. This must be reflected in National Society planning, appeals and budgets.

Volunteering and membership

There is much confusion within the Movement about who is a 'volunteer', who is a 'member', what 'volunteers' and 'members' are supposed to do, and how they should be organised and managed. One of the first steps is therefore to agree what we mean by these terms. The policy gives clear definitions of 'members' and 'volunteers'.

Two models for volunteer involvement within the Movement

Two different organizational paradigms exist in the Movement. One is based on the concept of local members coming together to carry out activities that they feel appropriate; the other is based on a National Society recruiting volunteers to carry out explicitly defined tasks.

Membership model: Here the concept of *member* is key. Members gather around an idea, form local branches and elect their local, regional and national leaders. They are seen as the owners of the organization, not only as its workforce. Even so, members can choose to be active or not. When active

they are not managed, they are led or self-managed. In this environment the concept of volunteers is weak or non-existent. The strong aspect of this model is membership involvement and democracy. Volunteering and service delivery are weak, however, and the bigger the organization, the more slowly it responds to changing needs.

Service delivery model: In this model the service and the *mission* are key. The organization exists to deliver services according to its mission and recruits staff and volunteers to do the job. It has local branches not to organize members, but to deliver services. This model is strong in management and service delivery. Being mission driven and top led the organization can relatively easily adopt to changing needs. It is weak in democracy.

Although both models exist in the Movement, the membership model is the more prevalent. This is often a result of local culture and/or tradition. The membership model is very common in Western Europe and countries that have been influenced from here; the service delivery model is similarly common in North America. It is important that National Societies understand the different strengths and weaknesses of each model, and to which model they in particular are closer.

Volunteers delivering service

Voluntary work has different characteristics to the work carried out by paid staff. In designing a programme, it is important that a National Society is aware which roles are best carried out by volunteers, and which by paid staff. Similarly, if a National Society decides that volunteers are to be its main force in delivering services to vulnerable people, then this may affect the areas in which the National Society carries out activities.

Volunteers as beneficiaries

Involving beneficiaries as volunteers can be an important way of reducing the volunteers' vulnerability. In such a project, it is the volunteers' involvement rather than the results of the programme that are the primary goal of the National Society. Examples of such programmes might include a youth group that meets once a week, or a project to encourage isolated members of society to meet together. In designing and running such programmes, National Societies must be clear about who they wish to benefit from the programme, and ensure that the programmes are evaluated against these expectations.

Time spent volunteering

The amount of time that volunteers spend working for an organization can vary greatly. Research suggests that most volunteers in successful, long-term programmes work for around 10 hours per month. There is currently a trend for National Societies in some regions to recruit volunteers who give a lot of time (for instance more than 20 hours per week), rather than volunteers who work for only a couple of hours a week.

People can only volunteer for a large amount of time each week if they have enough free time. By creating a culture in which volunteers work for a large number of hours per week, a National Society may close itself to other groups in society – groups such as skilled professionals, mothers etc., who have only a limited time to donate. These people may well have skills which the National Society needs for its programmes. By encouraging volunteers to work for an average of three hours per week, and investing in structures to support many volunteers for a short period of time per week, a National Society makes itself more accessible to all parts of society. At the same time, it reduces the risk of volunteer “burn-out”, as individual workloads become more sustainable.

A high percentage of volunteers working for a long period of time each week can be a symptom that a National Society does not have the knowledge and structures to recruit people for shorter periods of time and from different groups in society.

Staff – volunteer relations

Most National Societies employ staff in a variety of roles. The relationship between staff and volunteers is often a very sensitive one. If one group does not understand the role and value of the other, then suspicion and tension can be the result, leading to the National Society functioning less effectively. In developing a policy on volunteering, a National Society should also consider how such a policy might affect volunteer – staff relations, and take necessary steps to ensure that both groups know and respect each others' roles in the organisation.

4. Implementing a volunteering policy:

Policy Makers

Policy makers-usually the board or the executive committee-should generally go through the following steps: prepare a draft policy, approve the policy, ask management to implement the policy, ensure that management monitors implementation and reports back to the board on progress. This section suggests some questions that policy makers should ask, and to which they should discuss and agree some answers.

Preparing the policy

What is the situation now in your National Society?

- What do volunteers contribute to your National Society? What do senior managers and the board expect the volunteers' contribution to be?
- Are volunteers happy? How many volunteers are there, and how much time do they spend on voluntary work? How many vulnerable people do they serve?
- What do volunteers achieve? Does it meet the needs of the vulnerable people your National Society is working with?
- What is volunteering like generally in your country? What are the trends and issues facing volunteering in your country? Which other organisations offer an inspiring model for your National Society? Do people enjoy volunteering for these other organisations? Why?
- How has the National Society collect the data to answer these questions? Is it reliable? How have these data changed over the last ten years?

What is your vision for the future of volunteering in your National Society?

- What contribution would you like volunteers to make to the work of your National Society? How would they help the National Society to meet the needs of vulnerable people?
- Based on governance and programme needs, what sort of people would you like to attract as volunteers? What mix of ethnicity, gender, age and educational background are you looking for?
- What would you like volunteers to be doing? How should they be recruited and trained? How should they be managed? How should volunteers be treated? What equipment and skills should they have? And how should they be motivated and rewarded?
- How might these things be achieved in practice? How much of the National Society's resources should be allocated to encouraging volunteering-how much staff and managers' time and what proportion of the annual budget? Where might additional resources come from?

What are the important points that should be contained in your volunteering policy?

A volunteering policy should set out the principles, definitions and standards that the National Society would need to uphold if it is to achieve its vision for volunteering. It should complement a National Society's strategy, and support the development of existing and future programmes. The Federation's policy provides a useful guide to the sorts of things that you might want to include in your policy.

Making the policy happen

The board is usually responsible for making sure that management implements policy. It is not usually responsible for implementing policy itself. The board's role is to ensure that management prepares an effective and realistic implementation plan, and that management reports to the board on the progress of implementation as appropriate. The board may also need to take action to approve changes if there are problems with implementation, such as allocating additional resources, extending the implementation timescale or reducing the scope of the policy.

The following are some questions that the board may consider when reviewing management implementation plans and monitoring reports.

What action needs to be taken?

- Are the objectives clearly written? Can you easily tell from the written objectives what changes will be made to the National Society or to its stakeholders? Are the changes the right ones?
- Is there a clear and realistic timetable for achieving the objectives?
- What are the possible problem areas that you risk confronting? What might you do about them if the problems arise?

How much money and other resources do you need to allocate to the policy implementation effort?

- Does the implementation plan tell you how much the implementation will cost in staff time, and money? Is this acceptable to you?
- Where will the time and money be found? What other priorities and activities might not happen because of this? Is that acceptable to you?

How will you monitor the implementation of the policy?

- How often will management prepare a report on the progress of implementation for you? What other information will you need to ensure that the policy is being implemented? Will you need to speak to volunteers and to visit volunteer programmes too?
- What are the most important pieces of work in the implementation plan? What are the main products, results, outputs and milestones in the implementation of the policy that you need to pay attention to?
- What are the indicators that management will report against? How will you know that the implementation has been successful?

5. Implementing the policy:

Senior Management

Support board's policy development

The role of management in policy development is, typically: to provide information and options for the board; to guide a board's decisions in terms of what is practical; and to provide additional support if necessary, such as facilitation and consultancy. Boards may also benefit from visiting volunteer programmes, talking to volunteers, and talking to other organisations about their experiences. Management is often given the task of preparing draft policies for approval by the board. The following questions should be helpful for senior managers supporting their board's policy –and decision– making.

- Is the board's policy making process appropriate? Do they have a good understanding of volunteering in the National Society? Do they have access to the right sort of information? Have they consulted with appropriate people inside and outside the National Society?
- Is the board able to make appropriate decisions? What assistance (e.g. additional information, facilitation) might they need to make volunteering policy decisions?
- Does the draft policy have the right sort of contents? Is it in line with the policy decisions of the Federation's General Assembly? Does it set minimum standards for volunteer management? Does it give volunteers appropriate rights to support and access in the National Society? Does it reflect the board's requirements and vision of volunteering in your National Society?
- Is the draft policy practical? Is the board aware of the costs and benefits of the draft policy? Is the board aware of the resource requirements needed to implement the policy? Is the board aware of the other pieces of work that may be delayed or not implemented if resources are allocated to the volunteering policy? Are they happy with that?

Plan policy implementation

A board will typically ask management to prepare an implementation plan. The following questions should help management to prepare a realistic and comprehensive plan.

- What changes to systems and structures will be needed? What changes to people's jobs, responsibilities and skills will be needed? Will there be any changes needed to the National Society's strategy? What changes might be needed to the organisational culture, and people's attitudes and beliefs? Who will be responsible for making these changes happen?
- How will these changes take place? How much will they cost in money and staff time? Who will be responsible for each activity?
- When will the changes be achieved?
- What information or evidence will show the board that the changes planned have been achieved?

Implement policy

Management is usually given responsibility for implementing the policy, using the implementation plan as a guide. The secretary general, as chief executive, is typically given overall responsibility for implementation, and is accountable to the board. The actual nature of the work will depend on the nature of the policy, and the implementation plan.

Report on progress of implementation

National Society senior management should be asked by the board to report on the progress of implementation. The following questions should help decide what should be reported, how often, and to what level of detail.

- How often should the board receive a report? How often does the board meet? How often do they want to receive a report on the implementation of the volunteering policy? How important is volunteering to the board, compared with their other priorities?
- Should you report progress against all objectives and indicators, or only those that have been achieved, and those for which there are problems? Should you provide information about problems and proposed solutions? Do you ask them to make decisions to help you deal with problems?
- How long should the reports be? How much reading material do the board members receive before a meeting? Is it manageable? What length report will the board members be comfortable reading?

Good reporting will provide the board with appropriate information, without overloading them with paperwork. It will highlight the main achievements and issues, identify points for learning and experience, action to be taken in the next time period, and ask the board clearly when a decision is required. For all decisions, analysis of the consequences of each option will be helpful.

6. An explanation of the Policy

This section looks at the volunteering policy, and explains some of the key sections and concepts.

What do we mean by ‘volunteering’?

The first step for the policy is to explain what volunteering means. We all have an understanding of what we mean by volunteering, but that understanding is not necessarily the same between any two people. It can also be quite different in different countries. The definition below identifies some of the common and essential features of volunteering activity in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Volunteering in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is an activity that:

- 2.1** is motivated by the free will of the person volunteering, and not by a desire for material or financial gain or by external social, economic or political pressure;
- 2.2** is intended to benefit vulnerable people or their communities;
- 2.3** is organised by recognised representatives of a national Red Cross or Red Crescent Society.

Free will

Free will is important for volunteering. People should not be forced to volunteer by external pressures. For example, some governments require that people work for volunteering organisations as a substitute for military service, or when they are unemployed. The Federation does not count this kind of work as volunteering.

People should also volunteer because they want to do the work, and not because they want to earn money or other privileges, such as trips abroad and generous allowances.

Benefit to vulnerable people

All National Societies should be trying ‘to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity’– the goal of *Strategy 2010*, approved at the Federation’s General Assembly in October 1999. Volunteering is one of the means by which National Societies can improve the lives of vulnerable people. The work that National Societies ask volunteers to do should have some connection with vulnerable people. This may sound obvious, but often volunteering work can be designed by volunteers for their own benefit, and not for the benefit of others. There are some cases in which the benefits are not clear-volunteers may themselves be vulnerable, or members of vulnerable communities. It is always useful to ask yourself of any Red Cross activity: “how does this benefit vulnerable people?”, and ensure that this is reflected in programme design and evaluation.

Organised by Red Cross/Red Crescent

Volunteering can be both an organised and spontaneous activity. People will spontaneously help friends, relatives and neighbours without the need for anyone to organise it. Within the Movement, volunteering will normally be seen as a more formal, organised activity. When organised, the person or people organising should be appointed as the representatives of the Red Cross or Red Crescent society for which they are working. This is to ensure that any work carried out conforms to the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.

‘Members’ and ‘Volunteers’

The volunteering policy makes a clear and simple distinction between ‘volunteers’ and ‘members’ in the Red Cross/Crescent Movement.

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

A Red Cross or Red Crescent Member is a person who has formally agreed to the conditions of membership as required under the National Society’s constitution or rules, and is usually entitled to elect representatives on governing bodies, and to stand for election.

Red Cross or Red Crescent Volunteers may or may not be Members of their National Society.

A volunteer is someone who *does* something. It is a person who is actively working to improve the lives of vulnerable people. The work can be directly or indirectly involved with vulnerable people. Examples of direct involvement include social care, first aid, and disaster response. Examples of indirect involvement include fundraising, helping with administration and training volunteers.

‘Membership’ on the other hand, is a formal, legal status within the National Society. Being a member of a National Society usually gives a person the right to vote and to be elected onto governing bodies. It also usually gives people the right to ask questions of members of governing bodies, and to make proposals for new policies and programmes. Members are part of the governance of a National Society. They help to ensure that the National Society is accountable and well managed. They also give the National Society more credibility as an organisation that represents communities and residents.

Often, members are the same people as volunteers. People get involved with their National Societies as members and become volunteers. Or they get involved as volunteers and become members. Membership is a legal status, and volunteering is an activity. A person can be either involved in an activity as a volunteer or have the legal status as a member, both, or neither.

Some core values

The Basic Principles section of the policy describes four distinctive and important values, which all members of the Federation should aspire to.

Volunteering is a means for an individual or group to put into practice the Movement’s Fundamental Principle of Voluntary Service.

The Fundamental Principle of Voluntary Service states that the Movement ‘is a voluntary relief movement, not prompted in any manner by desire for gain’. This in itself does not refer explicitly to volunteering (the activity) as a fundamental part of the Movement’s basic values. However, volun-

teering, as defined in this policy, is an activity which ought not be 'prompted in any manner by desire for gain'. In which case, the activity of volunteering is one way in which National Societies can live up to the Fundamental Principle of Voluntary Service.

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

- 4.1** 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;

The benefits of volunteering are great, and wider than simply the value of the work done by the volunteer. Clearly voluntary work in the fields of social welfare, health, disaster response and disaster preparedness helps to reduce vulnerability. Volunteers themselves often benefit from the activity by learning new skills, developing greater social confidence and making new friends. The communities in which they live benefit from, for example:

- having stronger networks of people willing to support each other;
- having new skills, such as community first aid, which can be used as a common resource when needed;
- developing the confidence to identify community needs, work out what is needed to meet the needs, and motivate people to do the necessary work;
- developing skills in leadership, inspiring and persuading others.

For these reasons, National Societies need to be committed to promoting volunteering.

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

- 4.2** recognise 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;

When Henry Dunant first created the Red Cross, he thought of building a movement of people who were able to help the victims of war, whenever they were needed. The idea that people develop useful skills and respond to emergencies whenever they are needed is still the basis for much Red Cross and Red Crescent work today. The Federation's disaster response continues to depend on volunteers with the appropriate skills and knowledge who are prepared to act in emergencies. And these volunteers have skills that are helpful to their communities when there is no conflict or disaster. This principle encourages National Societies not to forget the origins of volunteering in the Movement, and to ensure that volunteers are always available to respond to emergencies.

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

- 4.3** value all volunteers primarily for their individual contributions, enthusiasm and commitment, as well as for the experience and skills they can bring;

This principle encourages National Societies to see volunteers not just for their existing skills and experience, but also for the potential skills they will develop through their volunteering and other life experience. It is also important not to turn away potential volunteers because they don't have the right skills. If a person does not have suitable skills for the work required, can the right skills be developed? Are there other volunteering opportunities for him or her (perhaps with another organisation)?

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

- 4.4** are aware of and value informal volunteering in communities, outside the formal organisation of National Society programmes and activities.

Volunteering happens not just when it is organised by the Red Cross/Red Crescent. Many other organisations support volunteers, and volunteering can happen without being organised. Volunteering strengthens communities and develops civil society. It is important that National Societies recognise that they have a responsibility to support it, even when it is not organised by a Red Cross/Crescent society. For example, giving people basic hygiene and healthcare skills enables them to help each other, without being organised by a National Society.

What National Societies must do

Section 5 of the policy sets out the responsibilities of National Societies, volunteers and the Federation. First, National Societies' responsibilities.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

- 5.1.1** provide a code of conduct approved by the national governing body that sets out the rights and responsibilities of both the National Society and its volunteers;

A code of conduct for volunteers and National Societies is an important part of making sure that volunteers are well treated, and that everyone involved with volunteers is aware of their responsibilities.

The code of conduct should explain, in simple language, what the National Society promises to do for its volunteers, and what the volunteers in turn promise to do for their National Society. The Federation volunteering policy can be a useful checklist for ideas to include in a code of conduct.

If the national governing body approves the code of conduct, it sends a message that the National Society takes its responsibilities towards volunteers seriously, and in turn, that volunteers should take their responsibilities seriously.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

- 5.1.2** recruit volunteers for specific, explicitly described roles or tasks;

There are broadly two ways of recruiting volunteers. The first is to ask people to volunteer, and when they come forward, to ask them to decide what they want to do, and to make up an activity. The second is to have a specific task or role in mind, and then to find people to volunteer for that task.

Not surprisingly, the first way of recruiting is not successful. Often people come forward to volunteer, but when they find that there is nothing for them to do, they leave quickly.

The second way can sometimes be harder, because not everyone wants to do the task you have in mind. But those people who do come forward know exactly what is expected of them, and so want to do the task or role. They are much more likely to continue to volunteer.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

5.1.3 recruit volunteers on the basis of their commitment and potential;

For many people, volunteering is an opportunity for personal development. If someone doesn't have the right skills it doesn't mean you should not recruit them. When recruiting volunteers you should be looking out for people's commitment to the work, and their potential for developing and learning the skills you need. In some cases, people may not have the right qualities you are looking for. In that case, you should try to find other appropriate volunteering opportunities for them.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

5.1.4 actively seek to recruit volunteers irrespective of their race, ethnicity, sex, religious belief, disability or age;

People from all backgrounds can be good volunteers. Having volunteers with a mixture of ages, ethnic groups, religious beliefs and so on is a positive advantage for a Red Cross or Red Crescent organisation. It reinforces the message that the National Society is an impartial and neutral organisation, and that it does not discriminate against anyone for any reason. Research shows that a volunteer organization that involves people from all segments of society, including those it seeks to serve, is likely to be more successful than less diverse volunteer organizations.²

If your National Society does not have a mixture of volunteers that reflects the way your communities are composed it is important to change this. It is not enough, however, to argue that people from other ethnic backgrounds, or women, or men do not come forward to volunteer for you. One of the challenges of volunteering is that people come forward to volunteer when they feel that they have something in common with the existing volunteers. This means that 'like recruits like' and we end up with National Societies that are remarkably uniform in the type of people who volunteer. A National Society made up of volunteers who are mostly middle-aged white women will not be an attractive organisation for, say, young black males.

National Societies must therefore *actively* encourage an organizational culture, and try to recruit volunteers from parts of society that are not represented in their current volunteer force.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

5.1.5 ensure that there is appropriate participation of men and women in National Society volunteer programmes for effective and gender-sensitive delivery of services and activities;

In general, National Societies should try to get an appropriate balance of men and women at all levels of the organisation. Sometimes though, the needs of programme and beneficiaries will define the gender of the volunteers who can take part in the programme. When delivering services for, say, elderly women, or women who are the subject of male violence, it would not be sensitive or appropriate to have male volunteers. Similarly, a programme to encourage the literacy of adolescent boys might need male volunteers to provide positive role models. At the same time, there will be programmes where the gender of volunteers is not relevant.

This area of volunteer programme design is clearly a sensitive one. What is important, however, is for a National Society to have a clear understanding of the impact of gender on services in volunteer programmes, and to ensure that gender balance is always appropriate to the needs of beneficiaries and clients.

The same thinking should be applied to all groups within a society, whether ethnic minorities, different age groups, minority religions or indeed any group that is not proportionally represented within the National Society.

2. From "Changing the Paradigm", The Second Report, June 1993, Points of Light Foundation, Washington DC

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

- 5.1.6** 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;

When recruiting volunteers it is important to recognise that in most cases volunteers will require some form of training. This may be induction to familiarise volunteers with the organisation, with the Fundamental Principles, with the kind of work they will be doing, and with any procedures they have to follow (for example, to claim expenses). Or it could be more complicated training, for example: communication skills, technical skills such as first aid, or handling and lifting skills.

Whatever the skills needed, it is important that before volunteers are recruited a National Society identifies the sorts of skills that are required, plans for the training to take place, and is sure that it has the money to pay for the training. This is an important part of fulfilling a National Society's legal and moral duty both to volunteers and beneficiaries.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

- 5.1.7** provide appropriate equipment for the task or role they are asked to carry out;

National Societies should provide equipment such as an identification card, a Red Cross bib, other protective clothing, latex gloves for first aid, and so on. National Societies should always be aware of the security and safety of their volunteers, and the equipment they need to do their work.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

- 5.1.8** reward and recognise volunteers whenever possible and appropriate, and provide appropriate personal development opportunities;

Saying 'thank you' is one of the most important aspects of working with volunteers. When you say 'thank you' you must mean it, and you may need to find new or different ways of saying it. Different people have different needs for recognition, so a National Society must be sensitive to that. At a policy level, this means that a National Society needs to ensure that all the staff and volunteers who are responsible for managing volunteers are aware of the needs to thank their volunteers, know how to do it appropriately, and have sufficient resources to be able to do it. If volunteers feel that they are not recognised for their contributions, they will leave.

In addition, it is quite possible that a volunteer will only stay with a National Society for a few months. This might be a result of the length of the activity for which the volunteer has been recruited, or of the volunteer's personal situation. A good National Society will support each volunteer as an individual, and make sure that the work they do is fulfilling. A National Society should also find new opportunities for volunteers who have outgrown their current roles. These opportunities could be with the National Society, or with other volunteer organisations.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

- 5.1.9** ensure that volunteers' views and ideas are actively sought and acted upon at all stages of programme design, development, implementation and evaluation;

Often, volunteers know their clients and beneficiaries best. They are the people who work with them, and often come from the same communities. Volunteers have much to give, and it is important that staff and other volunteers spend the time to listen and consult with volunteers when developing new or existing programmes, and during the normal course of managing a programme.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

5.1.10 reimburse reasonable expenses incurred by volunteers in the course of carrying out approved volunteering tasks;

Volunteers often have to pay for expenses out of their own pockets. They may have to pay for things like bus fares or lunch when they are doing their volunteering work. When this is the case, National Societies should refund these expenses if the volunteer so wishes. This is to remove any financial barriers to volunteering for those who, otherwise, might not be able to afford it.

A volunteer should neither gain or lose out economically in the process of carrying out tasks for the National Society. It is important that a National Society has clear guidelines and procedures for handling of expenses claims, as any payments made to volunteers above actual costs incurred may be subject to national employment and tax legislation.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

5.1.11 provide appropriate insurance protection for volunteers;

Volunteers work in vulnerable situations, and with vulnerable people. Volunteers can be injured, or harmed, or even killed when they are doing their volunteering work. At the same time, volunteers can harm people and property, especially if they have not been properly trained, or given the right equipment.

This means that it is very important for a National Society to have appropriate insurance policies. The insurance might be needed to pay compensation to volunteers or their families if they are injured or killed, or to pay for legal bills, and compensation if volunteers injure clients or others. Much depends on the legal system in your country. If you think that you do not have sufficient insurance protection, you are advised to get local specialist advice.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

5.1.12 ensure that volunteering work does not substitute for, and lead to loss of, paid employment;

There are two main reasons why National Societies should not seek to cut staff costs through volunteer involvement.

On a purely practical level, staff and volunteers are suited to different kinds of activities. Staff are suited to jobs where continuity of personnel, a number of tasks and a large number of hours per individual are required. Volunteer involvement in a programme is often appropriate when a number of discrete tasks can be carried out by a variety of people for a short period of time each week. Expecting volunteers to be able to replace staff positions is in the long term unrealistic, and likely to lead to a decline in volunteer performance as well as unsatisfied volunteers.

Secondly, by replacing staff with volunteers, a National Society gives the impression that it values volunteers mainly as a means of cost-cutting. Staff employed by a National Society may feel their positions threatened by volunteer involvement, thus leading to staff opposition to volunteers and volunteering within the organization. In addition, a National Society blurring the boundary between paid staff and volunteers may encounter opposition from trade unions and other organizations concerned with workers' rights.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

5.1.13 ensure that, when people need to be paid to perform a task or work, they are recognised 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;

There is currently a trend for National Societies to pay people for work and call them volunteers. This often happens in, for example, relief distributions. However, under the Federation's definition, volunteering is not a paid activity, although all expenses should be reimbursed. **This means that if people are being paid, they are not and cannot be described as 'volunteers'.** It also means that when they are working they should be considered casual labourers, contract workers or some other form of employee. In some countries, this has legal implications. For example, there might be a legal minimum wage, or employees may have rights to end of contract payments, and so on. There may also be tax obligations for the employer to pay. **A National Society should not seek to escape its legal and moral obligations to workers by describing them as volunteers.** Describing paid workers as volunteers can be a symptom of a National Society not having the knowledge and structures on how to recruit and manage real volunteers.

It is important that no Red Cross or Red Crescent organization is seen as an exploiter of cheap labour. When people are employed, they must be employed on a fully legal basis. When they work as volunteers, they must not be paid. If there is a situation (for instance following a disaster) where trained National Society volunteers who would normally work for a few hours per week are asked to volunteer on a full-time basis for a short period of time, it is important that the National Society cover their extra food, accommodation and travel costs in a way that cannot be mistaken for a salary. This might also include compensation for lost earnings if a volunteer's normal employer is not prepared to continue to pay the volunteer as a goodwill gesture.

In times of crisis, a National Society must have transparent procedures for dealing with such cases individually, so that both organization and volunteer are clear about the volunteer's legal status, and what reimbursements or benefits the volunteer can expect from the National Society. Ideally, this agreement should be signed both by the volunteer and a representative of the National Society, and include a definite time limit for the arrangement.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

5.1.14 provide appropriate training and development opportunities for existing and potential governance volunteers;

Governance of a Red Cross or Red Crescent society is not an easy job. It requires specialist knowledge of many areas, including the National Society's constitution, the legal requirements of not-for-profit organisations in the country, and an understanding of policy, strategy and performance assessment, among many other skills. It can also carry heavy legal responsibilities.

In the interests of accountability and performance, it is important that the governance of a National Society should not remain in the hands of a few with that specialist knowledge. A National Society should then help to develop the skills of those who have the potential to become governance volunteers, as well as improve the skills of those already elected.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

5.1.15 seek to promote co-operation and partnerships with organisations in civil society and public and private sectors that encourage volunteering.

The volunteering policy sets out the underlying belief that volunteering is a good thing, not just for a National Society's clients, but also for the volunteers themselves, and for their communities. It is therefore in the interests of a National Society to help to promote volunteering more widely, and in co-operation with other organisations with similar objectives. This might be through exchanging information and developing best practices of volunteer management with other voluntary organisations, or through "cooperating with governments to broaden the existing legal, fiscal and political bases for volunteering, and to mobilize increased public support" (International Federation Pledge, 27th International Conference).

What National Societies should expect of their volunteers

The expectations of volunteers are set out so that volunteers, when they start their volunteering work for their National Society are clear about what is expected of them. These expectations ought to be discussed openly with each volunteer, so that they understand what they need to do. It is important also that each volunteer has an understanding of the specific role that they are required to perform, preferably in the form of a 'job description'.

As well as being clear in their expectations of volunteers, and ensuring that these expectations are communicated to volunteers, National Societies must also be prepared to act sensitively and fairly if volunteers do not meet these expectations. A volunteer is a National Society representative carrying out a specific activity on behalf of the National Society. It is therefore not acceptable that a National Society's reputation be damaged, legal action be taken against a National Society, or a beneficiary harmed through a volunteer's actions. Structured training of National Society volunteers in their rights and responsibilities, and provision for structured and fair action should these not be met are therefore essential parts of a volunteer programme.

All Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are expected to:

5.2.1 act in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and promote their dissemination;

Acting in accordance with the Fundamental Principles is clearly a vital part of being a part of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. National Societies need to help volunteers to understand not just the principles, but also what they mean in practice in a way that makes sense for their local circumstances. If volunteers do not act in accordance with the Principles, National Societies must have a way of dealing with it, preferably through sensitive and appropriate disciplinary procedures.

All Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are expected to:

5.2.2 respect the Regulations on the use of the emblem and to prevent its misuse;

Again, it is important that National Societies help volunteers to understand what is correct and what is improper use of the Emblem. It is also important that appropriate disciplinary procedures are in place to help ensure that the Emblem is used correctly.

All Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are expected to:**5.2.3** strive and work for the highest standards of service;

Volunteers, again, need to be aware of what ‘the highest standards of service’ mean for their particular work, and for the National Society to provide appropriate support to ensure that volunteers can give their best.

All Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are expected to:**5.2.4** sign, and behave in accordance with, the National Society’s code of conduct for volunteers, rules, and/or the Federation’s Code of Ethics and Fundamentals of Voluntary Service;³

When a National Society has developed a code of conduct, it is important that volunteers are familiar with it, and with what it means. As a gesture that they have understood, and promise to act in accordance with the code of conduct, it is important that they sign such a written code.

National Societies must be sensitive to low levels of literacy among some volunteers. This might mean that a written code of conduct needs to be supported with pictures and illustrations, and that codes of conduct should be supported by staff explaining what it means to each volunteer who is asked to sign the code of conduct.

All Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are expected to:**5.2.5** be available in an emergency, as agreed with the National Society, and according to their skills and abilities.

To support the role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in emergencies, it is important that as many volunteers as possible can make themselves available to help. This might mean having appropriate training, making ‘release’ agreements with employers, and being familiar with emergency response procedures.

The rights of volunteers

With responsibilities come rights. These rights are important to ensure that volunteers are given appropriate respect and dignity, and the support to do their work. National Societies must take particular note of these rights, and do their best to ensure they are upheld. National Societies must tell volunteers that they have these rights, and must explain what they mean in practice.

All volunteers have the right to:**5.3.1** choose to become a Member of their National Society, as defined by the statutes;

Anyone who works as a volunteer for a National Society must be given the option to join as a member and to have the rights associated with membership. Typically, these rights will include the right to vote for local and national governing bodies, the right to stand for election to local and national governing bodies, and the right to speak and make proposals at meetings of governing bodies.

Membership must be available to all volunteers in a way that does not discriminate. For example, the costs of membership ought to be low enough for all people to afford, so that poorer people are not excluded.

3. Federation 1993, approved by IVth Session of Health & Community Services Commission

All volunteers have the right to:

- 5.3.2** have appropriate training or personal development to be able to undertake their agreed tasks or role;

This right should be seen in conjunction with the responsibility of National Societies to provide appropriate training (see point 5.1.6 of the policy). If volunteers are taken on by a National Society, they have the right to expect the appropriate training to do the work they were recruited to do.

All volunteers have the right to:

- 5.3.3** have appropriate equipment provided to be able to undertake their agreed tasks or role;

This right needs to be seen in conjunction with the responsibility of National Societies to provide appropriate equipment (point 5.1.7 of the policy). A National Society that recruits a volunteer to do a specific piece of work must also provide the equipment necessary to do the work.

The Federation's responsibilities

The Federation Secretariat shall:

- 5.4.1** support National Societies in their work with volunteers;
- 5.4.2** identify and support research projects that will help to strengthen National Society activities that promote volunteering;
- 5.4.3** seek to promote co-operation and partnerships with organisations in civil society and public and private sectors that encourage volunteering.

The Federation Secretariat has promised-through this policy and through a pledge at the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to support volunteering in National Societies.

Annex 1:

Volunteering

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 1.1.1 reinforce the importance of volunteering to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- 1.1.2 establish basic values and attitudes of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies towards volunteering.
- 1.1.3 set out the responsibilities of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies towards their volunteers.
- 1.1.4 set out the rights and responsibilities of people who volunteer for a Red Cross or Red Crescent Society.

2. Definition

Volunteering in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is an activity that:

- 2.1.1 is motivated by the free will of the person volunteering, and not by a desire for material or financial gain or by external social, economic or political pressure;
- 2.1.2 is intended to benefit vulnerable people and their communities in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent;
- 2.1.3 is organised by recognised representatives of a national Red Cross or Red Crescent Society.

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

A Red Cross or Red Crescent Member is a person who has formally agreed to the conditions of membership as required under the National Society's constitution or rules, and is usually entitled to elect representatives on governing bodies, and to stand for election.

Red Cross or Red Crescent Volunteers may or may not be *Members* of their National Society. This policy refers to *Red Cross or Red Crescent Volunteers*.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all recognised National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies who are members of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

4. Basic Principles

Volunteering is a means for an individual or group to put into practice the Movement's Fundamental Principle of Voluntary Service.

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

- 4.1.1 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;
- 4.1.2 recognise 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;
- 4.1.3 value all volunteers primarily for their individual contributions, enthusiasm and commitment, as well as for the experience and skills they can bring;
- 4.1.4 are aware of and value informal volunteering in communities, outside the formal organisation of National Society programmes and activities.

5. Statement

5.1 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shall:

- 5.1.1 provide a code of conduct approved by the national governing body that sets out the rights and responsibilities of both the National Society and its volunteers;
- 5.1.2 recruit volunteers for specific, explicitly described roles or tasks;
- 5.1.3 recruit volunteers on the basis of their commitment and potential;
- 5.1.4 actively seek to recruit volunteers irrespective of their race, ethnicity, sex, religious belief, disability, age;
- 5.1.5 ensure that there is appropriate participation of men and women in National Society volunteer programmes for effective and gender-sensitive delivery of services and activities;
- 5.1.6 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;
- 5.1.7 provide appropriate equipment for the task or role they are asked to carry out;
- 5.1.8 reward and recognise volunteers whenever possible and appropriate, and provide appropriate personal development opportunities;
- 5.1.9 ensure that volunteers' views and ideas are actively sought and acted upon at all stages of programme design, development, implementation and evaluation;
- 5.1.10 reimburse reasonable expenses incurred by volunteers in the course of carrying out approved volunteering tasks;
- 5.1.11 provide appropriate insurance protection for volunteers;
- 5.1.12 ensure that volunteering work does not substitute for, and lead to loss of, paid employment;
- 5.1.13 ensure that, when people need to be paid to perform a task or work, they are recognised 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;
- 5.1.14 provide appropriate training and development opportunities for existing and potential governance volunteers;
- 5.1.15 seek to promote co-operation and partnerships with organisations in civil society and public and private sectors that encourage volunteering.

5.2 All Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are expected to:

- 5.2.1 act in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and promote their dissemination;
- 5.2.2 respect the Regulations on the use of the emblem and to prevent its misuse;
- 5.2.3 strive and work for the highest standards of quality;
- 5.2.4 sign, and behave in accordance with, the National Society's code of conduct for volunteers, rules and/or the Federation's code of Ethics and Fundamentals of voluntary Services;
- 5.2.5 be available in an emergency, as agreed with the National Society, and according to their skills and abilities;

- 5.2.6 respond to the needs of beneficiaries and strengthen their capacity for self-help and active volunteering;

5.3 All volunteers are entitled to:

- 5.3.1 choose to become a Member of their National Society, as defined by the statutes;
- 5.3.2 have appropriate training or personal development to be able to undertake their agreed tasks or role;
- 5.3.3 have appropriate equipment provided to be able to undertake their agreed tasks or role;
- 5.3.4 accept or refuse any task or role in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Fundamentals of Voluntary Service.

5.4 The Federation Secretariat shall:

- 5.4.1 support National Societies in their work with volunteers;
- 5.4.2 identify and support research projects that will help to strengthen National Society activities that promote volunteering and share this information systematically.
- 5.4.3 seek to promote co-operation and partnerships with organisations in civil society and public and private sectors that encourage volunteering.

6. Reference

Volunteering affects most aspects of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' activities; in particular, programme development, implementation and evaluation, and local, national and international governance. This policy should be considered in conjunction with all other Federation policies and with specific reference to policies on Gender, Youth, Disaster Preparedness and Social Welfare.

Decision 15 – 12th Session of the General Assembly 1999

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 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.