

The value of volunteers: report findings

Introduction

Volunteering is at the heart of community-building. Volunteering promotes trust and reciprocity, and is a fundamental part of good citizenship, providing people with an environment where they can learn the responsibilities of community and civic involvement. It is a driver of political, social and economic development.



Voluntary service is one of the seven fundamental principles that bind together the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

During 2010, the IFRC conducted a survey to establish the economic and social value of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and published a report on the findings, entitled *The Value of Volunteers* in January 2011. The study was based on rigorous methodology that is aligned with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Johns Hopkins University Center for Civil Society Studies volunteer measurement project.

To mark a year of celebrating volunteers and volunteering worldwide, the IFRC is launching the 'Find the volunteer inside you' initiative that aims to better protect, recognize and promote the spirit of volunteerism as our best universal asset to adapt to a fast-changing world.



Highlights: Red Cross Red Crescent volunteerism

- A survey released in January 2011 found that Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers contributed 6 billion US dollars worth of services worldwide in 2009, the equivalent of 90 US cents for every person on earth.
- Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers served in health (37 per cent); disaster response, management and preparedness (26 per cent); social inclusion (12 per cent); and general support, e.g. fund-raising, management consultancy, strategic planning, etc. (25 per cent).
- The global Red Cross Red Crescent volunteer workforce numbers 13.1 million: greater than the population of Greece, more than twice the population of Singapore and three times the population of the United Arab Emirates.



- In 2009, 13.1 million people – two in every thousand people in the world or the entire population of Tokyo – volunteered with the Red Cross and Red Crescent.
- Donor dollars go much further with the support of the volunteer network. On average, the Red Cross Red Crescent network of volunteers extends its paid workforce by a ratio of 1 to 20 – meaning that for every paid staff member, there are 20 volunteers.

Social value

The social value contributed by volunteers is arguably even greater than the economic value. Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers reach around 30 million people each year in disasters alone and even more through community development initiatives that reach vulnerable people each day.

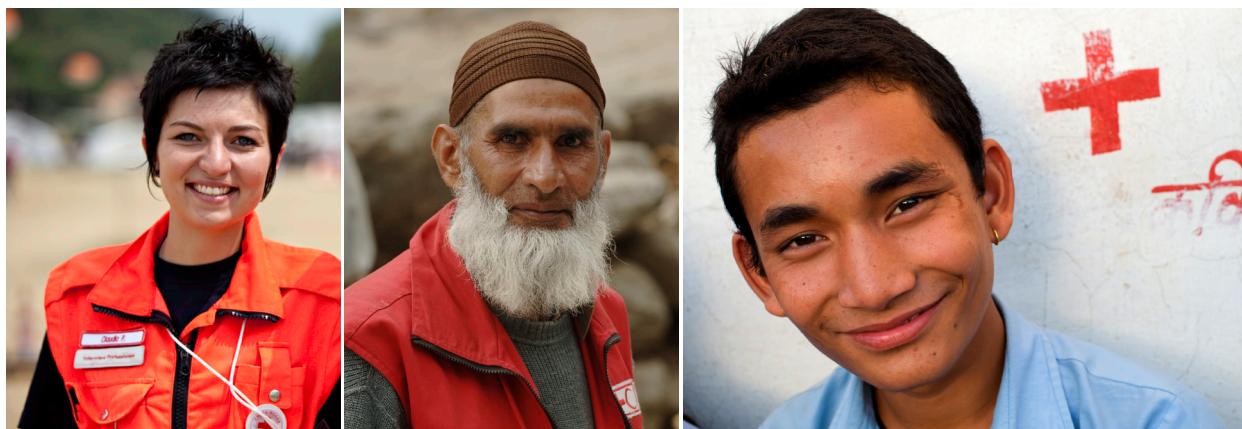
In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, Red Cross volunteers have been able to help protect over 2 million people from polio by allaying fears around the safety of vaccines and administering it in even the most isolated communities. In Pakistan, Red Crescent volunteers provide psychosocial support to victims of conflict in order to provide them with a feeling of normalcy and hope for the future.

In fact, Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers add social value that is either incalculable – such as the local knowledge required to respond quickly and reach the most vulnerable and isolated people during an emergency; irreplaceable – such as their contribution to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative valued at 10 billion US dollars that UNV described as “far beyond the reach of governments or international and national organizations”¹; or immeasurable – such as the commitment of Danish Red Cross volunteers who comfort people without family in the final days and hours of their lives.

1. *Laws and Policies Affecting Volunteerism Since 2001*, UNV, September 2009.
2. *The value of volunteers*, Dalberg, 2011.

Key statistics per region

Region	Total number of volunteers	Total annual value of volunteers	Average annual value per volunteer	Average ratio of staff to volunteers
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.4 million	US\$ 117 million	US\$ 86	327
Middle East and North Africa	527,000	US\$ 50 million	US\$ 94	35
Central, southern and western Europe	1.3 million	US\$ 1.1 billion	US\$ 855	32
Eastern Europe, central Asia, Turkey and the Southern Caucasus	217,000	US\$ 25 million	US\$ 114	19
US and Canada	710,000	US\$ 868 million	US\$ 1,224	11
Caribbean	72,000	US\$ 19 million	US\$ 268	45
Latin America	165,000	US\$ 66 million	US\$ 401	15
South Asia	2.7 million	US\$ 279 million	US\$ 102	23
South-East Asia	2.8 million	US\$ 225 million	US\$ 79	432
East Asia	3.1 million	US\$ 3.1 billion	US\$ 1,002	118
Pacific	54,000	US\$ 29.5 million	US\$ 542	18



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In the survey, partner organizations observed that Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers share a set of principles and values, their commitment is long term, and their participation is well organized and structured. In short, they provide a "professional" quality service to their communities².

Find the volunteer inside you: Our calls to action

Recognition

In 2011, a year of celebrating volunteers and volunteering worldwide, the IFRC and its partners are calling on governments around the world to formally recognize the value volunteers contribute by saving lives and changing minds. We are calling on governments to incorporate their contribution into key economic and social indicators used in decision-making and planning at the highest levels.

Protection

During 2011, a year of celebrating volunteers and volunteering worldwide, the IFRC is committed to helping create an enabling environment for volunteering, especially by focusing on the protection of volunteers and their access to the most vulnerable. We are advocating for a legislative framework that ensures that the principles supporting volunteerism are well understood and appreciated by national and local authorities.

Promotion

During 2011, a year of celebrating volunteers and volunteering worldwide, the IFRC is calling for people around the world to 'find the volunteer inside' by giving time, creating a safer environment for volunteers, providing workplace opportunities that enable employees to volunteer or by exploring innovative ways to fit volunteering into their busy lives.



For further information,
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Saving lives, changing minds.

