



# Urban Volunteering in Asia Pacific

A study of recruitment, engagement and retention

## How we work

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**Saving lives, changing minds.**



Strategy 2020 voices the collective determination of the IFRC to move forward in tackling the major challenges that confront humanity in the next decade. Informed by the needs and vulnerabilities of the diverse communities with whom we work, as well as the basic rights and freedoms to which all are entitled, this strategy seeks to benefit all who look to Red Cross Red Crescent to help to build a more humane, dignified, and peaceful world.

Over the next ten years, the collective focus of the IFRC will be on achieving the following strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises
2. Enable healthy and safe living
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace

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Cover photo:

*Avian flu campaign in urban Jakarta by Indonesian Red Cross volunteers / Indonesian Red Cross*

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## Message

With over half of the world's 7 billion people now living in urban areas, the face of human vulnerability is changing globally. We need to understand the impact of urbanization to ensure that we remain relevant not only in terms of the services and activities but also on the approaches of our national societies and their branches in engaging with urban volunteers. Unfortunately, there is a lack of robust research seeking to understand diversity in the volunteer base and the factors underlying the motivations and volunteering histories of urban volunteers. There is also a challenge in defining the boundaries of urban engagement in cities undergoing rapid migration from rural to urban settings.

The IFRC-Asia Pacific Zone is pleased to share this **study on urban volunteering in Asia Pacific**. It is robust in its methodology and analytic strategy and certainly will significantly contribute to the global literature on volunteering. The recommendations should enable our national societies and their branches in urban areas to reflect on how to further strengthen volunteering.

The value of our volunteers is tremendous, enabling every National Society in our zone to deliver services to the most vulnerable, to alleviate the suffering of those affected by disasters, conflicts and emergencies, and to enhance community resilience and build social capital.

This research must lead into action. The *IFRC Asia Pacific Zone OD Youth and Volunteering Unit* is committed to support national societies in using this study recommendations to improve on their volunteering practices in urban areas. The findings of this study will certainly be used to inform Disaster Management, Disaster Risk Reduction, Health and organizational development initiatives in urban environments.

Together with the **value of volunteers 2014** study series, and the disaggregated Asia Pacific data from the **Global Review on Volunteering**, this study should inspire everyone on the power of volunteering and motivate all of us to further support the development of volunteering in our respective national societies.

Please let me know whatever support you may need from our Secretariat team across the Zone to assist you to utilise this report and its findings to strengthen further your very important work to mobilise, recognise and retain volunteers into the future.

**Jagan Chapagain,**  
Director of Zone



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## Executive Summary

*Strategy 2020* and the Federation's *Volunteering Policy 2011* reaffirm volunteering as being fundamental to the organisation's vision and values. Each National Society depends upon volunteers to help vulnerable people in everyday programs and crisis situations. However, the opportunities for humanitarian action are evolving. With over half of the world's population living in fragmented and diverse urban areas, sustainability increasingly depends on the relevance of an organisation's services and its capacity to develop a capable, diverse and effective volunteer base.

In this regard, a key challenge for humanitarian organisations is that little is known about the composition, motivations and expectations of urban volunteers outside the few countries where comprehensive household surveys of volunteering exist. During 2013 the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Asia Pacific Zone) initiated research designed to fill this empirical gap.

The *Urban Volunteering Study* provides descriptive evidence from seven National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 13 cities in the Asia Pacific region. The data was collected from focus group discussions with around 120 volunteers, interviews with a broad range of staff in each National Society and a comprehensive survey of 1,360 volunteers.

Additional to this, using a randomly sampled Hong Kong survey, ordinary least squares regression modelling estimated the significance of a number of potentially important influences on volunteer engagement, including age, length of service, training, motivation, volunteering history, education, employment status and other demographic variables. The two measures of engagement modelled were the number of days volunteered in a typical week in 2013 and the number of services volunteered for in 2013.

The regression results show that when *all other influences are accounted for* training and the length of voluntary service (independently) increase both the number of days volunteered per week and the number of services volunteered for. And, even when length of service, training and other variables associated with age are taken into account, those aged 50 years and over contribute, on average, half a day more per week than those aged 15 to 19 years.

These results suggest that National Societies wanting to increase diversity and, at the same time, maximise scarce resources could benefit from more diverse strategies, including strategies to recruit "senior citizens". The finding that length of service and training independently lift engagement suggests, moreover, that strategies that foster the retention of existing volunteers through better training and support could enhance sustainability more effectively than strategies focused on lifting volunteer numbers.

### Recommendations

1. That National Societies invest in sustainable volunteering.
2. That National Societies maximise retention by developing new approaches to volunteering.
3. That National Societies prioritise volunteer management.
4. That National Societies reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of volunteering in their specific urban context.
5. That National Societies promote voluntarism in public spaces, including public promotion of Red Cross Red Crescent activities through media and social media and advocacy to secure government support for volunteering legislation.
6. That National Societies should prioritise existing resources to train and retain volunteers, including establishing an annual budget for volunteering development.

Refer to page 28 for full set of recommendations



PRC Lapu-Lapu/Cordova City Chapter volunteers planting mangroves.



# 1. Introduction

Nepal Red Cross volunteers doing public campaign.

## 1.1 The Urban Volunteering Study

The *Urban Volunteering Study* (hereafter “the study”), was initiated by the International Federation of the Red Cross (Asia Pacific Zone) to provide evidence relating to challenges and opportunities for volunteering in rapidly urbanising cities in the Asia Pacific region, with a focus on helping National Societies enhance volunteer recruitment, engagement and retention in urban environments.

A premise of the study was that National Societies evolve in response to the humanitarian needs and resource mobilisation opportunities that exist in cities, and that sustainability depends on the relevance of its services and its capacity to develop a capable, diverse and effective volunteer base.

With over half of the world’s 7 billion people now living in urban areas, the face of human vulnerability is changing globally (British Red Cross, 2012). However, understanding of the impact of urbanisation on the operations of humanitarian agencies has not received the research attention it deserves, due in part to a lack of effective data collection. While much work has, for example, been done on urban risk and vulnerability as a context for humanitarian action, robust research seeking to understand diversity in the volunteer base, and the factors underlying the motivations and volunteering histories of urban volunteers remains uncommon.

A key difference between urban and rural environments is that urban communities are substantially more “heterogeneous, complex and

engage in sophisticated methods of interaction. The most important aspect of city communities is their sheer numbers: there can be hundreds, even thousands of co-existing communities, overlapping, interacting, and competing for influence and resources” (EMI, 2012). In this regard, urban communities are more likely than rural communities to be based on extensive social networks that are relatively independent of one another; for example, a network of social media “friends” may extend far beyond the boundaries of a person’s home city. Systems and power relationships may also be more extensive and complex: “Multiple layers of systems and power structures considerably impact the daily lives of individuals.”

That volunteering in urban environments may likewise differ from rural volunteering has been suggested by research showing that recruitment and retention challenges vary across the two settings (Freeman et al., 2009) and that training is valued differently by rural and urban volunteers, whose characteristics as well as the types of services they provide can differ significantly (Chase-Ziolek and Striepe, 1999; Khurshid, Tasneem and Oliveras, 2011). Moreover it has been found that the relationship between social networks and social trust differs in rural and urban models of social capital, with implications for pro-social behaviour, such as volunteering (Beaudoin and Thorson, 2004). These and other studies suggest comparison of urban and rural volunteering as a fruitful area of future empirical exploration.

The *Urban Volunteering Study* contributes to this agenda in a specific and detailed way by more clearly

defining the characteristics of urban volunteers than has been done previously, and by providing a robust empirical analysis of their volunteering trajectories. In this regard, the primary motivation for the study was to identify key, empirically verifiable features of volunteering in contexts typified by rapid urbanisation. A secondary motivation was to provide a standard for future empirical research including, potentially, comparative research in rural environments (for which the consultation framework in Annex A provides a preliminary guide). Actual research into rural volunteering was, however, beyond both the scope and the intention of the *Urban Volunteering Study*.

## 1.2 Policy background

The need to better understand the challenges and opportunities afforded by urban environments was motivated by a long history of voluntarism within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Despite this, volunteering became a focus of attention only in 1999 with approval by the General Assembly of the Federation's *Volunteering Policy*. Developments over the following decade show the organisation's increasing awareness of the need to value and celebrate volunteers, especially in urban environments characterised by competing demands on scarce resources and by growing competition among agencies delivering humanitarian assistance.

In this context, the Federation's *Volunteering Policy* is a welcome development. Together with *Strategy 2020, Volunteering Policy* (revised in 2011) sets out the organisation's vision of volunteerism as being at the heart of community building and sustainable human development. Through these policies, the organisation highlights its commitment to promoting a culture of volunteering and seeks to position Red Cross Red Crescent Societies as the preferred choice of people seeking to volunteer.

That National Societies have made substantial progress over the decade since the introduction of *Volunteering Policy* is suggested by two Federation reports, *Taking Volunteers Seriously* (IFRC, 2007) and *Valuing Volunteers* (IFRC 2011), which trace developments in volunteering. By 2011, around half of 185 recognised National Societies had created national volunteer policies, and a smaller number had introduced volunteer management or volunteer development into their strategic plans, though it was unclear from the report how many of these societies had implementation procedures in place, or the capacity to act on their plans.

### 1.2.1 The development of volunteering, 1999 – 2013

- **1999:** Federation Volunteering Policy approved by the General Assembly.
- **2000–2001:** UN resolution 56/38, Recommendations on support for volunteering.
- **2001:** International Year of Volunteers, International Volunteer Day celebrated for the first time (5 December).
- **2002:** Volunteering Policy Implementation Guide.
- **2002:** Coalition for an Enabling Volunteer Environment (comprising the International Federation, United Nations Volunteers and the Inter-Parliamentary Union), established to lobby governments on volunteering.
- **2002:** Volunteer management included in Federation and ICRC leadership training for National Societies.
- **2004:** Voluntary Service, Volunteer Management Cycle.
- **2005:** Permanent Working Group on Volunteering established by the General Assembly.
- **2005:** Federation plan, Volunteer Plus (2006–2007).
- **2007:** International Federation global accident insurance scheme for National Society volunteers.
- **2007:** Volunteering made a mandatory item on the General Assembly agenda.
- **2011:** Federation Volunteering Policy revised and approved by the General Assembly. Toolkits developed for national societies on legal issues on volunteering. Volunteering in emergencies guidelines developed.
- **2012:** IFRC Asia Pacific Zone conducted a series of “value of volunteers” studies. The study series continued to 2013 with more national societies participating. Psychosocial support for volunteers toolkit developed. Online courses on volunteering made available at the IFRC Learning Platform. See [www.ifrc.org/learning](http://www.ifrc.org/learning). Volunteer stay safe handbook developed.
- **2013:** Global Review on Volunteering led by the IFRC Secretariat.

In practice, National Society policies are guided by the IFRC *Volunteering Policy*, but developing and implementing effective strategies for volunteer management may be difficult in context, given systemic organisational weaknesses and a general lack of knowledge about the characteristics, motivations and expectations of the volunteers who increasingly constitute the urban volunteer base.

Understanding urban volunteers and their reasons for volunteering is, therefore, a necessary first step to enhancing volunteering in city-based branches and chapters of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The *Urban Volunteering Study* contributes to this goal by providing evidence-based recommendations that exploit the opportunities – but also identify some serious challenges for National Societies – in recruiting, engaging and retaining volunteers in the Asia-Pacific’s rapidly urbanising cities.

### 1.3 Scope

Given that the goal of the study was to investigate urban volunteering, care was taken to ensure that all respondents were, in actuality, carrying out their volunteering work in an urban setting. In practice, defining the boundaries of urban engagement proved complex in cities undergoing rapid migration from rural to urban settings, as a case study from Kathmandu city illustrates.

As the Kathmandu context suggests, the interface between urban and rural communities is not always clear-cut, introducing complexity into any study of urban volunteering. The first step in defining urban volunteers was, therefore, to consult with chapter and branch managers, whose volunteers may or may not have been volunteering mainly outside of urban centres. Volunteers located in urban branches, but considered to be volunteering mainly in rural settings were not eligible for inclusion in the study.

The second step in scoping the study was to decide the definition of “volunteer”. The study was designed to align with a revised *Volunteering Policy* adopted on 23-25 November 2011 by the General

#### 1.3.1 Urban-rural interface: Kathmandu

Kathmandu continues to receive a flood of people seeking the promise of the urban opportunities city life has to offer. The surrounding area is rural and isolated with high levels of vulnerability. “In Kathmandu we see the social changes that urbanisation brings. The spirit of voluntarism is lacking and perhaps people become selfish just to survive.”

City-based district branches in Nepal are often far from the largely rural communities within their jurisdiction and, until recently, lacked the resources to engage meaningfully with these communities and deliver services. “The leadership of the Nepal Red Cross Society felt that to truly maximise our potential and achieve our goal of alleviating human suffering we need to be closer to the communities we wish to render service. This included seeking their membership and involvement in our governance so that our future direction is influenced by the vulnerable communities we wish to serve.”

The solution to these challenges in the Kathmandu district branch was the formation of 19 sub-branches and a further nine Cooperation Committees. Within this structure, empowered communities were encouraged to define their own priorities and seek their own solutions. Moreover, the democratic nature of the National Society means that members within these communities have a way open to them to become full members of their executive committees.

In this context, the role of city-based district branches is primarily to support a larger base of rural sub-branches, and facilitate their path toward autonomy. Bridging the urban-rural divide in this way has encouraged empowerment in those rural communities supported by urban centres, and the reputation of the National Society is enhanced.

Source: IFRC, 2011, “Case Study from Nepal Red Cross Society,” in *Doing Better: measuring the impact of organisational change processes on services to vulnerable communities*, chapter 2e, 68-82.



Red Cross Society of China volunteer demonstrating how to do CPR.

Assembly in Nairobi. This policy defines a volunteer as “a person who carries out volunteering activities for a National Society, occasionally or regularly”. In principle, volunteering activities are

unremunerated beyond the reasonable expenses incurred by the volunteer.

The definition provided in *Volunteering Policy* (2011) should have excluded from the study any person volunteering on time-limited projects with organisation partners who may provide modest financial incentives. In practice, however, the anonymity granted to survey respondents and a lack of clarity around the definition of a volunteer in some National Societies meant that remunerated “volunteers” could not always be identified.

Given that the objective of the study was to understand the true characteristics of adults and teenagers engaged in urban volunteering, including any economic motive to volunteer, the operational definition of “volunteer” adopted in the study was revised. For the purposes of the research a volunteer

is any person aged 15 years and over, and named by a Volunteer Manager as actively engaged in voluntary service in an urban setting.

Preliminary consultations were carried out at the Organisational Development and Youth Conference in Kuala Lumpur in May 2013, with a view to selecting participating National Societies. Human resource constraints, diversity in the urban volunteer base, and National Societies’ capacity to translate and deliver on an urban volunteering survey were key considerations in selection. Seven National Societies subsequently committed to participate.

Following selection into the study, face-to-face consultations with National Society staff were undertaken to communicate the project’s objectives to stakeholders and secure their agreement to implementation.

### 1.3.2 Participating National Societies

**Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS)** was established in 1971 and currently has a network of 68 branches across the country mobilizing 160,000 volunteers. For this study, staff and volunteers from the national headquarters and Dhaka branch participated.

**Hong Kong Branch of Red Cross Society of China (RCSC)** was established in 1950 as a branch of British Red Cross and became a special branch of the RCSC in 1997. Hong Kong Red Cross is known for blood transfusion. The society runs a range of humanitarian services to care for the underprivileged and conducting first aid courses.

**Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS)** was founded in 1877. JRCS currently has 47 chapters and branches below the chapter level. It has over 2.2 million volunteers, who are mainly organized into groups such as community-based volunteer corps, specialized volunteer corps based on the specific skillset, and youth volunteer corps. Volunteers and staff based at the national headquarters and Tokyo chapter participated in this study.<sup>1</sup>

**Mongolia Red Cross Society (MRCS)** was established in 1939. MRCS has a network of 33 mid-level branches and over 818 primary level branches across Mongolia, mobilizing 15,000 volunteers in

order to deliver services to the most vulnerable. For this study, staff and volunteers from the national headquarters and six branches in Ulaanbaatar participated.

**Myanmar Red Cross Society** was established in 1920 as a branch of Indian Red Cross Society, later gaining national official status in 1939 and was renamed Myanmar Red Cross Society in 1989. Today, MRCS has a network of 330 township Red Cross branches supervised by 17 regional/state Red Cross branches across the country, mobilizing approximately 40,000 volunteers who deliver services to the most vulnerable. Yangon Division volunteers participated in the study survey.<sup>2</sup>

**Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS)** was founded in 1964. NRCS currently has 75 district branches and more than a thousand sub-branches, creating a network of 90,000 volunteers across the country. For this volunteering study, those who participated were volunteers based at the national headquarters, and from the districts of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur.

**Philippine Red Cross (PRC)** was founded in 1947. PRC has 100 chapters and sub-chapters, creating a network of 500,000 volunteers across the country. For this study, volunteers and staff of PRC chapters in Davao City, Lapulapu, Cebu, Valenzuela and Rizal participated.

<sup>1</sup> The Japan Red Cross Society participated in staff interviews and focus group discussions but not the Urban Volunteer Survey.

<sup>2</sup> The Myanmar Red Cross Society participated in the Urban Volunteer Survey, but not in staff interviews or focus group discussions.

## 1.4 Staff interviews

The consultation framework (*Annex A*) was guided by three pillars of the revised *Volunteering Policy (2011)*, according to which volunteering is enabled when National Societies promote volunteers and volunteering, ensure the safety and security of volunteers, and recognize volunteers and their achievements.

Semi-structured questionnaires developed from the consultation framework were used in staff interviews, with questions varying according to the expertise and experience of the interviewee. The objective of the interviews was to provide context for the study with regard to the challenges chapters and branches face, and their capacity to respond to opportunities. In addition, the interviewer asked staff to comment on the ways they promote diversity, and the extent to which they involve youth, women and marginalised groups and support them in carrying out their work.

The consultation and interview processes were contiguous and as inclusive as possible. Participants included volunteer managers, program managers, national, district, chapter and branch staff, youth leaders, executives and board members. To provide context, discussion took place in some country offices.

## 1.5 Focus group discussions

During September and October 2013 and January 2014 focus group discussions were conducted at selected Red Cross Red Crescent chapters and branches. Detail on the demographic composition of focus groups by country is provided in *Annex B*.

Each focus group comprised up to 10 invited volunteers, with discussions facilitated by the lead researcher lasting approximately 90 minutes. To ensure unbiased responses, the researcher excluded National Society staff, except where participants lacked English language skills (Bangladesh and Mongolia). In these cases, a National Society staff member agreed to translate research questions and volunteer responses.

Prior to discussion, focus group participants received a set of broad, guiding questions. These questions were designed to stimulate reflection on how volunteers' experiences had influenced their recruitment, engagement and retention decisions, and to access their ideas for change.

The questions were:

- Why did you decide to volunteer for the Red Cross/Red Crescent? Why did you choose RCRC rather than another organisation?



Volunteers of Maldivian Red Crescent Society conducting a public campaign.

- What is the best/worst experience you have had volunteering in the RCRC Movement? What problems or challenges have you faced while volunteering?
- If you could name one thing to improve volunteering in your National Society what would that be? What do you think needs to be done to achieve this change?

In opening the discussion the researcher explained the objectives of the study to participants, and assured them of privacy and confidentiality. Volunteers agreed to these provisions.

### 1.6 Urban volunteering surveys

In-depth qualitative data provided by focus group discussions and staff interviews was supplemented by a quantitative survey (Annex C), delivered to a minimum of 200 urban volunteers in each participating National Society.

The main goal of the survey was to investigate how the demographic characteristics, motivations and service histories of urban volunteers influenced their volunteering trajectories. To facilitate this goal, the survey included 15 questions measuring three motivations: desire for service, desire for professional development and desire for career advancement. The construction and testing of the motivation survey is described in Annex D.

Sample selection for the survey was guided by the study goals, with random sampling the preferred means for selecting respondents for the survey. In effect, data limitations constrained this objective in all but one of the National Societies (China, Hong Kong).

For the remaining National Societies efforts were made to ensure the study interacted with and consulted a wide diversity of volunteers. The lead researcher guided staff on ways to include volunteers by cultural and socio-economic backgrounds (including, where possible, oversampling of volunteers from highly vulnerable communities). Staff were asked to ensure age and gender-balance approximate, in their judgment, to the volunteer base of the branch or chapter.

### 1.7 Analytic strategy

Given variability in selection methods and data quality, the analysis was primarily descriptive, with statistical modelling restricted to the randomly sampled Hong Kong survey.



Korean Red Cross volunteers preparing food for the homeless.

In the descriptive phase, evidence from 1360 complete or near complete surveys highlighted notable differences in the demographic composition, training and service histories of the volunteer base across urban settings, and provided support to qualitative evidence from focus group discussions and staff interviews. A subset of 893 surveys containing complete and correctly filled motivation data described the impact of motivation on volunteer recruitment, engagement and retention.

Key predictions suggested by the descriptive evidence were tested in the Hong Kong sample (293 surveys). The value of ordinary least squares regression modelling is that it estimates unknown population values from sample statistics. Under certain conditions, this allows us to judge the importance (the size and statistical significance) of observed relationships (for example, the relationship between training and volunteer engagement), independently of all of the other potentially influencing factors (for example, the volunteer's length of service, education and age).



## 2. Diversity

PMI

Tidal wave drill, North Jakarta.

**Volunteering Policy (2011) advises that:**

**“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.”**

**And that:**

**“They remove physical, economic, social and cultural barriers to participation, and recruit volunteers based on their potential.”**

An emerging literature on urban volunteerism increasingly highlights the global importance of diversity in development. That the Millennium Development Goals may be unachievable without local volunteerism implies, in particular, “the need to build strategically on rich, local traditions of voluntary self-help and mutual aid” (UNV, 2011: 93).

A key challenge in cities is that marginalised pockets of the urban population are consistently less likely to volunteer (Hurley, Wilson and Christie, 2008), including the disabled, the unemployed, people lacking formal qualifications, and those living in socio-economically deprived neighbourhoods. For these groups specific barriers exist – including physical, economic, cultural and social barriers – that negatively impact on an individual’s capacity or willingness to volunteer.

A number of studies show that platforms to support livelihood are especially important in removing barriers to volunteering in poor urban communities. For example, receiving money from selling health-related commodities and drugs has been vital in motivating community health volunteering in Bangladeshi cities (Khan et al., 1998). Unless organisations have the capacity to develop practical measures to support marginalised individuals, they

will continue to be under-represented in urban volunteering.

Where volunteers have more employment opportunities, studies have identified time as a more important barrier than economic considerations. Respondents to Canadian surveys (McClintock, 2004) consistently cite lack of time as the principle reason for not volunteering more often (75 per cent), or not volunteering at all (69 per cent). Similarly, in Australia, family and work commitments are the most important constraints on volunteering – cited by 59 per cent and 52 per cent respectively (National Survey of Volunteering Issues, 2011).

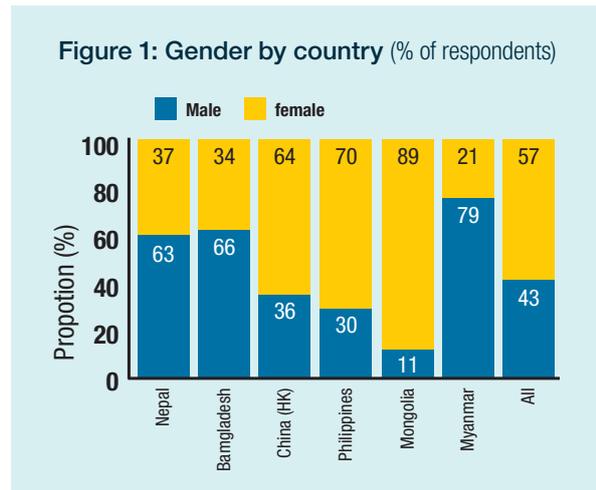
### 2.1 Sample diversity

The urban volunteering survey contained a number of questions designed to measure diversity in the volunteer base, including: gender, age, educational level, languages spoken at home, employment status, marital status, and the number of children under the age of 18 years living in the household. Barriers to participation were explored through staff interviews and focus discussion groups.

Overall, 1,360 individuals provided complete or near complete responses to the survey. Of these more than half (57 per cent) were female, though

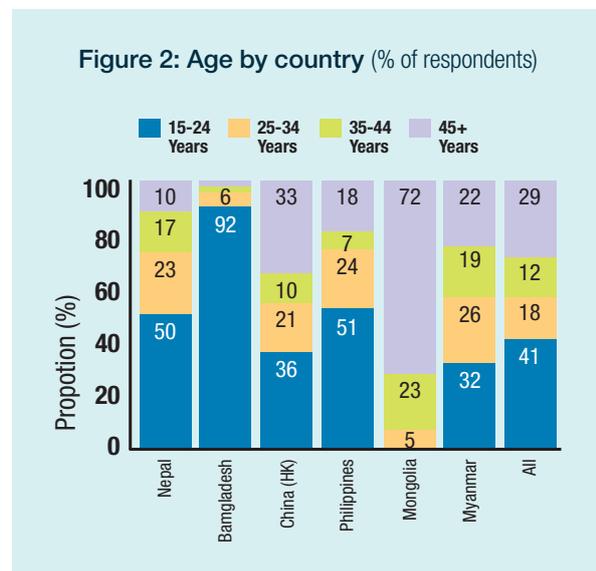
there was considerable variation between urban settings (Figure 1). For example:

- Women were a clear majority in cities in Mongolia (89 per cent), Philippines (70 per cent) and China (64 per cent).
- Men dominated the survey in cities in Myanmar (79 per cent), Bangladesh (66 per cent) and Nepal (63 per cent).



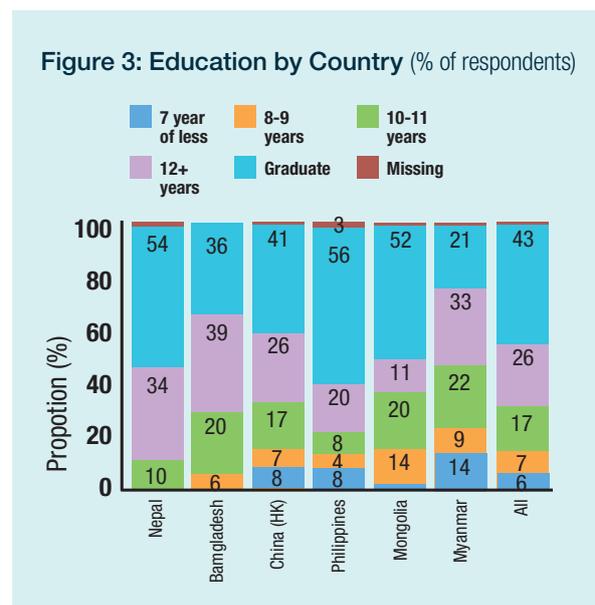
With the exception of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, the urban volunteering base was young. Two-fifths (41 per cent) of the all survey respondents were aged 15 to 24 years (Figure 2):

- A very high proportion of the Dhaka, Bangladesh, sample (92 per cent) were young people aged 15-24 years, and this group was also strongly represented in the four Philippines cities, (51 per cent) and the three cities in Nepal (50 per cent).
- By contrast, most (72 per cent) of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolian, volunteers were aged 45 years and older.



The majority of survey respondents were highly educated, with around 70 per cent reporting at least 12 years of schooling:

- Of these, the majority (43 per cent) were university or college graduates, and the rest (26 per cent) said they had received 12 or more years of schooling.
- Very few of the respondents reported seven years or less schooling (6 per cent), and around the same number reported eight to nine years of schooling (7 per cent).



Educational attainment is often an indicator of socio-economic diversity. While cities in Mongolia, Myanmar and China (Hong Kong) appear to be relatively inclusive, cities in Nepal, Bangladesh and Philippines were notably exclusive:

- The overwhelming majority of respondents from cities in Nepal, Philippines and Bangladesh reported at least 12 years of schooling (88 per cent, 76 per cent and 75 per cent, respectively), compared to China, Hong Kong (67 per cent), and cities in Mongolia (63 per cent) and Myanmar (54 per cent).
- Not a single respondent from the three cities in Nepal and only 6 per cent of Dhaka, Bangladeshi urban volunteers reported nine years of schooling or less compared with almost a quarter (23 per cent) of all Yangon, Myanmar respondents.

What are we to make of these results? Given that sampling was random only in Hong Kong it is likely selection bias partly explains the results in all of the other cities. Selection bias is a serious issue, to the extent that National Society staff may have

chosen volunteers for the survey on the basis of convenience, or on the basis of their own preference for volunteers whose characteristics were not representative of the volunteer base in the city. In the absence of comprehensive data on volunteers, the extent of the biases in the selection process in any particular city (excepting Hong Kong) could not be established. Nonetheless, as a comparison across countries, the diversity of the sampling is of interest, suggesting real differences in the volunteer base across countries.

To further explore whether (or not) National Societies promote diversity volunteer managers were asked:

*“Do you actively try to recruit volunteers from different races, ages, ethnic backgrounds, sexes, religions, beliefs, or people with disabilities?”*

In responding to this question, volunteer managers acknowledged the benefits of diversification in the volunteer workforce, and many recognised that urban environments present opportunities in this regard. At the same time, few considered that their National Societies had any capacity to exploit the diversity existing in urban populations. Among the reasons given were: lack of financial resources, lack of policy and/or practical strategies to deliver diversity, language barriers, organisational deficiencies, entrenched cultural attitudes, staff preferences, and education-based selection criteria.

When issues of diversity were raised in focus group discussions, volunteers were asked to consider

their National Societies’ commitment to recruit volunteers for their potential, without considering their gender, education or family background. Participants were also encouraged to share any challenges and problems they had personally faced volunteering.

In half of the National Societies surveyed, female (and young) volunteers expressed concern that cultural bias often played a role in whether or not a woman (or young person) was able to nominate for election to governing bodies. Among the issues identified were:

- recruitment into gender-based roles, with females predominantly volunteering at the community level, while men occupied most leadership and management roles
- gender-biased selection in training. As one focus group discussant put it: “They think helping people in a disaster is work for men, so men get the training even if a woman has more experience and service.”

A number of female volunteers cited insufficient protection and support and a lack of basic measures to ensure their safety. Most considered this a barrier to their participation in volunteering activity. It is worth noting, in particular, that elderly female volunteers in Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) responsible for home visits and social care programs reported that they themselves received little assistance in carrying out their duties, including a lack of gloves, masks and other forms of basic protection from disease when attending the sick, and a lack of appropriate procedures and rules to help defend them from sexual and other forms of harassment. Female volunteers in Dhaka (Bangladesh) also reported that a lack of reimbursement for transport made travelling relatively unsafe, especially at night.

The majority of the National Societies surveyed lacked practical implementation strategies to ensure that gender policies (where they existed) would be acted upon and rules around discrimination enforced. That female volunteers were not, in general, well protected and that their interests less than adequately represented was surprising given how often these same volunteers were, themselves, involved in bridging the gap between more advantaged and disadvantaged members of an urban community by building the social capital of vulnerable communities.



Youth Volunteers while distribution of NFIs to the victims of flood affected in a village near Mazar-e-Sharif in the northern region of Afghanistan.

### 2.1.1 Building social capital in Ulaanbaatar

Mongolian Red Cross volunteers run an extensive social care program in the tented “ger” districts of the capital city Ulaanbaatar, visiting vulnerable communities and helping them to cope with the loss of herder livelihoods and the break down in traditional social connections that often occurs when migration to the city takes place.

Volunteers carrying out social care home visits and providing material support are often older women, who share life-skills with those they assist, including the elderly and disabled. Social care can include help with household chores, bringing food and medicine and arranging medical visits, or it can mean putting people in touch with social day-care centres, where they will be welcomed and cared for.

Assistance with registration is particularly important in Mongolia, where the law can make it difficult to establish land ownership and the most vulnerable often do not possess the necessary

knowledge to secure entitlement. Volunteers also help people to complete the complicated process of registering for social benefits, such as disability and child allowances, and livelihoods are boosted by vocational training courses, teaching handicrafts and other skills.

In addition to valuable social service, the assistance volunteers provide is also about relieving the isolation of the socially isolated: “The volunteer and my neighbour are also helping me develop a vegetable garden. We’re planting potatoes, onions and carrots in my back yard,” says Mrs Dolgursuren. “It’s not only the practical help but also the friendship which really makes a difference. Having someone to talk to stops me feeling so lonely” (British Red Cross website).

By providing simple platforms for integration into the urban society, Mongolian Red Cross volunteers foster resilience and a culture of collaboration, helping individuals to build the social and work skills that promote and develop the social capital of vulnerable communities.

### 2.1.2 Volunteers supporting social inclusion in Tokyo

Volunteers from the Language Services Volunteer Corp shared with us their best experiences assisting disabled individuals to participate in tourism and work related activities in Tokyo. Though these individuals were not from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, the services provided suggest ways in which National Society programs can be tailored to enable target groups to overcome significant barriers to inclusion in social activities.

“I did a volunteer guide support for a person with disabilities from the UK. He was on wheelchair, and had some challenge in speaking. Based on the information we received beforehand, we prepared the itinerary, but on the day, he wanted to visit another place and we managed to respond to that request on the spot. I was satisfied that I could provide a necessary volunteer service to respond the client’s needs. Also, I was happy to learn new things about Japan through these activities.”

“I once supported a person with visual difficulty from Cambodia to guide to the place this person had to go. Travelling in Tokyo with a person with visual difficulty, I had a chance to look at Tokyo from a new perspective, and found many places that were quite inconvenient for those with disabilities even in the city centre of Tokyo. It was a very good learning opportunity for me.”

“I once guided a researcher from the US to go to the conference venue to make a presentation. It was a conference on disabilities, but there were many famous professors including the one who won the Nobel Prize recently. It is also a good feeling to be in that kind of special event as a volunteer.”

“Once I supported a family from the UK, a son and his parents. The son was on wheel chair. We had many good conversations and they seemed very much to be enjoying our guide. They even invited us to join the dinner, which was not included in the original plan, and we were like a part of the family.”

Ulaanbaatar and Tokyo provide inspiring messages on the role volunteers can play in building social capital and promoting social inclusion. Whether volunteers come themselves from socio-economically disadvantaged groups or whether they come from relatively advantaged backgrounds, they can bridge the gap by working with vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. The difference is that volunteers from more disadvantaged backgrounds (in Ulaanbaatar) themselves faced substantial economic barriers to volunteering.

*“I have to walk all the time to the village. So I have to pay for my shoes. I don’t have money to pay for transport.”*

## 2.2 Barriers to volunteering

In addition to economic barriers, a number of impediments to inclusive volunteering were identified by National Society staff, including: physical barriers (a lack of wheelchair access to offices and other necessary supports to the disabled and the elderly); social barriers (inadequate resources devoted to social events and absence of safe and comfortable rooms to promote social contact); cultural barriers (language barriers); and irrelevance (lack of presence in marginalised communities, or failure to target those communities in volunteer recruitment). Moreover, staff suggested that some of these barriers (such as the need for meeting rooms) were more typical of urban than rural settings.

Staff interviews also confirmed that the National Societies participating in the study lacked sufficient financial resources to overcome the barriers identified. Notably absent were platforms to support

the livelihoods of volunteers. For example, four out of the seven National Societies had no policy to reimburse volunteers’ basic travel expenses as advised by *Volunteering Policy (2011)*.

Lack of attention to the barriers facing volunteers from vulnerable communities reflected broader operational issues. Half of the National Societies in the study were highly dependent on funding provided by Government and Movement partners. Outside of these traditional sources staff identified few, if any, opportunities for developing new partnerships to support volunteering. Beyond the challenge of raising funds, partners who provide existing program resources tend not to allocate a portion of funding to the support of the volunteers tasked with the day-to-day work of servicing programs (outside of general funding for mobilising volunteers).

Finally, the results of the *Urban Volunteer Survey* provided anecdotal evidence that time availability may be a barrier to participation for women with children under the age of 18 years. This group was more than three times less likely to be represented in our survey (comprising only 13 per cent of the sample). Focus group discussions highlighted the reasons for these results, including inflexible volunteer work arrangements and lack of opportunity to volunteer from home. Other volunteers reporting time-related difficulties, included students and full-time employed persons. This reflects the importance of expanding volunteering opportunities from traditional forms to online, episodic, project-specific and others to encourage students, adults with less available time to volunteer, and others to volunteer with Red Cross and Red Crescent.



Adult volunteer groups of the Hong Kong Red Cross (branch of the Red Cross Society of China) organize experiential games for children in humanity education events, such as learning how to take care of visually impaired people.



Volunteers of local disaster relief and preparedness service of the Hong Kong Red Cross (branch of the Red Cross Society of China) show care and concern in visiting street sleepers in old districts in the city during cold winter to distribute warm clothing and winter preparedness information.

### 2.2.1 A story from our research

The lead researcher on the *Urban Volunteering Study* used social media to recruit volunteers for encoding and checking data. Brief descriptions of the tasks were communicated via Facebook and Twitter to volunteers in Philippine Red Cross.

On one occasion a volunteer responding to a data entry request was a young mother with children at home. She wished to participate in the study and asked if she could volunteer from home. This arrangement was well suited to the task required, suggesting that flexible work and the effective use of social media can remove barriers and enable volunteering beyond the physical site of a National Society branch or chapter. In this case, the volunteer lived three hours away from the Philippine Red Cross headquarters in Manila (where the researcher was located).

### 2.3 Where should the focus be?

For isolated and marginalised individuals, volunteering is an important means for social inclusion and brings with it many non-pecuniary personal and social benefits. Volunteering is also important as a route toward building the social capital of communities and a source of an individual's personal development. But in order to increase diversity we need to understand the factors influencing the participation of differing social groups and the specific barriers they face.

The *Urban Volunteering Study* suggests that many National Societies do not place a high priority on diversity, nor do they have well-developed strategies to reduce barriers to volunteering. This conclusion reinforces the advice of *Volunteering Policy (2011)* that National Societies should, at a minimum, reimburse volunteers for the expenses they incur. All volunteers, regardless of background, benefit from clear supporting frameworks that encourage them to volunteer and continue volunteering.

More extensive support for the livelihoods of volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds would promote greater diversity by encouraging socio-economically disadvantaged groups to participate. In this regard, National Societies that are serious about building opportunities for the vulnerable to volunteer should explore simple and practical options to support volunteers' livelihood and employability. Through its social services program, economically disadvantaged PRC



YABC training activity.



Bangladesh Red Crescent volunteers planting trees.

volunteers, members and the general public may also avail of livelihood training opportunities. In all these livelihood platforms, it is critical that an appropriate selection criteria is implemented and that the livelihood opportunities are well integrated in their volunteering opportunities as well.

The Philippine Red Cross membership campaign likewise provides incentives to volunteers who participate in the campaign, about 11 cents per person recruited as a member. The Quezon City chapter of Philippine Red Cross provides another example of how this can be done, through the simple mechanism of sharing with fundraising volunteers a proportion (approximately 10 per cent) of the funds the volunteers raise at metropolitan railway stations.

Finally, our research suggests that opportunities are unequally distributed by gender and age in some National Societies. Though cultural values play a part, there remains room for anti-discrimination policies and practical measures that encourage the inclusion of women in training and governance. The quota systems suggested by Bangladeshi and Nepalese volunteers in focus discussions have been adopted successfully in Africa and the Middle East (IFRC, 2011), suggesting that traditional attitudes and cultural barriers to the inclusion of women and youth can be overcome.



# 3. Recruitment, Engagement and Retention

PRC

Participants of the PRC Quezon City Red Cross Chapter 2013 Million Volunteer Run.

Volunteering Policy (2011) advises:

“National Societies also work with governments, the corporate sector and other partners to promote an enabling environment for volunteering in national life.”

And that:

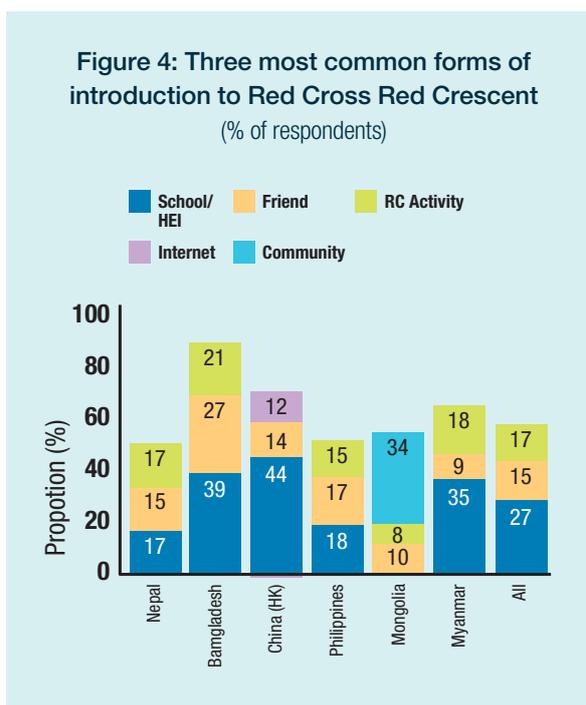
“National Societies have well functioning management systems and practices to supervise, support and encourage volunteers. These are adapted to the specific context of their work and responsive to new trends in volunteering that may go beyond the established structures of National Societies including,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

## 3.1 Responsiveness to new trends

The changing face of urban communities will increasingly require that organisations evolve different models of voluntarism (UNV, 2011). Moreover, a shift toward sustainability and relevance in volunteering suggests the need for innovative practices:

- Online volunteering (...) still has a huge potential to grow. New connections through social media allow connecting local, national and international initiatives on-site and online” (The Guardian, 19 April 2013).

The results of the Urban Volunteering Study showed that National Societies are not, in general, responding to these trends. In most cases, educational institutions remain the dominant enabling platform. More than a quarter (27 per cent) of all respondents had first learned about the organisation at school or at a higher education institution, usually a university (Figure 4).



For survey respondents, moreover, the least common sources were the internet (0 per cent of respondents, when Hong Kong was excluded), the workplace (1 per cent of respondents) and Red Cross Red Crescent promotional material (2 per cent of respondents). Family and Red Cross Red Crescent personnel were also uncommon in initiating volunteering (3 per cent of respondents in each case).

Outside of educational institutions, the individual (rather than any particular community) was typically the focus of the recruitment effort:

*“Individual volunteering is a more flexible and promising platform in urban areas” (Director, JRCS, Tokyo).*

*“There are many youth in urban areas, with many universities having a campus in the area. In this regard, it is easier to organise events as Japan RC, since it is easier to attract young people as participants and volunteers” (Director, JRCS, Tokyo).*

Our survey confirmed the Tokyo staff’s insights. An exception was where the volunteer base was significantly older, as in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, where community was the dominant base for voluntarism.

Volunteer testimony shows that the level of awareness and reputation of the Red Cross Red



Japanese Red Cross language service volunteers working on ‘DAISY’ – audio text. Volunteers supported the development of audio English text for students with hearing disabilities.

Crescent Movement can impact on the recruitment of volunteers. The low level of promotional activity in the recruitment of volunteers (outside educational institutions) in the study sample suggests that National Societies could do more to promote a humanitarian agenda, and educate the public as to the history, principles and work of the movement.

Finally, while staff interviews suggested that the recruitment trend is led by the demands of existing services, volunteer testament from some chapters (notably Hong Kong, Tokyo and Philippines) highlighted that for many volunteers the choice of an organisation to volunteer with often depends upon a good match between the volunteer’s skills and the services offered. The diversification of Japanese Red Cross into language services demonstrates the way that National Societies can become more responsive to the presence of a highly skilled volunteer base, diversifying into non-traditional services that their volunteers are willing (and able) to provide.

### 3.1.1 Social media and volunteering

In urban environments where most adults are in paid work, workplaces are a potential new source of voluntarism. Growing employer support and job-skill motivation among urban volunteers suggests trends in this direction (McClintock, 2004), with effective use of social media and the internet an enabling platform (Rodrigues, 2011).

In focus group discussions, only one volunteer identified his workplace as the platform for his recruitment:

*“I had no plan to join the Red Cross. I went there to invite them (PRC) to the school where I work. They told me about pre-educator’s training. Now I am a youth instructor.”*

However, in Hong Kong and Tokyo, discussants confirmed that the internet was an important source for their learning about voluntarism and volunteering opportunities:

*“I did not have special feeling about Red Cross. When I was thinking about trying new things, I happened to know about the [Language Service Volunteer] LSV.*

*It was not an LSV website, it was a kind of online feature article on volunteering introducing various volunteer groups.”*

Older forms of media were also important, with some volunteers naming news of Red Cross work as the reason they decided to volunteer:

*“I saw on TV about war in Palestine, and the Red Cross action. I thought I could do that too.”*

*“I happened to come across it [tracing] on TV and I thought it was interesting.”*

Effective use of existing and developing media to promote voluntarism and Red Cross Red Crescent work is likely to become increasingly important as non-profit organisations compete for volunteers. That the media is an important tool for building the reputation of an organisation was recognised by volunteers themselves:

*“I think Red Crescent should tell the public. People don’t know about us. People don’t know what volunteering is. They think we must have agenda, politics maybe. They don’t appreciate because they don’t know us, they don’t know what we do.”*

### 3.2 Retention

Overall, retention rates were high. Almost two-fifths (38 per cent) of survey respondents had been with their National Society for more than five years and a further 20 per cent had been volunteering for three to four years.

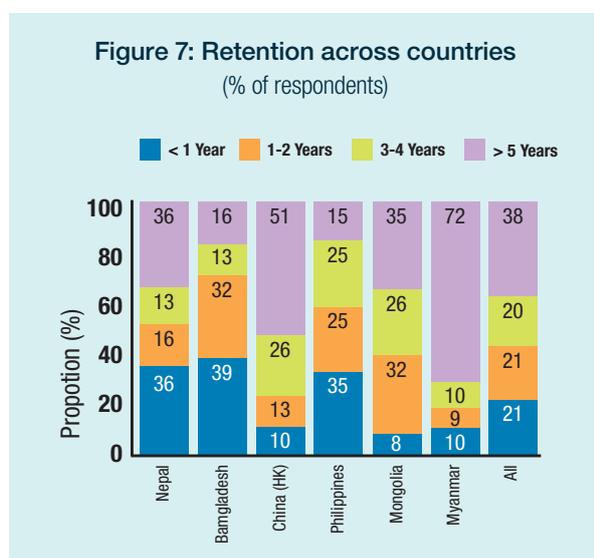
Retention was considerably higher in cities with an older volunteer base: 72 per cent of Yangon (Myanmar) volunteers and 35 per cent of Ulaanbaatar (Mongolian) volunteers were retained more than five years, compared to 15 per cent of volunteers in the four cities in the Philippines and 16 per cent in Dhaka (Bangladesh).



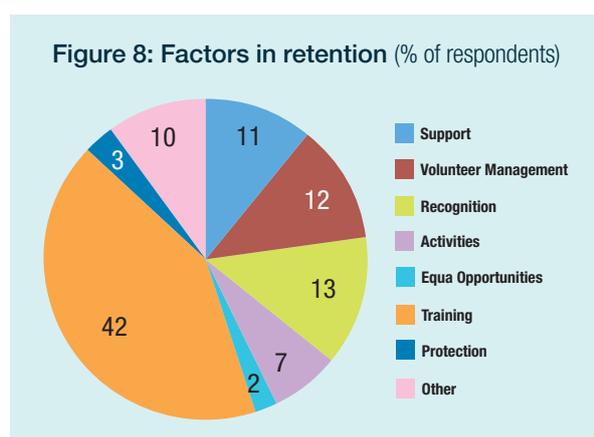
Bangladesh Red Crescent volunteers are cleaning debris at the collapsed Rana Plaza building.



Red Crescent volunteers conducting Polio eradication campaign.



In response to an open-ended question “What can we do to better help you continue volunteering?” two fifths (42 per cent) of respondents identified training as important to help them continue volunteering. Of these, 34 per cent mentioned a desire for more training, 3 per cent requested better quality training, and 5 per cent thought that specialised or practical training in the field was needed to help them to continue volunteering.



Focus group discussions identified multiple issues in retention including problems of governance, inadequate command structure, ineffective communication systems and processes, failure to provide necessary equipment and failure to promote the safety and protection of volunteers.

Many of the issues identified by volunteers were associated with poor resource management. That the reputation of the organisation can be damaged as a consequence was reflected in one volunteer’s comment:

“They sent us to help with a water rescue, but we didn’t have any equipment, not even a rope. So all we could do is keep the crowd away. People said: but you are Red Cross and you are not helping. We felt bad.”

Another issue identified by both staff and volunteers was the lack of capacity of National Societies to provide volunteers with on-going opportunity:

“The number of volunteering requests is not enough. Many LSV volunteers find that there is no volunteering opportunity when they can make themselves available for volunteering. At the same time, there are some requests that we could not respond as we could not find anyone available. Every year, we welcome highly-motivated new volunteers but I think we are not yet successful in providing enough opportunities for them.”

### 3.2.1 Should we care about volunteer management?

Volunteer managers are responsible for recruiting, satisfying and retaining volunteers. According to one influential study of not-for-profit organisations (cited in Hager and Brudney, 2004), two-fifths of volunteers stop volunteering because of management issues resulting in “more lost volunteers than people losing interest because of changing personal or family needs”.

Conflicts with management came up again and again in our discussions with volunteers, who were especially troubled by the lack of practices and procedures to address their concerns. Overbearing supervision (and the assumption that volunteers must obey directives or else be refused an opportunity to serve) arose as a source of serious discontent. “He said I must be here every weekend. Can he really dismiss me?”

Another issue raised by volunteers had to do with command structure and communication.

*“They ask me to go somewhere, but then I have to contact all these different people to get permission for transport and equipment. You ask me what is the better way? I can tell you, abolish departments. Let one person manage the volunteers for each service, and he can be responsible for getting it done.”*

In some National Societies, volunteers noticed how little staff cared about their efforts.

*“I feel the distance between volunteers and staffs. Even for organising the training, apart from first aid and Red Cross trainings, there is no contact with*

*staff. It is disappointing as once there is a distance, it is more difficult to reduce it.”*

Distance between staff and volunteers increased where privileges were more unevenly distributed.

*“You see outside, the drivers and cars for them to get home, but when they want us to volunteer they don’t give transport costs and sometimes not even food. And they get specialised training but they don’t even have to help us in the field.”*

Best practice in volunteer management also existed, however.

*“We know our volunteers. We trust them. So they can do the job, and if they have better ways to do their work they will suggest to me, and sometimes there can be problems but I will listen and try to solve. Also it is important for us to care about our volunteers, in their life, so tonight you will see us together at Karaoke” (program manager, Davao, Philippines).*

Volunteers in Davao chapter showed high levels of engagement and satisfaction with their volunteering experience, suggesting that volunteering is enabled by the welcoming environment and collaborative management style practiced in that chapter. This was in stark contrast with the experience of some volunteers in the study.

*“What about fundamental principles, I am volunteering because I believe in that. But I am not a slave, you know. We are human beings, we have human rights.”*

With regards to volunteer management, clear distinctions between staff and volunteers matter; in particular, volunteers resented directives that forced them to comply with work schedules more appropriate to wage-earning staff. To have a code of conduct specifying how managers treat volunteers, in distinction from staff, matters to volunteer satisfaction. Having dedicated, trained managers (whether staff or volunteers) who were responsive to volunteers’ needs appeared, in this study, to be more important to volunteers than the types of reward and recognition systems that were in place in National Societies.

## 3.3 Engagement

In addition to how long volunteers stay with an

organisation the Urban Volunteering Study attempted to assess how active, or engaged, they were. Measures of engagement included the number of days volunteered in a typical week in 2013 and the number of different types of service volunteered for in 2013.

Most commonly, respondents volunteered one day per week in one service. Within this pattern, there was some variation. For example:

- Respondents from Philippine cities tended to contribute more days in a typical week than in any other country, and
- volunteers from Dhaka, Bangladesh, were more likely than in any other country to participate in multiple services

Figure 5: Number of days per week volunteered in 2013, by country (% of respondents)

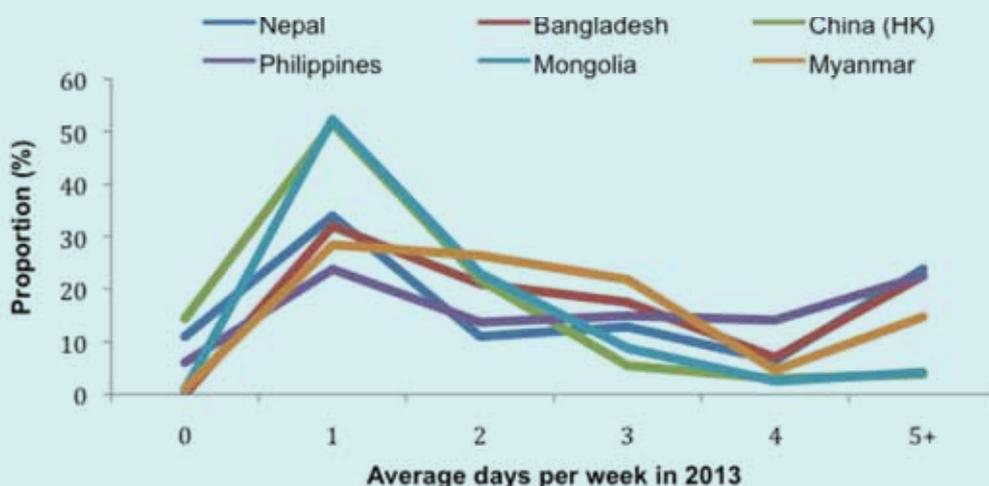
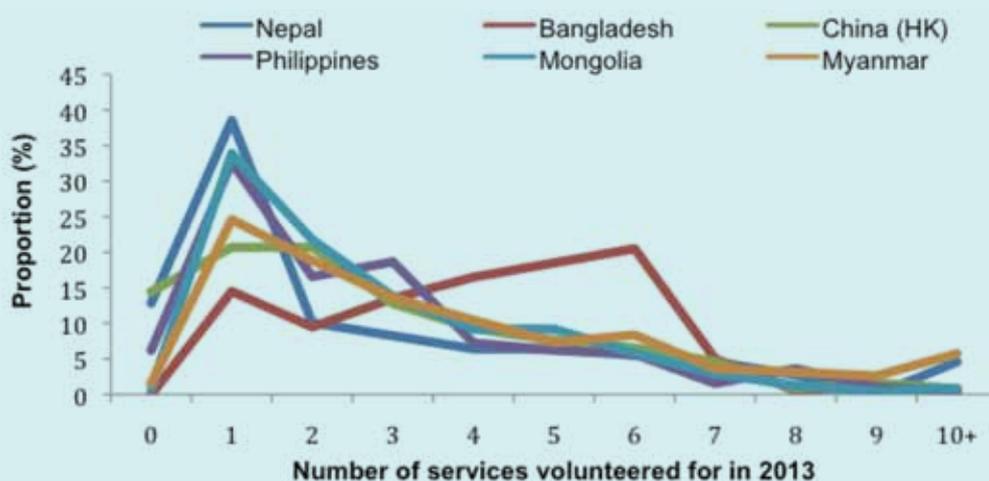


Figure 6: Number of different types of service volunteered in 2013, by country (% of respondents)



The relationship between volunteers' personal characteristics and engagement held surprises. Overall, being involved in two or more other non-Red Cross Red Crescent organisations substantially increased both the average number of days per week and the average number of services volunteered for in 2013 (Table 1). Motivation was ambiguous in engagement, with volunteers motivated by the chance to advance their careers increasing the number of more services participated in, but reducing number of days volunteered per week (Table 2). Finally, young volunteers (aged below 20 years) were substantially less engaged than the sample average, in terms of both days per week and the number of services provided (Table 3).

Focus group discussions suggested a reason for the lower engagement of young volunteers. Many

were in schools and universities, or in transition from education to work. As such, they expected their circumstances to change more often than those of older people. Moreover, their roots in the community tended to be less well established. Being younger also meant volunteers tended to have fewer previous volunteering experiences, a factor associated in our research with lower levels of engagement. The transient nature of youth volunteering was supported by our survey data, which showed that countries with an older volunteer base had longer retention rates.

But is age the key factor in volunteer engagement? Or are the higher activity levels of older people explained by another (unobserved) factor associated with age: do older people have more training, for instance?

To find out whether people aged under 20 years really differed from other age groups in their volunteering profiles we used the randomly selected sample from Hong Kong in a statistical model that controlled for people's different characteristics and circumstances. This included their different volunteering histories and length of service, their marital and work status, whether or not they had children, and their different motivations and educational levels.

Our results (Table 4) show that those aged 15 to 19 years did not differ in their engagement from other age groups, once the impacts of other influences were accounted for. A crucial exception was the comparison of this group and volunteers aged 50 years and over, with the older age group contributing half a day more of volunteering every week.

Compared to those aged 15 to 19 years, being 50 years of age and over *in itself* increased engagement, regardless of length of service and volunteering history, regardless of the amount of training received, and regardless of motivation, education, work status and family background.<sup>3</sup>



Korean Red Cross volunteers serve the elderly through a mobile laundry service that visits a different city each day of the week.

### 3.3.1 Interpretation

Ordinary least squares regression is a class of econometric model that holds constant confounding factors to test theories about observed relationships – in this case the relationship between age and volunteer engagement.

To understand the strengths of the modelling, consider 100 volunteers of different ages, with different demographic backgrounds, different levels of training, and different lengths of service.

Now imagine that, within this group, engagement (days per week and number of services volunteered for) varies with age. Younger people appear to be less engaged, on average. But is it really because they are younger? Might it not be that older people have more training and a longer length of service and these are the true influences on engagement?

To determine whether age is *in itself* a factor in engagement, we need to account simultaneously for the effects of all other influences on engagement, including in the model as many potential influences as possible. Ordinary least squares regression models provide such an estimate.

Our result shows that, compared to being 15-19 years of age, being 50 years of age or older positively influences the number of days volunteered per week *independently* of all of the other influences associated with age that we have captured within our model.

The model provides, in addition, a measure of the statistical significance of our result (in the case of age, the result is significant,  $p$ -value  $< .05$ ).

What the model does NOT tell us is why being over 50 years of age is important to increasing engagement.

### 3.4 Where should the focus be?

The success of volunteer-based programmes is hampered by high dropout rates. Volunteers who drop out create “decreased stability of the program, increased training costs because of the continuous

<sup>3</sup> Effects of age and other factors on volunteer engagement estimated by ordinary least squares regression (the partial effect for age was statistically significant,  $p$ -value  $< .05$ )

need for replacement, and they make the program difficult to manage” (Haines et al. 2007). Dropout places a burden on human and financial resource demands for recruitment and training (Bhattacharyya et al., 2001; Kabwa et al., 1996; Yiu et al., 2001).

What can National Societies do to reduce dropout and increase engagement and retention? On the management side, our results suggest that, while National Societies have volunteer management policies, they lack strategies and practical guidelines for implementation. One way to implement better management could be to offer training to all persons responsible for managing volunteers in all of their branches and chapters. A number of cost-effective training options are available, including webinars and online courses accessible through the Federation website. Other NGOs also offer management courses that could be accessed by city-based Red Cross Red Crescent chapters.

With regards to recruitment, our results raise questions about current practices. National Societies seem overly dependent on schools and educational institutions as sources of recruitment. But should National Societies develop new strategies to recruit young people, through social media for example? Or should they focus their recruitment efforts elsewhere, on “senior citizens”? Where should the focus be?

The results of our regression modelling suggest that National Societies would benefit most from diversifying their recruitment strategies, on the one hand evolving new ways to engage youth (for example, through more effective use of social media), while on the other hand developing targeted strategies that encourage people 50 years of age and over to volunteer. All other things equal, older people tend to stay longer and, on average, in a typical week they tend to give more of their time to volunteering, suggesting this age group as the source of largely unexplored possibilities for sustainable volunteering.



University and junior Red Cross volunteers helping Japanese Red Cross raise funds.



Bangladesh Red Crescent Team Leader briefing volunteers on rescue plan.



Indonesian Red Cross volunteers together with local authorities evacuating bodies from commuter line train which had crashed a fuel tank truck and burnt.



## 4. Training, Personal Development and Motivation

Japanese Red Cross volunteers in Fukushima.

**Volunteering Policy (2011) advises that:**

*“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.”*

Motivation is an important element in voluntarism. Moreover, people’s reasons for volunteering are complex and may change over the life course (Clary et al., 1998; Hendicks and Curtler, 2004; Omoto and Snyder, 1995; Penner and Finkelstein, 1998).

Among the motives that have been identified as important to urban volunteers are the desire to act on important values, the desire for self-improvement and the desire to gain career-related skills and experience. To provide a measure of the relative strengths of differing motivations, and their influence on volunteer training and engagement was a goal of the *Urban Volunteering Study*.

### 4.1 The motivation survey

The survey contained a number of questions relating to three dimensions of motivation: service, personal development and career. Each dimension was measured as the mean of responses to five questions, with each question rated on a seven-point scale from one equals “not at all important” to seven equals “most important”.

On average respondents rated service as the most important reason for volunteering (mean of 5.0). Personal development and career were also important motivators (means of 4.8 and 4.6, respectively).

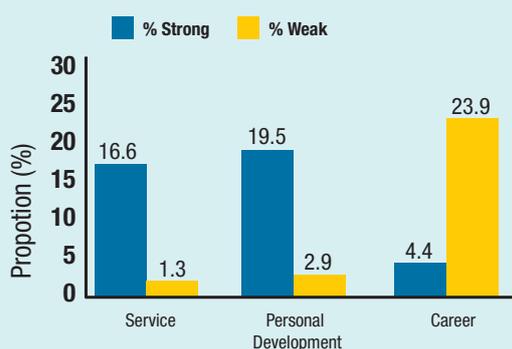
Within countries, volunteers valued both service and personal development highly. Distinctions between these motivations were small (Table 5):

- Urban volunteers in China (Hong Kong), Mongolia and Myanmar rated service slightly higher than personal development as a reason for volunteering.
- Volunteers in Nepal, Bangladesh and the Philippines rated personal development slightly higher than service.

Disaggregating these results into strong and weak motivations, career advancement was everywhere the least important to volunteering. Very few respondents (4.4 per cent) rated career motivation most important (rating 6.0 and above), while almost a quarter (23.9 per cent) rated career motivation unimportant (2.5 and below).

By contrast, around one-fifth of respondents (19.5 per cent) considered personal development most important, and a substantial number (16.6 per cent) considered service most important. Very few respondents rated service and personal development unimportant (1.3 per cent and 2.9 per cent of respondents, respectively).

**Figure 9: Strong and weak motivations for volunteering (% of respondents)**



Indonesian Red Cross volunteers helping a family with an infant in a flood in Jakarta.

Overall, long-term volunteers were more likely to link personal values with the choice of volunteering for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, and they were also more likely to express considered criticisms of a National Society's failure to live up to the fundamental principles. Regardless of length of service, volunteers identified with the particular services they were providing. Many volunteers expressed feelings of loyalty to volunteer peers, stressing friendships with like-minded people as a powerful motivation for continuing volunteering.

#### 4.1.1 Values and service

The desire to act on values by providing service to others was strong among participants in the discussion groups, with many revealing a history of volunteering in multiple service-oriented organisations (including in youth movements such as the scouting movement, girl guides and army reserves, in religious institutions, or in NGOs such as World Vision or the Salvation Army).

A high incidence of service-oriented volunteering was also confirmed in the survey, with four-fifths (81 per cent) of all respondents having volunteered for another organisation either currently or at some time in the past (Table 6).

Given that most respondents had a volunteering history outside the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement it was unsurprising that for many volunteers the choice of volunteering for one organisation rather than another often had to do less with the values of the organisation than with the match between the volunteer's skills and the services offered by the organisation and/or the ability of the organisation to provide a convenient platform to serve others:

*"When I came out [of university] I didn't know what to do in a real emergency. Now I know what to do, because with Safety Service I can work in the field."  
"Actually, it is a matter of convenience. The school is just close to my home."*

For a few volunteers, however, the fundamental principles were a direct factor in their choice of the Red Cross Red Crescent in comparison with other organisations. For longer serving volunteers, reflections on their National Society's capacity to live up to these principles were mixed:

*"I also volunteered with other organisation. Compared to that experience, volunteers in Red Cross are more unified as a team. They have a kind of 'volunteering principle' and we can learn that in the training. I prefer to join the well-organised team than volunteering individually."*

*"I like the history, I like the way they [Red Cross] interact with volunteers."*

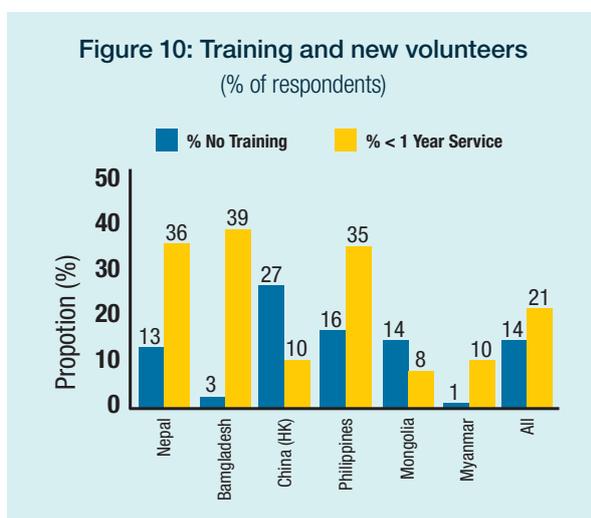
*"For me the fundamental principles are important, but I don't feel I can disseminate, because it is a point of honesty. People that are involved in politics, they should not be involved in high positions in Red Cross. They should not be eligible for board membership. It is a conflict, I think."*

*"I would say if there is one thing wrong here, it's that we [National Society] don't take the fundamental principles seriously. Because we have a chairman and unit committees elected by the president of this country. So, can I say to people, oh we are independent, we are neutral, they will think I am not serious."*

In general, the study found that volunteers valued service in itself, with many expressing a desire to overcome external and internal obstacles to volunteering. This suggests that humanitarianism is the core value for many volunteers, with volunteering outside the Movement enhancing rather than diminishing their commitment. However, the high value volunteers placed on personal development and relationships suggests that National Societies cannot take commitment to service for granted. Volunteers expect to benefit personally and socially from their volunteering experiences.

## 4.2 Motivation, training and engagement

Given that volunteers appear to value opportunities for personal development through volunteering, Figure 10 compares across countries the proportions of respondents who reported that they had not received training (other than an orientation) at the time of the survey. As the chance of receiving training may depend upon length of service, the chart also shows the proportions of respondents who had volunteered for the Red Cross Red Crescent for less than one year.



Overall, a substantial proportion of all respondents (14 per cent) reported no training and a fifth (21 per cent) of all respondents had volunteered for less than one year with the organisation. However, the data shows no relationship between new volunteering and lack of training:

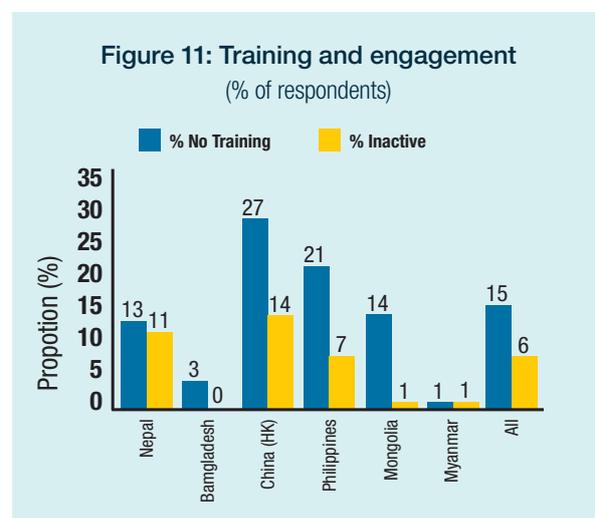
- In Dhaka, Bangladesh, almost two-fifths (39 per cent) of respondents were new volunteers, but only a few (3 per cent) were untrained.
- By contrast, very few respondents in Hong Kong, China, were new volunteers (10 per cent), but

almost four times this number (27 per cent) reported receiving no training.

In Hong Kong and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, it appears that a substantial number of individuals volunteering for more than a year had not received any training. One explanation for this may be that volunteers in these countries may be less active than volunteers in other countries, in which case low levels of training could be the result of lower levels of engagement.

To shed light on this possibility, Figure 11 shows the proportion of volunteers receiving no training and the proportion who were inactive in 2013. The results show that while Hong Kong volunteers were indeed less likely to be active in volunteering in 2013, this was not the case for urban volunteers in Mongolia. Moreover, for all cities (except Yangon, Myanmar), the numbers of volunteers without training far exceeded the inactive population. For example:

- In Ulaanbaatar (Mongolian) 14 per cent of volunteers reported receiving no training, but only 1 per cent reported not volunteering in 2013.



An alternative explanation for the finding that many active volunteers had received no training may be that a substantial numbers of urban volunteers bring previous qualifications and experience to their volunteering and do not require specialised training (beyond orientation) to engage in providing Red Cross Red Crescent services.

If activity does not require training, the two measures should not be correlated. To test this assumption, we estimated the statistical

significance of correlations between the number of Red Cross Red Crescent training courses completed and the level of volunteer engagement (the number of days a person volunteered per week in 2013, and the number of different services volunteered for in 2013).

Both relationships were positive and statistically highly significant, implying that activity does benefit from training. That is, increased training is associated with increased levels of engagement in terms of both the time committed and the services provided.<sup>4</sup> Volunteers with less training commit significantly fewer days per week and also deliver a significantly fewer number of services.

However, as we have already observed, a number of other factors interact in a volunteers' engagement. For example, people with lower levels of education, people who are working and people with children under the age of 18 years tend to commit fewer days per week and volunteer for fewer services (Table 3). Is their lower engagement the result of these other (external) factors? Or is it a result of fewer opportunities for training?

To understand the true impact of training on engagement our econometric model controlled for the potentially confounding effects of age, education, length of service, volunteering history and other demographic factors. The interpretation of this regression model based on a random sample of volunteers from China (Hong Kong) was described in Chapter 3.

The results of our modelling confirmed that increasing training also increases the average number of days spent volunteering in a typical week and the average number of services volunteered for in 2013.<sup>5</sup>

*Training by itself is beneficial in the engagement of volunteers, regardless of their motivations for volunteering, regardless of their age, volunteering history and length of service, and regardless of their education, employment status or family background.*

An even stronger influence on engagement was the length of voluntary service. Compared to those who had volunteered less than a year in the Movement, volunteers with five or more years of service contributed, on average, over half-a-day more per week and engaged in almost twice the number of services in 2013, while volunteers with three to four years volunteering service contributed an average of one more service.<sup>6</sup>

*Length of service by itself is positively related to engagement, regardless of amount of training or the volunteer's age, regardless of motivation and volunteering history, and whatever their level of education, employment status or family background.*



PRC Quezon City Red Cross Chapter Million Volunteer Run successfully conducted with the help of their volunteers.

<sup>4</sup> (Pearson's Linear Correlations,  $r = 0.16$  for number of days and  $r = 0.33$  for types of service volunteered for,  $p$ -values  $< 0.01$ ).

<sup>5</sup> Coefficients were statistically highly significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

<sup>6</sup> Coefficients were statistically highly significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

### 4.2.1 Interpretation

It is important to understand that the results reported for training and length of service are average effects.

Consider, for example, that we have 100 volunteers, individuals whose prior level of engagement varies, whose prior level of training varies, whose personal characteristics vary, whose length of service varies, whose motivations vary, and so on. Is it true that for each additional training course that each volunteer will increase his or her engagement?

No, individuals vary in their response to training, just as they vary on all other characteristics. The model does NOT tell us how many people respond positively to training.

What we can say is that for every additional training course that people report, average engagement

increases. The group who report three or more training courses have higher average engagement than the group who report two training courses, and the group who report two training courses have higher average engagement than the group who report one training course.

Given that, on average, training and engagement are positively related, and given that this effect is estimated independently of other influences on engagement we modelled, the benefit of training to National Societies is positive. Training is increasing with days volunteered and increasing in the services volunteered for.

What the model does NOT do is establish the causal direction of this relationship. However, it is plausible that training increases the number of services a person can volunteer for and the level of their engagement in those services, rather than the reverse.

### 4.3 Where should the focus be?

Our descriptive results suggest that, in addition to their desire to serve others, urban volunteers are motivated by a strong desire for personal development and, when linked to training, this incentive may foster higher levels of engagement in Red Cross Red Crescent activities and services. These results suggest that training is a powerful tool to support existing volunteers and increase their engagement.

All other things equal, length of service was also important to engagement. This suggests that National Societies reflect on how sensitive their current strategies are to diversification in the urban volunteering opportunities that encourage retention including, but not restricted to, diversification in the manner in which urban volunteering is best enabled.



From time to time, the Hong Kong Red Cross Puppet Volunteer Theatre conducts interesting and interactive puppetry activities in local communities to help disseminate caring messages and knowledge in various areas such as health, home safety, disaster preparedness and tracing service.

## 5. Recommendations

1. That National Societies invest in sustainable volunteering, including that:
  - a. National Societies allocate funding to volunteering reviews, research and evaluation.
  - b. National Societies consult with volunteers to identify groups affected by barriers to participation, and work with these groups to develop volunteer policies and, in particular, implementation guides offering practical solutions that reduce barriers, support livelihood, prohibit discrimination and promote diversity.
  - c. National Societies develop gender policies, including enforceable implementation rules and procedures to reduce gender imbalance in training, management and governance.
2. That National Societies maximise retention by developing new approaches to volunteering, including that:
  - a. National Societies explore volunteer opportunities for senior citizens.
  - b. National Societies explore new ways to involve youth, including, but not limited to, new volunteering opportunities using internet and social media.
3. That National Societies prioritise volunteer management. To facilitate this recommendation, we advise that:
  - a. National Societies train all volunteer managers, including making better use of existing internal and external resources, such as webinars or online seminars for training volunteer managers, the IFRC learning platform, and management seminars offered by other NGOs.
  - b. Volunteer managers are made accountable for the personal development of their volunteers including, but not limited to, leadership training and training on the fundamental principles.
  - c. National Societies empower volunteer managers to develop flexible work arrangements tailored according to who they recruit or are aiming to attract, and as a means to retain their volunteers.
4. That National Societies reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of volunteering in their specific urban context, including that:
  - a. National Societies explore cross-border initiatives that promote peer learning.
  - b. National Societies develop and evaluate effective governance and management systems, including volunteer policies and implementation guides that clearly define staff and volunteer roles, duties and rights.
5. That National Societies promote voluntarism in public spaces, including public promotion of Red Cross Red Crescent activities through media and social media and advocacy to secure government support for volunteering legislation.
6. That National Societies should prioritise existing resources to train and retain volunteers, including establishing an annual budget for volunteering development. To facilitate change, we recommend that:
  - a. Specific funding for volunteer support and development is separate from and independent of funding allocated to volunteer mobilisation to deliver programs or projects.
  - b. Programs externally funded should require that a portion of program funding be spent on volunteer development.
  - c. National Societies seek new sources of financial assistance, including corporate sponsorship and fundraising opportunities, specifically to support volunteers, including but not limited to support for insurance, safe transportation, safe equipment and reimbursement for costs borne by volunteers in carrying out services based on the clear and shared guidelines on reimbursement.

## 6. Tables

**Table 1: Engagement by respondents' volunteering history (means)**

Volunteering History	Mean Engagement	
	Days per week 2013	Number of Services 2013
<b>Non-RCRC Volunteering</b>		
0 orgs	2.02	2.66
1 org	2.11	2.54
2 orgs	2.20	3.69
3+ orgs	2.26	4.58
<b>RCRC Volunteering</b>		
Less than 1 Year	1.90	2.21
1-2 Years	2.03	2.52
3-4 Years	2.15	3.03
5 Years or more	2.30	3.86

**Table 2: Motivation orientation and engagement (means)**

High Motivation (rating of 6+ on 7 point scale)	Mean Engagement	
	Days per week 2013	Number of Services 2013
Service	2.15	3.14
Personal Development	2.02	3.09
Career	1.35	3.16

**Table 3: Engagement by respondent characteristics (means)**

Respondent Characteristics	Mean Engagement	
	Days per week 2013	Number of Services 2013
Women	1.91	2.73
Men	2.41	3.57
In paid work	1.86	2.97
Not in paid work	2.27	3.13
Children < 18 Years	2.11	3.16
No children < 18 years	2.14	3.06
Married	1.97	3.07
Unmarried (Single)	2.27	3.18
Unmarried (Other)	1.83	2.54
15-19 years old	1.92	3.17
20-24 years old	2.69	3.33
25-29 years old	2.40	3.05
30-34 years old	1.92	3.22
35-39 years old	2.21	3.20
40-44 years old	1.97	3.30
45-49 years old	1.94	3.05
50+ years old	1.81	2.73
College/University graduate	2.40	3.40
12+ Years of schooling	1.97	3.03
10-11 Years of schooling	2.36	3.68
8-9 Years of schooling	1.71	2.42
7 Years or less	1.89	2.54

**Table 4: Influences on levels of volunteer engagement, indicating significant factors (✓) and those, which were not (x).**

Number of Volunteers: 293		Engagement		
Factor	Measure	Number of Days	Services	
Training	Number of Courses	✓	✓	
Motivation	Service	x	x	
	Personal Development	x	x	
	Career	x	x	
<b>Length of RCRC Service Comparison Group ≤ 1 Year</b>				
Volunteering History	RCRC Service 1-2 Years	x	x	
	RCRC Service 3-4 Years	x	✓	
	RCRC Service ≥ 5 Years	✓	✓	
	Number of Other Organisations	x	x	
Demographics	Female	x	x	
	<b>Marital Status Comparison Group = Single</b>			
	Married	x	x	
	Widowed	x	x	
	Divorced	x	x	
	Separated	x	x	
	Children under 18	x	x	
	In paid work	x	x	
	<b>Education Level Comparison Group ≤ 7 Years</b>			
	Education 8-9 Years	x	x	
	Education 10-11 Years	x	x	
	Education ≥ 12 Years	x	x	
	Graduate	x	x	
	<b>Age Comparison Group = 15-24 Years</b>			
	20-24 Years	x	x	
	25-29 Years	x	x	
	30-34 Years	x	x	
	35-39 Years	x	x	
	40-44 Years	x	x	
45-49 Years	x	✓		
50+ Years	✓	x		

Estimation by ordinary least squares regression, significance of coefficients, p-value ≤ 0.05. Based on a random sample drawn from the China (Hong Kong) volunteer database (response rate 32%, giving 293 complete surveys).

**Table 5: Service, personal development and career motivations by country (means)**

	Nepal	Bangladesh	China (HK)	Philippines	Mongolia	Myanmar	All
<b>Service Mean</b>	5.4	5.1	4.7	5.1	5.0	4.9	5.0
<b>Range</b>	4.4	4.8	4.8	5.6	4.2	5.8	5.8
<b>P.D. Mean</b>	5.5	5.3	4.6	5.4	4.8	4.0	4.8
<b>Range</b>	4.4	5.0	5.4	5.2	4.4	6.0	6.0
<b>Career Mean</b>	4.2	4.7	3.1	4.0	3.4	2.8	3.6
<b>Range</b>	4.8	5.0	5.8	4.8	5.0	5.2	6.0

Note: care must be taken in cross-country comparisons (the horizontal dimension), due to well-documented cultural differences in the use of rating scales. Chinese and Myanmar respondents tended to rate all questions lower than the average for the sample as a whole, while respondents in Nepal, Bangladesh and Philippines, tended to rate all questions higher than the sample average. Respondents in Nepal, Bangladesh and Mongolia also used a more restricted range of options in rating questions. Comparisons within countries (the vertical dimension) are more reliable and are reported in the text.

**Table 6: history of non-Red Cross Red Crescent volunteering (% of respondents)**

Country	% by number of non-RCRC organisations volunteered for			
	0	1	2	3+
<b>Nepal</b>	4.6	50.5	21.1	23.9
<b>Bangladesh</b>	50.0	26.0	21.0	3.0
<b>China (HK)</b>	5.5	43.6	35.2	15.8
<b>Philippines</b>	20.2	46.8	14.5	18.6
<b>Mongolia</b>	24.3	49.8	14.6	11.3
<b>Myanmar</b>	12.2	57.4	16.8	13.7
<b>ALL</b>	18.9	45.2	21.9	14.0

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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.

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