



A study of Volunteering Charters and Policies from 19 National Societies: The Gaps and Opportunities

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1

Introduction

National Societies are guided by the principles identified in the IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011)

The **IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011)** sets out the vision of the Red Cross and Red Crescent of volunteerism as being the heart of the community. It highlights its commitment to promoting a culture of volunteering and creating environments that promote, protect, support and recognise the contribution of volunteers. It seeks to place the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to be the preferred choice of people seeking to volunteer.

IFRC reviewed volunteer policies, codes of conducts and volunteering charters from 19 National Societies from four regions. These 19 National Societies are Alliance members who agreed to share their documents and participate in the mapping exercise. While they are not representative of all National Societies - they are more likely to have complete sets of policies and tools - the review findings suggest that more needs to be done to align to the principles promoted by the IFRC volunteer policy.

1.1 Method

The study was designed to align with the elements in the IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011) and the text found within the draft global volunteer charter. 19 National Societies took part in the Study and follow up interviews were conducted with over half of the participating National Societies. The first round of consolidation involved asking the respective National Societies to provide their Volunteer Policy, Code of Conduct and if they have one in place, or something similar their Volunteer Charter. A second round of consolidation involved asking for any documents related to the management of volunteers. Finally, follow up skype and telephone conferences were conducted with 8 out of 19 National Societies. Others were consulted further through emails.

1.3.2 National Societies participating in the study

Africa	Americas	Asia Pacific	Europe
Ethiopia	Mexico	Nepal	Italy
Burundi	USA	Japan	Switzerland
Senegal		Australia	Spain
Togo			Denmark
Kenya			Germany
			United Kingdom
			Kyrgyzstan

			Finland
			Ireland

1.2 Limitations

The results presented in this study of Volunteering Policies and Charters are do not aim to explain how the use of these documents influence the motivation and engagement of volunteers. Moreover, the study only includes 10% of the 190 National Societies and does not include any National Society from the Mena region. Any generalisation should therefore be viewed with caution.

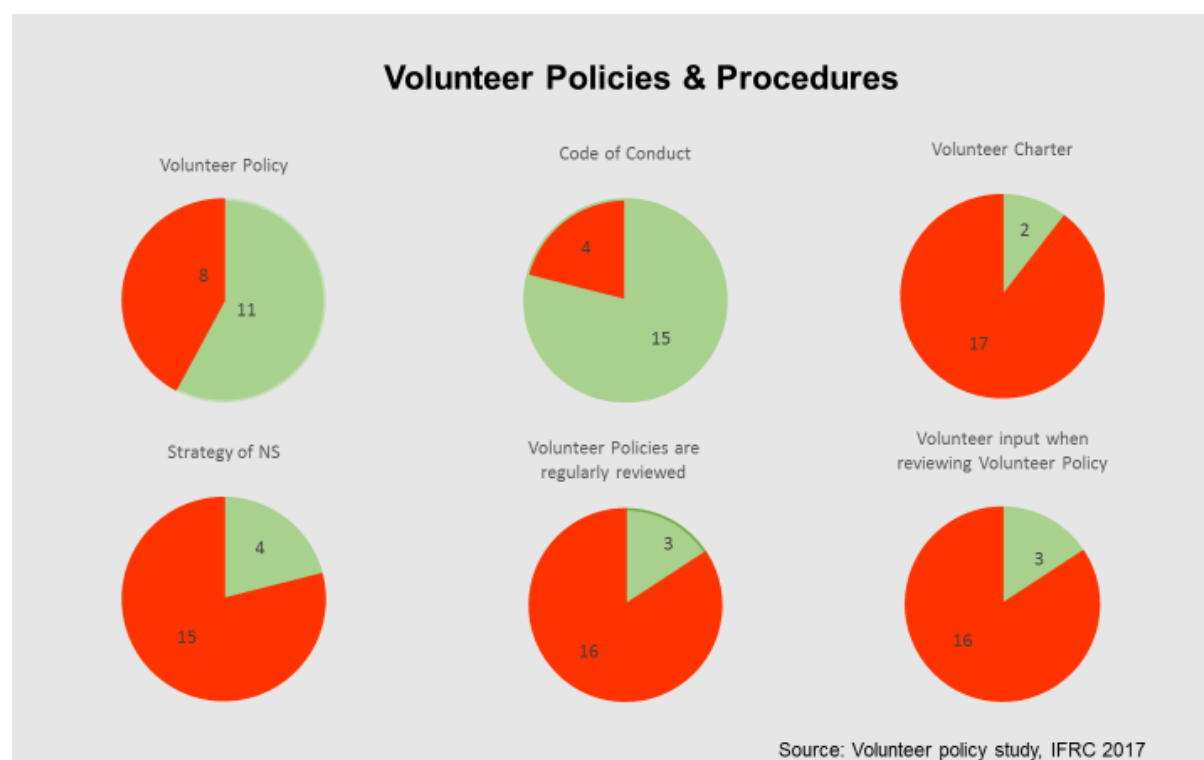
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Volunteer Policies & Procedures

National Societies set out a vision and an operational framework for the involvement of volunteers

“As National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies are trusted to serve communities from the inside, volunteering is the essential foundation for making and sustaining strong National Societies. A National Society’s capacity and effectiveness is directly related to its ability to mobilise, manage and empower volunteers from across the communities that it serves.” – IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011)

National Societies are expected to have volunteering policies in place based on a vision and an operational framework that provides direction and structure to the way volunteers are to be involved. **The IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011)** recognises that volunteering drives change in communities and is essential to the existence of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.



2.1 National Societies provide a framework for the involvement of volunteers

With the development of volunteer policies and related procedures, National Societies are recognising the contribution that volunteers make and are demonstrating their commitment to long-term volunteering to potential volunteers. 15 among the 19 National Societies have a Code of Conduct in place, eight of them are specifically for volunteers. Although the same strict ethical standards may apply to both staff and volunteers, appropriate code of conducts must be developed to protect volunteers and frame their responsibilities in an appropriate manner.

2.2 National Societies regularly review their policies and seek input from volunteers

The development of Volunteer Policies will further assist National Societies to identify and improve its operational procedures and improvements and involve volunteers in making process improvements. As communities continue to change and evolve with time, National Societies can adapt by evaluating and reviewing their volunteer policies, management tools and operating procedures to ensure their continuing suitability and effectiveness in promoting long-term volunteering.

Many respondents have not identified procedures that ensure their volunteer policies are reviewed on a regular basis; however, **after the adoption of the IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011), five National Societies reviewed their Volunteering Policies.** Furthermore, **three National Societies sought the input from their volunteers when developing their policies.**

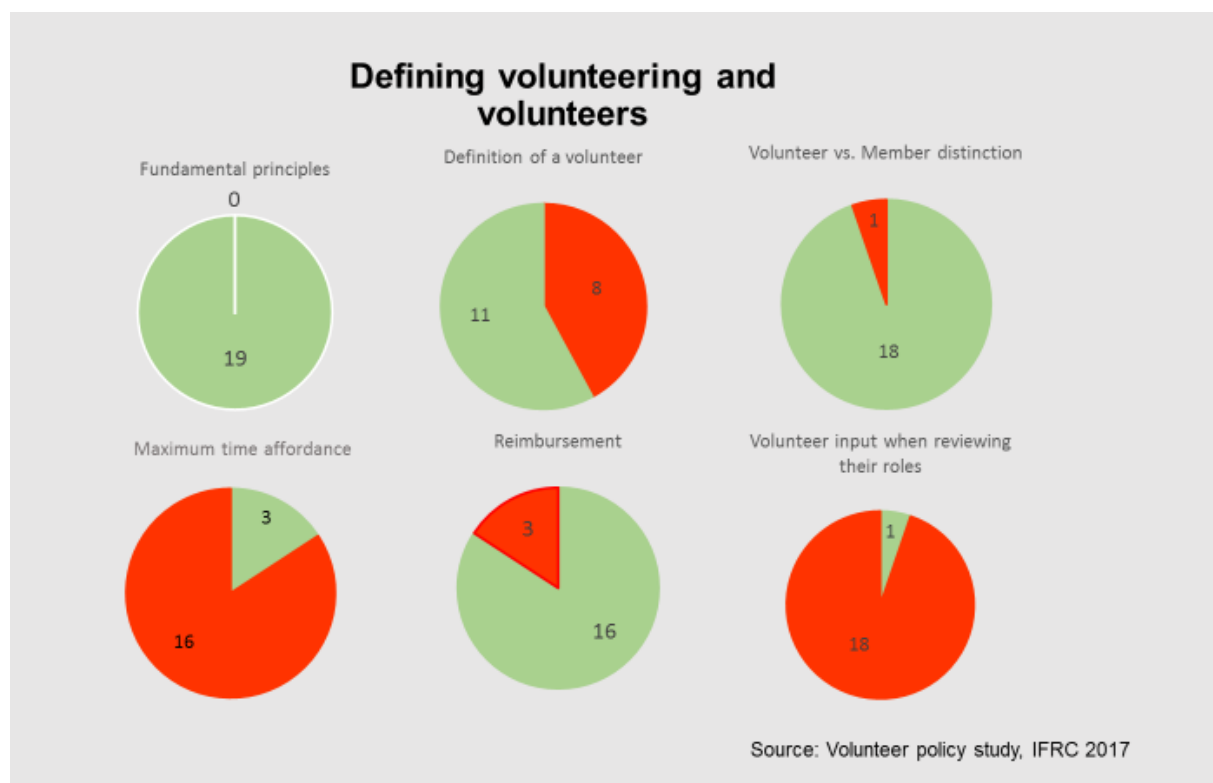
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Defining volunteering and volunteers

All National Societies and their volunteers are accountable to the Fundamental Principles

“A Red Cross Red Crescent volunteer is a person who carries out volunteering activities for a National Society, occasionally or regularly... Volunteering with the Red Cross Red Crescent is organised by recognised representatives of National Societies and is aimed at furthering its services and activities, always working in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. It is carried out by people motivated by free will, and not by a desire for material or financial gain, or by external social, economic or political pressure.” – IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011)

A Volunteer Policy is a reference for volunteers to protect their rights and in some extreme cases avoid exploitation. Volunteers carry out many roles in National Societies. Clarifying volunteer roles and responsibilities is a key component of developing an effective volunteer management system. Roles and responsibilities need to be reviewed regularly to remain effective and relevant in a changing environment.



3.1 The roles of volunteers are clearly documented and followed

The study found that all volunteers are accountable to the Fundamental Principles. Many provide a definition for the term “volunteer” and almost all make a distinction between a volunteer and a member of the National Society.

3.2 The reimbursement of volunteers' expenses

The **IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011)** calls for: “*National Societies [to] reimburse volunteers for preapproved expenditure related to their volunteering tasks.*”

Access to reimbursement can mean the difference between being able or unable to volunteer. **16 out of 19 National Societies provide for the reimbursement of volunteers' expenses.** However, lack of transparency surrounding the reimbursement process is of concern. In many cases reimbursement procedures discourages volunteering. Thus, National Societies have much to gain in informing their volunteers of this right.

3.3 National Societies seek input from volunteers when reviewing the roles of volunteers

Volunteers are recognised as strong advocates for their own needs and for those of the communities, yet **only one National Society could confirm that they directly seek the input from volunteers when reviewing and updating the roles of volunteers.**

Clearly defined roles and accountability may not seem a priority when National Societies face other pressing issues, yet having clear lines of responsibilities ensure that volunteers are not used as an alternative to staff but in fact are complementary: one increasing the work and value of the other.

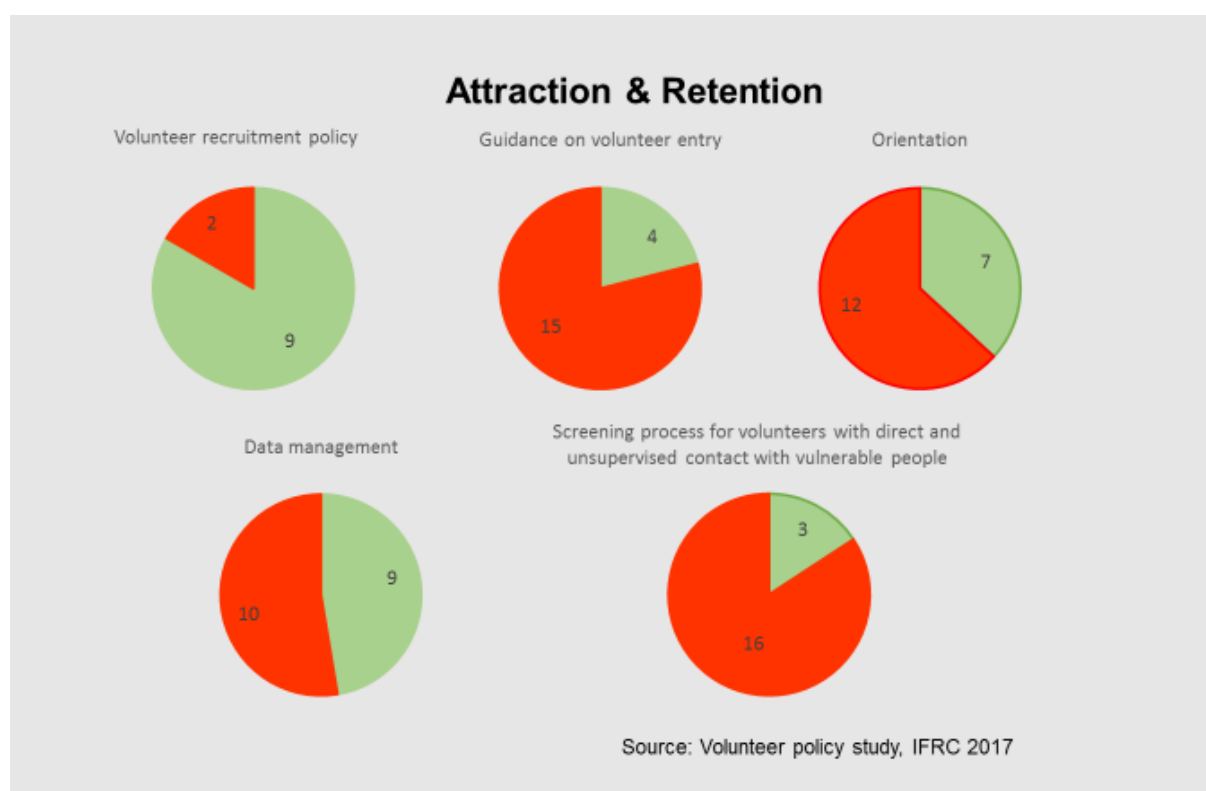
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Attraction & Retention

National Societies encourage diversity in the recruitment of volunteers

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

Clearly documented and implemented policies and managerial tools are essential for effective volunteer recruitment and retention. Individuals are more likely to pursue and continue volunteering with organisations that are well managed and therefore are seen to being more effective in meeting their expectations and needs. National Societies can ensure that in their recruitment of volunteers they are non-discriminatory and meet both the needs of the volunteers and the National Society. It is only when National Societies have an effective and systematic approach to recruiting and selecting volunteers that they will obtain optimum numbers of volunteers.



4.1 National Societies handle all potential interests in a non-discriminatory and prompt manner

National Societies acknowledge and respect the diversity that exists within their communities and most National Societies have developed a volunteer recruitment policy that seeks to ensure its volunteer base reflects the diversity of the local communities in which it operates. Greater engagement with diversity is also reflected in other managerial tools. For example, the Togolese Red Cross Charter details:

*“Dans le recrutement, la formation et l’utilisation des volontaires, la Société nationale doit veiller à une représentation plus ou moins équilibrée des hommes et des femmes dans la réalisation des programmes.”*¹ – Charter des volontaires, Togolese RC

The first contact between the volunteer and the National Society defines the relationship that is established. Potential volunteers must be addressed, treated and informed appropriately.

Yet **only a few National Societies provide guidance² on volunteer entry into the Movement.** Two examples are found below:

“Face-to-face interviews should be arranged as soon as possible after the potential volunteers contacts the Red Cross with interest in volunteering. Setting up the interview at the initial contact will “catch” the potential volunteer while their interest is peaked.” – Volunteer Management Manual, American Red Cross

*“Собеседование следует проводить не позже, чем в течение первых двух недель, после того как потенциальный волонтер обратился. Более длительное ожидание может привести к формированию у кандидата негативного впечатления об организации, которая даже не может найти время, чтобы встретиться с человеком, который предлагает ей свои услуги”*³- Guide to the organisation of the work of volunteer, Kyrgyzstan RC

National Societies carry out an orientation process to ensure that the choice of activity offered to the volunteer corresponds to their profile. It builds on the right of the volunteer to meaningful work and National Societies’ capability to mobilise volunteers. **Many National Societies provide documents regarding the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, including Volunteer Handbooks as in the case of the British Red Cross, American Red Cross, Kenya Red Cross⁴ and Irish Red Cross.**

National Societies do not always have defined procedures to ensure a diverse volunteer workforce. **Just under half of participating National Societies have a centralised volunteer data base and**

¹ “in the recruitment, training and the use of volunteers, the National Society must ensure a representation more or less balanced representation of men and women in the realization of the programs”

² Including a contact person dealing with initial inquiries and interview processes

³ “The interview should not later than during the first two weeks after the potential volunteer requested. A long wait may lead to the formation of the candidate of the negative experience of the Organization which cannot even find the time to meet with the person who offers its services.”

⁴ For youth volunteers

only one National Society could confirm that it is regularly updated and reviewed. A National Society cannot confirm that their volunteer workforce reflects the diversity within their communities if they do not collect and maintain records on the volunteers.

4.2 National Societies screen the suitability of applicants for volunteer position

When screening the suitability of volunteers, National Societies take their capacities and availability into considerations on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the requirements and priorities of the National Society. This is to ensure the safety of children, the elderly and individuals with disabilities, the quality of the work undertaken and to promote long-term volunteering. For example, **one National Society has provisions in place for volunteer applicants to undergo a police check prior to engaging in activities.**

5

Protection & Support

National Societies provide work within a supported environment

The **IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011)** advises that: *“National Societies ensure that their volunteers are properly prepared to carry out their work, through providing them with relevant and timely information, training and equipment, feedback on their performance, as well as appropriately assessed safety and security measures.”* And that: *“They insure their volunteers against accidents, and provide them with appropriate psychosocial support when required.”*

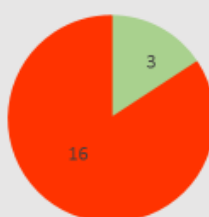
Policies protect volunteers against exploitation, unhealthy and unsafe working conditions and any ambiguity on expectations and responsibilities. To ensure the health, safety and psychosocial wellbeing of volunteers, National Societies have committed to implementing policies and procedures that control, monitor and review the work of volunteers as well as the environment in which they work. It builds on the right to satisfying and meaningful work and the right to work in a healthy and safe environment.

Protection & Support

Occupational Health & Safety Policy



Psychological support



Insurance



Source: Volunteer policy study, IFRC 2017

5.1 National Societies have policies and procedures in place to control the environment in which the work of volunteers takes place

Currently **only one National Society has a general occupational health & safety policy** in place for their volunteers and inform their volunteers of it accordingly. Furthermore, **only three National Societies have express provisions on access to psychosocial support**. However, many admitted that they provide psychosocial support through informal ways such as debriefing sessions.

5.2 National Societies provide insurance for their volunteers

One National Society does not currently insure its volunteers, which translates to approximately 60,000 volunteers being uninsured (out of a sample study size of approximately 3.4 million). **Two National Societies previously used the IFRC Insurance but both of which have now withdrawn.**

In cases where National Societies opt for a local insurance scheme they are expected to inform their volunteers of the terms and conditions of the local insurance. For instance, whether the insurance policy extends to volunteers who are minors.

5.3 IFRC 'Stay Safe'

The aim of the 'Stay Safe' Course provided by the IFRC learning platform is to provide minimum security preparation for volunteer and to assist National Societies to establish an appropriate security management system. **Although all 19 participating National Societies are registered on the platform, out of an approx. 3.4 million total volunteer sample base, less than 1% of volunteers have completed it.** Through the follow up interviews, some National Societies reported that the e-learning courses provided by the IFRC are not relevant to their National Society.

6

Training & Development

National Societies ensure volunteer development & satisfaction

The **IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011)** advises: “*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.*” And recommends that “*National Societies recognise that volunteers have a significant stake in the organisation. They take formal and informal opportunities to appreciate, individually and collectively, the work of volunteers and its impact.*”

National Societies have committed to developing policies and tools that will ensure that volunteers are provided with the necessary training to effectively carry out their roles, and to receive regular feedback and recognition on completed tasks, whether formally or informally. This requires policies and procedures to support and complement the training of volunteers and recognising their contribution. Volunteers will become active agents of change by being supported and empowered through effective policies.



6.1 National Societies provide feedback to volunteers about their work

All National Societies facilitate communication and provide spaces for volunteers to interact with one another. **A majority of National Societies have a volunteer M&E process in place**, either, in the form of evaluation forms or discussions after the activity has taken place.

6.2 National Societies provide volunteers with opportunities to access external training

Only a few National Societies provide volunteers with opportunities to access external training. **Four National Societies do speak of the personal development of their volunteers but do not provide learning opportunities outside of their respective National Societies.** During the follow up interviews, many National Societies reported they do not necessarily promote the courses offered by the IFRC because the courses often are not relevant to their National Society.

6.3 Volunteer satisfaction

Some National Societies gather information from volunteers in regards to their satisfaction with their work and environment, usually by conducting surveys and exit interviews. Furthermore, **only one National Society could confirm that they use the information when planning the recruitment of new volunteers.**

7

Moving forward

What do the numbers tell us?

The **IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011)** provides comprehensive, broad and high level guidance through three main thrusts: promotion, protection and support and the recognition of volunteers. The study found that National Societies are continuously informed by the Federation Policy. To be more effective National Societies, require more guidance and support in the actual implementation of the Policy, in particular, in database management, volunteer satisfaction and motivation, volunteer well-being including psychosocial support and the safety and security of volunteers.

The current IFRC Volunteering Policy is being used as a benchmark and reference, and as such is meeting its purpose. The Volunteer Charter, which is under development complements the IFRC policy and guides National Societies in improving their volunteer policies and management practices.

Annex I

List of Documents

No.	Title of Document	National Society
1	Volunteer Policy	Australian Red Cross
2	Code of Conduct	Australian Red Cross
3	Code of Conduct (Child Protection)	Australian Red Cross
4	Volunteering Policy	British Red Cross
5	Mutual Expectations	British Red Cross
6	Awards Guidance	British Red Cross
7	Volunteer Complaints Issues and Concerns Policy	British Red Cross
8	Confidentiality policy and guidance	British Red Cross
9	Harassment and bullying policy	British Red Cross
10	Health and Safety General Statement of Policy	British Red Cross
11	Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy	British Red Cross
12	Safeguarding Adults at Risk (of abuse or harm) Policy	British Red Cross
13	Travel and Expenses Policy v2	British Red Cross
14	Volunteer Handbook	British Red Cross
15	LA POLITIQUE NATIONALE DE VOLONTARIAT DE LA CROIX ROUGE DU BURUNDI	Burundi Red Cross
16	CODE DE CONDUITE POUR LES VOLONTAIRES ET LE PERSONNEL DE LA CROIX ROUGE DU BURUNDI	Burundi Red Cross
17	Strategy to strengthen Burundi Red Cross Society	Burundi Red Cross
18	RØDE KORS-AFTALE - OM FRIVILLIG INDSATS	Danish Red Cross
19	Strategy on Volunteer Management	Danish Red Cross
20	BESTYRELSESGUIDE	Danish Red Cross
21	Volunteer Policy	Ethiopian Red Cross
22	CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ERCS VOLUNTEERS	Ethiopian Red Cross
23	Management Guidelines	Ethiopian Red Cross
24	Volunteer Policy	Finnish Red Cross
25	Strategische Weiterentwicklung des DRK 2011-2020 Menschen helfen, Gesellschaft gestalten	German Red Cross
26	Verbindliche Mindeststandards	German Red Cross
27	EQ- Standard check service center volunteering	German Red Cross
28	Verknüpfung von Haupt- und Ehrenamt in DRK- Kindertageseinrichtungen	German Red Cross
29	Ehrenamt im Deutschen Roten Kreuz	German Red Cross

30	Wegweiser Ehrenamtskoordination ein handbuch fuerr die praxir	German Red Cross
31	Ordnung für Aus-, Fort- und Weiterbildung des Deutschen Roten Kreuzes	German Red Cross
32	Irish Red Cross Volunteer Policy	Irish Red Cross
33	Code of Conduct for Volunteers	Irish Red Cross
34	Volunteer Handbook	Irish Red Cross
35	Code of Conduct for Board of Directors and Senior Management of the Irish Red Cross	Irish Red Cross
36	CODICE ETICO, PROVVEDIMENTI DISCIPLINARI E COLLEGI DISCIPLINARI	Italian Red Cross
37	Norme di assicurazione per polizza - infortuni per il personale volontario	Italian Red Cross
38	PRINCIPI E VALORI UMANITARI STRATEGIA DELLA CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA	Italian Red Cross
39	REGOLAMENTO SULL'ORGANIZZAZIONE, LE ATTIVITÀ, LA FORMAZIONE E L'ORDINAMENTO DEI VOLONTARI	Italian Red Cross
40	○赤十字ボランティア事故見舞金の贈与にかかる取扱 要綱	Japanese Red Cross
41	○赤十字ボランティア事故見舞金の贈与にかかる取扱 要綱及び青少年赤十字メンバー等見舞金の贈与にかか る取扱要綱の制定について	Japanese Red Cross
42	○赤十字奉仕団指導要領	Japanese Red Cross
43	○災害救護・防災活動等に関する特殊赤十字奉仕団活 動の今後の強化策について	Japanese Red Cross
44	○赤十字奉仕団活動推進指導要領	Japanese Red Cross
45	赤十字奉仕団活動強化要綱	Japanese Red Cross
46	○赤十字奉仕団活動強化要綱の制定について	Japanese Red Cross
47	○赤十字奉仕団規則	Japanese Red Cross
48	○赤十字奉仕団等ボランティアの研修体系の整備につ いて	Japanese Red Cross
49	Volunteer Policy	Kenya Red Cross
50	KRCS Volunteer insurance cover notes	Kenya Red Cross
51	KRCS Volunteer insurance policy doc	Kenya Red Cross
52	Management Guidelines	Kenya Red Cross
53	Guidelines for Management of RCATs	Kenya Red Cross

54	KRCS Youth Handbook 2015	Kenya Red Cross
55	Volunteer Application Form	Kenya Red Cross
56	АНКЕТА ВОЛОНТЕРА	Kyrgyzstan Red Cross
57	Форма для собеседования с волонтером	Kyrgyzstan Red Cross
58	Правила поведения волонтеров НОКП КР	Kyrgyzstan Red Cross
59	Договор о волонтерской деятельности	Kyrgyzstan Red Cross
60	Лист учета времени работы волонтера	Kyrgyzstan Red Cross
61	Оценка работы волонтера за	Kyrgyzstan Red Cross
62	Отзыв о работе волонтера	Kyrgyzstan Red Cross
63	НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЕ ОБЩЕСТВО КРАСНОГО ПОЛУМЕСЯЦА КЫРГЫЗСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ	Kyrgyzstan Red Cross
64	Gestión del Voluntariado CARTA COMPROMISO	Mexican Red Cross
65	National Volunteer Management Policy	Nepal Red Cross
66	Code of Conduct for the Nepal Red Cross Volunteers/Members	Nepal Red Cross
67	Nepal Junior/ Youth Red Cross Policy	Nepal Red Cross
68	CODE DE CONDUITE	Senegal Red Cross
69	GESTION DU VOLONTARIAT DES SOCIETES NATIONALES DE LA CROIX-ROUGE ET DU CROISSANT ROUGE D'AFRIQUE	Senegal Red Cross
70	Carta de Derechos y Deberes del Voluntariado	Spanish Red Cross
71	CODIGO DE CONDUCTA DE CRUZ ROJA ESPAÑOLA	Spanish Red Cross
72	Volunteer Management Guidelines	Spanish Red Cross
73	VOLCRE 50401 Formato acuerdo de incorporación	Spanish Red Cross
74	VOLCRE 50501 Formato compromiso	Spanish Red Cross
75	Boletín interactivo_en	Spanish Red Cross
76	Spanish Red Cross Experience on IT volunteering management	Spanish Red Cross
77	Informe anual encuesta bajas 2016	Spanish Red Cross
78	Informe anual encuesta WP 2016	Spanish Red Cross
79	Leitlinien Freiwilligenarbeit des Schweizerischen Roten Kreuzes	Swiss Red Cross
80	Lignes directrices de la Croix-Rouge suisse en matière de bénévolat	Swiss Red Cross
81	Verhaltenskodex für Freiwillige im SRK	Swiss Red Cross
82	Code de conduite à l'intention des bénévoles de la CRS	Swiss Red Cross

83	Charte des Volontaires	Togolese Red Cross
84	Code de conduite	Togolese Red Cross
85	Accident claim form for professional accident coverage for volunteers	Togolese Red Cross
86	GESTION DU VOLONTARIAT DES SOCIETES NATIONALES DE LA CROIX-ROUGE ET DU CROISSANT ROUGE D'AFRIQUE	Togolese Red Cross
87	CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE FOR VOLUNTEERS ACCIDENT PROGRAMME 2013	Togolese Red Cross
88	NOTE DE SERVICE PORTANT GRILLE DES INDEMNITES JOURNALIERES APPLICABLES A LA CRT	Togolese Red Cross
89	ARC Charter Info	American Red Cross
90	AMERICAN RED CROSS CODE OF BUSINESS ETHICS AND CONDUCT	American Red Cross
91	Volunteer Handbook	American Red Cross
92	Volunteer Management Manual	American Red Cross
93	Volunteer Management Basics	American Red Cross
94	The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief	IFRC
95	Accident insurance for Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers	IFRC
96	Copy of Volunteers subscription form	IFRC
97	Accident claim form for professional accident coverage for volunteers	IFRC
98	Volunteering Policy	IFRC
99	Stay safe 2016 IFRC staff status	IFRC