The value of our volunteers

A Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) study focusing on the assistance provided by the Myanmar Red Cross Society volunteers to those affected by the inter-communal violence in the Rakhine State

by

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How we work

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A Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) study focusing on the assistance provided by the Myanmar Red Cross Society volunteers to those affected by the inter-communal violence in the Rakhine State.

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Executive summary

In June 2012, inter-communal violence in the Rakhine State erupted with a series of violent conflicts between Buddhists and Muslims causing deaths and displacing 150,000 people. The sensitive environment made it very challenging for the Myanmar Red Cross to access all communities. In order to deliver its mandate of serving the most vulnerable from all sides of the conflict, MRCS mobilized a total of 320 volunteers from other states/regions and deployed them to Rakhine for a 25 to 30 day mission.

The study highlights the economic value of volunteers based on the volunteering hours they have rendered during the same period. The study underscores as well the key role of volunteers as front liners in the inter-communal conflict – translating into action the Seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as they went about helping those in need, giving priority to most urgent cases regardless of race, religion and parties involved in the conflict. The unwavering courage of volunteers has heightened people’s respect for Myanmar Red Cross as an impartial and neutral humanitarian organization that is capable of helping everyone and anyone in need even in times of communal conflict.

This study focuses on this significant volunteer mobilization covering the period from June 2012 to April 2013.

Key findings

- Total number of beneficiaries reached: 70,651 of beneficiaries reached
- 874 people were assisted for emergency evacuation.
- Total number of volunteers mobilized: 320
- Total number of volunteering hours: 87,320 hours at an average of 273 hours per volunteer
- Equivalent full paid staff: 45
- Total volunteer investment: MMK 151,684,550 or CHF 166,853, an average investment of MMK 474,014 / CHF 521 per volunteer.
- The total volunteer value of the Rakhine operation is MMK 295,164,315.97 / CHF 324,680.
- VIVA ratio: 1:2, meaning that for every one MMK spent for each volunteer, MRCS received two MMK’s worth of services from each volunteer.
This study recommends:

1. To review and revise the current volunteer management system and procedures to enhance volunteer retention and sustainable volunteering actions.

2. To identify the appropriate means and ways of volunteer mobilization and motivation in line with the revised Strategic Plan 2015.

3. To continue conducting regular VIVA studies in order to measure the cost effectiveness of the community based projects and to illustrate the economic value of MRCS volunteers.
1. Introduction

The Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) model was developed by Katharine Gaskin¹ to highlight the economic value of volunteer work. The model assesses the total value of volunteering by considering the total cost the National Society (NS) spends on its volunteers vis-à-vis the total economic value of the services they have rendered. It gives important information about the cost effectiveness of the project or programme under review.

Since a pure VIVA study only focuses on the economic value of volunteers, the IFRC study authors included in this study the other contributions that volunteering has brought to the individual volunteers, to the beneficiaries, to the branches and to the national society. We have included quotes from volunteers and beneficiaries, as well as factual data on services rendered and persons assisted where possible. We have a more encompassing title “The value of our volunteers.”

This particular value of our volunteers study focuses on the work done by state/region volunteer teams organized and deployed by Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) organizational development (OD) division to respond to the Rakhine inter-communal conflict in 2012. The study covers the first year of the project from June 2012 to April 2013. The operation is ongoing as the unstable situations and small violent incidents continue in some townships of Rakhine State.

The MRCS participation in the 2013 value of volunteers study was supported by the IFRC Asia Pacific zone by sending Finnish youth delegate Kaisa Loikkanen to co-write the study with Khin Myo Myat Thein, MRCS head of OD division. Lloyd Sapla from the Philippines Red Cross and Alex Torres from the IFRC AP zone also provided full support to the study.

Objectives of the study:

1. Determine the economic value of the services rendered by the volunteers mobilized for the MRCS Rakhine operation.
2. Provide evidence based recommendation to improve volunteer management in Myanmar Red Cross Society.

“Red Cross volunteering is very interesting and inspiring and gives me a long term commitment to support the lives of the vulnerable.”

– U Thet Naing, volunteer with 35 years of RC experience

Myanmar Red Cross Society

Myanmar Red Cross Society was established in 1920 as a branch of Indian Red Cross Society. Burma (former name of Myanmar) separated formally from India in 1937 and in 1939 the Society obtained official national status. The organization was renamed Myanmar Red Cross Society in accordance with legislative change of the name from Burma to Myanmar in 1989. Today Myanmar Red Cross Society is the leading humanitarian organization in Myanmar and it is committed to improve the lives of the most vulnerable through promoting humanitarian values and community-based health and care and disaster management.

Rakhine State and the Rakhine State Red Cross branch

Rakhine State is situated on the western coast of Myanmar. It is bordered by Chin State in the north, Magway Region, Bago Region and Ayeyarwady Region in the east, the Bay of Bengal to the west, and the Chittagong Division of Bangladesh to the northwest. The Arakan Mountains, which rise to 3,063 metres (10,049 ft.) at Victoria Peak, separate Rakhine State from central Burma. Off the coast of Rakhine State there are some fairly large islands such as Cheduba and Myingun Island. Rakhine State has an area of 36,762 square kilometres (14,194 sq mi) and its capital is Sittwe.

Rakhine State consists of four districts: (1) Sittwe; (2) Maungdaw; (3) Kyaukphyu; (4) Thandwe and has a total population of 2,915,000 people. Combined, these districts have a total of 17 townships and 1,164 village-tracts. Sittwe is the capital of the State.

The Rakhine State Red Cross branch office is located in the capital Sittwe. It is governed by the State Red Cross supervisory committee and managed by a G1 (Grade 1) who is a long time volunteer of the Red Cross. The 17 township Red Cross branches are also governed by their respective township Red Cross supervisory committees and managed by the 2IC (second-in-command) who is likewise a long time volunteer of the township.

Township Red Cross 2ICs report to the State G1 who in turn is the focal link of the State to the MRCS Headquarters (HQ). Currently, the ex-officio chairpersons of the State and township supervisory committees are the State health officers and township health officers, respectively.

For more information about the Myanmar Red Cross Society and its services go to: www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org

Volunteer deployment for the Rakhine operation

Description of the situation in Rakhine

The unrest in Rakhine State in Myanmar began in June 2012 with a series of violent conflicts primarily between Buddhists and Muslims. The Myanmar government authorities have responded to the conflict by imposing curfews and by deploying their troops in the region. The government announced a state of emergency on 10 June 2012 allowing military to participate in the administration of the region. The conflict has caused approximately 240 casualties and about 150,000 people have been displaced due to the unrest.

The sensitive environment in Rakhine made it very challenging for local MRCS volunteers to access all communities affected by the ethnic conflicts. In order to deliver its mandate of serving the vulnerable from all sides of the conflict, MRCS mobilized volunteers from other states/regions and deployed them to Rakhine for a 25 to 30 day mission. This caused the increase in transportation and per diem costs for volunteer mobilization. However, this also made the MRCS the only recognized and respected aid organization that could access to all areas without need for armed escorts. Red Cross volunteers are doing their utmost best to preserve their acceptance among all communities by providing impartial aid.

In the Rakhine conflict, Myanmar Red Cross Society is demonstrating the seven fundamental principles in action, emphasizing neutrality and impartiality, by providing aid to both sides of the conflict regardless of the ethnicity, religion, sex, age and beliefs. This is essential to ensure safe access to the conflict site in Rakhine and in other parts of the country at all times.

Rakhine operation volunteer profiles

A total of 320 RC volunteers participated in the Rakhine operation between June 2012 and April 2013. The volunteers were divided into four groups, each doing different roles depending on their previous experience and skills. The four groups were: first aiders, relief workers, health educators and administrative and reporting volunteers.

While a lot of female MRCS volunteers wanted to participate in the Rakhine operation, they were deliberately not included in favour of male volunteers. The focal point for volunteers cited the following reasons in making this decision:
1. The accommodation place is hall type, 18’x 70’ extension of relief warehouse, only one room for 35 volunteers
2. There is no separate bath room and latrine for male and female.
3. Deploying female volunteers in this specific situation will require a different safety and security arrangements which the organizers are not yet able to do.

A significant majority of those who volunteered for this operation are under 30 years old. Majority of them were long time volunteers of the MRCS but there were newly recruited volunteers as well. They all come from different races.

The approach used in the Rakhine should be fully understood and appreciated within the context of the Rakhine conflict. In all other cases, the MRCS ensures full diversity in its recruitment and mobilization of volunteers.

**The recruitment of Red Cross volunteers deployed in Rakhine**

The minimum requirements for a volunteer to be mobilized in the Rakhine operation are:
- between 18 and 65 years old.
- has completed Basic First Aid training within the last two years.
- physically, mentally and emotionally fit.
- willing to work with both sides of the conflict according to the 7 Fundamental Principles
- be able to work at least 30 days in Rakhine.
- must act according to the Volunteer Code of Conduct

In addition, it is preferred that the volunteer:
- has undergone Emergency Response Training or National Disaster Response Training
- is a first aid instructor or health educator.

**Volunteer management**

The MRCS-OD Division has the responsibility of recruiting, briefing, deploying, supporting and debriefing volunteers for the Rakhine operation. The key tasks of the division include:
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1. Deciding how many Red Cross volunteers are needed, what kind of experience and skills they should have and how long they will be volunteering.
2. With approval from the secretary general, coordinating with the state/region Red Cross committees to recruit volunteers that fits the deployment criteria.
3. Developing security guidelines for Red Cross volunteers working in communal conflict situation.
4. Developing and implementing a volunteer deployment plan for each state/region to ensure sufficient number of volunteers are available in every batch that is sent to Rakhine.
5. Sending of letter of reminder to state/region Red Cross to keep local authorities always properly informed and updated so MRCS could get their full support.
6. Collecting of Red Cross volunteer data and making practical preparations for their deployment (accommodation, transportation, local support etc.) and for their going home.
7. Calculating budget and ensuring financial support to the deployed team.
8. Getting insurance coverage for the deployed team.
9. Organizing a briefing (before deployment) and debriefing (after they have completed their mission) for Red Cross volunteers at Yangon office.
10. Organizing a briefing session in Sittwe on the tasks ahead for each volunteer.
11. Ensuring that OD Division will actively participate in the monitoring and evaluation of volunteer management issues raised in Rakhine.
12. Ensure that all deployed volunteers are well appreciated and recognized.

Volunteer duty hours

The Rakhine operation volunteers work from 8am to 4pm seven days per week. All volunteers have one or two recreation time visits to View point, Sittwe during 30 days of deployment. The recreation time visits were organized after a full day volunteer work and to ensure they did not affect the actual volunteering hours.

“We facilitated and educated group of children and women at IDP camps on personal hygiene and hand washing practice. We heard that Community people said “they are getting more confident than before.” This makes me happy and I promised to join again the deployment team going to Sittwe.”

– Zyi Zyi, volunteer
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MRCS volunteer provides first aid services to injured children.

The duties of Red Cross volunteers in the Rakhine IDP (Internally displaced persons) camps:

1. Provide first aid services and health care education.
2. Organise mobile health clinics.
3. Organise water and sanitation activities such as water collection, distribution, water purification, installation of water tanks and fumigation of latrines.
4. Conduct hygiene promotion.
5. Relief goods distribution (participation in rice distribution donated by Qatar Red Crescent, Turkish Red Crescent and World Food Programme).
6. Emergency medical evacuation, when necessary.
7. Provide psychosocial support to IDPs.
8. Gather relevant data and prepare report to be submitted to team leader.

Services delivered by volunteers in the Rakhine between June 2012 and April 2013

For the period under study, the volunteers have reached 70,651 beneficiaries, broken down as follows:

- 35,400 people received first aid treatment.
- 25,347 people received health education.
- 9,030 people got psychosocial support.
- 874 people were assisted during emergency evacuation.
2. Analysis of the volunteer investment and value audit

A. Total volunteer investment

The total volunteer investment shows all the expenses associated with having volunteers. It must be emphasized that these expenses were incurred by MRCS because of the involvement of volunteers in the Rakhine operation.

Table 1. Total volunteer investment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Expenditure</th>
<th>Cost Detail</th>
<th>Amount (MMK)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Travel expenses made by volunteers to fulfil their duties</td>
<td>76,405,500</td>
<td>50.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>Equipment provided to volunteers</td>
<td>9,600,000</td>
<td>6.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Expenses</td>
<td>Expenses incurred for the trainings of volunteers as part of capacity building</td>
<td>2,632,000</td>
<td>1.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefing &amp; De-briefing</td>
<td>The OD unit briefing and de-briefing at Yangon</td>
<td>2,239,550</td>
<td>1.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Insurance for volunteers</td>
<td>320,000</td>
<td>0.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Accommodation for deployed volunteers</td>
<td>10,697,500</td>
<td>7.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perdiem</td>
<td>Perdiem</td>
<td>49,790,000</td>
<td>32.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>151,684,550</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MMK=Myanmar kyat

The figures showing the different costs were actual costs and the information was obtained from the OD team. This calculation do not include personnel costs of the regular paid staff of the MRCS OD division. The calculation included only the costs of briefing, capacity building training and debriefing conducted by the OD team.

Transportation

Transportation costs covered the volunteers’ transport from their local branch to the training venue in Yangon, as well as their transport to and from the operation area. This was the highest cost due to the fact that all volunteers mobilized and deployed in the Rakhine operation came from other MRCS branches. If it were local volunteers who were mobilized, the cost of transportation would decrease tremendously. Most of the volunteers deployed came from remote areas that took three days to travel by air to reach Rakhine State. With the high cost of plane fare plus additional expense for extra days at the transit place, MRCS had to spend MMK 76,405,500 (50.37% of total investment).
**Per diem**

Per diem was MMK 5,000 per day per volunteer covering meal expenses. This was the second highest investments after the transportation costs.

**Supporting materials**

Supporting materials referred to personal hygiene kit provided to every volunteer. The materials included plastic box, towel, toothbrush and tooth-paste, soap, detergent powder, comb, body powder, hair cream, disposable hand gloves, mask, nail clipper, ear plugs and shampoo.

**Insurance**

Insurance cost MMK 1,000 per volunteer for 2013 and all Rakhine volunteers were insured in the IFRC insurance scheme in line with MRCS’s “Supporting Guideline for RCVs working in emergency/disaster management”.

**Accommodation**

Accommodation costs included accommodation during transit and training days in Yangon and onsite in Rakhine.

**Training**

The training expenses covered the basic First Aid training (refresher) of the volunteers as well as the more advanced capacity building training conducted by the OD team and technical divisions.

**Briefing and de-briefing**

Briefing and debriefing were organized in Yangon by the OD team. The briefing part consisted of informing the volunteers about the practical issues and safety guidelines for working in field operation. The debriefing included costs of a farewell dinner for the volunteers.
B. Total volunteer value

This section analyses the functions carried out by volunteers and time spent on each activity, and matches it to the equivalent paid work at the market wage. This produces an estimated amount – what Myanmar Red Cross Society would need to pay if it were hiring staff to carry out the same work. The table below presents the equivalent positions or paid works a volunteer was doing during the course of their duties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title / Role</th>
<th>Equivalent Paid Job</th>
<th>Hourly Wage Rate*</th>
<th># of Hours in total</th>
<th>Total Value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Aider</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>3,461.66</td>
<td>50,400</td>
<td>174,467,727.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relief worker</td>
<td>Support Officer</td>
<td>2,884.72</td>
<td>12,320</td>
<td>35,539,722.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health educator</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>3,461.66</td>
<td>13,640</td>
<td>47,217,059.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Reporting Volunteer</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>3,461.66</td>
<td>10,960</td>
<td>37,939,807.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>87,320</strong></td>
<td><strong>295,164,315.97</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MMK=Myanmar kyat

The average wage rates were based on the most current wages MRCS pays its employees. However, these wage rates are substantially lower than the average wage rates in private market and other national NGOs in Myanmar. Should the study consider average wages in private sector, the economic value of volunteering would be obviously higher.

First aider was the most common role of the volunteers during Rakhine operation. First aiders provided first aid services and refer other cases to respective appropriate offices.

Relief workers focused on water and food distribution rescue and relief, evacuation, needs assessment, relief good distribution, logistic works, loading and uploading of relief goods and restoring family link.

“Red Cross volunteering is very noble work and I value it more than anything else. I will work for Red Cross till the end of my life.”

– U Kyaw Naing Oo, RC volunteer since 1973

Health educators advised the community about health care, water and sanitation, and personnel hygiene. They also educated the people how to avoid risk and harm and how to prevent communicable diseases in mass crowded population.

Administrative volunteer’s duties included registration of Red Cross volunteer participation in daily volunteering, supervision and reporting, assigning duties and responsibilities, daily office management, arranging meal and refreshment for the volunteers, arranging transportation, financial clearance and other insurance issues, if required.
C. The VIVA ratio

The VIVA ratio is computed using the formula:

\[
\text{VIVA ratio} = \frac{\text{Total volunteer value}}{\text{Total volunteer investment}}
\]

Using the values obtained during the VIVA exercise, we can reach the following calculation:

\[
\text{VIVA ratio} = \frac{295,164,315.97}{151,684,550.00} = 1.945 \approx 2 : 1
\]

The VIVA ratio calculation means that for every Myanmar kyat spent on each Rakhine operation volunteer, the Myanmar Red Cross Society received two kyats’ worth of services from each volunteer.

D. Total number of volunteer hours

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of volunteers</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of volunteer hours rendered</td>
<td>87,320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented on the table above, 320 RC volunteers rendered services for the project. The number of hours spent is multiplied by the salary rate per hour. This gives the total monetary value for the period under study. This amount can be considered as MRCS savings, as the same amount which would have been used to pay regular staff for carrying out the same task was spared.
E. Full-time staff equivalent to the total number of volunteer hours

In order to carry out the work of the 320 volunteers, the OD Division would need the equivalent of 45 full time paid staff. This was computed as follows:

\[
\text{Equivalent full time staff} = \frac{\text{Total volunteer hours}}{40 \text{ hours per week}} \times \frac{40 \text{ hours per week}}{48 \text{ weeks per year}}
\]

\[
= \frac{87,320}{40} \div 48
\]

\[
= 45.4 \approx 45 \text{ staff}
\]

F. Per capita costs and contributions

- Each volunteer mobilized has rendered 273 hours.\(^3\)
- Myanmar Red Cross Society has invested an average of MMK 474,014 per volunteer.;\(^4\)
- Each volunteer mobilized during the year was valued at MMK 922,388.\(^5\)
3. Other findings

The Rakhine operation has a wide range of benefits to Myanmar Red Cross that are not directly measured in terms of economic values:

- Dissemination of the seven principles of the Red Cross through action showing, especially impartiality and neutrality of the volunteers in providing help in a conflict situation.
- Media coverage of Rakhine conflict showing Red Cross volunteers in action thus increasing the visibility and good image of Myanmar Red Cross in the community.
- The volunteers gained more self-esteem, learned new skills and felt important having been given the opportunity to help the most vulnerable.
- The volunteers exposed to the conflict have become more committed to the Red Cross and its Fundamental Principles.

4. Conclusion

This value of volunteers study shows that 45 full time paid staff would be needed to carry out the work provided by the Rakhine operation volunteers. The volunteers provided help to 70,651 people in total and the services included first aid, food and water distribution, health education and emergency evacuation. The total cash value of the work of the volunteers is estimated to be MMK 295,164,315. The study shows that for each Myanmar kyat spent on the operation, Myanmar Red Cross Society received two kyats’ worth of services provided by volunteers.

“Security is our major concern due to the nature of communal conflict. It is good, and we are grateful we have the seven fundamental principles to guide us in our work. So whenever and wherever, regardless of race, religion and parties in conflict, we are able to help whoever is in need of our service. Even in our team, our volunteers come from different states and regions, but we worked together and we stayed under only one roof of warehouse for 30 days.”

– U Zaw Zaw Aung, G1, Kayar state, 38 year old, Kayar race
5. Recommendations

Most of the programmes and activities of Myanmar Red Cross rely entirely on volunteer participation. Therefore, it is vital to provide regular volunteering opportunities, training and recognition of volunteers’ contributions to the Movement. This is a key to ensure enthusiastic and committed volunteers now and in the future.

Key recommendations

- The current volunteer management system should be reviewed and enhanced in the light of the revised MRCS Strategy 2015.
- Volunteers working in situations of armed conflict and violence should be further motivated by consulting them on issues related to their work. This gives further importance to their role as volunteers.
- MRCS should give priority on volunteer retention strategy
- Volunteers’ well-being should be taken care of. They must be given more free time to avoid getting burnt out from too much work in a stressful situation as communal conflict. They should also be provided psycho-social support during and after the deployment.
- Conducting regular value of volunteers study is recommended to review and assess the cost effectiveness of the projects and to illustrate the economic value of the projects.

About the authors

**Khin Myo Myat Thein**

Khin Myo Myat Thein is Head of OD Division in Myanmar Red Cross Society. She has worked for Myanmar Red Cross Society since 1993. Among her current focus include MRCS law revision, implementation of the new branch development model in 330 branches, Midterm review of Strategic Plan 2015, Youth development programme, and participating in OCAC process. She is also a member of Southeast Asia OD and Youth Forum Steering committee for 2013-2015.

**Kaisa Loikkanen**

Kaisa Loikkanen is a youth delegate from Finnish Red Cross. Kaisa was positioned in AP zone office for 5 weeks helping the OD team with the Global review on volunteering interviews. She is a dedicated volunteer and member of the branch level youth committee in Finnish Red Cross.
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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