The call to **ACT DIFFERENTLY!** encourages us to seek better and more innovative ways in which we carry out our work. It inspires us to pursue our common goal, of building more healthy and resilient communities.

**Volunteering**

**FLORENCE CALL FOR ACTION**

In a continuously changing humanitarian landscape, the *Florence Call for Action (FCfA)* seems more relevant than ever. The document signed in 2014 by all National Societies across the Europe Region calls for increased commitment to forge **STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS** with stakeholders within and outside our Movement, and for maintaining an **INNOVATIVE** and **FLEXIBLE** approach throughout our work. **VOLUNTEERING** is one of the three main topics alongside **MIGRATION** and **SOCIAL ASPECTS** highlighted in the Florence document.

**BACKGROUND**

While the economic crisis in Europe affected the funding of many National Societies in our region, it also highlighted the valuable social capital that our volunteers represent for our Movement.

Strongly motivated by a common belief in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Fundamental Principles, volunteers generously offer their time and skills to provide high-quality assistance to people in need. They are active members of the communities they live in, offering unique local insight, which is critical in shaping the response of National Societies during crises.

Perhaps related to some extent to the general lack of funding, the environment for volunteer-based humanitarian organizations became increasingly competitive. At the same time, the number of volunteers in our Movement is currently stagnating at best and decreasing, at worst.¹

In addition, the conventional pattern of volunteering is rapidly changing, prompting the Movement as a whole to seek new methods in its approach to attract and maintain volunteers—an essential criteria for ensuring the relevance of the National Societies in the long-term.

¹ Global Review on Volunteering, 2014
Human Values programme attracts a new group of potential volunteers

The implementation of the Human Values programme by young Red Cross volunteers scores a great deal of success in capturing the imagination of eight to 14-years-old children going to school in Serbia and Montenegro. The main goal of this initiative is to decrease violence and discrimination among young people by promoting basic human values about tolerance and to prevent stigmatization, also addressing issues related to one’s personal and cultural identity. The positive “side-effect” of implementing this programme is that children become aware of other Red Cross activities such as first aid and psychosocial support, manifesting an interest in also becoming Red Cross volunteers.

E-volunteering @ Netherlands Red Cross

The Netherlands Red Cross has developed a set of E-volunteering activities in order to provide assistance to people who find themselves in emergency situations. This method is attracting a new group of volunteers who are otherwise disinterested or unable (e.g. due to disabilities) to participate in regular volunteering activities.

The online relief team set up in the framework of this initiative consists of volunteers who are monitoring the web and social media 24/7, searching the Internet for emergency situations that the Netherlands Red Cross could respond to. Through social media, they provide instant information and useful tips that help increase the resilience of victims, bystanders and their relatives in an emergency. The timely information from the actual scene that the team can provide can also work as an early warning system, helping the Netherlands Red Cross to tailor its response accordingly.

Good practices

The global total of 17 million volunteers suggest a powerful global Movement but, according to the Global Review on Volunteering, the distribution of volunteers is uneven in reality.

Our work

Resilient and relevant National Societies need to:

- **RE-THINK** the approach to volunteering ensuring long-term sustainability.
- **ADVOCATE** for legislative changes that recognize, promote and protect volunteers.
- **EMPOWER** volunteers by involving them in shaping direct action.
- **RECRUIT** volunteers emphasizing a specific humanitarian cause rather than the Red Cross and Red Crescent brand.
- **INVEST** in improving programmes.
- **USE** feedback received from volunteers when designing programmes and activities.
- **INVOLVE** volunteers in the decision-making process.
- **ENCOURAGE** volunteers to become agents of change in their own communities.
- **MOBILIZE** new groups of volunteers and capture their unique skills.

Europe Region volunteers in the global context

- 57.65% Asia Pacific
- 15.1% MENA
- 10.5% Europe Region
- 12.36% Africa
- 4.3% Americas

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