

Sector summary report

Voluntary Service Project

August 2013

the
power of
humanity



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‘Volunteering is embedded in our culture, and Australians have always volunteered, mobilising at local, state, national and international levels for an endless range of causes. The time has come now to officially recognise this Australian way of volunteering in tangible, meaningful ways.’¹

- Melanie Oppenheimer

‘Volunteerism is about people helping, learning, and actively participating in communities. Volunteering has no borders. It is a cross-cutting social phenomenon that involves all groups in society and all aspects of human activity.’²

- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

1. Voluntary Service Project

1.1 Introduction

Australian Red Cross is a member of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (the International Movement) with millions of members and volunteers operating in 189 countries. Our Movement's mission is to prevent or reduce human suffering, wherever it is found. Our seven Fundamental Principles guide us in this mission and one of these principles is Voluntary Service.

Our Vision is to improve the lives of vulnerable people in Australia and internationally by mobilising the power of humanity.

Our Mission is to be a leading humanitarian organisation in Australia, improving the lives of vulnerable people through programs delivered and promotion of humanitarian laws and values.

For almost 150 years Red Cross volunteers have improved our capacity as an organisation by helping us reach more vulnerable people. Volunteers are advocates in their communities for our global humanitarian mission and act on this locally, nationally and globally. Their contribution stretches across borders and into urban and remote communities on a regular basis, and touches each of our seven priority areas:

- Overcoming social exclusion by providing bridges back into the community
- Addressing the impact of migration
- Tackling entrenched locational disadvantage
- Increasing international aid and development
- Strengthening disaster and emergency services
- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Championing international humanitarian law

Red Cross volunteers also work in our retail stores, Red Cross College programs, and our business support teams such as Human Resources, Finance and Business Services and Marketing, Fundraising and Communications. In Blood Services, volunteers provide vital transport and hospitality services.

Our dependence upon volunteers to assist vulnerable people makes volunteers an essential resource, whether it be in our many retail outlets, or by making a daily phone call to an elderly person to check they are ok, or helping to design a volunteer database in Kenya.

Red Cross believes that voluntary service is a vital enabler of individual development, community strengthening and social cohesion.

The purpose of this report is to share our learnings with the sector. Specifically, the report outlines the key findings from Australian Red Cross' Voluntary Service Project ('Project') and to present our renewed strategic framework for the future of our work with volunteers and voluntary service. The report explores the changing landscape of voluntary service, including volunteer demographics and expectations, in order to better understand what strategic, meaningful volunteer engagement looks like today. While we draw heavily from the Red Cross experience, we are keen to share our learning with other organisations in order to collaborate with and contribute to the broader community.

1.2 Background and context

1.2.1 Voluntary Service Project Background

The primary objectives of the Project are:

- To renew and strengthen current Red Cross volunteer engagement
- To identify good practice, pilot projects
- To develop a five year voluntary service strategy and implementation plan.³

1.2.2 Red Cross context

Since 2007, Australian Red Cross embarked on an ambitious journey of services reform and implementation,⁴ and at the same time, confronted with unprecedented and significant challenges:

- A balanced budget environment largely driven by the Global Financial Crisis beginning in 2008.
- The need to drive greater efficiencies – people and resource re-alignments were implemented across support areas through major organisational development initiatives between 2009 – 10.
- Developing and implementing a Youth Engagement Strategy beginning in 2009.
- Black Saturday in 2009 and summer emergency activations in 2010 – 11 requiring whole of organisation effort.
- In 2010, a re-alignment in Human Resources resulted in reduced volunteer capacity. The realignment was seen at the time as a necessary resource rationalisation but has over time, significantly impacted on our overall capacity to engage and support volunteers.
- International humanitarian disaster responses including the Fukushima nuclear reactor emergency and Christchurch earthquake in 2011.

3. Voluntary Service Strategy Project Terms of Reference, Final 150312.

4. New Strategic Directions for Red Cross Services', endorsed by the National Board, June 2008.

- The expansion of the Government community detention program in 2010, with the aim of moving vulnerable people out of immigration detention facilities into community-based accommodation. Engagement of staff and volunteers expanded, with more than 800 new volunteers on-boarding during 2010 - 12.
- Red Cross also commenced as a core partner in the Australian Volunteers for International Development Program expansion and mobilised 117 volunteers between 2010 and 2011.

In 2011, an organisational mid-term progress check against strategy identified a range of challenges and opportunities⁵. Importantly, we identified **the need to further strengthen the role of volunteers and members in achieving Red Cross' overall mission.**

In this context, the establishment of the Project was initiated by management and supported by governance to strengthen Red Cross volunteer engagement. It was acknowledged that while pockets of the organisation have excellent volunteer engagement, support and retention, other areas require significant focus and enhancement.

To address some of the challenges, it was agreed that dedicated project resources would be allocated to meet the concurrent need to strengthen volunteer engagement and develop a strategy. It was also recognised from the outset that developing one Red Cross Voluntary Service Strategy requires a whole of organisation approach that brings together experience and knowledge from members, volunteers, governance and staff alike.

1.2.3 Red Cross workforce profile

As at December 2012, Red Cross has approximately 34,712 volunteers in its database. 47% of volunteers are aged 55 years or over; 81% are female; 17% have less than one year of service; and 6% have 10 or more years of service. 30% have been with Red Cross for between 5 and 10 years.

Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of number of volunteers and staff by location. The staff to volunteer headcount ratio is 1:11⁶ (total number of volunteers divided by total number of staff). FTE ratios are unknown as volunteer hours are not consistently recorded nor reported. Wage replacement value of volunteers cannot therefore be reasonably calculated.

Figure 1 – Breakdown of Australian Red Cross volunteers and staff by State and Territory

	Volunteers	Staff
ACT	1,454	71
NSW	11,303	490
NT	537	126
QLD	6,239	669
SA	2,534	261
TAS	2,356	110
VIC	6,466	390
WA	3,679	493
International	98	49
Other	144	393

1.2.4 Recent Human Resources improvements for volunteers

Since 2011, Red Cross has completed significant work in developing learning and skill building opportunities for volunteers including improved induction, support, and leadership development programs. These improvements include an on-line learning platform and a nationally consistent induction process.

Significant work has occurred in improving Work Health and Safety (WHS) for volunteers which is aligned with the coverage provided by Red Cross insurance policies. Volunteers now have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in the same way as staff (24/7, self referral, free and confidential). Improvements in volunteer WHS include increased participation by volunteers on WHS committees.

In March 2013, Red Cross implemented a Recruitment Management System. This program is used for all volunteer and staff recruitment, and improves the ease and speed of joining Red Cross.

5. 'Services Renewal Report 2008-2011: Three Year Reflection', endorsed by the National Board, March 2012.

6. This ratio is based on the total number of volunteers divided by the total number of staff as at December 2012.

1.2.5 The changing nature of voluntary service

In her book, *Volunteering: Why We Can't Survive Without It*, Melanie Oppenheimer⁷ states that,

‘Volunteering is embedded in our culture, and Australians have always volunteered, mobilising at local, state, national and international levels for an endless range of causes. The time has come now to officially recognise this Australian way of volunteering in tangible, meaningful ways. Then, perhaps, we can say that the twenty first century is the age of volunteers’

In understanding how the nature of volunteering has changed, we can better understand the need to be part of the change journey. Put simply, keep pace with change or risk becoming irrelevant. There is no room for complacency.

Overarching developments in the volunteering landscape that compel us to change are:

- A shift from a benevolent model to a model of building social capital. Building social capital is about building sustainable, trusting relationships with others. Volunteering has the ability to build social capital and strengthen communities by connecting people who do things for one another.
- Changing demographics of volunteers.⁸ More people are volunteering for less time; attitudes to volunteering vary across age cohorts; and multicultural Australian society all have implications for volunteer engagement.
- Volunteerism in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is often linked to family and kinship relationships and responsibilities. This can be viewed as informal volunteering or not identified as volunteering at all, particularly when it is not connected to the activity of an organisation.
- Cross-sector partnerships and growing interest in corporate and non-for-profit collaboration in order to address community need and fulfil mission. Strengthening networks and coalitions and organising work as a collaborative endeavour open to potential new partners presents opportunities for volunteering.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Overall approach

The Project used a combination of internal and external processes and activities to produce evidence-based inputs to the development of the strategic framework for Voluntary Service. The Project methodology and approach included:

- Individual interviews with 53 volunteers (48%) and 59 staff (52%)
- Consultation workshops across national, state and territory offices involving 88 volunteers (42%) and 124 staff (58%)
- Secondary research through comprehensive desktop analysis of over 400 articles
- Primary research through an Australian Research Linkage Partnership Project between Red Cross and Macquarie University⁹
- Consultation with International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) colleagues in Geneva and Kuala Lumpur including interviews and review of resources
- Interviews with 17 external volunteer involving organisations in Australia
- Internal resource and financial analysis
- Linkages with Red Cross' Emerging Leaders Program team

Figure 2 is the Project Visual Map which is a summary of the objectives and milestones of the Project.

7. Melanie Oppenheimer is a renowned historian, who has also been commissioned to research Australian Red Cross' history for its centenary celebrations in 2014. Oppenheimer, M. (2008) *Volunteering: Why We Can't Service Without It*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd. p. 209.

8. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006). *Voluntary Work 4441.0.0*. Canberra.

9. Three primary research projects associated with Red Cross' research partnership with the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion (Macquarie University) were funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant were completed during the Project timeframe. Findings were integrated into the Project results.

Figure 2 – Voluntary Service Project Overview

Preparation	Research, consultation and analysis	Consultation workshops	Volunteer engagement pilot projects	Strategy design
Terms of reference	Initial consultations	VIC	Identification of pilots	Strategic Framework
Project Management Plan	Environmental scan	ACT	Monitoring tool	
	Good practice resource	QLD		
Steering Committee	Measuring volunteer contribution	NSW	Implementation plan and resource requirements	
Project Team		NT		
Volunteers	Organisational models	SA		
	Consult with volunteer organisations	TAS		
	Financial and resource analysis	WA		
		National office		

■ Completed ■ Commenced

The Project was governed by the Project Steering Committee co-chaired by a Board member and the Director of Services and International Operations. The Committee included Red Cross staff, members and volunteers and external experts (volunteers). The Project was supported by a dedicated Project Manager, an organisation-wide project team and three sub-teams. At the operational level, the project was jointly managed by Strategic Operations and Human Resources.

1.3.2 Volunteer contribution analysis

To ensure that a volunteer voice was featured through every aspect of the Project, eight volunteers were recruited to serve on the Steering Committee and nine were recruited to serve on the Project Team. In addition, the involvement of a broad representation of volunteers

throughout the project consultation process was paramount.

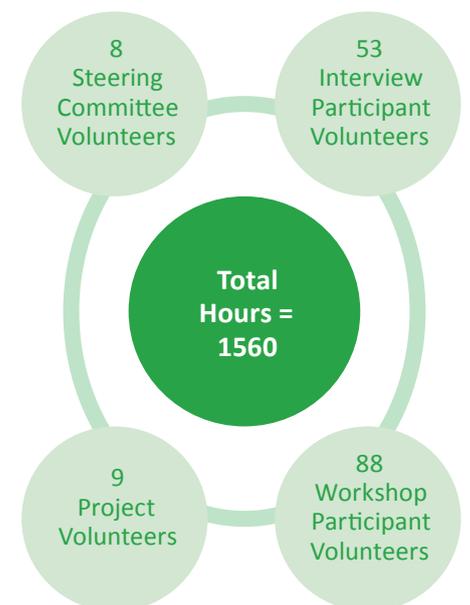
Volunteer contributions provided a vital leadership component to the development of the strategic framework. Most notably, the ideas, research, analysis, and operational support provided by volunteers led to an improved, more informed consultation process and more inclusive project outcomes.

The Project provided an opportunity to further enhance relationships between members, staff and volunteers as everyone was working together to achieve a common purpose.

Figure 3 shows the time contribution of volunteers from June to November 2012. The estimated total wage replacement value of \$39,000 was based on a conservative hourly rate of \$25 per hour, which is the average hourly award rate for community service workers. This wage

replacement calculation does not include indirect costs. During this six month timeframe, the time invested by volunteers was equivalent to an additional two full time employees.

Figure 3 – Volunteer contribution



1.3.3 Consultation

Interviews with volunteers and staff

53 volunteers from across Australia were interviewed; 827 comments were recorded and analysed to formulate the qualitative data. 59 staff from all service and support areas across Australia were interviewed by the Project Manager. 533 comments were recorded and further analysed as part of the qualitative data.

Red Cross consultation workshops

From July to September 2011, 10 consultation workshops were facilitated across Australia using open forum discussion groups. Participants included 88 volunteers (42%) and 124 staff (58%). Changes to the proposed strategic framework were iterated following each workshop. A total of 1038 responses to the key questions were analysed and mapped to the strategic framework. Comments were then reviewed to identify key themes and actions that could be implemented.

Interviews with external organisations

Interviews were conducted with 17 external organisations engaged with volunteering across Australia. Organisations were selected on the basis of having a high reliance on volunteers in fulfilling their mission. They were spread across six states and one territory.

The interview aims were:

- To capture common opportunities and challenges of organisations which involve volunteers.
- To identify ways in which this community of organisations can better support each other.
- To explore the perception of Red Cross and its influence on the volunteering sector.

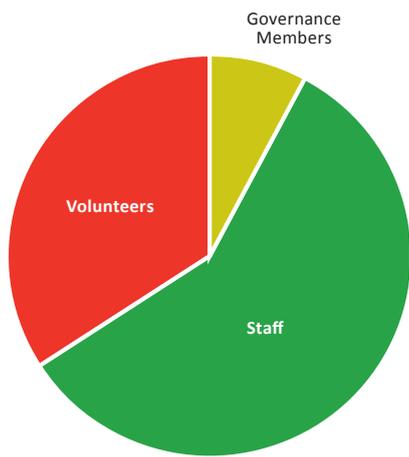


Figure 4 – Workshop participation by type

Staff	58%
Volunteers	34%
Governance members	8%

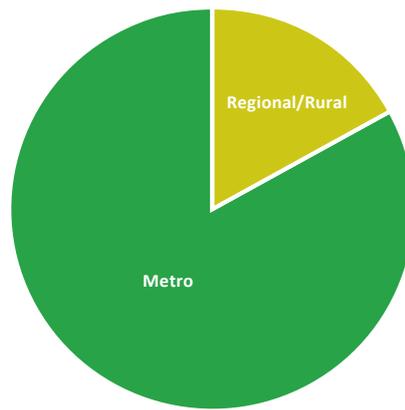
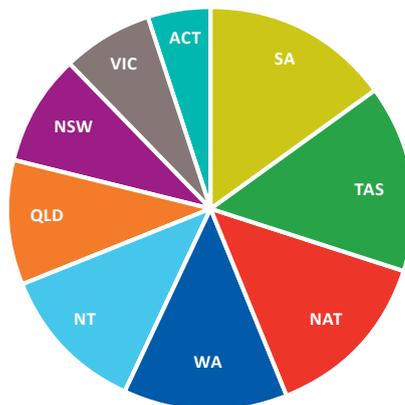


Figure 5 – Workshop participation by region

Metro	83%
Regional/Rural	17%

Figure 6 – Workshop participation by State and Territory

SA (34)	15%
TAS (33)	15%
NAT (31)	14%
WA (29)	13%
NT (26)	12%
QLD (22)	10%
NSW (21)	9%
VIC (15)	7%
ACT (12)	5%



Consultations with the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent (IFRC)

Given the Red Cross International Movement's strategic focus on volunteering and organisational development among National Societies, the Project Manager consulted regularly with Movement staff throughout the project, seeking informal advice and guidance. More formally, three senior Volunteering Development and Organisational Development representatives were interviewed based in the Geneva and Kuala Lumpur Zone Office. In addition, ongoing networking and advice on volunteering development was sought from volunteering practitioners in the Red Cross Red Crescent Organisational Development Network (ODNET).

Linkages to the Red Cross Emerging Leaders Program

In 2012, the Red Cross Emerging Leaders Program (a leadership development program co-facilitated by Melbourne Business School) included an action learning project relating to volunteers in support areas of Red Cross. The 'Think Volunteer' project team undertook online surveys across support areas to determine the use and engagement of volunteers in support areas and to identify the potential barriers to involving volunteers in support areas. This research and its findings were integrated into the Project.

Pilot projects

Concurrent with the consultation process, pilot projects which demonstrated good practice in volunteer engagement were identified. The aim was to inform the proposed strategic framework. Given funding limitations, it was decided that the Project would monitor and

analyse 20 pilot projects which were already underway or that could be implemented with existing resources.

Structured interviews were conducted with each of the 20 pilot sponsors. Data collected from the interviews focused on what is working well in the projects and what Red Cross might learn from these projects. Four case studies are included in this report.

Limitations to the consultation process

The following limitations to the consultation process are acknowledged:

- Staff and volunteer involvement was not in direct proportion to the numbers (headcount of staff and volunteers) which may have resulted in an unequal weighting of perspectives
- Workshops were conducted during week days and office hours which excluded some volunteers
- There were limited project funds available for remote and regional volunteers and staff to participate in the workshops; however, in three states, additional methods were undertaken to consult with them
- Former staff and volunteers were not consulted
- Neither clients nor community members were included in the consultations
- Consultations with other Red Cross National Societies and opportunities to learn from them were limited, albeit the newly launched FedNet portal, IFRC webinars, and e-communities of practice (ODNET) were utilised throughout the project
- The imperative to summarise and categorise a voluminous suite of data and divergent opinions carries the risk of generalisation

1.4 Key Findings

The following key findings informed the strategic direction for voluntary service:

1.4.1 Internal Findings

1. Volunteers extend Red Cross capacity to reach more vulnerable people

Red Cross' capacity to achieve our mission is directly related to our ability to effectively mobilise, engage and empower volunteers from across the communities that we serve. There must be a balance between bottom-up and top-down approaches, to incorporate community development and place-based approaches in everything we do.

Volunteers can only extend our capacity to reach more vulnerable people if they are engaged, managed and supported effectively and efficiently. Increased community, government and donor expectations for transparency and accountability compel us to be mission focused, strategic and effective in our use of volunteers.

Case study one below illustrates the important contributions that volunteers made where there is community trust, cultural knowledge, broad understanding of volunteering (formal and informal), sufficient funding and mission driven objectives.

Aboriginal REDiSupport Project – Emergency Services

Issue/problem: mainstream emergency recovery system was not being accessed by A&TSI people following the Mackay Floods, 2010.

Initiative/innovation: Community Development Officers collaborated with the Emergency Services Team in Port Augusta, SA, to develop a way to prevent the same problem from occurring in SA. 120K external funding was successfully sourced and a project team established. Volunteers were integral to the re-design and adaptation of the REDiSupport Teams to include A&TSI communities. Essential to the success of the project was taking genuine advice from and working with colleagues in Port Augusta, key senior A&TSI contacts and local networks. Importantly, communities chose to volunteer on an 'informal' basis as is the culture of A&TSI peoples.

Outcome:

- Trained A&TSI REDiSupport teams who are themselves members of the local communities.
- A mainstream recovery service was adapted to meet the cultural and local needs of Aboriginal people in Port Augusta.

2. Leadership and culture are critical factors

Leadership in providing inspiration, stability and coherence to the fundamental principle of voluntary service is a critical success element. Voluntary service is not the domain of one person or one team, however, effective leadership at CEO and executive levels is critical to drive this

commitment, promote the volunteer ethos across the organisation, being outward looking and engaging across sectors, and to ensure consistent policy, resources, procedural and duty of care of volunteers. A positive culture for volunteering must also be lived across the organisation, whether one is directly involved with volunteers or not. The need for cultural renewal and leadership is

not uncommon for many volunteer involving organisations, particularly those with a long history. The case study below illustrates how leadership and culture is critical to engaging volunteers in a team that did not previously work directly with volunteers through a planned, change management approach.

Engagement of volunteers in national office – International Tracing

Issue/problem: lack of volunteer engagement in a core Red Cross service area (International Tracing) in a national office environment

Initiative/innovation: Development of a Volunteer Engagement Program. This was achieved by re-aligning existing resources to allow dedicated staff time to design the program, identify meaningful activities and develop a training schedule. Volunteers were recruited based on clear position descriptions. New volunteers undertook structured training while staff were supported through a change management process.

Outcome:

- Increased capacity to respond to more casework activities.
- 100% retention of volunteers due to quality assessment method and initial training.
- Management support hours to volunteers decreased over time – but remains essential component.
- Volunteers vital during periods of high workload, e.g. response to disaster.
- Volunteers brought new skills into the team, for example, IT, languages and geographic knowledge.
- Volunteers benefited with new professional connections, new skills, and opportunity to meet a humanitarian need.

3. Complementarity – recognise and honour the differences and similarities

The ‘One Red Cross workforce’ approach, whilst intended to build a cohesive staff and volunteer workforce and to reduce duplication, also resulted in the reduction of dedicated resources for volunteer coordination and knowledge base for volunteering. In addition to reinvigorating resourcing, there needs to be much clearer understanding, acknowledging and valuing of the ‘complementary’ nature of member, staff and volunteer effort and facilitating a more in-depth understanding of how each

contributes both differently and similarly to achieve our mission.

Lack of role clarity, confusion over accountability, and a climate of resource rationalisation or budgetary constraints can increase the potential for tension between staff and volunteers. Improved equity in terms of recognition, time, support and quality are fundamental to strategic success and volunteer viability.

4. More meaningful engagement, not just more volunteers

Red Cross supports a balance between volunteer interests, skills and experiences with the client and community need and the vital

role of volunteers in achieving our purpose. We articulate the potential for more effective and meaningful volunteer engagement and recognise that traditional volunteering roles are not always appropriate. There are opportunities to offer more meaningful roles and new volunteer models with a broader scope than administration or service delivery, including organisational development and governance, leadership and consultancy services. This type of meaningful engagement with volunteers offers opportunities to engage with the rise of the ‘brain volunteer.’ The case study below presents one model of meaningful engagement.

Volunteer Consultants, South Australia

Issue/problem: Lack of professional skills and capacity in critical areas of Red Cross’ operations such as research, project management and business process improvements.

Initiative/innovation: The Volunteer Consultant model was created in 2009 where professional volunteer roles were identified and recruited. Position descriptions were designed to recruit skills and knowledge which would supplement the work of the SA middle management team. Once recruited, Consultants work to an agreed project plan with minimal supervision. The model is supported by SA leadership in collaboration between with HR.

Outcome:

- Volunteer Consultants have been working in SA since 2009 and undertaken a range of strategic projects across service delivery, research and development and business process improvements including significant contribution to the Voluntary Service Project.
- Good practice culture across SA Office where volunteers are well respected, supported and included in everyday activities.

‘Managers are too busy getting the job done to work closely with volunteers.’ - Volunteer

‘Lack of support available is a real disincentive to using volunteers.’ - Staff

5. Resources and rising cost of volunteering

Voluntary service requires dedicated human, technological and financial resources to be sustainable. Improving the capability, infrastructure, and technological and financial resources to support voluntary service during a time of restricted organisational resources demonstrates a significant investment requirement for Red Cross. This is exacerbated by the rising cost of engaging volunteers¹⁰ as a direct expense and indirect costs in supporting and managing volunteers which are considered as business as usual or as part of an individual's role. Red Cross will continue to assess appropriate resource alignment to enable sustainability of this renewed strategy.

6. Resource analysis

A resource analysis in 2012 revealed that 90% of volunteer support activities are undertaken by staff and 10% by volunteer leaders. This analysis raised important questions for risk management and leadership including:

- Are we preparing adequately our staff at the differing levels for volunteer management responsibilities?
- Do we adequately prepare the 10% of volunteer support effort carried out by volunteer leaders?
- Could we delegate more opportunities to volunteers to undertake leadership and coordination activities such as volunteer recruiting, training, and peer support as is currently happening on some areas?

Some staff reported that volunteer related coordination is often undertaken 'off the side of my desk' – that is, over and above staff members' actual role. With the launch of the new strategic framework, Red Cross commits to map existing processes, conduct gap analysis, and review all staff and volunteer position descriptions to determine if volunteer support and coordination responsibilities are included in the selection criteria, position responsibilities and position titles and to improve consistency in nomenclature. This resource analysis also applies to volunteer roles to ensure that all volunteers have a current position description.

Client & Volunteer Assessment Unit (CVAU)

Issue/problem: Volunteer inquiry management and recruitment process was too cumbersome and protracted.

Initiative/innovation: The well established and highly efficient centralised client intake process was adapted to include volunteer intake. Having had nine years of experience in streamlining client intake processes, the services team identified that a similar process could work for volunteers particularly as the majority of volunteers are interested in services and programs. The knowledge base for triaging calls from both clients and volunteers are similar enough to merge the two into one centralised process. All volunteer inquiries are taken from the CVAU – they are asked their areas of interest and skills from the first contact with Red Cross. They are then referred to the appropriate program.

Outcome:

- Volunteer inquiry and processing time has reduced from eight to 10 weeks to approximately two weeks.
- A culture where volunteers are treated with priority and as a result feel welcomed and included from the outset.
- Greater engagement of volunteers.
- Better matching of volunteers to roles, skills and interest.

7. Limited infrastructure – data and communications

The current IT systems across Finance, HR and Communications are dated making data analysis, reporting and planning challenging. Our current IT does not allow for effective two-way communication and relationship management with volunteers. Through the implementation of this strategy along with a significant reform agenda across Red Cross information and communication technology, we are committed to improving data quality and records management for volunteers as well as develop a higher level of connectedness through the use of technology and multi-channelled

approach to communications with and within volunteers.

8. Operating inefficiencies and lack of national coordination

The optimum operating model for Red Cross is one that is based on national coherence for knowledge sharing and streamlining processes, supported by local flexibility and ownership. Currently, there is clear dissatisfaction with the onerous ‘front end’ processes for engaging volunteers. Whilst volunteers understand the need for a robust recruitment process, they also expressed some disappointment in the lengthy, paper based process and lack of communication from Red Cross

which for some grew to a mounting sense of frustration, and for others, a disillusionment that prompted them to seek opportunities elsewhere. Red Cross’ research demonstrated that the time it takes to apply for a volunteer role was a critical factor in people’s decision-making process around volunteering with Red Cross. The case study above presents a local solution to improve the efficiency and quality of the initial enquiry and recruitment practice for volunteer engagement. Red Cross commits to addressing these issues as a matter of urgency and highest priority at the national level and being flexible as necessary to local requirements.

1.4.2 External Findings

The need for Red Cross to adapt and respond to the changing external environment, including emerging trends was a consistent and significant theme which echoed across the project. There are opportunities for Red Cross to respond to these trends as presented below in our strategic framework.

- Volunteer involvement to assist growing humanitarian need
- Socio-political & economic uncertainty resulting in greater need for social-cohesion
- Increased access to knowledge & education
- Technology & innovation
- Legal & fiscal policy
- Resolution #4 adopted by the International Conference 2011
- Humanitarian ethos
- Urbanisation
- Climate change
- Faith & culture
- Migration – refugee
- International humanitarian & development system
- Conflict & violence (combatant vs. civilian)
- Gender



Figure 7. Key strategic factors impacting voluntary service

- Community facing
- Collaboration in broader sector
- Improved technology (IT refresh, Program Novar)
- Member and youth engagement
- Member, volunteer & staff relations
- Recognition of informal volunteering (focus on A&TSI)
- Risk & compliance
- Focus on diversity
- Cultural change
- Beyond strategy 2015

- More volunteers, less hours
- Multicultural & ageing
- Youth – intergenerational collaboration
- Social media
- Partnerships (gov’t, civil society, NFP, private sector)
- Risk & regulation
- Impact of ACNC
- Professionalisation & national standards
- Increasing cost of volunteering
- Rights and responsibilities
- Accountability
- Food shortages
- Sustainable, resilient communities

Red Cross acknowledges and recognises that the impact of our voluntary service strategy is reliant on our understanding of the current external context; our role as a member of the global Red Cross Red Crescent Movement; and learning from and developing synergies with our Movement Partners and other volunteering organisations. Material in this section has been largely extracted from a report prepared by Research Volunteer, Dr. Joy Doherty.¹¹ Our renewed strategy is therefore informed by the following key external findings:

1. More people are volunteering but for less time

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007), one in three volunteers over the age of 18 volunteers formally with at least one organisation, and the majority of volunteers work in paid part or full time employment. Whilst the number of Australian volunteers has increased 24% since 1995, the median number of hours has decreased from 74 hours per volunteer in 1995 to 56 hours in 2006. New approaches to engaging volunteers, including short-term, are critical to our strategy. It requires that we re-think how we engage and support volunteers who are increasingly seeking volunteering opportunities for shorter periods of time.

2. Reciprocity – voluntary service has mutual benefits

There is growing acceptance that volunteering benefits the volunteer as much as the recipient organisation or community.¹² The ‘reciprocal’ nature of volunteering means that Red Cross will need to ensure that volunteers have a positive experience

as well as design more creative and empowering roles to best maximise the interests, skills and life experience that volunteers offer, or alternatively, referring volunteers to other organisations.

3. Building social capital and sustainable communities

The United Nations Decade of the Volunteer (2001-2011) raised awareness and recognition of volunteering as a global, vital human activity that helps build social capital and more sustainable communities.¹³ Building social capital is about building relationships, trust, shared norms and networks. It involves people taking part in community initiatives, groups, and organisations, and communicating with the wider community. Volunteering has the capacity to build social capital by connecting people who do things for one another and building sustainable and trusting relationships. The increasingly complex nature of humanitarian challenges such as climate change, poverty, forced migration and civil unrest, has highlighted the critical role of volunteers by connecting people who do things for one another and in building sustainable communities.

4. Responding and adapting to the changing volunteering demographics

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, it is estimated that 25% of Australians will be aged 65 or older by 2045 which will impact on the competition for skills. However this is countered by an increase in youth volunteering – from 16% in 1995 to 27.1% in 2010. Attitudes to volunteering vary across age cohorts and volunteering organisations are striving to create flexible, creative and responsive

engagement activities. These trends will require organisations to develop flexible, creative, and responsive engagement activities and new models of volunteering accordingly, e.g. corporate, intergenerational, client-to-volunteer, youth / family volunteering, and volunteer mentors.

5. Research and evaluation are essential to achieving strategic outcomes

Volunteering Australia’s national survey of volunteering issues (2011)¹⁴ identified that recognising the importance of research and adequate funding for research into issues that affect volunteering is a major challenge. Red Cross research and evaluation products will support and enable the strategic implementation of voluntary service internally, and they could also be a means to contribute to the external community of volunteering organisations and practitioners. Red Cross commits to assessing, agreeing and using Australian quality or other standards to review how volunteers are engaged in order to improve strategic outcomes and impact.

6. Diversity within Australian society

The multicultural nature of Australian society has implications for volunteer engagement. Many culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not identify themselves as volunteers, as it is often linked to family and kinship relations (‘informal’ volunteering). The need of one family is often met by the whole community, particularly where there is a high level of social capital.

11. Dr. Joy Doherty was recruited as a Research Volunteers for the project. She generously volunteered her time and research skills in compiling two substantial reports: “External Factors Affecting Volunteerism: Environmental Scan report”, August 2012; and ‘Systemic Review of Voluntary Service Organisational Models and Frameworks of Good Practice’, September 2012.

12. Graff, Linda, L. (2009). Reconceptualising the Value of Volunteer Work. Linda Graff and Associates Inc.

13. United Nations Volunteers (2011). State of the World’s Volunteerism Report: Universal Values for Global Well-being. United Nations Development Program.

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In communities where economic participation is limited, volunteerism may also be a means of gaining skills and opportunities for future employment. In building stronger and more resilient communities, organisations must create more flexible and responsive ways to engage volunteers across the diverse communities and to remove barriers that prevent greater participation of diverse people. Red Cross acknowledges the need for a more culturally informed understanding and recognition of informal volunteering in our approach to community development and voluntary service.

In today's multicultural Australia, volunteers must also be culturally competent to work with a diversity of clients. This requires increased investment in cross-cultural awareness and cultural competency training being provided to ensure cultural safety.

The case study below illustrates the important contributions that volunteers made where there is community trust, cultural knowledge, broad understanding of volunteering (formal and informal), sufficient funding and mission driven objectives.

7. Volunteer management – recognise and build professional competencies

The IFRC (2007)¹⁵ report, supported by Volunteering Australia's National Survey of Volunteering Issues (2011) called for improvements in the training of volunteers and volunteer managers, and excellence in management and leadership in order to fulfil the humanitarian mission. A volunteer manager is a professional who applies the best practice in volunteer management in compliance with national standards to identify,

strengthen, and effectively maximise voluntary involvement for improving the quality of life of individuals and of communities.¹⁶ Red Cross will consider how we might reframe our thinking to better support and recognise volunteer managers and how we might improve organisational capacity in this area through a targeted approach in our workforce development plan.

8. Professionalisation of volunteering

In the last two decades, volunteer management has emerged as a semi-profession and career choice.¹⁷ The need to invest in training and development of volunteer managers is matched by a professionalisation of the not for profit and voluntary sector. Like other emerging professions, volunteer management has a concrete body of knowledge and standards.

Demarcation between staff and volunteer roles and strengthening collaboration and integration are both essential. Organisations must be adept at building and enhancing the complementary roles, skills and knowledge of volunteers and staff to co-create our future.

9. Genuine partnerships with volunteer involving organisations

Red Cross can better maximise strategic opportunities to integrate, leverage and strengthen the existing and potential relationships with peak bodies, government, corporate and volunteer organisations, to show leadership, influence, and build sector capacity and expertise. Further, Red Cross can capitalise more on the positive perception of the organisation, our community profile, secular approach and broad reach and large range of services. Our strategic

partnerships can drive and support advocacy and influence policy debate and legislation for volunteering.

52% of organisations consulted by Red Cross as part of the Project, had a positive perspective of Red Cross as key people for advice, tremendously committed volunteers, good community profile, a positive secular approach and a large range of services, yet 24% had a limited understanding of Red Cross and the remaining 24% perceived Red Cross to be non-collaborative or restricted, isolated in our approach to voluntary service.

Nonetheless, 100% of the organisations consulted identified that Red Cross could contribute more by sharing practice, networking, referring volunteers and showing leadership and influence in the sector.

‘Our clients will be best served if we do this together.’

- External organisational representative

‘...we are battling the same issues. We may be competitive at times but we have so much more to gain by working honestly together.’

- External organisational representative

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Figure 8. How external organisations view Red Cross



10. Innovation in programs and services

Innovation is key to remaining relevant and building sustainable future generations of volunteers. This may also require offering support or development opportunities for staff and volunteers to assist in identifying and applying methodologies that extend beyond traditional processes and move into new volunteering models that operate across different dimensions, as well as appropriate

change management to surmount internal barriers and fears.

An analysis of the pilot projects mapped by the Project revealed that all were predominately extensions of existing practice or methods. If Red Cross wants to continue to delivering the same types of services in traditional ways, there are certainly staff who will innovate and improve our methods of volunteer engagement. However, in order to respond to the changing landscape

of volunteering and innovate in the sector, we need to review what we are doing and how we are doing it. More inclusion of volunteers in developing innovative approaches due to the level of talent, experience and community knowledge that volunteers offer is required. This potential for innovation would involve change management to surmount internal barriers due to existing attitudes.

11. Learning from Red Cross Movement partners

The global infrastructure of the Red Cross Movement provides the opportunity to connect, support, as well as participate in benchmarking and good practice sharing in implementing and evaluating our proposed strategic framework.

Since 2001, the Red Cross global Movement has published significant research and good practice tools for volunteer engagement and management.

Connected by common history, principles and mission, these channels offer the opportunity to learn from each other. During the Project, we discovered that we can learn not only from the National Societies that are most similar to us in terms of context and culture but also from those that are distinct from us. As the case study below demonstrates, there is much to learn from looking at the experiences of National Societies operating in complex development contexts.

Burundi Red Cross Society

Issue/problem: in 2005, after years of civil war, the Burundi Red Cross Society (BRCS) employed four people at the national level. Services around the country were limited or non-existent and focussed on administration rather than community. The Society was at rock bottom and needed to reinvent itself in order to help rebuild a country savaged by years of civil war.

Initiative/innovation: with support from Federation, BRCS embarked on a 'bottom up' approach to its work and focussed on building local communities. It had a clear vision that a sustainable future can only be achieved by building local capacity, and that activities must be based on the 'need' and 'capacities' identified by local communities. It invested in ongoing training and coaching of key leadership roles which worked with communities rather than for them and that all volunteering development processes within the national society was accountable to communities. This resulted in a groundswell of support from communities across the country.

Outcome:

- In 2011, BRCS had 200 employees at the national and provincial levels. It mobilises about 300,000 volunteers, the majority of whom are themselves vulnerable but who offer daily services to vulnerable communities.
- Changed from a culture of dependency on outside aid to sustainable community development.
- Improved standing and reputation across the country.
- Leader in community capacity building within the Movement.

2. Strategic Framework

To retain and strengthen the importance of voluntary service in all Red Cross activities and to ensure that Red Cross clearly positions itself to meet the humanitarian needs of the future, the following Voluntary Service Strategic Framework was endorsed by the Red Cross Board in February 2013.

VISION: We seek to inspire people to take humanitarian action and contribute to building stronger, more connected individuals through voluntary service.

	Outcomes we aspire to	How we will achieve the outcomes
Community	That clients and communities benefit from voluntary service.	Advocacy & sustainability
	That Red Cross engages with the community of volunteer-involving organisations as a collaborative partner.	Collaboration & partnership
Volunteers	That Red Cross volunteers are empowered through meaningful and flexible engagement and effective promotion, support and recognition.	Empowerment & effectiveness
	That Red Cross volunteers represent the diversity of the Australian community.	Diversity & accessibility
Red Cross	That Red Cross leadership at all levels models and inspires a culture of voluntary service.	Leadership & culture
	That Red Cross plans, resources, and builds capacity and capability to support voluntary service.	Enabling environment

3. Implementation Priorities

In May 2013, the Red Cross Board committed new funds to support the implementation of the new strategy. A summary of the high level implementation process currently underway is described below.

Phase 1: Plan	Phase 2: Establish	Phase 3: Consolidate	Phase 4: Review
April 2013 – June 2013	July 2013 – Dec 2013	January 2014 – June 2014	July 2014 – June 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch new strategy • Agree organisational model and management structure • Develop policy underpinning governance for implementation • Confirm Year 1 financial resources • Agree three year plan and success indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of new resources and delegation of existing resources • Develop communications and change management plan • Organisational model & management structure in place • Align with internal systems, policies and operational frameworks • Develop external advocacy framework • Monitor success indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence implementation at national, state and territory levels • Implement communications and change management plan • Refine alignment with internal systems, policies and operational frameworks • Begin implementation of external stakeholder advocacy framework • Monitor success indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate with Strategy 2020 planning • Consider further integration with Members and Youth engagement strategies

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Austraining International
Blacktown City Council
Boroondara Volunteer Research Centre
Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence
Cancer Council
Catholic Care
Foundation for Young Australians
Hutt Street Centre
Lifeline
Saint Vincent De Paul
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