



## Volunteering Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Voluntary service is a fundamental principle of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and lies at the core of humanitarian assistance provided to millions of vulnerable people worldwide. Volunteers are the backbone of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, playing an indispensable role in delivering Programmes and services, supporting governance, administration, and fundraising, and strengthening community resilience through mobilization and engagement. Their contributions not only enhance the capacity of National Societies but also foster a culture of humanitarianism and solidarity within communities.

Volunteering has been an integral part of Maldivian society, deeply embedded in the values of solidarity, mutual aid, and collective resilience. Maldivians have long demonstrated a strong sense of community, coming together to support one another in times of need. From assisting in traditional livelihoods to mobilizing for large-scale community projects such as island electrification, school development, and non-formal education. In addition, throughout its history volunteers have played a crucial role in disaster response, recovery efforts including epidemics and pandemics to provide aid to affected individuals and rebuilding communities.

In recent years, the landscape of volunteering in the Maldives has evolved significantly due to social, economic, and political transformations. The advent of democracy has led to greater civic engagement, encouraging active community participation in decision-making and governance. At the same time, rapid urbanization, technological advancements, and climate change-related challenges have reshaped how people engage in voluntary work. Today, volunteering extends beyond traditional community service to include digital activism, structured humanitarian response efforts, and innovative social initiatives. People are also seeking more flexible and impactful ways to contribute, often engaging in short-term or skill-based volunteering that aligns with their interests and expertise.

Recognizing these evolving dynamics, the Maldivian Red Crescent (MRC), as the largest humanitarian organization mobilizing and managing volunteers across the country, is committed to fostering a responsive and well-organized volunteer network. As the nature of volunteering continues to transform, MRC aims remain adaptive, ensuring that volunteer engagement is inclusive, meaningful, and sustainable. This requires innovative approaches to recruitment, training, and retention, as well as leveraging technology and new forms of engagement to connect with volunteers more effectively. By embracing these changes, MRC aims to strengthen community resilience, promote social cohesion, and contribute meaningfully to national development and humanitarian action.

This Volunteering Policy underscores MRC's commitment to prioritizing volunteerism, ensuring that volunteer development and management adhere to high standards and best practices. It serves as a framework to guide the organization in creating an enabling environment where volunteers are valued, supported, and empowered to make a lasting impact in their communities.

## 2. Scope

This Policy applies to all aspects of volunteer engagement within MRC and sets the framework for mobilizing, managing, and supporting volunteers across various humanitarian and development activities by MRC. The policy defines MRC's values and commitments toward its volunteers, outlining their rights and responsibilities, as well as MRC's duty to provide a safe, supportive, and meaningful volunteering experience. It reinforces the importance of volunteering to MRC and ensures high standards in recruitment, management, and development.

The policy is applicable across all levels of MRC operations—at island, atoll/city, national, and international levels—whether conducted by local units, National Society Headquarters, or in partnership with Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement actors and external stakeholders. It ensures that MRC remains adaptive to emerging trends in volunteering, including flexible, skill-based, and short-term engagements that align with evolving social and technological landscapes.

This policy is aligned with the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, IFRC Strategy 2030, the IFRC Volunteering Policy, and international best practices to strengthen community engagement and impact of volunteerism across the Maldives. This policy should be considered in relation to the other policies within MRC and is completed by a Volunteer Manual to implement the different elements of the policy.

## 3. Definitions

**3.1.1. A Red Cross Red Crescent Volunteer:** is a person who carries out volunteering activities or services, out of their free will and not by a desire for material or financial gain, on behalf of the IFRC network, occasionally or regularly and always working in accordance with the fundamental principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

**3.1.2. Maldivian Red Crescent volunteer:** MRC Volunteer is a person who carries out volunteer activities or services regularly or occasionally, out of their free will and not by a desire for material or financial gain on behalf of Maldivian Red Crescent and agrees to the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and to the MRC Code of Conduct.

**3.1.3. Volunteer Management:** Refers to the people development process that creates an enabling environment which promotes, recruits, maintains, innovates and motivates volunteer action inspired by the MRC and the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Volunteer management includes the management of volunteers in Programmes and Services, the design of volunteer tasks based on the skills of volunteers and ensuring that volunteers have the essential means and training to perform their tasks safely. The **Volunteer Manager** or **Focal Point** is the staff, or appointed volunteer who is responsible for the recruitment, support, and coordination of volunteers.

**3.1.4. Active Volunteer:**

An active volunteer of the Maldivian Red Crescent is an individual who is frequently engaged

in the organization's humanitarian activities, programs, services and training. They regularly participate in community services, emergency response, and capacity-building efforts, while upholding the Fundamental Principles of the RCRC. Active volunteers are dependable, maintain updated volunteer records, attend meetings or refresher sessions, and contribute meaningfully to the goals of their units. The minimum requirement to become an Active Volunteer shall be stated clearly in the Volunteer Manual of MRC.

#### **4. Statement**

In addition to the RCRC Movement's Fundamental Principles, the following general principles underpin MRC's approach to volunteering.

Maldivian Red Crescent:

1. Recognizes and promotes volunteering as a significant and positive contribution for social good, enabling individuals to contribute meaningfully to improving the lives of vulnerable people and strengthening community cohesion and resilience.
2. Recognizes and values volunteering as a means of creating and supporting a network of people who are available to contribute to MRC's mission, especially in emergencies in an inclusive environment.
3. Values all volunteers for their individual and collective contributions, enthusiasm and commitment as well as for the experience and skill they can bring to MRC, while also recognizing and encouraging all forms of voluntary service outside of MRC's Programmes & Services.
4. Commits to actively engaging volunteers in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of Programmes & Services.
5. Committed to create an enabling environment, fostering inclusivity, respects local traditions and cultural norms while ensuring that volunteer opportunities are accessible to all in the Maldives, regardless of gender, age, nationality or race.
6. Promotes culture of learning for and from volunteers through leadership development Programmes, skill building initiatives and knowledge sharing to empower volunteers to grow personally and professionally to strengthen their role in humanitarian action and in communities.
7. Ensures that volunteer efforts are systematically managed, tracked and recognized through transparent and meaningful appreciation mechanisms.

8. Maintains clear distinction between volunteers and paid staff, ensuring volunteers are fairly treated not be used as a substitute for paid workforce. MRC will ensure that the time commitment of the volunteer does not negatively impact their wellbeing, especially in emergency situations.
9. Encourages volunteerism as a powerful tool for building a society based on humanitarian values such as peace, tolerance, solidarity, mutual respect to demonstrate how contributions of volunteerism foster a culture of care, development and resilience within Maldivian communities.

In addition to these general operational principles, MRC, with respect to volunteering, applies the following:

**4.1. Duty of care to its volunteers and commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment, MRC**

- 4.1.1. Will provide volunteers with adequate training in safety protocols, ethical conduct and humanitarian principles to ensure their wellbeing during operations.
- 4.1.2. Continuously assess and mitigate potential risks associated with volunteering activities, especially in emergency response and disaster related efforts.
- 4.1.3. Ensure access to mental health and psychosocial support services, recognizing that volunteers may face stress and trauma.
- 4.1.4. Uphold zero tolerance for any form of harassment, abuse, or exploitation, implementing clear mechanisms to safeguard volunteers.
- 4.1.5. Where applicable MRC will provide access to appropriate safety measures, including personal protective equipment and insurance coverage to volunteers.

**4.2. Promote diversity and inclusion in volunteering, MRC**

- 4.2.1. Commits to ensure the volunteer base reflects the diversity of the Maldivian Society with inclusive and accessible volunteer recruitment regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, disability, social background, other identity factors, and geographic location.

**4.3. Strengthen and enhance volunteer engagement and management, MRC**

- 4.3.1. Will invest in efficient and secure data management systems to facilitate volunteer registration, onboarding, engagement, and recognition. Data protection and privacy will be upheld in compliance with national regulation and international best practices.

#### **4.4. Introducing and adapting flexible forms of volunteering, MRC**

- 4.4.1. Recognizes that volunteering is evolving and commits to facilitating individuals seeking diverse, flexible and impact-driven ways to contribute, facilitating both short-term and long-term volunteering opportunities.
- 4.4.2. Promote digital and remote volunteering, enabling volunteerism beyond physical boundaries.
- 4.4.3. Strengthening collaboration with external partners, including community groups, private sector, regional networks to expand volunteer engagement opportunities.

#### **4.5. Prioritize volunteer motivation and wellbeing, MRC**

- 4.5.1. Assess volunteer well-being, satisfaction, and motivation, taking evidence-based actions to improve volunteer experience and strengthen volunteer management practices.

### **5. Responsibilities**

The leadership of MRC is responsible for the effective implementation of this Volunteering Policy. MRC will ensure that all volunteer management, engagement, and development practices are aligned with this policy, while being contextually adapted to the Maldives and in accordance with relevant Movement-wide frameworks.

To support this, MRC will take the following key measures:

1. **Institutional Structure:** Establish or designate a dedicated focal point within the National Headquarters and Regional Offices responsible for volunteer development and coordination.
2. **Awareness and Capacity Building:** Ensure that all levels of leadership, staff, members, and volunteers are sensitized to this policy, supporting documents and mechanism.
3. **Priority Documents:** As required, with meaningful engagement and participation of members and volunteers, tools, guidance and supporting mechanisms to implement the policy will be developed or revised to be aligned with the policy. Among these tools, guidance and supporting mechanism, the following documents must be prepared within 6 months after the approval of this policy:
  - MRC Volunteer Management and engagement Manual: comprehensive document detailing the volunteer management cycle, related procedures, roles & responsibilities including monitoring and evaluation of volunteer management & engagement.
  - MRC Volunteer Recognition Guideline: will outline clear, inclusive, and consistent ways to acknowledge the contributions of volunteers across all levels of the National Society. It will serve as a practical tool to embed a culture of appreciation, guide recognition practices in units and regions, and ensure that volunteers feel valued, motivated and connected to the Movement.

4. **Unit / Regional Office Support:** Provide continuous support to MRC Units and regional offices to strengthen volunteer engagement and community-based initiatives.

This policy will be reviewed every four years or as deemed necessary.

## Reference texts

1. Maldivian Red Crescent Act (7/2009), 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009
2. Hanoi Call for Action
3. IFRC Strategy 20230
4. IFRC Volunteering Policy
5. MRC Code of Conduct
6. MRC Privacy Policy
7. MRC Child Protection Policy
8. MRC Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Policy
9. MRC Human Resources Policy
10. MRC Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy