



**IFRC Strategy 2030
consultations
highlighted the
importance of local
actors and the role of
National Societies in
developing their
local branch level
capacity**

Learning from branch voices

Keeping the ear to the ground

26 July 2023

Thank you



A deep thank you to all the 257 stories shared by branch leaders from across the globe.

These were shared in the process of the IFRC Branch Development Special Event, organized on 2023 March 15th and they are each valuable and unique stories.

These are branch voices not heard otherwise, expressing a breadth of experience across the world.

The sharing of these stories shows a growing shift in perceptions of people at branches; from being recipients of knowledge, to being producers of knowledge and seen as active change agents in their National Societies and for the IFRC Network.

Here is a short analysis of the 257 stories and what the Branch Leaders are telling us.

You may find the full 257 stories from the IFRC Branch Development Portal: ([English](#) / [French](#) / [Spanish](#))

IFRC will continue to invite branches to share stories, continue to learn from branches, arrange for events based on needs--- all through the building of **the Branch Development Communities of Practice.**





Snapshot of the BD Special Event

A **first step** towards the new **IFRC Community of Practice on Branch Development**, a virtual space for branch leaders to **share** their own experience and **support** others who face similar challenges.



1,373 persons

connected to prepare the event
(55% from Branches)



581 persons

from **370** branches in **108** countries participated in real-time conversation during the Special Event and actively interacted with one another



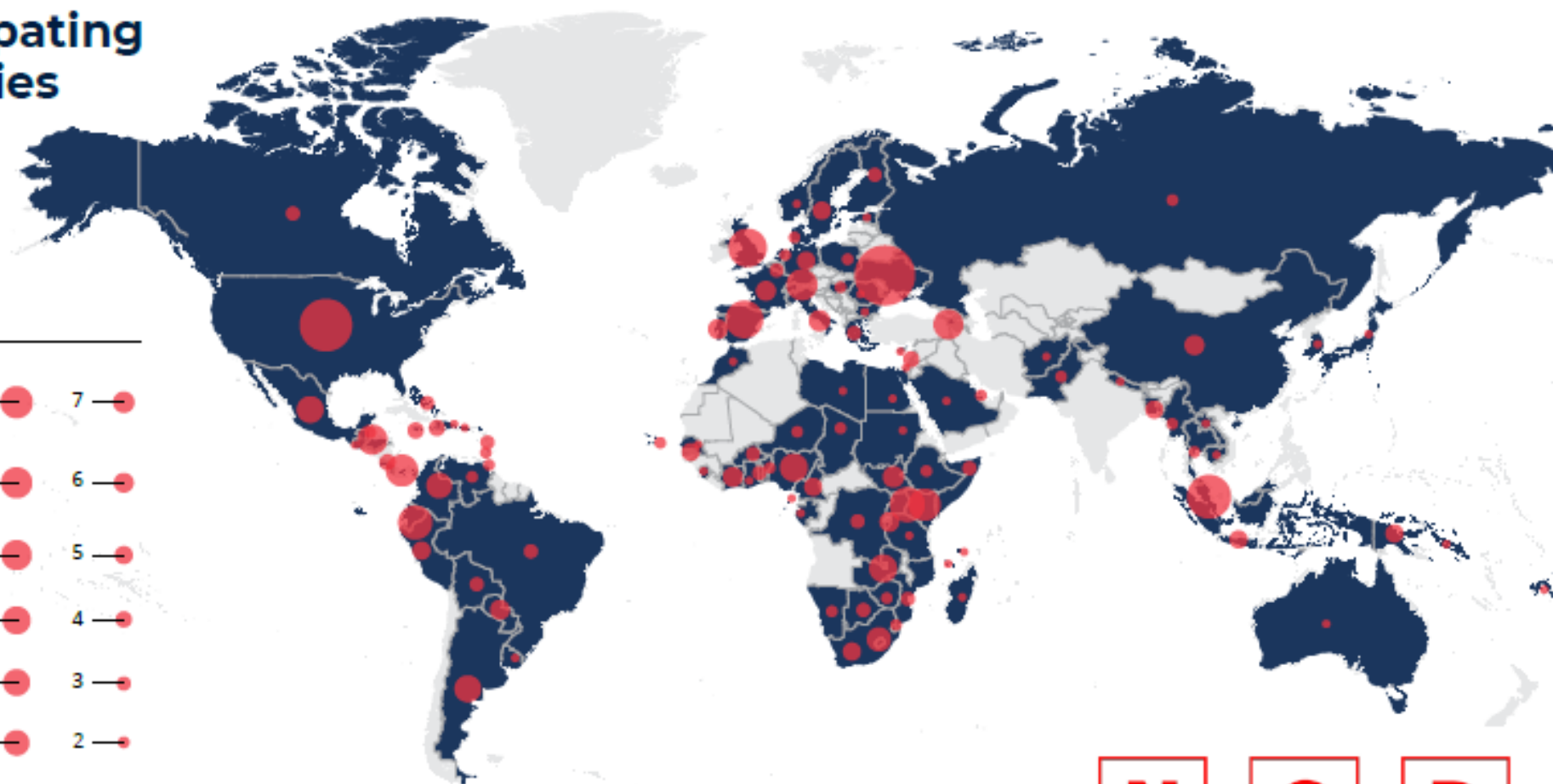
257 stories

were shared by branches and used before, during and after the event



Map of the 108 participating countries

Participants



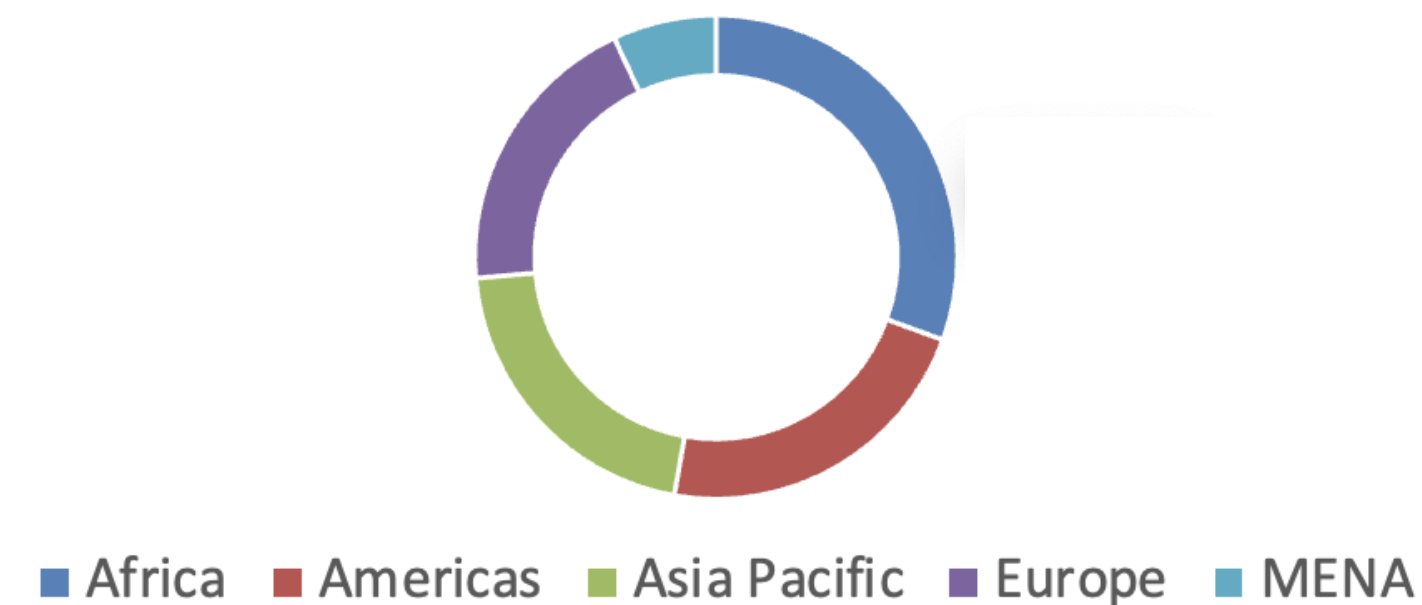


Success stories Branches shared

Across the 257 stories, here are the categories of success stories shared by Branches:

- **Engaging with communities**, gaining trust and recognition and embrace of volunteers
- **Volunteer recruitment and retention** through dissemination of Red Cross Red Crescent Values, offering training and protection
- **Building motivation** - the satisfaction of serving the vulnerable and increase of community trust and image through that
- Investing in building **Good Leadership** (within branch staff, volunteer and youth)
- **Mobilizing of local resources** – mobilizing funds, community resources and support, local authorities' support
- **Growing stronger during crisis**
- **Engaging with and involving young people**
- **Relating with local stakeholders** - local authorities, local partners, local leaders, other institutions

These 257 stories are shared by Branch Leaders from different parts of the Globe:





Branch Leader's biggest challenge

Mobilising financial resources and volunteers are the biggest challenges faced by branch leaders

My Branch's biggest challenge is:



Source: IFRC, based on input from the 257 stories



Link between challenges and success stories

In most of the topics that surface both in the challenges and the success stories, there is a clear overlap in the topics, though prioritized differently.

- Sustainability has the highest priority among the challenges shared, and
- Engaging with communities, gaining trust and recognition and embrace of volunteers has the highest visibility among the success stories.

The following slides shows chosen topics from both successes and challenges giving and insight on what was surfaced from both these story telling and providing some sample stories*.

** Disclaimer / limitations: The data are self-reported – IFRC has stayed loyal to the content and tone of the stories, without editing.*



What do Branches do to make themselves more sustainable?

Branches leaders have highlighted that Branch sustainability is both about finances and human resources. It is about having resources to be able to reach more people in the communities, attract and retain more volunteers to reach further. Here are some sample stories shared :

Yambio branch before BOCA had lots of challenges in terms of, local partnership, lack of resources and funds to support local initiatives, poor retention policy of volunteers. We have recruited 749 volunteers (270) females, We have IGA, that's Occasion tents, Chairs and Try-Cycle for rent.

The Branch and its volunteers have protection and acceptance during our movements and provision of services from both community and public authorities due to our close engagement wherever we serve ensuring the Seven Fundamental principles. We have been able to retain our volunteers as a result of rotational engagement of volunteers in activities.

Singira Robert Daniel, Yambio Branch
South Sudan Red Cross

Shortly after the start of the present crisis in Ukraine, refugees started arriving in our city Halmstad.

The local authorities were not prepared to handle the situation so our branch stepped in, mobilizing volunteers and resources. Eventually we had around a hundred volunteers, many of whom are engaged in the branch's other activities.

It's great to see that we can mobilize resources to face unexpected challenges.

Michael Coyet, Halmstad Branch
Swedish Red Cross

The situation of volunteer motivation in times of pandemic, as volunteers we helped but nobody helped us until we raised money to buy food to give to the volunteers who needed it the most in times of pandemic.

We became more aware, we became more human among us... Because we too can be affected by an event.

Jorge Martìn Filial Itapua
Paraguayan Red Cross



What do Branches do to engage with their communities and define needs?

Key to the Branches strength and sustainability is intertwined with its relevance. Putting community needs at the center for the branch's priorities and services enables branches to maintain its relevance. Therefore, a high priority is on identifying community needs to inform these priorities and services, and gain trust, acceptance as well as access in order to make local impact. Here are some stories shared by Branch leaders:

I remember the experience during food distribution and livestock offtake when we had to go into the interior of villages where roads are almost impossible to pass, mountains and roads winding on rough terrain where we had to get off the car to lower the weight but finally, we kept the heart of people beating when we reached them and offered the help they really needed. It was an encouraging challenge and created good impact in the people's hearts that we could reach them in such remote areas where vehicles don't regularly pass.

Josphat Ekai, Samburu Branch
Kenya Red Cross Society

When you want to grow your branch you should have good communication with the staff, volunteers and also the community you are working with. So, when I'm saying volunteers including committee, different memberships and volunteers specially those who offer their knowledge or their power to support their branch. The difference my branch and people I serve there is a difference which the branch is one who is responsible to the community to develop their efforts and make change to the community. The service is theirs and the branch is theirs and they can be involved.

Mohamud Ismail Ali, Garowe branch in
Somalia, Puntland
Somali Red Crescent Society

My branch has carried out positive activities, from the beginning our branch was less well known to the public, now it is better known. . one of which is that we are active in disaster activities and others such as the Covid-19 vaccine, etc. My branch is unique. Why are the results so good? What we do is accepted by the community and we are also one of the branches with positive results throughout Indonesia.

Syahril Hamzah, Jambi Province
Indonesian Red Cross Society



What do Branches do to be inclusive and reach out to marginalised groups?

Branch Leaders have highlighted the importance of a Branch to strive for diversity and promote the inclusion of all, engaging young people, diverse gender and ethnicity– among the service it provides, in the composition of its board/staff/volunteers/and members. This enables a Branch to stay relevant to a vast range of community composition and builds agility. Here are what some branch leaders said:

When the pandemic started, we could reach vulnerable people all over our province. We supplied medicines, food, psychological support and whatever needed, even the chance to make video phone calls to relatives far away. Apart from that, we have given shelter to Afghan refugees and Ukrainian as well (among other nationalities). The feedback given from these people was one of closeness and the sense of a well-done job. Our priority was to make these people at ease and include them in another culture. The sense of belonging to the biggest institution in the world has grown stronger.

Mercedes Martinez, Oficina Provincial Cruz Roja Española en Ávila
Spanish Red Cross

The “Community Integrated Home Care and Active Aging” program has been implemented in the Shirak region since October 2016. The project focuses on the problems of the elderly, disabled, and people with chronic diseases by introducing an integrated system of medico-social home care. Preliminary studies have shown that old people and people with fewer abilities want to have a dignified life and as much autonomy as possible by staying at home as long as possible, receiving care and assistance covering their specific and individual needs, being integrated into community life and able to realize their potential and skills, as well as influence their own life and life of their communities.

Samvel Madoyan, Shirak Regional Branch
Armenian Red Cross Society

As a volunteer and a leader of RCY network of RCSC Shanghai branch, it’s always an important job for us to encourage RCYs to join our work. For example, we launched a program aiming at improving elderly’s sense of self-satisfaction. It is hard to reach a large amount of elderly unless universities are motivated. We introduce this program to RCY leaders from universities, explaining why is this program helpful for elderly, and more importantly, why is it meaningful for RCY volunteers.

Shanghai Red Cross Youth Network
Red Cross Society of China



What do Branches do to engage young people in their work?

While the importance of “ensuring diversity” was surfaced under the earlier topic, specific attention was given to “Engaging young people” across the 257 stories. While young people face challenges such as unemployment, disconnection with communities, and many others, when Branches provide opportunities for personal development and empowerment through services, volunteering opportunities, it is showing positive impact for young people themselves, but also for the Branch to sustain its volunteer and human resource.

I belong to the coordination of veterans, our growth as a coordination is limited, but in our work we have received several young people interested in working, so we have channeled them to the coordination of Prevention and developed activities together where our experience is used by young people in our community activities. Several young people have joined us and we have been able to start a teamwork supporting and training new generations, as well as showing them a type of participative leadership.

Enrique Saucedo Padilla
Mexican Red Cross

In our community the vulnerable people face a lot of challenges such as poor hygiene and sanitation, food insecurity, disasters, lack of shelter, unemployment majorly in our youths and many others but we as leaders of Red Cross, have to transform these people’s lives through providing them, psychosocial support, creating income generating activities so that we empower our youth and other vulnerable.

I’m a youth leader and I have to transform lives of people and also I empower the people I serve at branch and the community.

Nannyonga Brenda (Volunteer),
Masaka Branch
Uganda Red Cross Society

I engaged the high learning institution to give 50 scholarship to the youths who are members from our branch as well as the provinces which made more youths joining and subscribing to Red Cross. It was my dream come true because the time I was contesting for youth leadership I did tell my fellow youths that I will negotiate with higher learning institution to support our youth volunteer’s who are under-privileged.

It turnout to be a milestone considering the fact that it was first of its kind and most of the youths wanted to be part of it. We had a good number of youths who joined the movement because of the project.

Volunteer, Ndola branch
Zambian Red Cross Society



Is “motivation” and “satisfaction of serving” an important driver for Branches?

Satisfaction of serving the community and people that experiences vulnerabilities, surfaced as a major motivational factor. With that the power of “motivation” as a driving force of developing a Branch.

Here are what some Branch Leaders shared:

We assisted the members of our community in the aftermath of hurricane IRMA.

It was different for us because we were also in the midst of the disaster ourselves, but it was an opportunity for us to rise above self and serve, the people we serve then had a greater appreciation for the assistance and support we were able to lend.

Peter Cuffy, Barbuda branch
Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross Society

It is a unique experience that allows you to expand your horizons and explore something new on a daily basis. Activities like this take you out of your comfort zone, changing your routine, allowing you to learn new things and perform actions you didn't even know you could do.

When we provide our services they always have joy on their faces.

Márcio Correia
Cape Verde Red Cross

Our organization is a true friend for temporarily displaced persons, to whom we provide humanitarian and psycho-social assistance. The people we help, like all Ukrainians, are going through difficult times. They left their own home, they are forced to start a new life in another city. In addition, they have an unstable psychological state, because they heard the sounds of explosions and saw the enemy face to face. It is scary.

Kyiv-Svyatoshinska district organization
Ukrainian Red Cross Society



What do branches do to grow stronger during emergencies and crisis?

What we learn is, that for most branches, the moment of responding to disaster and crisis, is the ultimate test of its ability. It is a moment of truth, when it must be seen to perform. If it does, its image and the support it receives grow.

Here are some stories shared:

It was the most frightening time of the year, the Covid-19. It was a matter of talking to my 14 teams of 10 people each who managed the water points after communicating the new lifestyle methods.

We sometimes received about 800 people per working day. But communication with politeness and respect for others was the key to crystallizing the lesson.

My branch was talking about a taboo subject to people who were very afraid and even afraid of being infected by us.

Cameroon Red Cross Society

During the COVID-19 pandemic my Branch was able to establish and strengthen its presence in the greater Suva area (Suva being the capital of Fiji) and my Branch was able to get, engage and maintain voluntary presence. We serve Fiji's most populated areas and have perhaps the largest geographic territory to cover as a Branch, covering 5 of Fiji's 14 provinces.

I think the wise counsel I was able to provide helped anchor them during what was a chaotic time for my Branch. There were mistakes made, but I was looked to and sought after to provide guidance based on the Fiji RC Constitution.

**Epeli Lesuma, Suva Branch
Fiji Red Cross Society**

During the flash flood of 2022, I lead a team in the community of Fajikunda to assess and collect data on affected households. This engagement strengthened the relationship of the Branch with local actors such as ward councilors, National Assembly representatives, youth groups, and households. Since then, they have been working closely with us thus appreciating the impartial role of the Red Cross during emergencies.

In fact, the National Assembly members, Councilor, and representatives of the community group were indeed impressed with the timely response. In fact, this compels them to seek more collaboration with the Red Cross to address societal challenges as they occur.

**Al'amin Sillah, Kanifing Municipal Branch
Gambia Red Cross Society**



How do branches build good leadership within?

Stories have shown that successful Branch Development centers on the Branch senior leader's ownership in the process. Moreover, the ability of Branch senior leadership to navigate changing environments, agility to adapt, strategic oversight, building a culture of trust and safety, was shown as highly importance for the Branch' development efforts and better positioning of the Branch. Here are some stories shared:

I started executive management roles earlier this month. Like most existing services in the branch, it lacks structure and lacks leadership. My work is being carried out with the aim of changing this reality and making the branch functional, structured and profitable, in order to reach the greatest number of vulnerable people with the best quality in terms of services provided. In these last few days, all the staff and volunteers felt the changes in terms of leadership, as there began to be rules and procedures for all types of actions carried out by all the people who work and provide services in the branch

Mário Tavares, Delegação de Portalegre
Portuguese Red Cross

Our branch is new launched 2022 November with 182 membership or volunteers and 99% youth, Bojanala branch in RSA Northwest Province consists with more than 100 wards or communities and our aim is to at least have more than 5 members/Volunteers per ward. We have a very supportive professional board members.

It was never difficult because of the support of the board we have.

Victor Maine, Bojanala Branch
South African Red Cross Society

It was a transition process in the National Society in which my area began to be strengthened. Knowing the movement and the internal work helped to create lines in which the volunteers supported generating direct impact inside and outside. Always hand in hand with the volunteer staff you can believe in what you do and above all GROW.

At the management level, I can say that important working groups were established and the leadership of colleagues and people who had not had opportunities for growth was visualized.

Shirley Blackshaw G.
Costa Rica Red Cross



More stories from Branch Leaders

You can find the link to the full set of the 257 branch stories from the Branch Development Portal

- [Click here for English](#)
- [Click here for French](#)
- [Click here for Spanish](#)