

Unlocking the Potential of Branches

The Benefits of Branch Development and BOCA 2.0 to National Societies and Branches



Branches: The beating heart of locally-led action

Branches and local units of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies are the primary connectors to communities – active not only during emergencies, but every day. They mobilize volunteers, provide opportunities for volunteers to engage in and shape local activities, as well as in the delivery of essential services according to the NS role and mandate. Deeply rooted in local realities and trusted by their communities, Branches and local units ensure the National Society’s work is relevant, timely, and responding to local needs. Their continuous presence enables them to act quickly in times of disaster and crisis while maintaining vital development and social support services year-round.

What makes a “Strong Branch”?

A strong Branch is one that is able to deliver relevant local services, for the local and diverse needs of the community, through an active network of volunteer-based units and local relationships. These services and networks must be sustained for as long as needed, mainly through local resources, delivered with quality, and with the ability to scale up/scale down based on needs. Strong Branches also contribute to the overall strength and visibility of the National Society and promote strong cohesion with the National Societies’ overall vision, mission and strategic priorities.

Starting Branch Development: Key Questions and Decisions

Branch Development is a continuous process of asking the right questions and making deliberate choices with the aim of strengthening branches’ ability to deliver relevant local activities and services through an active volunteer network. The definition of a strong branch helps inspire National Societies to reflect on what this would mean in their context and design their own branch development journeys, guided by the principle that when volunteering is at the heart of Branch Development, change becomes sustainable. Branch development also entails a reflection on whether the branch network

sufficiently covers the territory, if the branches are in the right locations, if the decision-making model and roles and responsibilities between HQ and branches are clearly defined and adequate or if changes need to be made.

What a Branch can do

Branches lead their own development through a cycle of five key actions: **analyzing community needs, assessing internal capacity, planning priorities, implementing actions, and reflecting to improve.** This cycle helps branches take informed, locally led steps to strengthen their role, services, and sustainability over time.

What a National Headquarters can do

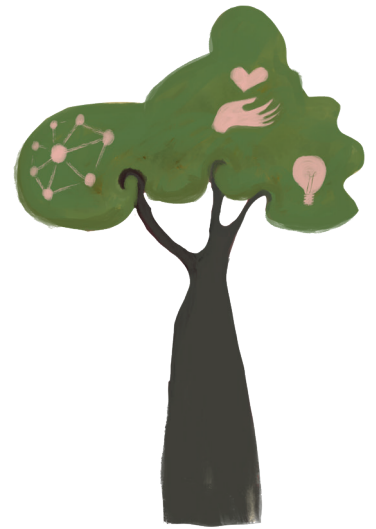
National Headquarters play a vital enabling role in Branch Development by: **setting a shared vision and standards, establishing systematic approaches and tools, providing tailored support, facilitating peer learning, monitoring collective progress, and recognizing and motivating branches.** These actions strengthen alignment, build momentum, and create the conditions for branches to thrive as strong, community-connected actors.



BOCA: Empowering Branch growth and development



The Branch Organisational Capacity to Act (BOCA) is a practical tool that helps unpack the vision of a strong branch. It is a participatory self-reflection exercise designed to empower branches to consider what it means to be a strong branch, see the bigger picture, identify strengths, as well as areas for improvement, and agree on development priorities. It is often the first step in a broader Branch Development process, laying the foundation for long-term transformation.



For a Branch, BOCA is:

- **Self-Led and Strategic** – It enables branches to reflect on their own capacities and understand their role in the community, fostering ownership to drive growth and innovation. It encourages reflection on how the branch can continuously evolve and improve.
- **Participatory and Inclusive** – It brings together leaders, volunteers, and other stakeholders to build consensus on priorities and promote collective decision-making.
- **Action-Oriented** – It results in a locally owned roadmap with concrete steps for strengthening the branch, enhancing volunteering, and enabling local action and service delivery. Follow-up, monitoring, and adaptation of this roadmap are key to achieving sustained impact.
- **Motivating and Inspiring** – By clearly highlighting opportunities for growth, BOCA can energize branches and generate momentum for transformation. Success stories from one branch can inspire others.

For a National Society, BOCA offers:

- **Shared alignment and direction** – It helps Branches develop a shared understanding of what a “strong Branch” looks like and builds alignment with the National Society’s overall vision, strategy, and direction.
- **National overview** – When applied across branches, BOCA provides NHQ with a comprehensive overview of existing capacities which can help inform targeted support and peer learning, and guide investments.

For more information on Branch Development and BOCA, visit IFRC Branch Development Portal at <https://branches.ifrc.org/>

