The value of our volunteers

A Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) study on the Bangladesh Red Crescent youth volunteers’ response to people affected by Rana Plaza building collapse in Savar, Bangladesh

by
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How we work

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Saving lives, changing minds.

Strategy 2020 voices the collective determination of the IFRC to move forward in tackling the major challenges that confront humanity in the next decade. Informed by the needs and vulnerabilities of the diverse communities with whom we work, as well as the basic rights and freedoms to which all are entitled, this strategy seeks to benefit all who look to Red Cross Red Crescent to help to build a more humane, dignified, and peaceful world.

Over the next ten years, the collective focus of the IFRC will be on achieving the following strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises
2. Enable healthy and safe living
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace

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Cover photo: Bangladesh Red Crescent Society volunteers responding to the Rana Plaza disaster. Photo by BDRCS.
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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Executive summary

Tragedy struck in the morning of 24th April 2013 when the 9-storey Rana Plaza building at Savar, 20 kilometers away from the capital Dhaka, collapsed. At least 4,000 people were trapped inside the building that contained 5 garment factories, a marketplace, a private clinic and a bank. Most of the victim of this tragic incident were garment factory workers as other establishments closed a day before when they noticed major cracks in the building.

A total of 181 RCY volunteers were mobilized around the clock for services in search and rescue, evacuation, first aid, psychological support, restoring family link, and dead body management until the emergency operation was declared closed on 19 May 2013.

The study highlights the heroic role played by the volunteers in saving lives and the equivalent economic value of the volunteering services they have rendered. The study clearly shows how the timely and skillful response of the youth volunteers made a difference in one of the history’s worst disasters and how well they were appreciated by the people they have helped.

Key findings

- Assisted in the rescue of 2,438 people
- Mobilized a total of 181 volunteers
- Total volunteering hours spent: 37,720 hours
- Total volunteering hours equivalent to 235 full time paid staff
- Total volunteer investment: BDT 1,130,436.00
- Investment per volunteer: BDT 6,245.50
- Total volunteer value: BDT 6,423,134.54
- Average value per volunteer: BDT 35,486.93
- VIVA ratio: 5:1, meaning that for every one Taka invested in volunteer, BDRCS received five Takas worth of services rendered by volunteer

This study recommends

1. Enhance volunteer management by developing a volunteering policy and its implementing guidelines. Ensure that this will be disseminated to the BDRCS units to guide them in the recruitment, mobilization and recognition of volunteers.
2. A lesson learnt session needs to be conducted after every major activity to help improve future services.
3. Increase public awareness of the roles that volunteers play within the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, especially the youth.
4. Ensure the safety and welfare of volunteers when they are mobilized especially in high risk activities by providing them with identification cards, proper personal protective equipment and insurance.
5. The BDRCS Resource Management System (RMS) volunteer database must be fully utilized and updated regularly to better connect with the RCY volunteers.
1. Introduction

The Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) model was developed by Katharine Gaskin to highlight the economic value of volunteer work. The model assesses the total value of volunteering by considering the total cost the National Society (NS) spends on its volunteers vis-à-vis the total economic value of the services they have rendered. It gives important information about the cost effectiveness of the project or programme under review.

Apart from the economic value of volunteers, the IFRC study authors included in this study the other contributions that volunteering has brought to the individual volunteer, the beneficiaries, the branches and the National Society. We have included quotes from volunteers and beneficiaries, as well as factual data on services rendered and persons assisted, where possible. Hence, we have the more encompassing title, “The value of our volunteers.”

This is the first volunteering study conducted by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society. This study was inspired by the gallantry of the youth volunteers (mostly 21-25 years old) during the tragic Rana building collapse in Savar, Bangladesh which killed instantly more than a thousand people.

The spontaneous response of the youth volunteers who rushed to the disaster scene shortly after the tragedy struck, reflects the Bangladeshi people’s inherent sense of empathy to people in distress. The tragic incident once again put to test the life-saving skills of 181 Red Cross youth volunteers who assisted in the rescue of more than 2,400 persons who were trapped under the rubbles. The vigilance and determination of the volunteers to save lives reminds us how BDRCS volunteers in the past helped reduce death toll brought by cyclones in 1970s from 300,000 to more than 3,000 when Cyclone SIDR hit the coastal region in 2007 with the same strength and power. More than anything, this study shows that the spirit of Henry Dunant is alive in the heart of every volunteer.

“I have served as a volunteer in 26 countries under World Service Authority but BDRCS always makes me feel like home.”

– Martin, Senior RCY

Volunteers carrying dead body after building collapse.

Volunteers managing temporary shelter.

VIVA study workshop jointly organized by BDRCS and IFRC.
Objectives of the study

1. Determine the economic value of volunteers in the emergency response during the Rana Plaza building collapse.
2. Document the success stories and achievements that can be replicated in the future.
3. Provide evidence-based recommendations that will guide the National Society to adopt better volunteer management system.

Scope and limitations of the study

It was a great opportunity to scrutinize and analyse the volunteer services of BDRCS, identify opportunities and scope of improvement. The study team carried out a desk review of related documents of volunteer management in the National Society with particular reference to the National Headquarters’ response to Savar building collapse tragedy. It was difficult to derive all the information from desk review due to lack of data documentation. Unstable political condition somehow slowed down the progress of the study. To overcome the obstacles a workshop was jointly organised by BDRCS and IFRC where questionnaire surveys were distributed to RCY volunteers who were involved in Rana Plaza operation, to crosscheck and validate the data. The workshop proved helpful and effective in getting more accurate data.

VIVA study was focused more on the economic value analysis of the services rendered by the volunteers rather than the quality of services, which to us, should both contribute to the overall cost effectiveness of volunteers’ response to Rana Plaza operation. To make the analysis more comprehensive, an experience sharing session by the RCY volunteers was also organised by the study team. Some invaluable information came out from experience sharing session and the survey which was conducted. Finally, to give the entire value auditing study a holistic look VIVA team also interviewed some of the survivors of the Rana plaza tragedy who received services from RCY volunteers at the Center for Rehabilitation of Paralyzed located in Savar.
Bangladesh Red Crescent Society

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) formally started its mission to reduce human sufferings and save lives of the vulnerable people, through the President’s Order (PO-26, 1973) on 16 December 1971. As the 119th member of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, all the accomplishments of BDRCS are aligned with the Seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Code of Conduct. Having auxiliary status to the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, BDRCS is delivering humanitarian services through its 68 branches across the country during natural and man-made disasters.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Youth

The Red Crescent Youth Programme which started in 1975 supports the National Society’s activities to achieve its goal, primarily in promoting volunteerism among the youth sector. In support of BDRCS, the Ministry of Education of the Government of Bangladesh has included in all secondary and higher secondary level institutions (6th to 12th grade) a curriculum on Red Crescent Youth volunteering, training and development. BDRCS has around 400,000 skilled and trained Red Crescent Youth volunteers spread across its 68 branches. The national headquarters is headed by an RCY executive committee composed of 15 members. The Youth chief of the NHQ acts as the representative of all the Youth chiefs of the BDRCS. However all Youth chiefs at branches & NHQ enjoy the equal status. Without the permission of BDRCS, no other organisation can use the name “Red Crescent Youth.”

Table 1: Annual budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Expenditure</th>
<th>Budget-2013 (BDT)</th>
<th>Expenditure-2013 (BDT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Crescent Youth</td>
<td>4,150,000</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co Curriculum</td>
<td>1,620,000</td>
<td>1,350,520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BDT = Bangladeshi Taka

Services

The key activities of RCY volunteers at BDRCS NHQ and branches include: search and rescue, first aid service, emergency relief operation, early warning of any natural disaster, response to fire incidents, winter cloth distribution, tracing activities, restoring family link, conducting health education and water and sanitation promotion, blood donation, and dead body management.
BDRCS response to people affected by building collapse in Savar, Bangladesh

On 24th April 2013, local time 9.15 am, Rana Plaza, a nine storey building in Savar, 20 kms away from the capital city of Dhaka, suddenly collapsed triggering tremor and piles of dust that darkened the whole area within minutes. At least 4,000 people were trapped inside the building that housed five garment factories, a market place, a private clinic and a bank. Most of the victims of this tragic incident were garment factory workers. Other establishments closed a day before when they noticed major cracks in the building.

RCY team composed of 100 volunteers rushed to the spot and helped in the rescue and evacuation of the trapped victims for two consecutive days without letup. On the third day, another 81 volunteers came to support the first team of volunteers. The RCY volunteers worked side by side with the two National Disaster Response teams (NDRT). As the disaster scene started to clear up from the smoke of dust and debris, bodies piled up all over the place became visible and foul smell filled the air. Volunteers acted on the situation and helped other responding agencies clear the area of decomposing bodies. For BDRCS youth volunteers, the whole Rana Plaza was a nightmare – a nightmare they have never imagined would, and could happen – but at the same time, a nightmare that brought out the best in them as Red Cross youth volunteers. For 24 solid days since the collapse of Rana Plaza building and until the close of the emergency operation, the 181 indefatigable youth volunteers remained steadfast in their resolute to do the best they can, while they can, so that others may live.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of volunteers deployed</th>
<th>181</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of first aid and medical post</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of people received first aid and medical service</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of RFL post</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of family reunited</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of drinking water (litres)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of body bag provided</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the RCY volunteer getting inside the wreckage using crane.

RCY volunteers carrying heavy oxygen cylinder.
2. Analysis of the volunteer investment and value audit

A. Total volunteer investment

This section presents the total investment that BDRCS has made for its volunteers who participated in the rescue and relief operation at the Rana building collapse in Savar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Expenditure</th>
<th>Cost Detail</th>
<th>Amount (BDT)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Expenses on meals / snacks provided to volunteers</td>
<td>174,500</td>
<td>15.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Travel expenses made by BDRCS to mobilize volunteers to fulfill their duties.</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>Equipment provided to volunteers</td>
<td>175,600</td>
<td>15.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Expenses</td>
<td>Expenses incurred for the technical trainings of volunteers as part of capacity building.</td>
<td>207,062</td>
<td>18.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Cell phone cost incurred by BDRCS</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>0.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Recreation</td>
<td>A trip to Cox’s Bazar was arranged by BDRCS for the RCY volunteers who were deployed in Rana Plaza</td>
<td>438,274</td>
<td>38.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,130,436</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main expenses incurred by BDRCS on youth volunteers deployed in Rana plaza operation included food, transportation, safety gears and rescue equipment, training, communication and recreation.
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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Data includes the total time spent by 181 volunteers in various tasks during Rana Plaza operation. This estimate was collected from the workshop of 181 RCY volunteers who were involved in the operation.

### B. Total volunteer value

This section presents the tasks carried out by volunteers and the time spent on each task, and matches it to the equivalent paid work at the market wage. This produces an estimated amount – what the National Society would need to pay if it were hiring staff to carry out the same work. The wage rate used in this study was based on Bangladesh Red Crescent Society salary scale. The table below presents the equivalent positions or paid works a volunteer is doing during the course of their duties.

#### Table 4. Total volunteer value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title / Role</th>
<th>Equivalent Paid Job</th>
<th>Hourly Wage Rate</th>
<th># of Hours in each role (181 volunteers)</th>
<th>Total Volunteer Value of Rana Plaza Operation (BDT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search &amp; Rescue</td>
<td>Field Officer (Relief Dept.)</td>
<td>148.75</td>
<td>14,476</td>
<td>2,153,305.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First aid</td>
<td>Paramedic</td>
<td>214.68</td>
<td>2,394</td>
<td>513,948.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracing</td>
<td>Field Officer (Tracing Dept.)</td>
<td>171.20</td>
<td>2,016</td>
<td>345,139.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead body management</td>
<td>Office Assistant (Tracing Dept.)</td>
<td>190.68</td>
<td>15,686</td>
<td>2,991,006.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food distribution</td>
<td>Supporting staff (Relief Dept.)</td>
<td>123.54</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>123,169.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment transportation</td>
<td>Supporting staff (Relief Dept.)</td>
<td>171.20</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>110,766.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debris cleaning</td>
<td>Supporting staff (Relief Dept.)</td>
<td>123.54</td>
<td>1,504</td>
<td>185,804.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37,720</td>
<td>6,423,134.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1 US dollar = 77.77 BDT

Data includes the total time spent by 181 volunteers in various tasks during Rana Plaza operation.
C. The VIVA ratio

The VIVA ratio is computed using the formula:

\[
\text{VIVA ratio} = \frac{\text{Total volunteer value}}{\text{Total volunteer investment}}
\]

Using the values obtained during the VIVA exercise, we can reach the following calculation:

\[
\text{VIVA ratio} = \frac{\text{BDT 6,423,134.54}}{\text{BDT 1,130,436.00}} = 5 : 1
\]

The VIVA ratio calculation means that BDRCS received five taka worth of volunteer services for each taka spent on each RCY volunteer in the Rana Plaza operation. With the total volunteer investment of BDT 1,130,436, BDRCS yielded a total of BDT 6,423,134.54 worth of volunteer services rendered by RCY volunteers.

D. Total number of volunteer hours, age and involvement with BDRCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of volunteers</th>
<th>181</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of volunteer hours rendered</td>
<td>37,720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Years of involvement with BDRCS as RCY (years)](image)

![Volunteer Age](image)
As presented on the above table, 181 volunteers invested their 37,720 hours of volunteer services for this specific disaster relief operation. Many of them were involved in multiple activities. 65% of the total volunteers were between the ages of 21-25 and 115 volunteers joined as RCY within last 0.5-1 year. Such statistical data is a clear evidence that youth are getting more and more involved in volunteer services. With proper motivation and training the number will increase rapidly and these volunteers then could be considered as “trained asset” ready to be mobilized anytime the need arises.

**E. Full-time staff equivalent of the total number of volunteer hours**

Unlike #2, #3, #4, #5, and #6 in this study series, this particular case of the BDRCS is focused on a specific operation that only lasted 28 days (4 weeks). Therefore, the formula for computing the full time staff equivalent was also adjusted such that the hypothetical “staff recruitment” is not for a one year period (48 weeks) but basically for the period of the operation which is only 4 weeks.

In order to carry out the work of the 181 volunteers for 28 days (for this study we counted this as 4 weeks) mobilized during the Rana Plaza building collapse operation, the branch would need the equivalent of **235** full time personnel. This was computed as follows:

\[
\text{Equivalent full time staff} = \frac{\text{Total volunteer hours}}{40 \text{ hours per week}} \times \frac{\text{4 weeks}}{\text{(specific for this operation only)}}
\]

\[
= \frac{37,720 \text{ hours}}{40} \times \frac{\text{4 weeks}}{(\text{specific for this operation only})}
\]

\[
= 235 \text{ full time staff}
\]

*If we compute this in a normal 1 year recruitment, this would be equivalent to a 20 full time staff.*

It must be noted however that the adjustment made to this formula is just in relation to the period of operation (4 weeks) and not in the hours per week. This is significant because a full time staff of BDRCS, or any national society for this matter, usually work very long hours, including Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. In matters of saving lives, our volunteers would be on duty 24/7. The usual computation used in this section is meant to demonstrate the staff equivalent during normal times.
F. Per capita costs and contributions

Calculations on the hours, value and expenditure for each volunteer deployed in Rana Plaza incident:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per capita hours</th>
<th>=</th>
<th>Total number of volunteer hours</th>
<th>Total number of volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>37,720.00</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>208 hours per volunteer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per capita expenditure</th>
<th>=</th>
<th>Total volunteer investment</th>
<th>Total number of volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>1,130,436.00</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>BDT 6,245.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per capita value</th>
<th>=</th>
<th>Total volunteer value</th>
<th>Total number of volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>6,423,134.54</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>BDT 35,486.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clockwise:
1. RCY volunteers trying to communicate with the search and rescue (S&R) team using wireless.
2. An RCY volunteer helping relative of a victim to make phone call and restore family link.
3. Volunteers cutting concrete to rescue a victim.
3. Experience sharing session of the volunteers

My father allowed me to become RCY but never wanted me to participate in any risky operation like Rana Plaza building collapse. So I didn’t inform him initially that I am working with Rana Plaza rescue team. By the time the operation was finished my shoe was in total ruin. He noticed and asked the reason of the damage to the newly bought shoes. I confessed about my participation in Rana Plaza operation. He was so proud of me that he bought me a new pair of shoes. That was a great inspiration for me to continue volunteering. Inspired by my enthusiasm, 10 boys younger than me also joined as RCY in my hometown. It feels good to be the idol for other people and I hope I will always keep up the image of BDRCS’s RCY.
– Arafat, RCY

On the 3rd day I recued a woman who was in a complete shock and in real helpless condition. She was so traumatized that she could not rely on anyone and refused to get out of the wreckage. I gave assurance that nothing would happen to her. She relied on me. I asked her name, she replied “Parveen from Bhola”. I then carried her in my arm and was getting out of the wreckage and I kept repeating in loud voice “Parveen from Bhola”. Then her mother recognized her and blessed me stating “may you live as many years as the number of hair on my head”. Such blessings inspires me everyday towards volunteerism.
– Anik Islam, RCY

I am a jobholder. I took my leave from my office during those days of Rana Plaza operation so I can volunteer. Everyday I travelled 43.9 kms from Narayongonj to Savar, and with my humble effort, tried to ease the suffering of the victims. In normal times, to travel this distance is a nightmare experience but for this work the distance felt very little to me. In fact I used to feel restless as to how quickly I can reach the spot.
– Khairul, Senior RCY

I was an active RCY in my school days. After my marriage I was not that much involved for 17 years. But after watching the deadliest incident on TV, I could not confine myself at home. It moved me so much that I recalled my days of volunteer work and I felt that I must join the team once again. Out of a deep sense of empathy I rushed to Rana Plaza without even informing my family. I joined the team and immediately took part in the rescue effort. I was the first woman who stayed whole night at the site and worked shoulder to shoulder with the other volunteers. The experience was traumatic because I could see how helpless our garment workers were because they worked in a building without any safety regulation. Next morning I came back home and found my son watching Cricket match on TV. I felt my son also should have more social responsibility and feel for the people like every RCY felt. I motivated my son to join as RCY. Now both mother and son serve as RCY of BDRCS. Participating in this work gives me a sense of bliss and satisfaction.
– Sraboni, Senior RCY
4. Interview with the affected persons

On 24th of April, 2013 I was rescued by a RCY volunteer. I was trapped on the 6th floor. RCY helped the Armed forces to drill the wall and cut the rods carefully. A RCY pulled me out of the wreckage holding my hand firmly.

– Jakir Hossain, 30, Rana Plaza Victim

I was a technician of my garments company. I had a screwdriver on my hand. I started digging the cracked wall using that screwdriver and was heading towards an unknown world. Suddenly I could see sun light and a boy with red jacket asking “anybody here?”. I pushed a flexible pipe towards him to give signal. He got the signal, made a path and rescued 5 of us. Then a RCY team carried us into an ambulance. I could see that they were mired into the sludge upto their knees but they were not bothered and were conquering the obstacle passionately to rescue us as fast as they could.

– Md. Al Amin, 27, Rana Plaza Victim

I was senseless for the first two days. On the third day RCY team rescued me from the 7th floor of the building. I thought I could get up by myself, but failed, my legs were broken. The volunteer was so lean and thin that I thought I could not rely on him. But may be a strength from God was vested on him during that time and he confidently carried me on his shoulder.

– Dur Protirash, 25, Rana Plaza Victim

I used to work in a building adjacent to Rana Plaza. I was trapped within my office premises. A team consisting of 3 RCY rescued me from the 7th floor on the next day. I am also the victim of Rana plaza incident but no other organization helped me, nor recognized me as a victim. Bangladesh Red Crescent Volunteers who were deployed in tracing operation identified me and BDRCS gave me 9,000 taka.

– Baki Billah, 27, Rana Plaza Victim

After 10 hours of the incident a RCY team found me. One of them gave me water other covered my eyes. Initially I thought it was to protect my eyes from dust but later on I realized they did that to spare me the pain of watching my lost leg.

– Rehana Akhter, 24, Rana Plaza victim

I was a technician of my garments company. I had a screwdriver on my hand. I started digging the cracked wall using that screwdriver and was heading towards an unknown world. Suddenly I could see sun light and a boy with red jacket asking “anybody here?”. I pushed a flexible pipe towards him to give signal. He got the signal, made a path and rescued 5 of us. Then a RCY team carried us into an ambulance. I could see that they were mired into the sludge upto their knees but they were not bothered and were conquering the obstacle passionately to rescue us as fast as they could.

– Md. Al Amin, 27, Rana Plaza Victim

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– Baki Billah, 27, Rana Plaza Victim

On the first day after 5 hours me and my mother were rescued by a RCY team. They took us onto stretcher and got us into ambulance. RCY’s are angels to us. I wish they could reach my sister and save her.

– Preeti Rani, 18, Rana Plaza victim.
5. Other findings

- Rana Plaza tragedy was one of the deadliest man-made disasters encountered in the history of Bangladesh. The contribution of RCY was highly appreciated by entire country and the media as well. BDRCS has awarded certificates to the volunteers in recognition of their efforts in Rana Plaza rescue operation.

- Almost every local television channel covered RCY volunteers’ activities during the Rana Plaza incident. The female RCY who participated in the Rana Plaza operation was only 3.87% of total RCY volunteers. Even though this number appears too low, their dedication and spirit inspired other volunteers and were highly appreciated by the media.

- The VIVA ratio could even be bigger if all other activities of volunteers during the whole year under review were included instead of just one event.

- BDRCS received a total of BDT 6,085,758 donations from many national and international organisations, as well as from various individuals, to support volunteer activities in Rana Plaza. In addition, volunteers got free transport worth BDT 95,056 during the operation.

- Volunteers had only one pair of vest each during the entire operation. If possible, volunteers should have extra pair of BDRCS vest or t-shirt during operations for their own hygiene.

- Safety gears (helmet and gumboot) were not up to the standard to conduct a risky operation like Rana Plaza. The sole of the boots were very thin and helmets were made of plastics. Handy gears were required that could ease the rescue operation. (i.e. torch encrusted helmet could be a better option than individual torch and helmet as it keeps one hand free and facilitate rescue operation).

- Volunteers have no insurance coverage.

- A full health checkup of each volunteer was required after a prolonged risky and unhygienic operation like Rana Plaza.

- No per diem could be managed for the volunteers because of budget constraints of BDRCS. Many of the volunteers’ cloths got torn and worn out. Giving them a new set of cloths would have been a nice gesture.

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**Future RCY...**

Akhter Hossain, a 7-year old boy, sells popcorn near Rana Plaza. He has personally witnessed how the building collapsed, the immense suffering it has caused to thousands, of people and how the heroic role of the RCY volunteers saved hundreds of lives. The whole scene moved him so deeply that he, too, felt the burning desire to help the victims in any way he could. But he was so young and was not allowed to get inside the wreckage. Still, he managed to bring to the RCY team water, food, and message from worried and caring friends and relatives waiting outside. He also helped in cleaning the first aid booth and attending to the first aiders’ needs. He was so inspired by the RCY team that whenever he sees a red jacket with BDRCS logo he rushes to them and expresses his interest to join BDRCS volunteer team. He says “when I grow up I will join Red Cross youth. It’s a dream to me”
6. Conclusion

This study shows that 235 full time staff would have been required to carry out the Rana Plaza operation. Each volunteer invested an average 208 hours in the Rana Plaza operation per capita value equivalent to BDT 35,486.93. Per capita investment by BDRCS on RCY volunteers was BDT 9,032. However, the study was not confined within the quantitative values only. It tried to identify cost effectiveness in terms of quality service and level of satisfaction of those who have received the service of RCY volunteers. BDRCS may find it useful to do this value of volunteers study to continue highlighting the economic and social value of its volunteers while at the same time identifying the needs or gaps in its volunteer management but eventually highlighting and recognizing the value of the volunteers.

7. Recommendations:

1. Enhance volunteer management by developing a volunteering policy and its implementation guidelines. Ensure that this will be disseminated to the BDRCS units to guide them in the recruitment, mobilization and recognition of volunteers.

2. A lesson learnt session needs to be conducted every after major activity to help improve future services.

3. Increase public awareness of the roles that volunteers play within the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, especially the youth.

4. Ensure the safety and welfare of volunteers when they are mobilized especially in high risk activities by providing them with identification cards, proper personal protective equipment and insurance.

5. The BDRCS Resource Management System (RMS) volunteer database must be fully utilized and updated regularly to better connect with the RCY volunteers.

BDRCS youth volunteers work relentlessly along with other emergency response teams during the Savar tragedy – from rescuing and evacuating survivors, treating the injured, to retrieving bodies.
Bangladesh Red Crescent Society would like to thank the following for their full support and active participation in making this VIVA study possible:

- BDRCS youth volunteers involved in the Rana Plaza building collapse response
- Rana Plaza survivors who were interviewed for this VIVA study
- Donors, partners and the local community
- Mass Media who provided coverage and featured BDRCS and volunteers
- BDRCS Governance and Management
- BDRCS Youth and Volunteer Department
- BDRCS Organizational Development Department
- BDRCS Response Department
- IFRC Bangladesh Delegation Response team, ICRC and PNSs that supported the Rana Plaza Building collapse response

About the authors

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Syeda Nusrat Haque joined IFRC in August 2013 as Knowledge Management Officer. This study is one of the many works she has done for the IFRC Bangladesh Delegation. She is 26 years old and did her Batchelors in Environmental Science and Management and Masters in Disasters Management.

**Md. Kamrul Hasan**

Md. Kamrul Hasan is a development practitioner with about 6 years of professional experience in planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of development and humanitarian project/programs. At present, he is working as “Senior PMER Officer” in Planning and Development Department of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS). He has completed his Master of Social Science (MSS) in 2006 and Bachelor of Social Science (BSS) in 2005 major in Political Science from the University of Dhaka.

**Sayma Ferdowsy**

BDRCS Deputy Director for youth & volunteers since 2006. Her tasks include youth and volunteer development through trainings on various BDRCS services including emergency response, first aid and tracing, as well as through programme participation and events organisation. With the recognition of and endorsement by the Bangladesh government for the inclusion of BDRCS programmes in the extra curriculum of students in all secondary schools and colleges in the country, Ms Ferdowsy has taken a bigger challenge to make the 400,000 BDRCS youth volunteers the humanitarian force people can depend on in times of need.
The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

**Humanity** The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

**Impartiality** It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

**Neutrality** In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

**Independence** The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

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