VOLUNTEERING IN A MULTI-HAZARD ENVIRONMENT

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Global disaster prevalence-Caribbean and St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The recent Global Risk Report (2022) projects that over the next decade, "environmental risks are perceived to be the five most critical long-term threats to the world as well as the most potentially damaging to people and planet, with "climate action failure", "extreme weather", and "biodiversity loss" ranking as the top three most severe risks"[1]. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is at risk to several natural hazards, including floods, hurricanes, cyclones, droughts, landslides, and volcanic eruptions[2]. The most common hazards are tropical storms and hurricanes. In 2022, the islands were impacted by five (5) named hurricanes, Lisa, Julia, Ian, Fiona, and Earl, even though none made landfall[3].

Landslides, another common hazard, occur due to building constructions on steep slopes and prolonged rainfall experienced during the rainy season. In 2008, there were 25 reported landslides due to heavy rainfall, which resulted in one (1) death. Even though volcanic eruptions are not common, the impact resulting from an eruption is large-scale. The most recent eruption of the La Soufriere volcano occurred in 2021[4]. Before its last eruption, there are five others in recorded history. The effects of these disasters are further compounded by a 48.2 % vulnerability level as of the last poverty assessment[5].

Given the frequency and the multitude of hazards faced, and the growing number of extreme events due to climate change, there is an increased need for volunteers and volunteer participation in readiness and reduction activities and not just response and recovery[6]. This has resulted in the adoption of strategies for effective disaster management being focused on empowering people to take action before, during and after a disaster. Most countries do not possess adequate human and other resources needed to effectively respond to and recover from a disaster. This is especially true in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in which the islands depend on assistance from other

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[1] https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2022.pdf
[2] https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/drm-country-note-2010-st-vincent-grenadines.pdf
[3] https://www.worlddata.info/america/stvincent-grenadines/hurricanes.php
[4] https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/drm-country-note-2010-st-vincent-grenadines.pdf
[5] https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/saint-vincent_prsp_2007-2008_v1.pdf
[6] https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/7009/ajem-201902-23-dr-andrea-grant-etal.pdf

countries and, more so, on acts of grassroots volunteerism and non-governmental organizations to fill this breach.

The Red Cross is uniquely situated to assist within these parameters since it is founded upon volunteerism. Red Cross volunteers do not just provide bodies to assist, but they are part of the grassroots networks, which provide information that is often time-consuming to collect and verify otherwise. These strategies appeal to the need for self-determination by building individual capacity and community resilience and are often reflected in an increased level of informal and formal volunteering.

The study of disasters has emphasized the "…need to understand human behavior" (Drabek & McEntire, 2003), and therefore this study is designed to identify how to sustain volunteer motivation in a multi-hazard environment using lessons learnt from the experiences of preparing for and responding to numerous hazard impacts.

The need to better understand volunteer motivation is also linked to changing participation and motivation patterns. Brand loyalty to one humanitarian organization is becoming less significant[7]. The IFRC Volunteering Policy also states that "Volunteer development, including recruitment and management, needs to be proactive in adapting to the skills and interests of volunteers rather than serve as a reactive network". To accomplish the aims of this research, it will argue that interventions by the National Society affect volunteer perceptions and motivations because of the impact on their well-being. This paper will highlight:

1. Actions needed to mitigate the level of burnout among volunteers in a multi-hazard environment.

2. Actions to address the perceptions of volunteer safety in a multi-hazard environment.

3. Recommendations on sustaining volunteer well-being and motivation in a multi-hazard environment.

It will begin by offering an overview of volunteering, its motivation and its benefits. It will then look at some of the major disasters that impacted St. Vincent and the Grenadines during the period

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[7] https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/20220822_IFRC-Volunteering-Policy-EN.pdf

2020-2022. This study will further examine the results gathered from research into this topic and make recommendations based on those results.

2.0 Volunteering Definition and Landscape

The word "volunteer" was first used in a non-military sense in the 1630s (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2001). The IFRC defines a Red Cross Red Crescent Volunteer as, "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 IFRC Movement". However, from its definition, it can be surmised that from the earliest development of civilization, wherever an act of kindness was offered, volunteerism existed. Volunteering can be categorized as 'formal' or 'informal' in which informal volunteering is defined as "unpaid, voluntary work that is not coordinated by an organization or institution[8]"

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is an organization that is founded on volunteerism and holds the principle of volunteerism as fundamental to its actions[9]. Its history recounts that Henry Dunant, its founder, saw the need for more voluntary acts during the Solferino battle and from there built an organization which holds formal volunteering at its core. This attitude towards volunteering is further cemented into Strategy 2030 which is supposed to represent the collective goals of all 192 national societies which comprise the IFRC.

Specifically, goal three of Strategy 2030 stipulates that "people mobilise for inclusive and peaceful communities[10]". Although not expressly stated in this statement, there is no doubt that this mobilizing of which it speaks is volunteerism. There is an implied understanding that to achieve such goals, there must be participation and ownership of the efforts by the community alongside the coverage and services provided by governments. This ownership and partnership is, in essence, a type of informal volunteering. Although they appear similar at face value, spontaneous volunteering, while a form of informal volunteering can be defined as volunteering "on impulse"

[8] https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/advocacy/informal-volunteering-and-unpaid-work/
[9] https://www.ifrc.org/get-involved/volunteer-us/our-volunteers
[10] https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/S2030-EN.pdf

without a long-term commitment. One is only limited by the time given to make the decision to volunteer and not the nature of the organization.

A new model for understanding volunteering practices in the 21st Century was published in a 2020 paper under the Plan of Action to Integrate Volunteering into the 2030 Agenda. In this model, five dimensions of volunteer action are defined: structure (formal and/or informal), site (online and/or offline), intensity (episodic and/ or regular), aspiration (self-building and/or community-building) and category (service, mutual aid, participation, campaigning and leisure; these are not mutually exclusive).

Grant, Hart & Langer (2019) postulates that "formal organization of volunteers is supplemented by informal volunteering, especially during response and recovery phases and is increasingly encouraged in readiness and reduction activities". This also occurred in St. Vincent and the Grenadines where the environment created by multiple large-scale disasters necessitated informal or spontaneous volunteering to respond. There was informal volunteering in which there was the spontaneous mobilisation of resources during the La Soufriere volcano eruption and Hurricane Elsa. However, some of these resources are yet to be converted into a more permanent and formal volunteering structure.

2.1 Volunteerism in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Outside of a disaster, persons can become formal volunteers with the SVG Red Cross once they express interest. The intake process is initiated and requisite training and opportunities for socialization and volunteering are provided. For the most part, new members are recruited by word-of-mouth through friends, colleagues and family, members.

Additionally, calls are made for interested community persons to become formally trained as members of a Community Disaster Response Team (CDRT). Training is provided to interested persons in ten (10) thematic areas. CDRT-trained individuals are expected to form a community response group, which can provide basic support to a community affected by a disaster. It should be noted that CDRTs are not considered to be a Red Cross volunteer group and report directly to the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO). Even though CDRTs officially report to NEMO, any disaster-related information received is also shared with the SVG Red Cross. If the

CDRT wishes to become a Red Cross group after training, then the SVG Red Cross officially inducts the group into the formal organization. Training is on-going for all volunteers ensuring that they are provided with the necessary skills needed to fulfil their areas of interest and volunteer activities.

Informal volunteering occurs both when there is a large-scale disaster- as was the case in the La Soufriere volcanic eruption, Covid-19, Hurricane Elsa- and when community resources are overwhelmed-e.g. providing additional assistance at a sporting event or after a road accident.

3.0 Motivation and Volunteering

The motivation for volunteering has been well-researched. Self-Determination Theory makes allowances for the variation of motivation at any given time and makes distinctions between different types of motivation (Figure 1) and consequences.
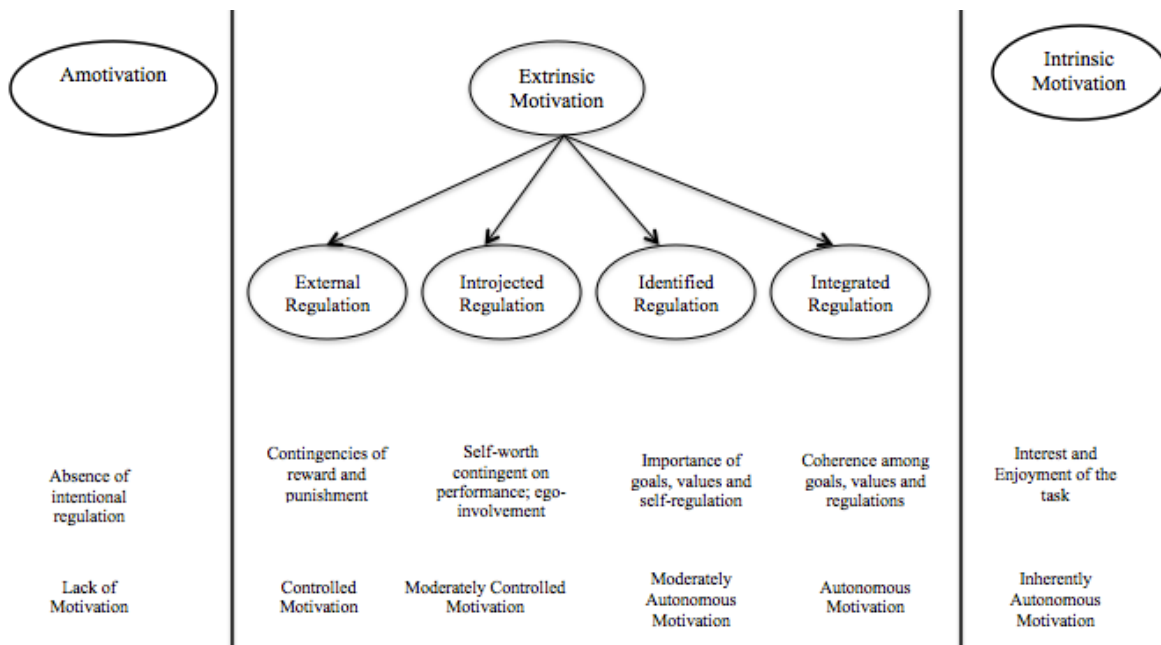

Figure 1: Motivation spectrum by Gagne and Deci (2005)

Self-determination theory posits that all persons, regardless of culture, have the same innate need for autonomy, competence and relatedness and therefore the satisfaction of these will allow for

motivation (Deci et al, 2001, Bidee et al, 2013). Furthermore, as advanced by Ryan and Deci (2000), "…people vary in the level of motivation (how much) and also in the *orientation* of that motivation (what type)". This idea becomes clearer after looking at Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Maslow proposed that people have several inherent motivation systems unconnected to rewards or unconscious desires (McLeod, 2007). Each individual is located at a different point on this metaphorical pyramid proposed by Maslow. This location is determined by socialization as well as economics. As a result, how motivated the individual is and the nature of that motivation will also be singular since every individual interacts with his environment differently.

Gagne & Deci (2005) stated that "…Self Determination Theory research focuses not on the consequences of the *strength* of those needs for different individuals, but rather on the consequences of the extent to which individuals are able to *satisfy* the needs within the social environment". This is especially important in volunteering motivation since the consequence of not being able to satisfy the needs spoken about by Gagne and Deci (2005) is often translated into abstaining from volunteering. As a result, any research into volunteer motivations should include an examination of both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivational interventions.

When a volunteer performs an activity because it is inherently interesting or pleasurable, this is intrinsic motivation. The result of this motivation is creativity and learning which is inherent in every individual and exists in the interaction between the individual and any given activity. Of import here, however, is that intrinsic motivation will only occur when the activity allows for the extending of the individual's capacities or gives positive experiences.

When one does something because it leads to a separate outcome, is extrinsic motivation. The types of extrinsic motivation can vary. In the first type of extrinsic motivation, the individual is propelled to act by an external stimulus. For example, if a teacher was asked, by their National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO), to report to their school which is a designated shelter in preparation for an incoming tropical cyclone. It may be done. However, the individual may perform the activity with resentment.

The other form of extrinsic motivation occurs when the activity is self-endorsed and therefore accepted. In the example set out above, if the teacher performs this task with a willing attitude, it can be said that his behaviour reflects an inner acceptance of the value of the task. This motivation

is either identified or integrated and results in more positive self-perceptions, greater persistence and better quality of engagement.

While it is understood that the act of volunteering worldwide is conducted out of free will, Haivas et al (2013) stipulate that the more volunteers perceive themselves to be autonomous (the source of their own volunteering behaviour), the more engaged they tend to be with their volunteering work and the less likely they are to quit the organization. The work climate of volunteers was also found to positively influence volunteer attitudes and behaviours by allowing for need satisfaction (Bidee et al, 2013). This finding holds implications for community engagement in informal volunteering as well. A study by Butt et al (2017) discussed different approaches to motivation for volunteering and grouped them into four areas using an ABCE model: affiliation (A), beliefs (B), career development (C), and egoistic (E). This approach is effective in covering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

The subject of remuneration as motivation for volunteering was discussed by several authors (Wilson, 2007; Paton et al, 2007; Baillie, Smith and Laurie, 2011). Remuneration enables individuals that might be poor or marginalized to volunteer (Paton et al, 2007; Butcher and Einolf, 2017). However, Baillie, Smith and Laurie (2011) argue that historically rooted and active volunteer practice in the global South may be disrupted by the neoliberal professionalism of volunteering. Paton et al (2007) concluded that while motivation may link to remuneration, it must not be reduced to that singular motive.

3.1 Benefits of volunteering

Motivation for volunteering is closely linked to the actual or perceived benefits to be derived by the individual. The level to which these benefits satisfy the need for affiliation, beliefs, career development and ego also determines how motivated the individual is to continue to volunteer. On a national scale, volunteerism provides varied pathways to participation nationally in that it serves as a bridge between service providers and beneficiaries[11]. Glanville (2016) stresses the contribution of volunteering to the development of social capital through higher levels of social trust and the resulting creation of more expansive social networks. On an individual level, although

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[11] https://swvr2022.unv.org/key-messages-and-policy-recommendations/

the causal mechanisms remain unclear, observational evidence suggests that volunteering is beneficial to mental health and survival (Jenkinson et al, 2013).

4.0 Background

4.1 The St. Vincent and the Grenadines National Society

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) Red Cross society also recognizes the importance of volunteers to the achievement of its goals and states in its draft volunteer policy that "Volunteerism is considered to be the backbone of the SVGRCS". The national society was founded in 1949 as a branch of the British Red Cross since the country was still a British colony. It was not until 1989, a full 10 years after gaining independence, that the SVGRC was recognized by the IFRC[12]. To date, the SVGRC boasts a total of 369 adult volunteers (90 Males, 279 females) and 194 youths.

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross Society plays an integral role in national emergency management. The National Emergency Management Act of 2008 formalized the position of the Red Cross as a part of the National Emergency Council which ensures the functions of the National Emergency Management Organization are carried out by the SVG Red Cross. The organization also sits as the deputy Chair of the Voluntary Services Sub-Committee. In the capacity of deputy chair, the Red Cross is responsible for coordinating the movement and care of specific vulnerable populations at the community level along with first aid training. This is possible due to the grassroots nature of Red Cross operations having trained groups and Community Disaster Response Teams (CDRT) in various communities nationwide.

The SVG Red Cross is also a member of the Health Services, Emergency Supplies and Security/Search and Rescue Sub -Committees. It assists with the provision of care for the injured, old and children, first aid training; relief supplies and distribution, public awareness and assistance in rescue at the CDRT level respectively. Other functions performed include assistance with shelter inspections yearly and shelter administration in the event of a disaster. Volunteers also assist with conducting damage and needs assessments post-disaster.

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[12] https://www.devex.com/organizations/saint-vincent-and-the-grenadines-red-cross-svgrc-121230

Outside of a disaster, volunteers engage in various activities geared towards community support and development. A primary offering of the SVG Red Cross is the provision of first aid services. While both youth and adults volunteer equally, care is taken to respect the laws, health and moral traditions of the country. This translates into youth volunteers of a certain age group not being on a first aid team at certain types and times of events.

4.2 Hazards faced, timeline of each and national interventions

The negative consequences of hazards have been extensive for SVG which has responded to multiple threats over the last 2-year period. Among the threats faced are a dengue fever outbreak in January 2020, a covid-19 pandemic in March of the same year, the explosive eruption of the La Soufriere volcano in April 2021 followed by the impact of Hurricane Elsa in July 2021 all while still responding to the impacts of the previous two disasters.

The impact extended to all sectors of the society with disruptions especially felt in the education and economic sectors. During the volcanic eruption, over 5,000 students were displaced from school in the impacted zones and school came to a halt for about a month throughout the country. Furthermore, the impact of the shift in the method of instruction on parents during covid-19 pandemic often goes unmentioned. Many parents who were not teachers still had to leave their homes daily to go to work. While some counted on close family to provide some level of supervision, others had to go without.

4.2.1 Covid-19

"The coronavirus pandemic has been the biggest disaster in living memory, by almost any measure" (IFRC, 2023). Although St. Vincent and the Grenadines did not have an official shutdown period, locally, Covid-19 resulted in disruptions to normal operation and activities, especially in schools, due to their premature closure. Learning was shifted to an online format for most students. In response to the covid-19 pandemic, the SVG Red Cross proceeded with a multipronged strategy comprising multiple interventions geared toward institutional strengthening and health protection. Mental health and psychosocial support services were provided along with

training in infection prevention and control. The National Society also provided support to the Ministry of Health during immunization. Community feedback mechanisms were engaged to conduct a survey to understand the public mistrust towards covid-19 vaccination.

Efforts were made to engage all volunteers during this time. Even elderly volunteers were involved in the making of masks and care packages including sanitary supplies for distribution to vendors and other daily paid workers in Kingstown. Some groups continued their monthly soup kitchen distributions but added an awareness layer ensuring that those served were informed of covid-19 along with best practices. Sanitary supplies were also distributed during these times. Importantly, the National Society ensured that personal protective equipment (PPEs) were available to volunteers for either personal use or during their volunteering activities. Much attention was also given to supporting the national effort. Volunteers were stationed at schools to assist with temperature checks, sanitising of hands and recording the information as needed at the request of the Ministry of Education. Many posters were also distributed and displayed strategically nationwide as part of support in a national covid-19 awareness campaign.

4.2.2 Volcanic eruption

The La Soufriere volcano began effusive eruptions in 2020. On April 9th 2021, the first set of explosive eruptions began. Residents of St. Vincent and the Grenadines saw ash fall with varying severity depending on the zone in which they live blanketing the country in various degrees of darkness. In the red zone, tephra accompanied the heavy ash fall burying vegetation and surface water sources. Pyroclastic flows were also present in some areas. There were disruptions to the water supply in all areas since the Central Water and Sewage Authority (CWSA) shut down intake valves from waterways as a preventative measure to protect the nation's water supply.

The explosive eruption of the La Soufriere volcano saw 48 educational institutions becoming inaccessible as a direct consequence of the impact of the eruption while another 56 were used as emergency shelters. Over 25,000 persons evacuated from high-risk areas. The SVG Red Cross provided support for over 5,000 persons with the provision of relief supplies including hygiene and cleaning kits, water and food. The Red Cross also provided housing solutions, risk

communication and community engagement along with psychosocial and livelihood support. Volunteers were on the ground serving as a part of shelter teams, distributing supplies, gathering data as well as providing psychosocial support internally as well as to evacuees.

The National Society also recognized the fact that volunteers would have also been affected by the on-going disasters or would have had family members who were affected. Creative ways were sought to maintain contact with volunteers in order to keep them informed, engaged, motivated and safe. To this end, the National Society focused on the provision of support: physical and mental health and psychosocial.

To properly provide for the physical needs of affected volunteers, a needs assessment survey was designed and disseminated via Whatsapp for volunteers to fill out. It is important to note here that given the scope of the disaster, the Whatsapp platform had become increasingly used nationally to keep in touch. Once the survey was completed, the National Society (NS) tried to provide relief to those volunteers as needed. The Needs Assessment, conducted from 28th April 2021 and encompassing 160 volunteers (80.6% F, 19.4% M; 90% enrolled volunteers, 10% un-enrolled) indicated that volunteers faced water shortages (33.3%), were evacuated (22%), health challenges (17.5 %), ash fall (17.5%), agricultural losses (7%), served as host family (3.5%). As a result, the National Society provided food to 65.5%, water to 20%, clothing to 5.5% and medication to 9% of those volunteers surveyed.

Mental health and psychosocial support were conducted via formal and informal debriefs. In addition, a WhatsApp number was designated for PSS. This line was monitored 24/7 by a volunteer trained in PSS and using this number, volunteers could reach out and talk or chat with someone as needed regardless of their physical location.

The Director General and the volunteer management committee also started having Zoom briefings as the emergency response rolled on. These aimed to keep volunteers informed of the SVG Red Cross' response and the services available to them along with providing a community in which to share experiences and recommendations.

4.2.3 Hurricane Elsa

Less than three months into the disaster caused by the eruption of the La Soufriere volcano, on July 2ⁿᵈ, 2021, the country was hit by another hazard, that of hurricane Elsa. The ensuing precipitation fuelled lahars, the compaction of remaining ash and landslides. The result was damage to property further compounding vulnerabilities that were already exacerbated by the eruption. This category 1 hurricane caused the activation of 11 shelters on mainland St. Vincent and 2 on Bequia sheltering some 98 persons and those previously displaced by the volcanic eruption. Three police stations had also sustained damages to their roof and windows in the hurricane.

The SVG Red Cross, already spread thinly from the other 2 on-going hazards, continued with the provision of relief supplies and mental health and psychosocial support to the affected and volunteers as needed.

5.0 Methods

A desktop review on the topic was conducted online primarily using Google and Google Scholar to access peer-reviewed and other grey literature. Search parameters centred on volunteering, motivation and volunteering in a multi-hazard environment.

A six-question online survey was developed and distributed via WhatsApp chat group to Red Cross group leaders, members of the first aid support group and specific volunteer group chats including the youth commission chat group. Members of the chat groups were asked to complete the survey and share the link with other Red Cross volunteers. The survey was closed online on the 17ᵗʰ of March 2023. There were 70 responses altogether but 68 valid responses after data cleaning.

6.0 Limitations

The method used to administer the survey may exclude older and younger volunteers who are not technologically inclined or who do not possess the resources to access the Internet.

7.0 Results

On the question of in which of the national emergencies volunteers had taken part, 3% of the respondents had volunteered during the covid-19 pandemic alone; 26.5% volunteered during both the covid-19 pandemic and the La Soufriere volcanic eruption with 19.1% stating that they would have volunteered during the covid-19 pandemic, the La Soufriere eruption and Hurricane Elsa. A smaller number of individuals (4.4%) volunteered during the La Soufriere eruption and Hurricane Elsa with 47% of individuals volunteering only during the La Soufriere eruption.

When asked about their motivations for volunteering, 58.8% of respondents stated that they volunteered because it was the right thing to do; 35.3% believed that it is what was expected of them as Red Cross volunteers while 5.9% believed that volunteering at that time would have been beneficial to their career. The responses as to the motivation for participating in the disaster were further broken down by disaster for analysis. The results can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Table showing comparison of motivation by disaster

	Right thing to do	Did what was expected	Beneficial to career	Total
Covid-19	3	0	0	3
Volcanic Eruption	41	28	4	73
Hurricane Elsa	15	7	2	24
Total	**59**	**35**	**6**	**100**

Most of the respondents (97.1%) believed that their contribution as a volunteer during this time was valued. Only 2.9% disagreed. Informal interviews with volunteers indicate that intervention practices such as communication, acknowledgement, support and having needs met, all contributed to the feeling of being valued. Similarly, for some volunteers who felt that those things were not forthcoming, it translated into not feeling valued. These findings support those gathered as a response to the question of what can be done to improve the volunteering experience and as expressed in Table 3 below.

As to the question of which of the services offered by the Red Cross the respondents use during their time volunteering, 60.9% of volunteers who responded would have used psychosocial support (PSS); 37.5% stated that had their needs met by the National Society; zoom briefings and having a needs assessment done were both received 34.4% with only 8% of persons indicating that they had not used any of the services being offered to volunteers during the emergencies. Volunteers were questioned on the issue of safety, specifically as to whether they felt unsafe during their volunteering period. The majority (81%) felt that they did not feel unsafe at any moment. Only 19% felt unsafe. Table 2 below compares the responses by disaster.

Table 2: Table showing volunteer perception of safety by disaster

	Did not feel safe	Felt safe
Covid-19	0	2
Volcanic Eruption	10	40
Hurricane Elsa	13	3
Total	**23**	**45**

When asked what could have been done to improve the volunteering experience during the multiple hazards, 48 persons responded. Some gave multiple responses bringing the total responses to 51. The results are expressed in table 3 below. From the results, it can be seen that an overwhelming majority of volunteers want more communication and meetings. The second most popular response was the need for more encouragement and support. There is a need by volunteers to feel more engaged and connected. The value gained is proportionate to the value given. If volunteers can provide a greater level of assistance, then maybe they would also feel more connected to the overall organization and its objectives. Meaningful engagement is of utmost importance.

Responses	Number
More coordination	4
More communication and meetings	15
Reimbursement and aid	5
Not sure	1

Nothing (well done)	5
Nothing (disillusioned)	1
Debrief and rest	1
More encouragement and support	7
Recognition	2
More capacity building for volunteers	5
Personal motivations	5
Total	**51**

8.0 Discussion

Nearly half of the volunteers surveyed were active during the covid-19 pandemic. Interestingly, the number of persons volunteering increased significantly when the volcano erupted despite it now being a multi-hazard environment. Responses indicate the importance of intrinsic motivation in propelling this mobilization of human resources. Volunteers saw the need to help their communities in their time of need. This conclusion is also supported by the figures showing the number of persons who volunteered only for the volcanic eruption. While it cannot be certain what percentage of those persons who volunteered for the volcanic eruption alone were spontaneous volunteers, it must be recognised that there is a link between intrinsic motivation and resource mobilization in a disaster.

The question of safety in a multi-hazard environment, despite intrinsic motivation, also arose. The enabling environment provided by attention to safety or rather, the feeling of safety despite the multi-hazard environment, may have contributed to an increased level of motivation for participation. It is important to note that safety here does not just refer to physical safety but also to psychological well-being. By providing PPEs alongside MHPSS, meeting their physical needs and increasing communication, the NS reminded volunteers that their well-being was prioritized.

The number of persons volunteering in a multi-hazard environment decreased over time. Despite the interventions, informal interviews with some volunteers indicate that there was burnout among volunteers given the duration of the responses (from 2020 to August 2021). Burnout is defined by

Maslach & Leiter (2006) in World Psychiatry journal as a "psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job". The fact that volunteers were not just spectators to the disasters but also impacted both directly and indirectly is an important consideration when discussing the cause and results of burnout in volunteers. Burnout causes cognitive, emotional and attitudinal damage demonstrated by negative behaviours towards work, peers, and the job (Maslach & Leiter, 2006).

The importance of psychosocial support for volunteers cannot be overly stressed. Results indicate that this was the most sought-after intervention method. The need for constant effective communication is highlighted. Indeed, internal communications are oftentimes overlooked in a multi-hazard environment given the other priorities; however, responses have indicated that its importance should not be ignored. The issues of encouragement and support, recognition and coordination could have been readily addressed with communication throughout the response.

Volunteer well-being appears to be the key to sustaining volunteer motivation in a multi-hazard environment and therefore, allowing for the availability of volunteers for the duration of the response.

At the National Society level, there were other challenges. The ability to widen the focus of operations to include a view on volunteers and meeting their needs in a timely fashion was one of them. The myopic viewpoint or inability to properly multitask alongside the conducting of simultaneous evaluation and creation of interventions to facilitate adaptations to the changing environment also made it difficult to find and fund volunteer interventions.

Communicating initiatives, once identified, was also a challenge faced by the NS. While it was fairly possible for formal volunteers to be notified through built-in systems indirectly or directly employing stored contact information, reaching spontaneous volunteers was much more difficult. As a result, many remained unaware of initiatives which would have benefitted them.

9.0 Recommendations

There are a lot of opportunities to volunteer, and many different organisations aimed at bettering humankind. As mentioned previously, people no longer have blind loyalty to any one organisation.

Therefore, understanding volunteer motivation and finding ways to engage with volunteers to ensure retention should be a priority. The following are some recommendations:

9.1 Take the time to understand volunteer motivation and volunteer satisfaction.

Take the time to understand volunteer motivation and volunteer satisfaction. Also, failing to consider the culture of the country while implementing a one-size fits all system is not going to work. This is primarily because how persons feel valued and appreciated differs based on the country's context and culture.

Volunteer recognition is also linked to motivation and retention. Many persons may volunteer due to altruistic reasons, however, some may ve different expectations that can be met by an organization. Improving retention of volunteers can be done by focusing on the reasons that motivate an individual to volunteer, building a strong volunteer management program around those motivations that provides continual volunteer training and support, and showing volunteers social and institutional appreciation for the work and support they provide for the organization[13].

9.2 Check-in with volunteers to better understand their needs.

In the case of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, persons chose to volunteer even though they were themselves impacted. Some of the persons volunteering in shelters were also being housed there as they were displaced during the La Soufriere volcanic eruption. The SVG Red Cross recognised this and administered a needs assessment via WhatsApp to determine how volunteers were impacted and the type of assistance needed.

Listening to volunteers and effectively communicating with volunteers so they feel heard keep to build trust and this type of meaningful engagement with volunteers that demonstrates consideration and care towards them would help to keep a volunteer motivated and satisfied.

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[13] https://lodestar.asu.edu/blog/2017/01/how-can-nonprofits-improve-volunteer-retention

9.3 Ensuring volunteers receive adequate psychosocial support.

This research paper demonstrated that volunteers were themselves affected members of communities and therefore would have experienced the same losses and grief in their families and communities, as those who they are supporting[14]. Oftentimes, the need and extent to which volunteers may require psychosocial support can be underestimated.

According to the "Caring for Volunteers, Psychosocial Support Toolkit" created by the IFRC, some of the causes of stress and the main risks to the psychological well-being of volunteers can be a result of exposure to traumatic events and stories; having unrealistic expectations of themselves (not being properly prepared emotionally to deal with disaster situations); having heroic aspirations (save the world mentality); stressful working conditions; and organisational issues. The stress faced due to these risks can lead to burnout.

Given the challenging multi-hazard environment the SVG Red Cross provided psychosocial support and training to volunteers, however, volunteers still identified psychosocial support as something they needed more of. The provision of adequate support and the implementation of a buddy system, whereby volunteers are able to provide support to each other, recognise the signs of burnout and encourage their fellow volunteers to take a break when needed can be beneficial.

9.4 Increased training and participation in drills

Increased training and participation in drills can also improve the type of assistance that can be provided by a volunteer as well as lead to improved expectations as training will help volunteers understand what they might encounter in a disaster and therefore enable them to better cope mentally with the harsh conditions.

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[14] https://pscentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/volunteers_EN.pdf

Volunteer training and support influenced volunteer retention through volunteer motivation as well as volunteer satisfaction[15]. They will feel even more motivated and be willing to volunteer for a longer period.

10.0 Future Research

Do the motivations for volunteering shift in a multi-hazard environment and to what extent do volunteers face burnout in a multi-hazard environment?

11.0 Bibliography

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[15] https://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/11581/1/FulltextThesis.pdf

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