



Professor Matt Baillie Smith speaking in Geneva at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

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Northumbria and IFRC strengthen collaboration to advance research on volunteering

Volunteers play critical roles in responding to the multiple humanitarian crises facing the world, including disasters linked to conflict and climate change. But there are often gaps in protection and support for those working to help others.

To address this, [Northumbria University's Centre for Global Development](#) and the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies \(IFRC\)](#),

have signed a new agreement promoting collaborative research and learning on volunteering in humanitarian contexts over the next five years. The aim is to strengthen capacity in volunteering research and practice, as well as to support 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and more than 16 million volunteers engaged by them.

This will build on more than a decade of partnership for Northumbria researchers with IFRC policy makers and practitioners, which has already included a [Global Review on Volunteering](#) and analysis of the implementation of [IFRC Volunteering Policy](#). Existing collaborative work also includes research jointly conducted with the Swedish Red Cross on [Volunteering in Conflicts and Emergencies \(ViCE\)](#) and subsequent training and support to improve volunteer safety, security and wellbeing through the [IFRC's Community of Practice](#) on the topic.

Researchers from the University's Centre for Global Development have been engaged in key humanitarian events at the invitation of the IFRC to help ensure that the voices and experiences of volunteers are at the heart of discussions. This includes the latest International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and General Assembly of IFRC, which were both held in Geneva in October. Matt Baillie Smith, Professor of Global Development and Dean of Research Culture at Northumbria University, and Dr Bianca Fadel, Research Fellow at the Centre for Global Development, participated in panel discussions at side events organised during the conference and general assembly.

Commenting on the longstanding partnership with IFRC and the newly signed agreement, [Professor Baillie Smith](#) said: "The research we do at Northumbria's Centre for Global Development reveals how important volunteers are to meeting global challenges, such as those around the climate emergency and conflicts. It also shows the need to prioritise volunteer safety and wellbeing, the need to recognise that volunteering is not separate from structures that produce inequality and exclusion, and the need for respect when it comes to the diverse knowledge and skills that volunteers across the world have to offer."

Dr Bianca Fadel, who has conducted research with the Red Cross in Burundi on volunteering in protracted crises, said: "Our partnership and close collaboration with the IFRC has ensured our research has real world impact. We're all committed to ensuring the voices and needs of volunteers on the

frontlines of the world's humanitarian challenges are heard and met.”

[Xavier Castellanos](#), IFRC’s Under Secretary General for National Society Development and Coordination highlighted: “This partnership allows us to combine theory and practice in support of our National Societies and their volunteers on the frontlines of crises.”

Northumbria University academics are creating a world-leading hub of research expertise, knowledge exchange and learning on [volunteering in humanitarian crises and development](#) contexts. Their work is supported through significant funding from UK research councils, leading global humanitarian agencies and NGOs in the UK and internationally.

Discover more [here](#) about research involving Northumbria’s Centre for Global Development and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Ends

[Notes to editors](#)

About Northumbria University

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally. Named Modern University of the Year 2025 by The Times and The Sunday Times, Northumbria is based in Newcastle upon Tyne, with an additional campus in London.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more at www.northumbria.ac.uk

About the IFRC

The IFRC is the world's largest humanitarian network, comprising 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies working to save lives, build community resilience, strengthen localization and promote dignity around the world.

Find out more at www.ifrc.org

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

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Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk

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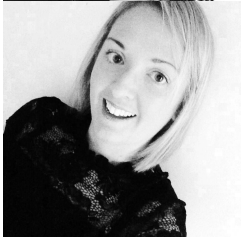


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