

Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement

In delivering disaster services, the American Red Cross adheres to the fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross 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, endeavors, 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 endeavors 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 continue 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.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

- *The XXth International conference of the Red Cross, Vienna 1965*

RED CROSS STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR DISASTER RELIEF WORKERS

- 1. Assistance is offered to anyone who has a disaster-caused need.** The prime motivation of our response to disaster is to alleviate human suffering and the stress caused by disaster.
- 2. Assistance is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients without adverse distinction of any kind.** The provision of relief will be based solely upon the assessment of the needs of disaster victims. Red Cross workers will treat each other and all with whom they come in contact with dignity and respect.
- 3. Assistance will be free of personal, political or religious conditions. Red Cross will remain independent of any government entity.** Red Cross policies and implementation strategies do not seek to implement the policy of any government, except when it coincides with Red Cross independent policy.
- 4. We shall respect the culture, structures, and customs of the communities and countries in which we are working. Red Cross will build disaster response on local capabilities.** Where possible, Red Cross will attempt to build capacity by involving the local community.
- 5. Red Cross will involve the community in the management and provision of relief.** Red Cross disaster response assistance will never be imposed on anyone. We will strive to achieve community participation in our relief and recovery activities and will cooperate with local government and voluntary agencies, when appropriate.
- 6. Assistance provided will include the means to mitigate future losses, whenever possible. Red Cross workers are accountable to those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.** Red Cross acts as a link between those who wish to assist and those who need assistance during disasters. Therefore, Red Cross is accountable to both constituencies. The provision of Red Cross disaster assistance is based on high standards of professionalism and expertise in order to maximize valuable resources. All of our dealings with donors and beneficiaries shall reflect an attitude of openness and transparency. We recognize the need to report on our activities, both from a financial and effectiveness perspective.
- 7. In all disaster response activities we shall recognize disaster victims as dignified human beings.** We shall portray an objective image of the disaster situation where the capacities and aspirations of disaster victims are highlighted, and not just their vulnerabilities and fears. While we will cooperate with the media to enhance our response, we will not allow external or internal demands for publicity to interfere with providing disaster relief assistance to victims.

—Adapted from the Code of Conduct prepared by the International Committee and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent