

The Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Disaster Relief

Prepared by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in consultation with the ICRC

Basic Principles

1. Field of application

1.1 The present Principles and Rules apply to disasters resulting from natural or other calamities.

1.2 Every disaster relief operation carried out in a country where there is war, civil war, or internal disturbances, shall be regulated by the provisions of the Agreement of 1989 between the ICRC and the Federation, or by any subsequent such agreement.

1.3 However, Articles 24 to 29 of the present Principles and Rules shall also apply to situations described under paragraph 1.2.

2. The duty to assist

2.1 The Red Cross and Red Crescent in its endeavour to prevent and alleviate human suffering, considers it a fundamental right of all people to both offer and receive humanitarian assistance. Hence it has a fundamental duty to provide relief to all disaster victims and assistance to those most vulnerable to future disasters.

2.2 We recognize that in helping disaster victims to survive, relief programmes must also look to the future and ensure that people are not left more vulnerable to the future disasters. Wherever possible, relief programmes should attempt to build upon the capacities of those being assisted, involve them in the management and implementation of the programme and act with a sense of accountability towards the beneficiaries.

3. Role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

3.1 Prevention of disasters, assistance to victims and reconstruction are first and foremost the responsibility of the public authorities. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, (hereinafter referred to as the Federation [1]) will actively offer assistance to disaster victims through the agency of the National Society in a spirit of cooperation with the public authorities. In principle, Red Cross and Red Crescent help is of a complementary and auxiliary nature and is given primarily in the emergency and reconstruction phase. However, if circumstances require and provided the Red Cross and Red Crescent is assured of the necessary resources and means, it may undertake longer-term disaster assistance programmes. Such programmes should be designed to reduce vulnerability to disasters, and prepare for future possible disasters.

4. Coordination

4.1 Considering that assistance to disaster victims requires coordination at both the national and international levels, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, whilst remaining true to its Principles, should, in the implementation of its programme, endeavour to take into account the help given by other national and international organizations.

4.2 Considering the Federation's position as one of the leading disaster response agencies, the National Society should offer its service to their disaster affected government to assist with the coordination of NGO disaster relief. The Federation should support such endeavours.

5. Role of the Federation

5.1 The Federation acts as the information centre for its member Societies regarding situations caused by disaster and coordinates, at the international level, the assistance provided by National Societies and the Federation or channelled through them.

5.2 The Federation should also support National Societies in their contacts with their governments with a view to establishing and developing their position and role in disaster preparedness and response.

6. Preparedness and mutual aid

6.1 It is the duty of National Societies to prepare themselves to give assistance in the event of a disaster.

6.2 In view of the solidarity binding them together they shall help one another when faced with a situation exceeding the resources of any one Society.

6.3 In assisting each other in this way, while respecting the independence of each other and the sovereignty of the stricken country, National Societies contribute to the strengthening of friendship and peace among peoples.

7. Ways and means of assistance

7.1 Red Cross and Red Crescent assistance to victims is given without any distinction as to sex, nationality, race, religion, social condition or political opinion, It is made available solely on the basis of the relative importance and urgency of individual needs.

7.2 Red Cross and Red Crescent relief is administered with economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Its utilization is the subject of reports, including audited accounts of income and expenditure, reflecting a true and fair view of the operation.

Disaster Preparedness

8. National relief plan

8.1 In order to cope with the effects of disaster, each country should have a national plan outlining an effective organization of relief. If such a plan does not exist, the National Society should instigate its establishment.

8.2 The national plan shall assign to all sections of the community - public services, Red Cross and Red Crescent, voluntary agencies, social welfare organizations and qualified persons - precise tasks in the fields of disaster prevention, relief and reconstruction.

8.3 To ensure rapid mobilization as well as complete and effective use of material and personnel resources, the national plan should envisage coordination through the establishment of a centralized managing body. Such a body should be able to provide authoritative information on the effects of a disaster, its evolution and the needs.

9. Preparedness of the National Society

9.1 The extent of the Red Cross and Red Crescent relief programme depends on the magnitude of the disaster, the needs already covered by others and the responsibilities delegated to the National Society by its government or by the national relief plan.

9.2 Each National Society must prepare itself to assume the responsibility devolving on it in the case of disaster. It must establish its own plan of action, adapt its organization accordingly, recruit, instruct and train the necessary personnel and ensure the availability of the reserves in cash and kind which it might need in the emergency phase of a relief operation. Such plans must be regularly reviewed and capacity further developed in the light of experience.

9.3 All National Societies face the possibility of responding to disasters beyond their capacities. National Societies should therefore make preparations for receiving and managing international assistance provided by the Federation.

9.4 National Societies should make every effort to obtain facilities from governmental or private transport services in their countries for the rapid transport, whenever possible free or at reduced rates, of relief supplies, including goods in transit, for disaster victims.

9.5 National Societies should also endeavour to obtain from their governments exemption from all taxes and customs duties, concerning the entry into and transit through the country, of funds and relief supplies intended for the victims of disasters.

9.6 Furthermore, they should seek to obtain travel facilities and the quick granting of visas for Red Cross and Red Crescent personnel taking part in relief operations.

10. Preparedness of the Federation

10.1 The Federation will endeavour to assist National Societies with their organization and preparedness for relief actions. In particular by offering them the services of technically qualified personnel (delegates) and by contributing to the instruction and training of their personnel. It will encourage and facilitate exchanges of information between Societies so that the experience of some will be of benefit to others. It will encourage investment by Federation members in disaster preparedness activities in the most disaster prone countries.

11. Agreements on mutual assistance

11.1 As part of their disaster preparedness strategy, National Societies should endeavour to conclude agreements on future mutual assistance in the event of disaster, with the National Societies of neighbouring countries. The Federation shall be informed.

11.2 For the most disaster prone countries, the Federation shall endeavour to negotiate pre-disaster agreements with the National Society of the disaster prone country aimed at enhancing the disaster preparedness activities of the Operating National Societies and improving the timeliness and effectiveness of Federation response to major disasters. Where appropriate these agreements may be tripartite, involving a Participating National Society.

International Disaster Relief Assistance

12. Initial information

12.1 To enable the Federation to act as the disaster information centre, National Societies shall immediately inform it of any major disaster occurring within their country, including data on the extent of the damage and on the relief measures taken at the national level to assist victims. Even if the National Society does not envisage appealing for external assistance, the Federation may, in the spirit of Federation solidarity, send a representative/s to the disaster-affected area to gather information and assist the National Society in dealing with the international dimensions of the disaster.

13. Use of the disaster Relief Emergency Fund

13.1 In accordance with its rules, as amended by the 1991 General Assembly, the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund may be used by the Federation to finance emergency pre-disaster activities or initial emergency response to disasters.

14. Request for assistance and appeal

14.1 Any request from a National Society of a stricken country for international assistance shall be addressed to the Federation. Such a request must contain an overview of the situation in the disaster area, the number of persons to be helped and the nature, quantities and priorities of relief supplies needed by the National Society.

14.2 On receipt of such a request, the Federation will, when conditions call for it, launch an Appeal to all National Societies or, depending on the circumstances, to a certain number of them. No Appeal will be launched by the Federation without a request from the National Society of the stricken country or without its agreement.

14.3 The Federation may, however, take the initiative to offer assistance, even though the National Society has not asked for it. The National Society will consider such offers with urgency and goodwill, bearing in mind the needs of the disaster victims and the spirit in which such offers are made.

15. Relations with the international news media

15.1 Since the media can have a major influence on public support for a relief operation and the generation of funds, the National Society of a stricken country should make every effort, consistent

with the efficient conduct of the relief operation and. any regulations laid down by the authorities, to facilitate journalists' coverage of an emergency situation.

15.2 When a disaster situation attracts large-scale international media interest, the Federation may assign a delegate, or delegates, to assist the National Society in coping effectively with the requirements of the media and responding to the public information needs of Participating National Societies and the Federation's Secretariat in Geneva.

16. Regular communication of information

16.1 The National Society of the stricken country will keep the Federation informed on the development of the situation, the relief given and the needs still to be met. The Federation will forward this information to National Societies to which the Appeal had been made.

17. Information on assistance

17.1 When, as a result of a Federation Appeal or as a result of mutual agreement or other special circumstances, a National Society gives assistance to the Society of a stricken country it will immediately inform the Federation. Such information will contain the amount of gifts in cash and all available data on gifts in kind, including quantity, value and means of transportation.

18. Implementation of Federation assistance

18.1 When a National Society is in receipt of international assistance, the Federation may assign to that National Society a representative or a team of delegates, whose name or names will be communicated to it as rapidly as possible and whose number will depend on the magnitude of the disaster.

18.2 Where technical assistance personnel are provided, the Head of Delegation will be responsible for the judicious and effective utilization of the team of experts with a view to helping the National Society with such activities as the reception, warehousing and distribution of relief supplies received from abroad, as well as information, communication and all other activities that will contribute to the effectiveness both of the relief operation itself, undertaken by the National Society involved, and of the assistance of sister Societies.

18.3 All staff assigned by the Federation will have the task of assisting the National Society and not of taking over its basic responsibilities.

18.4 The Representative or Head of Delegation shall be given all necessary communication facilities for the swift dispatch to the Federation, of all the information likely to enable it to back up its Appeals to National Societies and inform them as fully as possible on the needs resulting from the disaster and then on the use made of the relief received. He/she should advise the National Society concerned of the measures taken and foreseen, both by the Federation and National Societies, which are giving their support.

19. Execution entrusted to the Federation

19.1 When the administrative organization of the Society in the stricken country does not enable it to meet the situation, the Federation, at the request of that Society and with its cooperation, may assume the local direction and execution of the relief action.

20. Representatives of Participating Societies

20.1 Participating Societies wishing to send representatives to the' spot, particularly to collect information material to enhance public support for the relief actions, shall obtain the prior agreement of the central headquarters of the National Society of the stricken country. They should also inform the Federation.

20.2 Any such representatives will be bound by the Rules of Conduct for Federation field personnel and shall report on their actions to the Federation Representative or Head of Delegation.

21. Foreign personnel

21.1 All personnel provided by Participating Societies to assist in the implementation of the operation, will be placed under the direction of the Federation, when the direction and execution of the relief operation have been entrusted to it.

22. Transmission and forwarding of relief

22.1 Assistance donated by a National Society to a stricken country shall always be sent through Red Cross and Red Crescent channels, either direct to the National Society or through the intermediary of the Federation. Funds sent to the Federation will be specifically earmarked for the disaster for which they are contributed and will either be sent to the National Society of the stricken country or, with its concurrence, be utilized by the Federation according to the needs of the relief operation.

22.2 National Societies and the Federation may agree to transmit relief from non-Red Cross sources to a stricken country. In such cases, the relief will be utilized by the National Society or, with its concurrence, by the Federation in conformity with the present Principles and Rules.

23. Soliciting of contributions abroad

23.1 Unless there is a previous agreement, the National Society of a stricken country will not try to obtain, either directly or indirectly, funds or any other form of assistance in the country of another Society and will not permit its name to be used for this purpose.

Accounting and Auditing for Joint or Separate Federation and/or ICRC Operations

24. Principle of accountability

National Societies receiving gifts from sister Societies, the Federation, the ICRC or any other source in the context of a joint or separate Federation and/or ICRC operation or programme must conform to the following rules as regards accounting and auditing:

24.1 Gifts in cash

24.1.1 *Bank accounts*

The Operating Society shall open in its own name a special bank account whose sole purpose shall be to receive all the funds and cover all the expenditure of the opération programme. It shall not be used for any other transactions. There shall be one bank account per operation / programme. If for unforeseen reasons, it is not possible to open a separate bank account, a separate cash ledger should be maintained per operation programme.

24.1.2 *Financial reporting*

The Operating Society shall render a periodic account of the funds held by it for the operation / programme showing: opening balance brought forward from the previous period; income from all sources during the current period; actual disbursements during the period and the closing balance for the period. The periodicity of these reports shall be established in the agreement, but under no circumstances should be less than quarterly. Additional information required for the following period comprises: anticipated income, an estimate of expenditure and cash requirements. The Federation and/or the ICRC would in that way be prepared to give consideration to making an appropriate supplementary advance in, cash.

24.1.2.1 The actual disbursements charged to the operation / programme shall be shown in a detailed statement which, together with copies of vouchers for all amounts debited and recapitulatory bank statements, shall be submitted promptly to the Federation and/or the ICRC local Delegation, no later than the end of the following month. In the event of such reports not being submitted, the local Delegation should take appropriate steps to assist the Operating Society in producing the necessary report. In exceptional circumstances, where monthly reports are not forthcoming, the Federation and /or the ICRC may decide on the suspension of the financial assistance.

24.1.2.2 In recognizing the importance of financial reporting, the Federation and /or the ICRC shall undertake to provide or make available technical assistance to the Operating Society in order to ensure the timely production of accurate and complete financial reports . Such reports should be regarded both as a management tool for the Operating Society, and as a reporting service to the Federation.

24.1.3 *Auditing*

Auditing is a normal, integral step in any professionally managed operation. In the interest of sound financial administration, the National Society's accounts related to the operation / programme shall be audited at least yearly by auditors designated by the Federation and/or the ICRC. The cost of the audit will be met from the funds available for the operation / programme. This audit shall result in the Auditor's Report and a Management Letter. The said results shall be communicated to the National Society and, if necessary, corrective actions to be taken shall be indicated. In the exceptional event . when no corrective action have taken place, the Federation and/or the ICRC may consider suspension of financial assistance.

24.2 *Gifts in kind*

Where gifts in kind are made, records of the stocks showing the origin and use of such contributions shall be submitted monthly and upon completion of the operation / programme

25. Exceptional Rules of Procedures

25.1 The Federation and /or the ICRC may, in certain exceptional circumstances, not be fully satisfied with the way in which resources for Federation and/or the ICRC operations and programmes are managed and accounted for by either Participating or Operating Societies.

25.2 In such circumstances, the Federation and/or the ICRC is authorized to entrust a qualified Federation and/or the ICRC representative to look into the matter.

25.3 The National Society in question be it operating or participating, shall ensure that the Federation and /or the ICRC representative, has access to such records of the Society as the Federation and /or the ICRC representative considers necessary for the purpose of their task.

26. Use made of gifts

26.1 A National Society which benefits from the assistance of sister Societies will give the Federation's and/or ICRC's Representative or Head of Delegation the opportunity to see, on the spot, the use made of the gifts received.

27. Unsolicited relief supplies

27.1 If a National Society wishes to send relief supplies which are not mentioned in the Appeal launched by the Federation and/or ICRC, it shall first obtain the agreement of the National Society of the stricken country or of the Federation and/or ICRC. When there has been no Appeal but a National Society nevertheless wishes to send relief supplies to the Society of a stricken country, the previous agreement of that Society is also required and the Federation and/or ICRC shall be informed.

27.2 In the absence of such an agreement, the receiving National Society is free to use unsolicited relief supplies at its own discretion, without being bound by the provision of Article 29.3.

28. Donating supplies while receiving assistance

28.1 A National Society in receipt of international assistance for its own country shall not contribute assistance of a similar nature to a sister Society without the prior authorization of the Federation and/or ICRC.

29. Use of gifts

29.1 Gifts sent to a National Society may be used only for the purpose designated and will serve in the first place to give direct assistance to the victims.

29.2 An Operating Society may in no event use cash gifts to cover administrative expenses included in its ordinary budget, nor may it transfer cash gifts donated to it to another organization or group for use by that organization or group.

29.3 If in the course of a relief operation it becomes necessary to sell or exchange a part of the goods received, the donors will be consulted through the Federation and/or ICRC. The funds or goods thus obtained may only be used for the relief action.

30. Relief balances

30.1 Goods or funds remaining on hand after the termination of a relief action may be used for subsequent rehabilitation activities, used for Society disaster preparedness activities, transferred to other priority programmes, or returned to the Participating Society. All such use of funds or goods should take place under an agreement between the National Society of the stricken country and the Federation after consultation by the Federation with the Participating Societies concerned.

Final Provisions

31. Obligations

31.1 A National Society which accepts spontaneous or special assistance is bound to conform to the obligations laid down in the present "Principles and Rules" even though it has not requested assistance within the terms of Article 12.1.

XXIst, XXIIInd, XXIIIrd, XXIVth XXVth international Conferences of the Red Cross, Istanbul (1969), Tehran (1973), Bucharest (1977), Manila (1981), Geneva (1986) and Geneva (1995).

Note

1. In the Federation, the organization of disaster relief actions belongs to the attributions of the Secretary General, assisted by the Secretariat.