



GENDER AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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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.

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 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.

INTRODUCTION

The members of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) strive for a world in which everyone's rights are fulfilled, everyone is treated fairly and with dignity, everyone has equal access to opportunities, everyone can participate in making decisions for their own lives, everyone's voices are heard, and everyone is safe from harm.

We can only achieve these goals, ensure we “do no harm” and remain true to our Fundamental Principles,¹ if we put gender and diversity inclusion front and center of our work. Failing this would mean not reaching those that need our help, becoming irrelevant to the communities we serve, and risking contributing to vulnerabilities or worsening power imbalances and cycles of violence. To be effective, our work must pursue equality of power, opportunities and access to resources and services for women, men, boys, girls and people with any sexual orientation, gender-identity, expression and characteristic, of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

By advancing gender equality and building on the self-determined priorities, capacities and resources of all individuals and their communities, the IFRC can contribute to empowerment, self-sufficiency, fair treatment, and sustainable development, including contributing towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We will embrace diversity not only for fairness sake, but as core to finding better solutions for humanitarian and development challenges.

We will also hold ourselves accountable for making our organizations, and the IFRC as a whole, inclusive and accessible, diverse and representative of the communities with whom we work. The purpose of this policy, which replaces the IFRC Gender Policy (1999), is to ensure a dynamic approach that promotes the inclusion of gender and diversity as the foundation for all our actions, in particular in our institutional arrangements, our operations and programme cycles, and our humanitarian diplomacy. Implementation will require more than technical steps; it will require resources and a real transformation of our traditional power structures, institutional cultures and behavior. We are committed to make that transformation happen.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all National Societies and the IFRC in all aspects of our work. It sets out our collective understandings and commitments to gender, diversity and inclusion. Specific strategies, frameworks and tools shall be developed to support its implementation.

¹ This is also reflected in the *Fundamental Principles commentary* by Jean Pictet (1979).

DEFINITIONS

Gender refers to an aspect of people's socially determined identity that relates to masculinity and femininity – it is not binary. Gender roles vary significantly between cultures and can change over time (including over the course of an individual's lifetime). Social and structural expectations to gender strongly influence people's social role, power, rights and access to resources.

Diversity refers to the full range of different social backgrounds and identities that make up populations. It includes, but is not limited to, gender, ethnic origin, nationality or citizenship, age, disability, language, political opinions, religious beliefs, social background, sexual orientation, physical appearance and color.

Intersectionality refers to the fact that individuals have several layers to their identities, such as gender, ethnic origin, nationality or citizenship, age, disability, language, political opinions, religious beliefs, social background, sexual orientation, physical appearance and color that are woven together. People suffer discrimination against a combination of these factors. An intersectional perspective emphasizes the importance of looking at these forms of discrimination together and at the same time in order to understand their compound effects on the individual.

Inclusion refers to reducing inequalities based on social backgrounds, identities, roles and power relations. Providing inclusive services means giving equitable access to resources for all. In the long term, inclusion also focuses on facilitating access to opportunities and rights for all by addressing, reducing and ending exclusion, stigma and discrimination.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) refers to categories that include, but are not limited to, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, trafficking, forced/early marriage, sexual harassment, forced prostitution, femicide, female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation and abuse, and denial of resources, opportunities and services².

² This definition is an excerpt from the definition in the [Resolution 3, 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent \(2015\), Sexual and gender-based violence: Joint action on prevention and response.](#)

STATEMENT

The National Societies and the IFRC commit to actively embrace different identities and individuals, to guard against all discrimination in all our actions, and to promote the value of a diverse society with gender equality.

We recognize that there are often different views within communities about gender and diversity. We will be respectful of these differences, but we will not be deterred from our commitments as they are based on the Fundamental Principles. Gender and diversity inclusion is an essential part of ensuring people are safe from harm and in any action that aims at ensuring the protection of people; gender and diversity must be at the core and must guide the work of National Societies and the IFRC .

To achieve these goals, National Societies and the IFRC shall:

Institutional capacity

- Appropriately **reflect** the makeup of the communities we work with and to be relevant to people in need of our assistance and support by ensuring **diverse representation** and composition of human resources among members, volunteers, intervention or surge teams, staff and leadership.
- Continuously **analyze³ and monitor organizational gender and diversity issues**, including the gender and diversity composition of human resources at all levels (governance, management, staff and volunteers). This data will be analyzed in light of potential barriers to equal opportunities, diversity inclusion and gender inequality related to power and decision making within our institutions.
- Commit to ensure that **leadership teams and governing bodies** are comprised of no more than two-thirds of one gender. We will also ensure that the IFRC Secretariat considers diverse global representation in all its levels.
- Maintain a **culture of inclusion and diversity**, and a safe and nurturing workplace for individuals throughout the National Societies and IFRC Secretariat through activities such as trainings and establishing policy and regulations on protection, gender and inclusion, prevention of sexual harassment, child protection and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Take necessary steps to ensure that our organisations actively **promote equitable opportunities** through initiatives such as equal remuneration for equal work, anonymized recruitments and mentoring systems and as far as feasible, maternity and paternity leave, paid whenever possible.
- Include capacity strengthening in **gender and diversity mainstreaming** as part of institutional development programs with special attention to staff training on gender and diversity analysis skills.
- Include relevant gender and diversity-sensitive approaches and learning materials in all **staff and volunteer capacity strengthening** initiatives at national, branch and community level.

Programmes and operations

- Incorporate a **gender and diversity analysis⁴** in all of our programmes, operations, services and tools, in order to ensure dignity, access, participation and safety for persons of any gender, sexual orientation, age, color, disability, socio-economic and legal status, faith, nationality and ethnic origin. This analysis will cover the full management cycle, from assessment to planning, monitoring and data collection, evaluation and reporting. It will be facilitated through the implementation of the IFRC's existing "Minimum Standards for Protection, Gender & Inclusion (PGI) in Emergencies".
- Ensure that all programmes and operations **address the specific needs** and risks for different individuals and groups, based on the findings of the gender and diversity analysis.

³ For example by using the [IFRC Gender and Diversity Organisational Assessment Toolkit](#).

⁴ Gender and diversity analysis helps to understand how opportunities and inequalities may be affected by the various social backgrounds and identifying factors of each individual, including factors that impact the level of risk people face, to violence, exclusion and discrimination.

- Ensure **community engagement and accountability** to acknowledge people's self-determined priorities, especially focusing on the most vulnerable to discrimination, exclusion and violence.
- Integrate measures to **prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence** (including sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian actors) in all programmes and operations⁵.
- Ensure that **personnel with specialized training** in protection, gender and inclusion issues technically supervise programmes and operations, and that all staff and volunteers hold core competencies in protection, gender and inclusion and the "do no harm" principle.
- Seek opportunities to **share knowledge** about gender, diversity and intersectionality with each other and collaborate to develop better ways to promote equality, embrace diversity, understand intersectionality and strengthen participation and access to equal opportunities for those discriminated, neglected or marginalized.
- Undertake **specific programmes and activities** to promote diversity inclusion, equality, open-minded attitudes towards gender and diversity and to develop interpersonal skills such as critical thinking, non-violent communication, empathetic listening and mediation.

Advocacy

- Engage in humanitarian diplomacy to **support people's dignity, access, participation and safety** and ensure that the voices of people with diverse identities are heard and that their specific needs and rights are met. This includes incorporating gender and diversity perspectives in developing humanitarian diplomacy initiatives on other topics.
- Persuade decision-makers and opinion leaders to act, always, in the interests of people in vulnerable situations by **protecting their equal rights and ensuring their equal access** to humanitarian services, including:
 - addressing the **specific needs and protection risks** of women, girls, men, boys, sexual and gender minorities, people with disabilities and those from other diverse backgrounds.
 - ensuring a **survivor-centered approach** to prevent, mitigate and safely respond to discriminatory and identity-based violence such as sexual and gender-based violence, advocating that states and communities acknowledge that such violence is common and promoting preventative and preparatory actions even before incidents are reported.
 - Integrating specific attention to gender and diversity issues in disaster laws and policies and revising any **public policies or practices** that lead to discrimination or exclusion.
- Portray and promote diversity and equality in **the communications and representation** of National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The leadership of National Societies and the IFRC shall ensure this policy's implementation. National Societies are expected to align their existing policy and guidance with it, with appropriate adaptation to their contexts.

Tools for operationalizing this policy include the IFRC Minimum Standards for Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Emergencies and accompanying frameworks, such as the Strategic Framework for Gender and Diversity Issues and the Strategic Framework for Disability Inclusion. As required, the tools and supporting frameworks will be reviewed and revised to align with this policy.

Regular reports on the implementation of this policy will be made to the IFRC Governing Board and the IFRC General Assembly.

This policy was adopted at the IFRC General Assembly in December 2019 and will be reviewed regularly, at the latest by the IFRC General Assembly in 2027.

⁵ [Resolution 3, 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent \(2015\), Sexual and gender-based violence: Joint action on prevention and response.](#)



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 14 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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