

Emergency response policy



AID ORGANIZATION

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Introduction

Emergencies can be on any scale, affecting a single household or a local community, causing disruption at a national or even global level. Emergencies are defined as life threatening situations which put people at risk of death or severe deterioration in their health status or living conditions, and which have the potential to out-strip the normal coping capacity of the individual, family, community and state support systems. Emergencies may affect men and women differently, and they in turn have differing ways of coping with emergencies.

The Aid Organization must be able to act in all these life threatening situations regardless of the scope of the emergency, and its actions must be governed by the same policy regardless of the size and level of the response.

Scope

This emergency response policy establishes the basis of Aid Organization emergency response and applies to all types of Aid Organization emergency response whether carried out by a single branch of a National Society, by an individual National Society or by the Aid Organization acting collectively.

Statement

The Aid Organization and each Local/National Society shall:

- Seek to assist the most vulnerable people in emergencies. Aid Organization Emergency Response seeks to protect the life and health of the individual and to ensure respect for the individual through assisting those most affected in obtaining adequate access to basic life support needs. These encompass at a minimum:
 - Adequate safe water and sanitation.
 - Adequate food.
 - Adequate health care including psychological support.
 - Adequate shelter.
- Assistance must be carried out in a manner that does not add to the threat of violence against the assisted population.
- Recognize the Aid Organization role as auxiliary to government in humanitarian services and thus will not replace or undermine state responsibilities where the potential for appropriate
- state action exists. In addition, it will not normally replace or duplicate the work that other humanitarian agencies are mandated to carry out.
- Undertake emergency response according to the Fundamental Principles of the Aid Organization and apply the principles and spirit of the Code of Conduct for the International Aid Organization Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.

- Work within the competence of the Operating National Society and the International Federation. Rely on, but not be limited by, local capabilities and coping mechanisms. Programme beneficiaries, men and women, must be meaningfully involved in the planning and implementation of emergency response.
- Base their actions on appropriate disaster preparedness programming and planning. Aid Organization emergency response programmes are designed and implemented to maximize the possibility of beneficiaries speedily returning to their normal lifestyles, or where this is not possible, to attain a quality of life as free from external aid as possible.
- Work towards self reliance and sustainability of programming by both the Operating National Society and the assisted population taking into account the long term effect of emergency assistance on future development opportunities. Operating National Societies should take responsibility to actively plan and pursue their capacity building during emergency assistance operations.
- Continue until the acute threat to life and health has abated or, in situations of prolonged threat, until the needs can be more appropriately addressed within the framework of rehabilitation mechanisms.
- Maximize the strategic advantage of the Aid Organization *by* ‘working as a Federation’ to mobilize all appropriate resources, including the regional structures of the Federation, while ultimately building on the capacity of the Operating National Society.

Financial resources

The primary tool for Aid Organization emergency response fund-raising is the Emergency Appeal. National Appeals are launched nationally by the National Society concerned. International Appeals are launched by the Federation Secretariat. The Appeal process is governed by National Society regulations and, internationally, by the Principles and Rules for Disaster Relief.

Human resources

Recognizing the vital role of human resources in emergency operations, the Aid Organization must ensure the proper identification, placement, retention, development, support, administration and management of suitably qualified, trained and experienced personnel to work in the service of the most vulnerable. The Aid Organization must, with the National Society concerned, be constantly vigilant to minimize the risk to the safety and security of volunteers and staff working for the programmes.

Information resources

The Aid Organization recognizes data and information as key resources in its emergency response. It is committed to making the Aid Organization a reliable and timely source of disaster related information. Information systems will be designed and implemented in order to maximize:

- The speed, efficiency and effectiveness of emergency response.
- The security and safety of beneficiaries, staff, volunteers and fixed assets.
- The timeliness, accuracy and clarity of reporting and accountability systems.
- The involvement of beneficiaries and local organizations.

Physical resources

Aid Organization *policy* dictates that the need for physical resources is well defined, that quality standards are ensured, that delivery is timely, that stocks are adequately maintained and distribution controlled. Physical assets not used in the emergency response programme or surplus to operational requirements, as the programme scales down, should be deployed to support other emergency programmes when no longer needed for the emergency at hand, subject to national government regulation.

Consistent with the above, the impact of local purchase upon the local economy and well-being of the population should be assessed to ensure that such actions do not cause undue harm. Programme officials should refrain from creating duplicate infrastructures when existing National Society or commercial enterprises can provide the necessary support.

Responsibilities

National Societies and the Aid Organization have a responsibility to ensure that all emergency response operations and programmes are carried out in compliance with this policy; that all staff and volunteers participating in emergency response programmes are aware of the rationale and details of the policy; and that all relevant governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental partners are adequately informed of this policy.

Further reference texts

- The Code of Conduct for the UN Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief
- The Principles and Rules for Go B disaster /relief Policy
- The Food Aid and Nutrition Policy
- The Seville Agreement (November 1997)