

FORCED TO FLEE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

How the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is addressing climate and disaster displacement across the Asia Pacific Region



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 16 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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COVER: BANGLADESH 2020 – Jorina Begum checks on her flooded home after being forced to leave during floods in June 2020, which displaced 5.4 million people. As climate change intensifies, communities like Jorina's are increasingly vulnerable to prolonged flooding, forcing many to seek shelter on higher ground or along roadsides. *AJ Ghani / IFRC*

About this report

In the face of disasters and the changing climate, people in Asia Pacific are being forced to flee their homes. Using case studies of Red Cross and Red Crescent Society action in Asia Pacific, this report underscores the need to scale up efforts to support people and communities to adapt and reduce the risks of displacement, address the humanitarian impacts of displacement and support resilient and sustainable recovery. It articulates where we need to do more, anchoring our action in local leadership and the meaningful participation of affected people and communities.

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Several National Societies also support the work of Asia Pacific National Societies in reducing risks and addressing needs related to displacement in the context of disasters and climate change in Asia Pacific. These include American Red Cross, Australian Red Cross, British Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Red Cross Society of China, Danish Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross, French Red Cross, German Red Cross, Hong Kong Red Cross Branch of the Red Cross Society of China, Italian Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross Society, Korean Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, New Zealand Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Qatar Red Crescent, Singapore Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross and Turkish Red Crescent.

Get involved

There are many ways to support the work of National Societies addressing displacement in the context of disasters and climate change.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CEA	Community engagement and accountability
CVA	Cash and voucher assistance
EAP	Early action protocol
eVCA	Enhanced vulnerability and capacity assessments
IDP	Internally displaced person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IFRC-DREF	IFRC-Disaster Response Emergency Fund
PASSA	Participatory Approach for Safer Shelter and Settlement Awareness
PER	Preparedness for Effective Response
PGI	Protection, gender and inclusion
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene



FOREWORD

The impacts of displacement do not end with the decision to move. Risks and uncertainties follow people into new, and often precarious places, testing their ability to rebuild and find stability.

For millions of people across Asia Pacific this is not a distant possibility, it is a daily reality. In 2024 alone, there were 24 million disaster displacements across the region, accounting for over half of all global disaster displacements. Asia Pacific is the world's most disaster-prone region. The number of people forced to move is only set to increase as climate change accelerates.

The diversity of this region means that displacement looks different in every context. In Tuvalu, rising seas inch closer each day, forcing decisions to be made about leaving centuries-old homelands. In Mongolia, droughts and harsh winters drive herders from the steppes. In the crowded lanes of Bangkok, floods push the poorest from already fragile homes. Whether on a tiny island or in a sprawling city, the stories are the same: disasters, driven and amplified by climate change, are uprooting lives and erasing the familiar.

Yet, in the face of these challenges, there is hope. Hope is found in the strength of communities and in the tireless work of those who stand with them. Across Asia Pacific, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its member National Societies are already at the forefront of locally led action, working with communities to reduce risks, support recovery and strengthen resilience. Our collective action spans the full cycle: from early warning and early action, disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation, to humanitarian response and long-term recovery. They work to ensure no one is left behind – supporting displaced people, migrants, refugees and host communities alike.

This report is a call to see what is at stake and to recognise the possibilities for change. It highlights what is possible when communities are supported, and local action is prioritised. It reminds us that while Asia Pacific faces more displacement than any other region, it also holds some of the most powerful examples of resilience and adaptation.

It argues that we must invest in people's ability to stay safely in their homes, support those who must move, and ensure that no one is left to face the impacts of disasters and climate change alone.

Alexander Matheou
Regional Director, Asia Pacific
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate change and disasters are increasingly undermining the lives, health, protection and well-being of people and communities across Asia Pacific. Each year, millions of people face escalating risks and devastating impacts – many are forced to leave their homes and become displaced, while others remain unable to move without support.

This report highlights the essential role of National Societies in Asia Pacific in reducing the risks of, and addressing the needs from, displacement in the context of disasters and climate change. The report showcases how locally led and collective action can help people to adapt, move to safer areas and recover and rebuild with dignity. It serves as both a description of challenges surrounding displacement and as a practical resource for policymakers, practitioners and partners seeking to enhance efforts in this critical space.

The urgency for action has never been greater. The Asia Pacific region sees more displacement linked to disasters and climate change than any other region in the world. With the highest number of disasters globally, the region is facing increasingly frequent and intense events due to climate change. In 2024 alone, these events triggered over 24 million displacements – over half of the global total – and the situation is expected to worsen.

More frequent and intense climate and weather-related disasters are becoming the norm. Recent years have seen floods, storms, heavy rains, tropical cyclones, heatwaves and prolonged droughts. Climate hazards often intersect with geophysical hazards such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis, compounding risk. Consecutive and cyclical events leave communities with little time to recover, increasing the risk of repeated displacement and worsening living conditions. Displacement is also becoming more protracted and complex, driven by the interconnected impacts of climate change, disasters, conflict, violence, poverty and other factors.

Empowering people and expanding their options is essential to helping them stay safely in their homes, move out of harm's way and recover with dignity on their own terms. Achieving this requires sustained investment in risk reduction, climate adaptation and early action, alongside robust preparedness measures, targeted humanitarian support and efforts to strengthen sustainable and resilient recovery.

Through 39 case studies from 21 National Societies in Australia, Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Palau, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, this report demonstrates how they are working with local communities and leading efforts to reduce risks, protect lives and support recovery. These examples of addressing displacement and strengthening resilience to the impacts of disasters and climate change across Asia Pacific offer insights and inspiration for action.

Who we are

As the world's largest humanitarian network, the IFRC is comprised of 191 National Societies, 38 of which are in Asia Pacific. National Societies are uniquely placed to address displacement. As trusted and present community members with networks of local staff and volunteers, and as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field, National Societies bridge gaps between communities, governments and other actors to address the needs of the most at-risk. This unique dual positioning also allows National Societies to engage with decision-makers and opinion-shapers, elevating community voices and priorities to inform policy and programmatic action.

Working closely with diverse communities, including people of all ages, genders and backgrounds, National Societies play a pivotal role in identifying those at risk of displacement, reducing risks and advancing climate adaptation. Their work encompasses preparedness; early warning and early action; humanitarian response; recovery and resilience-strengthening. These efforts are complemented by work on disaster risk governance; protection, gender and inclusion; community engagement and accountability; and humanitarian diplomacy. National Societies aim to take an inclusive approach, working to leave no one behind by supporting internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers, migrants and host communities while empowering them to shape programming and services.

For the IFRC, addressing the needs of people and communities at risk of or adversely affected by displacement in the context of disasters and climate change is a global strategic priority. This commitment is reflected in the IFRC's Strategy 2030 and the Migration Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2024–2030. Through the Global Climate Resilience Platform, IFRC is generating financial resources to scale-up locally led climate action, focusing on meaningful participation and active leadership by communities, including those at risk of or affected by displacement. Climate resilience programming is already underway in at least 94 countries. These commitments underscore the reality that National Societies are already responding to this challenge in every corner of the globe – and will continue to do so for years to come.

The challenge

In Asia Pacific, the ways in which disasters and climate change increase the risks of displacement – and exacerbate challenges for people who are already displaced – are complex and constantly evolving. Economic, social, political, environmental and demographic factors intersect to shape whether, how and when people move in response to disasters and climate change.

Evidence from Asia Pacific shows:

- People are experiencing repeat displacement as disasters triggered by climate hazards such as seasonal flooding, droughts or storms force them to flee.
- People are displaced for longer periods, as disasters triggered by climate hazards overlap with protracted crises, conflict, poverty, marginalization and food, water and resource insecurity.
- Climate change is contributing to worsening food insecurity, which can limit local adaptation options.
- As the impacts of climate change make rural lives and livelihoods more difficult, people are moving toward urban areas, including informal settlements. Asia Pacific has the largest number of people living in informal urban settlements, often in climate-exposed areas with limited access to essential services.
- Displacement is disproportionately impacting marginalized groups, including people living in poverty, women, children and older persons.

- Displacement is heightening exposure to health and other risks, with displaced people and others on the move in the context of climate change facing greater health risks and barriers to accessing essential health and other services.
- Displacement in the context of disasters and climate change has negative impacts on mental health, including trauma experienced during disasters as well as the impacts of the loss of livelihoods and culture.

Scientific projections also indicate:

- The number of people exposed to compounding hazards – such as cyclones followed by floods and landslides, sea-level rise exacerbating storm surges and coastal erosion, or heatwaves combined with droughts – is set to rise.
- The number of people moving into urban areas is expected to grow, resulting in larger populations in urban areas and informal settlements exposed to floods, heatwaves and other hazards.
- As sea levels rise across Asia Pacific, millions of people living in low-lying coastal areas will face increasing risks of displacement associated with sea-level rise, coastal flooding and extreme coastal events.
- The impacts of average temperature increases, including more frequent extreme heat events and sea-level rise, threaten the ability of land to support human life and livelihoods in arid regions and low-lying coastal settlements.
- Climate impacts may also reduce the ability of people in situations of vulnerability to move due to loss of assets, reinforcing existing inequalities and adaptive capacities, leaving people trapped in high-risk areas, unable to move without support.

Hazards and displacement in Asia Pacific



Storms triggered **114 million** displacements between 2013-2024, representing over 50 per cent of all disaster displacements in Asia Pacific.



Floods triggered **88.4 million** displacements between 2013-2024, representing over 40 per cent of disaster displacements in Asia Pacific.



Sea-level rise poses multiple and compounding risks to people living in coastal regions and islands across Asia Pacific. However, data on displacement linked to sea-level rise and related coastal hazards is lacking.



Drought affects millions of people across Asia Pacific, undermining food and water security and threatening livelihoods. However, data on displacement linked to drought is only reported for some countries and partially.

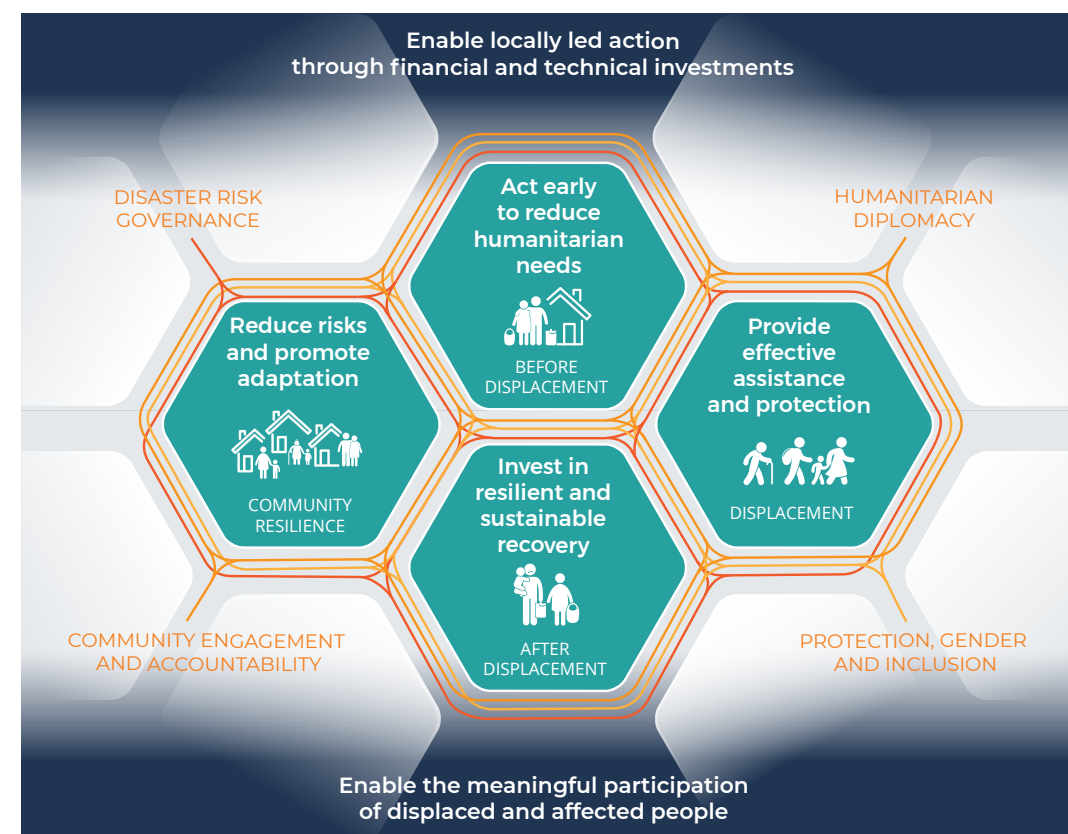


Rising temperatures and extreme heat affect the health and livelihoods of millions of people across Asia Pacific. While data on displacement linked to rising temperatures and extreme heat remains limited, heat stress not only reduces options for adapting locally but also increases risks for people on the move.

How we can do more

There is a need to scale up individual and collective action to both reduce the risk of and address the impacts of displacement in the context of disaster and climate change. Understanding the nature and dynamics of displacement and other forms of human movement is essential for shaping effective programmes, emergency responses, laws and policies, and humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy. This research provides valuable insights and evidence on areas where stronger investments are needed, as reflected in the diagram below. By scaling up action in these areas, based on contexts and needs, with and through local leadership and the meaningful participation of affected people, we can help expand options for people and communities – enabling them to adapt and stay in their homes, move to safety, recover and remain resilient on their own terms.

ACTION TO ADDRESS CLIMATE AND DISASTER DISPLACEMENT



National Society action in Asia Pacific

Sustained action at the local level is vital to addressing displacement in the context of disasters and climate change. Through their extensive networks of staff and over 10 million volunteers, National Societies in Asia Pacific are already taking action as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field, with strong local connections and global reach. Some of these actions are discussed in Section III and IV of this report.

The below box discusses the cross-cutting areas where National Societies take action across the displacement cycle, while the graphic on the next page provides descriptions of the actions taken across the different phases.

Cross-cutting action and tools

National Societies are taking action in the following cross-cutting areas:

- Disaster risk governance supports public authorities in developing or strengthening comprehensive legal and policy frameworks to reduce risks of disasters and displacement and address the needs of displaced people.
- Humanitarian diplomacy influences policies, practices and public perceptions to better address the needs and resilience of at-risk and displaced people.
- Community engagement and accountability promotes inclusive participatory approaches that consider and are guided by the needs and priorities of people in vulnerable situations, including internally displaced people, migrants, refugees, people at risk of displacement and host communities, as well as fostering their ability to influence programming and services.
- Protection, gender and inclusion analysis and programming adaptation minimizes and addresses harms, promotes access to protection services and supports the inclusion of diverse populations.
- Cash and voucher assistance is a tool used for interventions ahead of disasters and during response and recovery. It enables people to use the autonomy they have to decide on how best to meet their needs and priorities with dignity.

NATIONAL SOCIETY ACTION IN ASIA PACIFIC

Action to address climate and disaster displacement

ADAPTATION & RISK REDUCTION:

Recognizing the intensifying impacts of climate change, investment in adaptation and risk reduction can expand choices for people to stay in their homes or move out of harm's way on their own terms. National Societies are reducing risks, promoting adaptation, and strengthening resilience by:



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

- identifying **at-risk communities** through community-led assessments, hazard mapping, and risk-informed planning and taking actions to reduce risks, including with a specific climate-risk lens
- strengthening access to **shock-responsive social protection** and existing social protection systems for people in situations of vulnerability
- strengthening access to health services and **climate-resilient health systems**, such as through community surveillance of climate-related diseases
- strengthening access to water, sanitation and hygiene services (WASH), including better waste management, such as through **climate-resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene systems**
- strengthening the **resilience of homes and assets**
- investing in **nature-based solutions**
- promoting **livelihood diversification** and climate-resilient livelihoods and climate-smart agriculture
- **educating and raising awareness** on the impacts of disasters, including displacement and the need for risk reduction and preparedness

PREPAREDNESS & EARLY ACTION:

Before hazards and disasters strike, National Societies work with and alongside communities, providing them with the information, tools and resources to prepare and act early to protect lives and livelihoods, move out of harm's way, or reduce the impacts of displacement by:



BEFORE DISPLACEMENT

- promoting and shaping **early warning systems and processes** to provide people with information about forecasted hazards and helping them understand their options
- taking **anticipatory action** in response to warnings, providing tools and resources for people to protect themselves, their homes, settlements and livelihoods, and cope and stay or move out of harm's way safely and with dignity
- supporting communities to establish and map **evacuation sites and safe routes** and develop contingency plans
- **pre-positioning goods** to provide efficient and appropriate support
- promoting preparedness and early action in **displacement camps and settlements** and reducing risks and exposure to disasters and climate impacts

ASSISTANCE & PROTECTION:

When displacement cannot be avoided, National Societies provide essential services and protection to meet the needs of displaced and other affected people drawing on a long history of expertise and action by:



DISPLACEMENT

- supporting **shelter needs** by setting up evacuation centers, collective accommodations, planned settlements, supporting hosting arrangement or providing rental assistance
- supporting communities to move out of harm's way through **safe and dignified evacuations**
- addressing **basic needs**, including food, water and household items
- delivering **health services**, including first aid, psychosocial support, risk communication, and community engagement to reduce health risks and promote empowerment
- providing **WASH interventions** to promote awareness of the risks of disease spread and have safe, dignified, and sustained access to water, sanitation and hygiene services.
- providing **protection services** to women, children, elderly people, people with disabilities, and others in vulnerable situations, including information on rights, how to report and receive support for abuse or harm, action to restore family links, and other essential protection and specialized services, as well as referrals to other actors
- providing **cash and voucher assistance (CVA)**, including through multi-purpose cash assistance and sector-based cash assistance, to address immediate needs, protect assets, and to address a variety of needs, such as health, WASH, shelter, food and others

RESILIENT RECOVERY & RISK REDUCTION:

National Societies remain present long after disasters end, supporting displaced people to recover, (re)integrate and remain resilient wherever they choose—in places of origin, in places of where they found safety or in new areas. They also work to reduce risks and provide support for people who remain in displacement camps and settlements or protracted situations by:



AFTER DISPLACEMENT

- promoting **inclusive recovery planning and action**, including by strengthening access to services, such as health, water, sanitation, and hygiene, and fostering social cohesion
- supporting people to **return to their homes and rebuild**
- contributing to the **informed and voluntary planned relocation** of displaced people, including supporting shelter, livelihoods and other needs in places of settlement and strengthening the participation of displaced and affected people in such processes
- addressing the needs of **displaced people living in camps and settlements** or who remain in situations of protracted displacement and reducing their risks and exposure to disasters and climate impacts, including risks of further displacement
- strengthening access to social protection systems, climate-resilient health systems, climate-resilient WASH systems, strengthening the resilience of homes and productive assets, investing in nature-based solutions, and supporting livelihood diversification and climate-resilient livelihoods

BANGLADESH

Implementing disaster preparedness for displaced communities in camps

- Partnering with government to establish a cyclone preparedness programme

Providing support in protracted displacement situations

- Supporting longer term services and social cohesion efforts in and around camp settings

Developing cyclone early action protocols in coastal districts

- Working in coastal districts to pre-position and prepare with communities ahead of disasters

MYANMAR

Responding to complex and overlapping crises

- Supporting preparedness and response, including for people displaced by conflict

Capacity strengthening in displacement and migration contexts

- Integrating support for migrants and displaced people in disaster responses

SRI LANKA

Supporting government-led anticipatory action

- Working with national and regional partners on dialogues and workshops on anticipatory action

Bridging disaster displacement response and recovery efforts

- Responding to displaced communities with multi-sector assistance, including cash assistance to support recovery

PAKISTAN

Rebuilding alongside communities displaced by floods

- Supporting government efforts to provide shelter solutions for displaced communities

Understanding climate impacts on health and employment opportunities

- Conducting studies to better prepare communities on the impacts of climate on health and livelihoods

NEPAL

Leveraging social protection programmes to meet humanitarian needs

- Shock response social protection during floods, prioritizing marginalized groups

Strengthening urban resilience and engagement

- Using pre-existing networks to scale up disaster risk reduction and resilience

MONGOLIA

Supporting early action for extreme winters

- Developing an early action protocol to reduce livestock loss ahead of dzud impacts

Livelihood and psychosocial support for people moving to urban areas

- Incorporating mental health and care for migrants in informal settlements

THAILAND

Responding to floods that affect already displaced communities

- Supporting an inclusive approach to flood response, including migrants and displaced people from Myanmar

THE MALDIVES

Integrating migrants into the National Society staff and volunteer base

- Inclusive approaches to decision-making in disaster response and assessments

Providing health services for migrants during disasters

- Scaling up community engagement in communication materials on disease outbreaks

INDONESIA

Preparing for and responding to droughts

- Carrying out anticipatory actions and supporting drought-affected families

MALAYSIA

Providing health and care support for migrants and refugees

- Providing inclusive health services, including during disasters and climate shocks

Providing health and care during monsoon seasons

- Addressing humanitarian needs of flood-displaced households, including health and care services

TIMOR-LESTE

Implementing cross-border disaster preparedness

- Coordinating support across borders for people displaced during disasters

Supporting displaced people during concurrent disasters

- Responding to disaster displacement and health emergency in evacuation centres

PHILIPPINES

Supporting communities displaced by disasters from response to recovery

- Addressing immediate needs and integrating recovery through multi-sectoral response

Supporting relocation and resettlement of people displaced by disasters

- Working with local government and communities to assist a planned relocation project

JAPAN

Supporting at-risk groups in the face of compounding disasters

- Providing assistance in evacuation shelters and mitigating impacts of heat-related illness

Supporting displaced communities in the wake of multiple disasters

- Providing emergency relief after floods and earthquakes

PALAU

Strengthening locally led preparedness and early action

- Engaging young people in preparedness and early action ahead of disasters

Supporting communities displaced by typhoons

- Promoting response and recovery efforts for displaced communities, including through multi-purpose cash assistance

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Enhancing community resilience to drought

- Providing health and WASH services to strength resilience during worsening droughts

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Enabling locally led disaster preparedness

- Working with communities and authorities to prepare and disseminate warnings ahead of disasters

TUVALU

Implementing disaster preparedness and recovery plans in the outer islands

- Supporting island-specific plans on disaster preparedness with community volunteers

SAMOA

Supporting whole-of-society preparedness in the face of climate change

- Involving at risk-communities in preparedness ahead of hazards and response efforts

FIJI

Promoting anticipatory action to enhance resilience

- Strengthening early warning systems and anticipatory actions as an essential step towards community resilience to climate hazards.

VANUATU

Enhancing anticipatory action in the face of repeat cyclones

- Conducting activities ahead of cyclone season, including pre-positioning relief items

Responding to displacement during simultaneous crises

- Addressing the humanitarian needs of people displaced by cyclones, supporting them to build back better

AUSTRALIA

Supporting communities displaced by disasters

- Empowering displaced communities to drive their response and recovery

The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities

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.

