



# Humanitarian Principles in Brief



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# Humanitarian Principles



Four principles guide international humanitarian law:

humanity

neutrality

impartiality

independence



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# Humanity

This is also known as the 'humanitarian imperative'.

The principle that all those in humanitarian need have a right to assistance.



# Neutrality

“Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature”.



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## Impartiality

“Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions”.



# Independence

“Humanitarian aid must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented”



In small groups,  
rank the four  
humanitarian  
principles in  
**order of  
importance.**

Explain your  
choices?



# The History of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement



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Henry Dunant  
helped  
wounded  
soldiers at the  
battle of  
Solferino in  
1859



Henri Dunant, 1828-1910



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- His **two main ideas** were for a treaty that would oblige armies to:
  - Care of all wounded soldiers and the
  - Creation of national societies that would help the military medical services.
- Dunant put down his ideas in a campaigning book published in 1862.
- The Public Welfare Committee in his home town of Geneva took them up and formed a **working group** (the embryo ICRC, with Dunant as secretary), which first met in February 1863.
- The following October, **an international conference was convened**, to formalize the concept of national societies.
- In 1864, delegates from a **dozen countries adopted the first Geneva Convention**, which put a legal framework around these decisions and **made it compulsory for armies to care for all wounded soldiers**, whatever side they were on.

# Voluntary Guidelines Governing Humanitarian Action



The Code of Conduct for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement adhere to high standards of **independence, effectiveness and impact.**



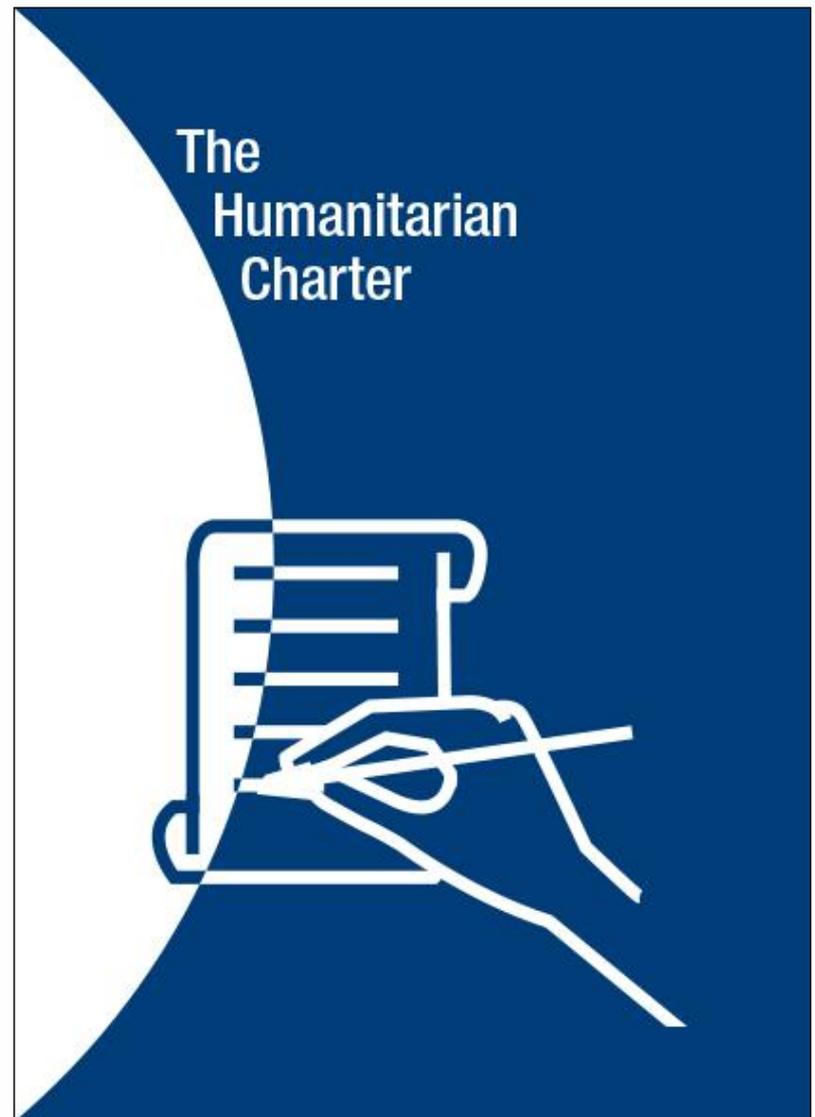
To date, **492** separate organizations have signed the code.

## Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes:

1. The **humanitarian imperative** comes first.
2. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of **need alone**.
3. Aid will not be used to further another **particular standpoint**.
4. Endeavour **not to act as instruments of government**.
5. **Respect** culture and custom.
6. Disaster response on **local capacities**.
7. **Involve programme beneficiaries** in the management of aid.
8. **Reduce future vulnerabilities** to disaster and meet basic needs.
9. **Accountable** to those we assist and accept resources.
10. Recognize victims as **dignified human beings** in promotional materials.

## Sphere Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response cover:

1. water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion
2. food security and nutrition
3. shelter, settlement and non-food items
4. health action



The Humanitarian  
Accountability  
Partnership aims to  
improve the quality  
of humanitarian  
**action and  
compliance.**



Have you had any experience with such guidelines and have you found them useful?

Would knowing more about these benefit your company?



# Key Messages

“A broad spectrum of instruments guide humanitarian work. These range from formal legally binding treaties to voluntary guidelines to plan programmes. All of these need to be taken into consideration.”



# Contact Details

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