

Guiding principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance

I. Objectives and focus of humanitarian assistance

1. Human suffering should be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable in the population, such as children, women and elderly. The dignity and rights of all must be respected and protected.
2. Humanitarian assistance is to be provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature. There will be no weapons or armed personnel on the premises or transportation facilities of humanitarian organizations.
3. Humanitarian assistance is to be provided irrespective of ethnic origin, social status, gender, nationality, political opinions, race or religion. Relief of suffering must be guided solely by needs and priority is to be given to the most urgent cases of distress.
4. Humanitarian assistance aims to help reduce poverty, meet basic needs and enable communities to become more self-sufficient.
5. Humanitarian activities are guided by international humanitarian law and human rights and by the mandates given by international instruments to the various humanitarian organizations.

II. Management and operational principles

6. Humanitarian actors respect the culture, structures and customs of the communities where humanitarian programmes are carried out. Where possible and to the extent feasible, ways shall be found to involve the intended beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance and/or local personnel in the design, management and implementation of assistance programmes.
7. Humanitarian agencies hold themselves accountable to those they seek to assist and will be accountable for their actions to the government, and for their use of resources, to those who provide them. Humanitarian actors retain responsibility to manage human, financial and material resources for their activities. Management of these resources follows transparent, independent, open, competitive processes. Specifically, staff are recruited on the basis of suitability and qualifications for the job.
8. Equipment, supplies and facilities of humanitarian actors are not to be used for purposes other than those stated in programme objectives. Vehicles of humanitarian agencies are not to be used to transport persons or goods that have no direct connection with assistance programmes.
9. Humanitarian assistance is only of value if delivered in a timely fashion. Effective humanitarian operations require easy, sustained access for humanitarian personnel participating in relief activities to deliver, monitor and assess humanitarian aid, enabling them to reach targeted members of the population in need of assistance.