



GLOBAL SAFEGUARDING ACTION PLAN 2022-2025

OCTOBER 2021

ifrc.org

IFRC'S PROTECTION, GENDER AND INCLUSION (PGI) UNIT

Developed in close collaboration with The British Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, and in consultation with IFRC and national society representatives from all regions globally

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Cover photo: Girl in Lithuania, photo by IFRC

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**GLOBAL SAFEGUARDING ACTION PLAN
2022-2025**

Joint Advocacy, Institutional and Operational Capacity Strengthening in Prevention &
Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Child Safeguarding

OCTOBER 2021

Overview

The IFRC secretariat and network approach to Safeguarding is underpinned by the Fundamental Principles of humanity and impartiality and the principle of 'do no harm'¹. Our commitments to safeguarding are reinforced through statutory resolutions, pledges, strategy and policies including, but not limited to, **IFRC Strategy 2030; the 2015 International Conference Resolution 3: Sexual and gender-based violence: Joint action on prevention and response; the 2019 International Conference Pledge on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment; the IFRC staff Code of Conduct, PSEA Policy, Child Safeguarding Policy, Gender and Diversity Policy, Anti-Harassment Guidelines**; and the forthcoming IFRC PGI Policy and Operational Framework (2022-5).

The IFRC network has taken action to enhance safeguarding over many years and this has led to progress (see Annex 1 for safeguarding progress to date in the IFRC network). The IFRC secretariat and National Societies in the IFRC network are working to further enhance their safeguarding systems to ensure our own people and programmes do no harm in any way against the people we serve or our own people, including volunteers, staff, and associated personnel².

Safeguarding for the IFRC network refers to our responsibility in acting to: Keep people safe from any form of harm caused by the misuse of power by making sure that our staff, volunteers, programmes, and communications do no harm to children and adults, nor expose them to abuse or exploitation. Safeguarding also includes protecting staff from harm and inappropriate behaviour such as sexual harassment (see Annex 2 for definition of terms).

Power imbalance is at the heart of safeguarding. Humanitarian workers hold enormous power, which can create the risk of exploitation and abuse. Sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment involves certain groups and individuals within organizations exercising power in harmful ways against those less powerful. Safeguarding within the IFRC network includes several key components:

- Sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) of children and adults perpetrated by anyone working for IFRC or a member National Society;
- Other forms of abuse e.g. physical, psychological, or emotional, financial and/ or material, discriminatory, organizational abuse and child labour perpetrated by our people;
- Harm caused by our programmes and communications that we fund through our partners (including other National Societies, the IFRC and ICRC);
- Ensuring adults and children of diverse backgrounds have a meaningful role in decisions that affect them; and
- Sexual harassment in the workplace.

PSEA (prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse) is also a term used to refer to certain aspects of safeguarding, but specifically focuses on SEA or SEAH (including sexual harassment in the workplace), whereas safeguarding has a much broader focus.

This Safeguarding Action Plan focuses on priority areas for improvement in the IFRC network, including a) prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and b) Child Safeguarding. Other areas for improvement, such as anti-harassment, are covered elsewhere.³

¹ 'Do no harm' is about ensuring that humanitarian operations do not have any negative effects endangering affected persons e.g. because of unplanned or poorly planned services or systemic failure to safeguard.

² Delegates, consultants, contractors, media, visitors, and others supporting RCRC work.

³ Work against sexual harassment in the workplace is owned and coordinated by IFRC Human Department, with reference to the **Anti-Harassment Guidelines**.



Boy in Afghanistan, photo by IFRC

The components of this Action Plan may be implemented through a common approach, recognizing that PSEA and Child Safeguarding both a) include prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse, b) promote a survivor-centered approach to reporting and referrals and c) require cultural change for people to feel safe and able to speak up and report concerns. Each component is also unique and covers its own specific area and requires its own specific approaches.

Within the IFRC, safeguarding is a responsibility across all departments, programmes, and for all our people. To help coordinate and support this, the Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) unit has a leadership role around advancing the PSEA and Child Safeguarding agendas, in alignment with the IFRC PSEA Policy and Child Safeguarding Policy. Instrumental resources for the safeguarding roll-out include the **IFRC PSEA Manual** and **Child Safeguarding Guidelines**. The IFRC has adopted sector good practice safeguarding standards⁴ which are reflected in the PSEA and Child Safeguarding policies and guidelines⁵. These standards apply in all locations, in all cultures and with all partners. However, understanding of the local context (local laws, cultural norms, etc.) is crucial for effective implementation against our minimum standards for PSEA and Child Safeguarding.

⁴ IASC Minimum Operating Standard for PSEA (IASC MOS-PSEA) and Minimum Standards for Child Protection.

⁵ These standards will also be reflected in a new IFRC Safeguarding Assessment Framework.

Objectives

This Safeguarding Action Plan outlines the key actions the IFRC secretariat and National Societies in the IFRC network will take to strengthen PSEA and Child Safeguarding. The overall ambition is for all members of the IFRC network to develop a culture for safeguarding in their interactions with people of all genders, ages, and abilities in communities around the world. The objectives of this Safeguarding Action Plan are:

By end 2025, we will...	Our goals are...
Gain formal recognition of our commitments to safeguarding at the 2023 International Conference	A Safeguarding Pledge is presented at the 2023 International Conference, achieving 40 signatories from National Societies in the IFRC network.
Strengthen mechanisms for coordinating safeguarding within the IFRC network and with networks/organizations providing a continuum of care for survivors	All five IFRC regions have a well-functioning Safeguarding Working Groups providing regular progress updates, including an annual report on progress against this Action Plan and an updated list of networks / organizations for assistance for survivors.
Ensure the IFRC secretariat is institutionally ready to take a leadership role in strengthening safeguarding in the IFRC network	All IFRC offices and 150 National Societies have completed safeguarding assessments as an initial step in developing PSEA of Child Safeguarding policies. 100% of new IFRC programmes each year complete a Child Risk Analysis.
Work with National Societies to strengthen their institutional policies, structures, systems, and culture for safeguarding, providing a strong foundation for all types of programming including PGI	50 National Societies have drafted or approved PSEA policies and procedures. 60 National Societies have drafted or approved Child Safeguarding policies and procedures.
Support and facilitate IFRC and National Society programmes, services, and emergency operations to mainstream and integrate safeguarding	30 National Societies have taken steps to ensure safe programming and services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • screening of National Society personnel to help prevent safeguarding risks. • briefing, training, and signing of staff Code of Conduct by all programme volunteers and staff; • well-communicated channels for safe reporting and response to SEA and Child Safeguarding concerns integrated to community-based feedback and complaints mechanisms; • referral pathways for child protection, sexual and reproductive healthcare, counselling, justice and MHPSS services; and • access to PSEA and Child Safeguarding technical support (e.g. technical advisory staff, delegates, or consultancy support).
Contribute to safeguarding related learning in the IFRC network and the wider sector	Peer learning reviews and regional evaluations undertaken, with learning shared.

Financial resources

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility in the IFRC and among National Societies. Therefore, there is a need for engagement on safeguarding by senior leadership, community-based volunteers, human resources, security, programme managers, legal, PGI and CEA staff, among others. Specialist PSEA and Child Safeguarding support and resources are also required for the phased roll-out of PSEA and Child Safeguarding in the IFRC network:

- At the global level, technical advisers, delegates, a pool of trainers and rapid response roster for awareness raising, advocacy, and provision of technical support e.g. for developing policies, establishing referral pathways, and supporting emergency response operations;
- At the sub/regional level, Safeguarding Officers to coordinate and support the implementation of safeguarding activities with National Societies in the region and to facilitate peer learning; and
- At the country level, Focal Points are required within National Societies to help ensure prevention and effective response to SEA and Child Safeguarding concerns e.g. Board/Leadership, Headquarters, Branch and Divisional safeguarding focal points.

The PGI unit within the IFRC secretariat is leading the effort to fundraise (within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and externally with supportive partners and donors) to support a significant investment in PSEA and Child Safeguarding over the coming four years. We have developed a budget to support the implementation of activities within this Action Plan, with the aim to achieve the objectives of this Action Plan in all IFRC regions (Africa, Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe, and MENA) by end 2025. The following table provides a summary of costs. Please see Annex 3 for the costed action plan / breakdown of costs.

Summary of costs⁶

Cost type	Cost per annum (CHF)	Cost Total (CHF)
5 Regional Safeguarding Officers <i>@ CHF 42.000 pa x 30 months</i>	131.250	525.000
Contribution to 20 National Society HQ Focal Points <i>@ CHF 7.750 pa x 30 months</i>	96.875	387.500
Per diems for 100 Branch Focal Points <i>@ CHF 10 x 125 days over 30 months</i>	31.250	125.000
Specialist technical support (0.25 FTE per region) <i>@ CHF 15.5 pa x 36 months</i>	58.125	232.500
Regional communications and training	25.000	100.000
Regional fund for assistance for survivors	3.750	15.000
Regional peer learning and evaluations	16.250	65.000
Contingency @ CHF 150k	37.500	150.000
Total	400.000	1,600,000

⁶ The budget is informed by costings for CEA roles in the IFRC network; British Red Cross-led PSEA implementation pilots with IFRC and National Societies in Namibia, Eswatini and Nigeria; and consultation with IFRC and National Society representatives.

Related documents

Name	Version
Staff Code of Conduct	2007
PSEA Policy	2018
PSEA Manual	2020
Child Safeguarding Policy	2021
Child Safeguarding Guidelines	2021
Anti-Harassment Guidelines	2021

Contact

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Integrity Line

Report any alleged misconduct or integrity incident, such as corruption, fraud, sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment, unethical behaviour, child abuse, security incident, information security or staff health incidents: online ifrc.integrityline.org
email speakup@ifrc.integrityline.org
call **Phone List**.



Boys from Afghanistan in a migration camp in Europe, photo by IFRC

Annex 1: Safeguarding progress to date in the IFRC network

PSEA

The IFRC secretariat conducted its first internal PSEA review between 2005-2006 and developed its first action plan in 2007. This included hiring its first PSEA coordinator and developing an inter-departmental leadership group to lead action. Since 2018:

- A specific PSEA Policy has been created for the secretariat which has been used as a template for NS to develop their own policies;
- A pledge was presented at the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and harassment in humanitarian action;
- Partnered with over 45 National Societies on the process to enhance their PSEA policies/systems;
- Developed the **IFRC PSEA Manual** to support National Societies, with six accompanying video animations to help disseminate the guidance in the Manual;
- Carried out routine screening of candidates for a history of SEA, under the SCHR **Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme**;
- Through the PGI unit, had an IFRC secretariat PSEA Advisor and begun having roles at sub-regional levels, including a PSEA Officer in the IFRC Southern Cluster Office⁷.

Child Safeguarding

Recognizing the large number of children it interacts with, the special protection needs of children, and the need to clearly define acceptable and unacceptable behaviour with children, in 2013 the IFRC developed its first Child Protection Policy. An online course was developed to support awareness raising among IFRC personnel. Since the development of the 2013 Child Protection Policy:

- 30 National Societies, mainly in the Asia Pacific Region, have adopted their own Child Protection Policies;
- In 2021, the IFRC secretariat launched its new Child Safeguarding Policy which replaced the 2013 Child Protection Policy. With the new Child Safeguarding Policy are also now available a series of supporting documents to assist the IFRC network to better implement their policies;
- A key part of the Child Safeguarding Policy is the Child Safeguarding Risk Analysis which is a requirement for all IFRC programmes. The Analysis identifies the levels of risk that programmes pose to children across a rating system of low, medium, high, and very high; and
- The IFRC, through the PGI unit, has invested in a Senior Child Protection Advisor who supports regions with strengthening child safeguarding systems.

Other Safeguarding progress

- Developed a new safeguarding self-assessment framework for the IFRC secretariat which is currently being reviewed for use as a template for National Societies to undertake a self-assessment, particularly in fulfilling the requirements of any funding from the United Nations.

⁷ A pilot supported by the British Red Cross and funded by the UK Government.

Annex 2: Definition of Terms

Abuse refers to actual or threatened neglect, emotional, physical and/or sexual exploitation and abuse (including sexual harassment) of any child, young person, or adult by any member of our staff, volunteers and associated personnel.

Adult refers to a human being aged 18 years or more, regardless of the applicable legal definition of the term in the relevant country.

Affected Person/s refers to persons who look to or benefit from RCRC protection or assistance. This may include any person in the country or local community where we are operating.

Best interests of the child broadly describe the well-being of a child. Such well-being is determined by a variety of individual circumstances (such as their gender, age, level of maturity and experiences) and other factors (such as the presence or absence of parents, quality of the relationships between the child and family/ caregiver, and other risks or capacities). There are three aspects to the Best Interests concept. They are:

- A child's basic right: children have a right to have their Best Interests assessed and taken as a primary consideration;
- A legal principle: if a legal provision is open to more than one interpretation, the interpretation which most effectively serves the child's Best Interests should be chosen;
- A rule of procedure: whenever a decision will affect a child, a group of children or children in general, the decision-making process must (a) evaluate the possible impact of the decision on the child(ren) concerned and (b) show that the right of children to have their Best Interests assessed and taken as a primary consideration has been explicitly considered.

Child refers to a human being under the age of 18 years regardless of the applicable legal definition of the term in the relevant country.

Child abuse refers to a deliberate act with actual or potential negative impacts upon the child's safety, wellbeing, dignity, and development. It is an intentional act that takes place in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

- Emotional or psychological abuse is when a caregiver acts or behaves in ways that have an adverse effect on the emotional health and development of a child. Such acts include restricting a child's movements, denigration, ridicule, threats and intimidation, discrimination, rejection, and other nonphysical forms of hostile treatment that deny the child an appropriate and supportive environment in which to thrive. They are acts that may result in psychological and social deficits in the growth of a child;
- Physical abuse is a caregiver's use of physical force to cause actual or possible physical injury or suffering;
- Sexual Abuse is when a caregiver involves a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society.

Child exploitation refers to when an individual in a position of power and / or trust takes or attempts to take advantage of a child for their own personal benefit, advantage, gratification, or profit. This personal benefit may take different forms: physical, sexual, financial, material, social, military, or political. Exploitation may involve remuneration in cash or in kind (such as social status, political power, documentation, freedom of movement, or access to opportunities, goods, or services) to the child or to a third person/s.

Community-based complaints mechanism (CBCM) refers to trusted channels through which members of an affected community can safely report complaints and seek help. It builds on engagement with the community where individuals are able and encouraged to safely report grievances in a confidential way if needed – including SEA incidents – and those reports are referred to the appropriate entities for follow-up.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private.

Harassment includes any improper and unwelcome conduct that has or that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another. Harassment may be present in the form of words, gestures, or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment to another or that causes an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive work environment

Humanitarian worker / personnel refers to any person in the service of the organization, including all staff, volunteers, interns, and consultants.

IFRC network means the IFRC secretariat and the 192 RCRC National Societies globally.

Retaliation or **retaliatory action** means any direct or indirect detrimental action recommended, threatened, or taken because an individual has reported a suspicion of alleged misconduct or participated in an authorized audit or investigation. Retaliation may include adverse administrative actions, such as, but not limited to, unwarranted poor performance evaluations, changes in job duties or other negative decisions affecting the individual's terms and conditions of employment. Retaliation may also take the form of verbal abuse or harassment.

Sexual abuse refers to the actual or threatened physical or psychological intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. This includes sexual activity with anyone who looks to, or benefits from, RCRC services or programs, or with anyone under 18.

Sexual exploitation refers to any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. It includes transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex and exploitative relationships.

Sexual harassment refers to any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Third-Party Personnel refers to any person who is employed by a third-party and made available to the IFRC, without being IFRC Personnel, such as by means of a service agreement between the IFRC and a service provider.

Survivor/victim refers to a person who has experienced sexual exploitation or abuse. The terms 'victim' and 'survivor' can be used interchangeably. 'Victim' is a term often used in the legal and medical sectors. 'Survivor' is the term generally preferred in the psychological and social support sectors because it implies resiliency.

Survivor-centered approach seeks to empower the survivor by prioritizing her/his rights, needs and wishes and ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect. A survivor-centered approach helps to promote a survivor's recovery and to reinforce her/his capacity to make decisions about possible interventions. The guiding principles of the survivor-oriented approach at IFRC are:

- Do No Harm,
- Respect,
- Safety,
- Confidentiality,
- Non-discrimination and Best Interest of the Child.

Whistleblower refers to an individual who reports a concern regarding wrongdoing. Whistleblowers provide information, based on a reasonably held suspicion that a wrongdoing has occurred.

Zero tolerance refers to zero tolerance of RCRC Movement staff and volunteers engaging in any form of sexual exploitation or abuse. In practice, this is a commitment to immediate operational response when a concern is raised and an obligation on any staff, volunteers, and associated personnel to report concerns as soon as they arise. It includes protection of, and non-retaliation towards, whistleblowers or anyone else reporting concerns. Zero tolerance to SEA includes a prohibition on transactional sex by aid personnel, regardless of local legislation.





Woman in South Sudan, photo by IFRC

Annex 3: Costed Global Safeguarding Action Plan (2022-25)

Objective	Outcomes	Outputs
Gain formal recognition of our commitments to safeguarding at the 2023 International Conference	Increased awareness and commitment to Safeguarding in the RCRC Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding Pledge presented at the 2023 International Conference Safeguarding workshop at the Council of Delegates.
Strengthen mechanisms for coordinating safeguarding within the IFRC network and with networks/ organizations providing a continuum of care for survivors	Well-coordinated approach for meeting the targets in this Action Plan & collaboration with networks/ organizations for assistance to survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Safeguarding Working Groups with Terms of Reference. Regional annual progress report against this Action Plan. Updated contact lists for networks/organizations for assistance for survivors.
Ensure the IFRC secretariat is institutionally ready to take a leadership role in safeguarding	Increased understanding of strengths and gaps in safeguarding and agreed Safeguarding Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational safeguarding assessment completed. Safeguarding Action plan developed and agreed with leadership.
Work with National Societies to strengthen their institutional policies, structures, systems, and culture for safeguarding, providing a strong foundation for all types of programming including PGI	A good foundation is established for safe RCRC services and programmes, through ethical leadership, accountability, and human resource processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSEA Policy and Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures.
Support and facilitate IFRC and National Society programmes, services, and emergency operations to mainstream and integrate safeguarding	<p>Good practice based on minimum standards for PSEA and Child Safeguarding implemented in RCRC programmes and emergency operations.</p> <p>This includes safe, accessible, survivor-centered reporting channels and assistance for survivors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of risks to community members in relation to the programme / emergency operation (including the Child Safeguarding Risk Analysis). Well-communicated channels for safe reporting and response to PSEA and Child Safeguarding concerns integrated to community-based feedback and complaints mechanisms. Referral pathways for child protection, sexual/ reproductive healthcare, counselling, justice and MHPSS established and regularly updated. Register of PSEA and Child Safeguarding specialists.
Contribute to safeguarding related learning in the IFRC network and the wider sector	Strengthened organizational capacity of RCRC Movement actors to prevent and respond to SEA and Child Safeguarding concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning reviews carried out e.g. internal, external or peer reviews. Safeguarding evaluations. Learning shared widely e.g. through webinars, meetings, events, online platform.
Contingency		

TOTAL

Indicators	Baseline at start 2022	Target by end 2023	Target by end 2025	Regional cost (CHF)	Cost per annum (CHF)	Total 2022-5 (CHF)
Number of Movement actors who sign the Pledge	0	40 NS sign the Pledge	N/A	0	0	0
Number of regional WGs with: a) agreed ToR b) annual PSEA and CS progress report, and c) updated contacts list for assistance to survivors.	1 regional WG with: a) agreed ToR	3 regional WGs with: a) agreed ToR b) annual PSEA and CS progress report, and c) contacts list for assistance to survivors	5 regional WGs with: a) agreed ToR b) annual PSEA and CS progress report, and c) contacts list for assistance to survivors	Regional Safeguarding Officers (0.05 FTE x 5 regions x 30 months)	6.563	26.250
Number of IFRC offices and NS with a safeguarding self-assessment completed.	IFRC secretariat HQ and 57 NS ⁸	Half of the IFRC offices and 40 NS have a safeguarding assessment completed	All IFRC offices and 150 NS complete a safeguarding self-assessment	Regional Safeguarding Officers (0.05 FTE x 5 regions x 30 months)	6.563	26.250
Number of NS with PSEA and CS policies and procedures which meet IFRC standards ⁹ ;	17 NS with approved PSEA policies and 26 with approved CS policies	30 NS with drafted or approved PSEA policies 40 NS with approved or drafted CS policies	50 NS with approved or drafted PSEA policies 60 NS with approved or drafted CS policies	Regional Safeguarding Officers (0.05 FTE x 5 regions x 30 months)	65.625	262.500
				Technical Advisory (0.2 FTE x 5 regions x 36 months)	46.500	186.000
				20 NS HQ Focal Points (0.25 FTE x 30 months)	96.875	387.500
				Advocacy comms and training	25.000	100.000
Number of NS a) completing programmatic safeguarding assessments; and b) integrating PSEA and CS to high-risk programmes, including well-communicated channels for safe reporting and response, referral pathways, briefing and signing of staff Code of Conduct by all volunteers, and access to PSEA and CS specialist support.	Unknown	15 NS carry out assessment of safeguarding risks to programmes and integrate PSEA and CS to high-risk programmes	30 NS carry out assessment of safeguarding risks to programmes and integrate PSEA and CS to high-risk programmes	Regional Safeguarding Officers (0.02 FTE x 5 regions x 30 months)	26.250	105.000
				Technical Advisory (0.5 FTE x 5 regions x 36 months)	11.625	46.500
				100 Branch Focal Points (125 days over 30 months)	31.250	125.000
				Assistance for survivors	3.750	15.000
Learning related to implementation of PSEA and Child Safeguarding is captured, shared, and integrated to operations and programmes.	0	2 regional learning reviews with learning shared. 2 regional evaluations.	5 regional learning reviews with learning shared. 5 regional evaluations.	Regional Safeguarding Officers (0.02 FTE x 5 regions x 30 months)	26.250	105.000
				Regional learning events x 5	12.500	50.000
				Evaluations x 5	3.750	15.000
					37.500	150.000
					400.000	1,600,000

8 57 National Societies have undertaken assessment against the UN PSEA Assessment i.e. partial completion of the IFRC safeguarding assessment.

9 Standards within the IFRC PSEA Manual and Child Safeguarding Guidelines



The vision of the IFRC is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.