



PROTECTION, GENDER, AND INCLUSION POLICY

JUNE 2022

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.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to set out the approach of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to addressing issues of protection, gender and inclusion (PGI).

It demonstrates the IFRC network's commitment to preventing, mitigating, and responding to violence, discrimination, and exclusion through strengthening its institutional capacity, through programmes and operations, and through advocacy, partnerships and collaboration. The policy strengthens and clarifies the unique value of the work of the IFRC network in this area, through individual National Society's action and through IFRC Secretariat support. It also serves as a basis to strengthen complementarity of roles and approaches related to protection between all National Societies, the IFRC, the ICRC¹, other humanitarian actors and governments.

The PGI approach is a key support to the IFRC, meeting the three goals and overall aim of Strategy 2030 of "devoting particular attention to people who are vulnerable, excluded or marginalised". It is also a core element of the IFRC's priority of promoting Values, Power and Inclusion, and the enablers of Engagement, Accountability and Trust as articulated through the IFRC secretariat's Agenda for Renewal. This policy is informed by and builds on many existing IFRC and Movement policies, strategies and frameworks².

The Fundamental Principles – especially humanity and impartiality – and the Statutes of the Movement, carry the obligation for members of the IFRC network to strive for a world in which everyone's needs are met and their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled: everyone is treated fairly and with dignity, everyone has equal access to opportunities, everyone can participate in making decisions for themselves and their communities, everyone's voices are heard, and everyone is safe from harm.

We can only meet this obligation by understanding the causes, risks and consequences of **violence, discrimination** and **exclusion**. We also understand that we cannot live up to the principle of "Do no harm" without this understanding and application of a PGI approach.

We acknowledge the real and overwhelming evidence that all types of **violence** are exacerbated by crisis, conflict and disasters. We remain deeply concerned with the global extent of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), violence towards children and the exploitation, denial of rights, or trafficking of persons in vulnerable situations including those displaced or on the move. We recognize that comprehensive measures are required to ensure safeguarding from the violence that tragically occurs within the humanitarian system.

We see that **discrimination** is intersectional and recognise the many factors by which people experience **exclusion** and marginalisation, and the compounded effects this has on their lives, wellbeing and safety. We know that across the world, women and girls continue to be deprived of equal rights, autonomy of their own bodies and access to basic needs. We are equally concerned for the lack of equal rights experienced by other sections of the population linked to other diversity factors.

For all these reasons, actions on protection, gender, and inclusion (PGI) needs to be an integral part of all that we do as the IFRC network.

We must ensure the **protection** of people from all forms of violence, harm, abuse, and exploitation. We must strive for the meaningful **inclusion** of all people in their communities. Our approach recognises that violence, discrimination, and exclusion are all forms of harm which are inseparably linked, and that to effectively address the causes, risks and consequences of any one of these issues, we need to address them together. This requires responding to the **ways in which gender and all other diversity factors**³ affects people's lives.

1 Particularly in the context of the Protection in the Movement initiative to establish a common understanding and framework around "protection" within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement).

2 The most relevant of these are listed in the accompanying Operational Framework to this policy.

3 Refer to the diversity definition below. Note that "Gender" in "Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI)" should be understood as standing for all "gender and other diversity factors". Diversity considerations are an essential part of Protection and Inclusion actions – simply for the sake of brevity, "Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI)" is the term used.

By advancing equality and building on the self-determined priorities, capacities and resources of all individuals and their communities, the IFRC can contribute to their empowerment, self-sufficiency, fair treatment, and sustainable development, working towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, to

which our Strategy 2030 contributes. The IFRC network's unparalleled capacity to mobilize volunteers from the community means it has a unique contribution in support of these goals. This also reinforces the responsibility of the IFRC to ensure the protection of all volunteers in all situations.

Adherence to this policy will require more than technical steps. We recognize our institutions need to be safe and inclusive in order to be able to meet these obligations. Adherence will require resources and a real transformation of our traditional power structures, our accountability processes, institutional cultures, and behaviour. We are committed to make that transformation happen – through the measures outlined below in the “statement” section of this policy.

SCOPE

This policy builds on and replaces the IFRC Gender and Diversity policy (2019). It sets out our approach and collective understanding of, and commitments to protection, gender and inclusion. It applies to all National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat in all aspects of our work. Specific organisational and operational strategies, frameworks and tools shall be developed, revised and strengthened to support its implementation.

Definitions⁴

Protection: keeping people safe from harm. It aims to ensure that the rights of individuals are upheld by preserving the physical, psychological, and emotional safety, integrity, and dignity of those at risk of, or affected, by violence, discrimination, and exclusion.⁵

Gender: the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for individuals based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender identity: each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth or the gender attributed to them by society. “Trans”, “transgender” and “non-binary” are umbrella terms representing a variety of words that describe an internal sense of gender that differs from the sex assigned at birth and the gender attributed to the individual by society.

Diversity: the full range of different social backgrounds and identities that make up populations. It includes, but is not limited to, gender identity, ethnic origin, nationality or citizenship, age, disability, language, political opinions, religious beliefs, social background, sexual orientation, physical appearance, colour and racialized identity⁶.

Inclusion: reducing inequalities based on social backgrounds, identities, roles and power relations. Providing inclusive services means giving equitable access to resources for all. In the long term, inclusion also focuses on facilitating access to opportunities and rights for all by addressing, reducing and ending exclusion, stigma and discrimination.

4 A more comprehensive list of other key terms related to PGI is provided in the glossary of the PGI Operational Framework, including Dignity, Access, Participation and Safety.

5 This definition elaborates on the IFRC's specific focus of implementing the broad definition of protection for all humanitarian actors adopted by the IASC and accepted by the Movement: “all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law)”.

6 We use the term “racialized” rather than “race” to emphasise both the continuing destructive impacts of racism in the world as well as the damaging aspects of the term “race” to apply to certain groups of people, as the term is contested and a social construct that can underpin racist discrimination.

Child protection: the prevention of, and response to, abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children.

Discrimination: any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference that has a negative impact on certain person(s), for the sole reason that they belong to one (or more) categories of diversity such as those listed above. Non-discrimination consists of taking specific actions that prevent or mitigate such discrimination from occurring.

Identity-based violence: any act of violence by individuals, groups or societies based on actual, perceived or ascribed aspects of an individuals' identity. Identity-based violence is facilitated and exacerbated by structures, norms, and laws that condone or promote (explicitly or tacitly) discriminatory attitudes and practices.

Intersectionality: a perspective which emphasises that individuals have multiple and overlapping layers to their identities, such as gender identity, ethnic origin, nationality or citizenship, age, disability, language, political opinions, religious beliefs, social background, sexual orientation, physical appearance, colour and racialised identity that are woven together. People can experience discrimination against or be privileged by a combination of these factors. An intersectional perspective emphasizes looking at these layers together and understanding their compound effects on the individual, based on prevailing power relations in any given society.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV): categories that include, but are not limited to, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, trafficking, forced/early marriage, sexual harassment, forced prostitution, femicide, female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation and abuse, and denial of resources, opportunities and services.

Violence: the use of force or power, either as an action or omission in any setting, threatened, perceived or actual against oneself, another person, a group, a community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in death, physical injury, psychological or emotional harm, mal-development or deprivation.⁷

Safeguarding: our responsibility in taking action 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 and volunteers from harm and inappropriate behaviour such as sexual harassment.⁸

The IFRC Secretariat policies define related terms as follows:

Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA): policy, rules and actions intended to prevent IFRC Personnel from engaging in any form of sexual exploitation and abuse and to respond where it has occurred.⁹

Child safeguarding: the broad obligation on IFRC personnel, partners, suppliers, and contractors to ensure that the design and delivery of programmes and organisational programmes are in the best interests of the child, do not expose children to adverse impacts, including the risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect and that any concerns about children's safety within the communities where they work are appropriately reported and responded to.¹⁰

7 From the *IFRC Strategy for Violence Prevention, Mitigation and Response* (based on an earlier WHO definition)

8 The IFRC secretariat further defines safeguarding as aiming to prevent harm in the following areas: i) Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of children and adults by anyone working for IFRC or a member National Society; ii) Other forms of abuse e.g. physical, psychological or emotional, financial and/or material, discriminatory, organisational abuse and modern slavery of children and adults by anyone working for IFRC or a member National Society; iii) Harm caused by our programmes and communications that we fund through our partners (including other National Societies, the IFRC and ICRC); iv) Ensuring adults and children of diverse backgrounds have a meaningful role in decisions that affect them and v) Harassment, including sexual harassment, and discrimination in the workplace.

9 IFRC's PSEA operational manual provides further guidance.

10 IFRC secretariat's policy on Child Safeguarding spell out principles, definitions and roles and responsibilities for the secretariat.

STATEMENT

The following general principles underpin the IFRC network's approach to PGI:

The IFRC network is **"driven by needs and informed by rights"**. This means that we actively support the fulfilment of people's entitlement to protection, assistance and inclusion under international and domestic law (including those established by international human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law). However, it is the needs of those affected, rather than upholding legal rights per se or holding duty-bearers to account, that determines what we do and how we do it.

Our principle of impartiality directs us to make "no discrimination ... guided solely by needs... to give priority to the most urgent cases". We commit to guard against all discrimination in all our actions, and to promote the value of a diverse and inclusive society founded on the equality of all genders - and all other aspects of individuals' identity. While we are committed to constructive dialogue on different views within communities about these issues, we will not be deterred from our commitments in this policy, as they are based on the Fundamental Principles.

The IFRC network promotes a **person-centred approach** in all efforts to prevent, mitigate and respond to violence, discrimination and exclusion. This means listening to, understanding and respecting what people think at all times, and demonstrating adaptation for the perspective, autonomy, experience, strength and need of the individual(s) in question. When responding to violence in particular, this means applying the **survivor-centred approach**.¹¹

In the three areas of engagement described below, different levels of engagement are possible - often referred to as "mainstreaming" and "specialised". "Mainstreaming" refers to ensuring all National Society and IFRC Secretariat interventions¹² guarantee a minimum level of dignity, access, participation and safety, through adaptations that address the needs identified through a comprehensive PGI analysis. It is the responsibility of **all** staff and volunteers to implement PGI mainstreaming, with guidance and quality assurance from experienced PGI staff and volunteers.

"Specialised" refers to interventions that aim to directly prevent or respond to violence, discrimination and exclusion and should only be carried out by trained and experienced PGI staff and volunteers. These specialised actions may be integrated into other programmes or they may be separate ("standalone"). Both mainstreaming and specialised PGI efforts require dedicated resources.

To put these principles into practice, National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat shall:

1 Institutional capacity

- **Appropriately reflect the makeup of the communities we work with**; and be relevant to people in need of our protection, assistance and support by ensuring **diverse representation** among members, volunteers, intervention or surge teams, staff and leadership, including through recruitment processes.
- Take necessary steps to ensure that our organisations actively **promote equitable opportunities and accessible workplaces** through initiatives such as reasonable accommodations for any type of impairment, equal remuneration for equal work, anonymized recruitments and mentoring systems, and equitable parental leave in line with global best practice.

¹¹ A survivor-centred approach creates a supportive environment in which the survivor's rights and wishes are respected, their safety is ensured and they are treated with dignity and respect. This approach is defined by four guiding principles: 1) Safety, 2) Confidentiality, 3) Respect and 4) Non-discrimination.

¹² This means any action or intervention that any staff or volunteer performs including planning, implementation and reporting within any sector or area of work such as health, water, sanitation and hygiene promotion, detection work, coordination, recruitment, trainings etc.

- Continuously **analyse¹³ and monitor organizational protection, gender and inclusion issues**, including the gender and diversity composition of human resources at all levels (governance, management, staff and volunteers). This data will be analysed considering potential barriers to equal opportunities, diversity inclusion and misuse of power related to decision making within our institutions.
- Commit to ensure that **leadership teams, and governing bodies** are comprised of no more than two-thirds of any gender identity. We will also ensure that the IFRC Secretariat reflects diverse and inclusive global representation at all its levels
- Examine and **understand our own dynamics of power, privilege, and unconscious bias**, paying particular attention to how sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and ageism, ableism and other similar acts of discrimination impact our ability to **ensure a culture of inclusion and diversity**.
- Maintain **a safe, inclusive and nurturing workplace** in all National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat by developing and strengthening tailored, contextualized and implementable policies, structures, systems, procedures and culture for:
 - safeguarding in the IFRC network: including PSEA and Child Safeguarding,
 - prevention of harassment (including sexual harassment), and discrimination;
- Include capacity strengthening in **protection, gender, and inclusion mainstreaming** as part of institutional development programmes with special attention to volunteers, staff, management and leadership training on analysis skills.
- Include relevant protection, gender, and inclusion-sensitive approaches and learning materials in all **staff and volunteer capacity strengthening** initiatives at national, branch and community level.

2 Programmes and operations

- Incorporate a **protection, gender and inclusion analysis** in all of our programmes, operations, services and tools in order to ensure dignity, access, participation and safety. This is done by analysing the specific needs and risks for persons of any gender-identity, ethnic origin, nationality or citizenship, age, disability, language, political opinions, religious beliefs, social background, sexual orientation, physical appearance, colour and racialized identity and other relevant factors. This analysis will cover the full management cycle, from assessment to planning, implementation, monitoring and data collection, evaluation and reporting. It is facilitated by the collection of sex, age and disability disaggregated data.¹⁴
- Ensure that all programmes and operations **mainstream measures to address the specific needs and risks** for different individuals and groups, by implementing the recommendations of the protection, gender and inclusion analysis – in particular by utilizing the IFRC’s “Minimum Standards for Protection, Gender & Inclusion in Emergencies”, or other relevant guidance for long-term programming.

¹³ For example by using the IFRC Protection, Gender and Inclusion Organisational Assessment Toolkit as a complement to other existing IFRC tools such as OCAC, BOCA and PER.

¹⁴ Particular attention should be paid to data protection in PGI work.

- **Ensure that specialised programmes** addressing problems of violence, discrimination or exclusion are designed and implemented in contexts where the needs are clearly identified, and there is sufficient capacity and resources to ensure a sustainable and effective support to affected people.
- Integrate **measures for safeguarding in all programmes and emergency operations** and ensure that systems are in place for safe, **person-centred referral pathways and mechanisms** that provide appropriate care, protection, assistance and support to individuals negatively impacted by violence, discrimination or exclusion.
- **In both mainstreaming and specialised work**, the collective experience and knowledge of the IFRC Network supports particular attention and priority to preventing and responding to the following themes¹⁵:
 - sexual and gender-based violence (including sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian actors) in all programmes and operations.
 - all forms of violence towards children
 - trafficking in persons
 - violence and exclusion towards persons with disabilities
 - community or communal violence
 - any other form of identity-based violence – including racist, faith-based and other violence linked to perceived or actual differences between people, based on the analysis of each individual context
- Ensure, wherever possible, that **specialised staff working on protection, gender and inclusion issues are recruited with sufficient technical knowledge and experience** to adequately supervise programmes and operations, ensure appropriate professional standards within specialised programmes and mainstreaming efforts¹⁶. This supervision should support staff and volunteers to build their core competencies to ensure minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion and the “do no harm” principle.
- Ensure that relevant **PGI competencies** are included in the responsibilities of all staff, in addition to PGI staff. Those competencies should be continuously improved by developing and promoting learning pathways for staff and volunteers of programmes and operations, including PGI specialized trainings and PGI mainstreamed in different trainings.
- Undertake **programmes and activities** to promote diversity inclusion, equality, open-minded attitudes towards gender and diversity and to develop interpersonal skills such as critical thinking, non-violent communication, empowerment, empathetic listening and mediation.

3 Advocacy, partnerships and learning

- Engage in humanitarian diplomacy to **support people’s dignity, access, participation and safety** and ensure that the voices of people with diverse identities are heard and that their specific needs and rights are met. This includes ensuring that diverse perspectives are fully represented in developing humanitarian diplomacy initiatives on other topics.

¹⁵ These themes are those most commonly implemented by National Societies with support by IFRC Secretariat. However many other protection issues can and should be addressed by the membership, to which the general recommendations of this policy would still apply.

¹⁶ Referring to relevant tools and guidance available within the Movement and elsewhere, such as the PGI in Emergencies Toolkit, the Professional Standards for Protection Work, and relevant specific guides on those thematic approaches listed in the paragraph above.

- Persuade decision-makers and opinion leaders to act, always, in the interests of, and with people in vulnerable and risky situations by **protecting their equal rights and ensuring their equal access** to humanitarian services, including:
 - addressing the **specific needs and protection risks** of children, adolescents and adults of all gender-identities persons with disabilities and those from other diverse backgrounds.
 - ensuring a **survivor-centred approach** to prevent, mitigate and safely respond to discriminatory and identity-based violence such as sexual and gender-based violence, violence against children and other protection needs, advocating that states and communities acknowledge that such violence is all too common and promoting preventative, anticipatory and preparatory actions even before incidents are reported.
 - Integrating specific attention to protection, gender and inclusion issues in disaster laws and policies and advocating for the revision of any **public policies or practices** that lead to violence, discrimination or exclusion.
 - Portray and promote diversity and equality in **the communications and representation** of National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat.
- **Building on the existing partnerships and collaborations between Movement components** (such as the Protection in the Movement initiative), further strengthen and develop **partnerships, collaboration and learning with actors inside and outside the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement** to ensure coherent and complementary approaches to protection, gender and inclusion.
- Seek opportunities to **share knowledge and learning** about **protection, gender, and inclusion** with each other **and collaborate** to develop better ways to promote equality, embrace diversity, understand intersectionality and strengthen participation and access to equal opportunities for those discriminated, neglected or marginalized.

Responsibilities

The leadership of National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat shall ensure this policy's implementation. National Societies are expected to align their existing policies and guidance with it, with appropriate adaptation to their contexts.

Tools for operationalizing this policy include the IFRC Operational Framework for Protection, Gender and Inclusion, IFRC Minimum Standards for Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Emergencies, the Protection, Gender and Inclusion Organisational Assessment Toolkit, Safeguarding Self-Assessment Framework, Child Safeguarding Risk Analysis, and related frameworks such as the Movement Strategic Framework for Disability Inclusion and the Strategic Framework for Inclusive Programming. As required, the tools and supporting frameworks will be reviewed and revised to align with this policy.

This policy will be reviewed regularly, at the latest by the IFRC General Assembly in 2029.



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 14 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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