

POTENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES

Principles and values – rights and obligations

Concrete examples of what the charter means for volunteers, derived from the Fundamental Principles (FP) and the RC rC mission

A Charter for Volunteers

Policy and management Implications for NS

Content of NS policies, guidelines, codes of conduct and management systems required to enforce volunteer rights and obligations

PREAMBLE

Rights and obligations are proclaimed by the volunteers themselves: they are not devolved by a higher authority (independence and voluntary service)

The Mission is stated in the preamble along with the principle of unity – volunteers around the world are united in their common goal to alleviate human suffering. Their allegiance is to the mission *before* it is to the organisation – not the reverse.

Volunteers make the FP theirs. They are at all times guided by the FP (not just when on mission for the RC)– they are always responsible for their actions and are empowered to say *no* when asked to do something contrary to the FP (voluntary service). They are accountable to their peers (*united...we...*). Only the 4 main global FP are named (= global charter)

We the Volunteers of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

United in our mission to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found, solemnly vow to uphold and abide by the Fundamental Principles of Humanity, Independence Impartiality and Neutrality.

RC RC refers both to the ideals and to the organisation(s): the charter therefore requires NS to have **POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS** to ensure all the elements of the charter

The mission of the volunteers and of the NS are one and the same (Unity): the NS policies, systems and services are the *means* to accomplish the mission. **MANAGEMENT/PERFORMANCE REVIEW: Volunteers and staff are all accountable** in terms of *outcomes*

PLAN AND BUDGET: Strengthening community resilience is a means to prevent and alleviate human suffering. Volunteers and NS are accountable to their missions' impact on humans (humanitarian ethics). Areas of focus and SDG metrics measure this impact.

MANAGEMENT AND DATA SYSTEMS: To accomplish its mission, the RC must be Universal – present everywhere, for everyone, always (see IFRC framework for community resilience). This requires robust and data systems, a robust, agile infrastructure, a large pool of volunteers, and strong NS leadership. The volunteers can meet their obligations only if their NS are fully equipped.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: Protect + Respect = Dignity. Volunteers are humans and therefore *equals among equals*. They treat others with dignity and are treated by NS staff with dignity. **PROGRAM & VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT** Volunteers by their presence and understanding (*empathy*) protect others against unintended consequences and identify gaps in NS services.

PLAN AND BUDGET: Economic independence is often elusive when National Societies rely on large donors (whether they are corporate, government or philanthropists) because donors may have their own agendas and are not bound by the FP and the mission. Volunteers have **COMMUNICATION CHANNELS** to voice their concern and inform NS management on threats to Independence.

CODE OF CONDUCT, PROGRAM MANAGEMENT: "Beneficiaries" are *fellow humans*, like volunteers and like NS staff. Volunteers treat others with dignity, *equals among equals*.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT Non-discrimination, as a consequence of impartiality, should not be confused with *diversity* – inclusive NS with a fair representation of minorities and vulnerable groups helps to be impartial and culturally relevant, but diversity is not a necessary condition for impartiality.

CODE OF CONDUCT; Voluntary service, as all the other FP, applies to paid staff as much as to volunteers. Indeed, paid staff should set the highest standards in terms of voluntary service

MANAGEMENT protects and respects volunteers and upholds their dignity. Dignity includes participation in decisions, and *recognition* for efforts even in case of failure. Volunteers are leaders and treated as such.

GUIDELINES protect the volunteers, e.g. protective gear, safe and secure work environment, etc. **HR SYSTEMS Protection and support** also includes moral support (e.g. Psychosocial support), protection against harm and dishonour

PLAN AND BUDGET: NS provide volunteers with the means required to accomplish the mission
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT: NS secure the resources to provide protection before accepting a potentially dangerous mission.

POLICY: NS promote and defend the emblems and to take complementary protection measures where and when the emblems and Humanitarian Law are not respected.

POLICY NS, when feasible, facilitate volunteers' access to health and life insurance, and in some cases opportunities for livelihood – volunteers should not need to sacrifice their families for the mission: financial compensations, whether per diems or salaries are compatible with voluntary service and help preserve families and communities. Some risks can be pooled between volunteers of different countries (e.g. an IFRC insurance scheme)

CALL TO ACTION - The Red Cross Red Crescent = the volunteers, united by the FP and the mission, organised and empowered by their NS. **Any threat to the volunteers is an existential threat to their National Society, the Federation and the Movement.**

PART 1: Fundamental Principles (FP) guide the obligations of the volunteers (and staff)

1. Humanity, as the overarching principle. It includes promoting a culture of non-violence and peace, building and restoring trust and solidarity within and between communities and countries (resilience).

Respect for the human being includes: do no harm, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, confidentiality, duty to say *no* when asked to do something that is likely to cause harm.

2. Independence, there is a feedback loop and National Societies encourage volunteers to provide their input on needs assessment and needs response. Volunteers reject pressures to undertake their duties guided other than by need.

3. Impartiality, Volunteers never discriminate and always prioritise those most in need.

4. Neutrality, should not be confused with inaction – It is just that our actions do not lead people to believing we are taking sides. Neutrality includes respect for the emblem – e.g. not loading weapons in vehicles with emblem, and following NS code of conduct and guidelines on proper communications and use of social media.

5. Voluntary service, not to be confused with volunteering. Voluntary is derived from Independence (financial and political) – the service is defined by the mission.

We protect life and health and we ensure respect for the human being.

We promote mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

We accomplish our mission in total independence, resisting any political, ideological or economic interference that threatens to divert us from helping those in need.

We endeavour to relieve the suffering of our fellow humans, guided solely by their needs, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Never do we discriminate as to nationality, gender, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions.

We do not take part nor take sides in hostilities, nor do we engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

We are not prompted by any desire to gain nor can we be subjugated to the will of others.

We are the members and leaders of our National Society on which we rely for protection, support and respect.

We are confident our National Society will give us the means to accomplish our mission, and, while we may be fearless and sometimes risk our lives, and because we know our emblem does not always shield us from harm and harassment, we call on our Brothers and Sisters of the Red Cross Red Crescent to protect us and preserve our families and communities.

We are The Red Cross Red Crescent.

PART 2: Rights of volunteers = obligations of NS

RC is a volunteer movement because it is led by volunteers – volunteers are not unpaid workers but the embodiment of voluntary service.

Volunteers are encouraged to participate in decisions at all levels.

Volunteers do not request protection, support and respect as a right – they rely on and have confidence in their National Society to protect, support and respect them.

CONCLUSION:

RC is one, united, universal movement of fellow humans, driven by an ideal above and beyond any organisation. It is a Universal Common Good. We are all RC RC volunteers.