



FIRST AID POLICY

Introduction

Today Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are the major first aid provider in the world.¹ This started at Solferino when first aid was given to the wounded soldiers, the sick and injured without discrimination. In the 21st century, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) reaffirms its commitment to first aid within the changing context of global health.

The Mission of the International Federation is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.²

The Goals of the Federation's Global Agenda established in 2006 are:

Goal 1: To reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.

Goal 2: To reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.

Goal 3: To increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.

Goal 4: To promote respect for diversity and human dignity and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion.

Everyone has the potential to save lives. First aid education and practice are essential tools for the achievement of these Goals.

Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers continue their efforts to make first aid available to all. First aid is not only about life saving techniques. First aid is an act of humanity showing willingness to save lives with full respect for diversity and without discrimination.

Building skills in first aid with the vulnerable people can help to build safer and healthier communities.

The International Federation's Global Health and Care Strategy 2006-2010 provides the framework for the integration of first aid education and practice with all health and care activities. If the International Federation is to fully realise the potential of first aid, National Societies must take a concerted effort to increase the number of people trained in first aid and to scale up their community-based first aid actions.

Definition

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions have been adopted:

First aid

This is immediate help provided to a sick or injured person until professional help arrives. It is concerned not only with physical injury or illness but also with other initial care which includes psychosocial support for people suffering emotional distress caused by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event.³

¹ Report of the First Aid Education European Network, Geneva 4-7 October 2006.

² Strategy 2010, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 1999.

³ *European First Aid Guidelines, Resuscitation*, Volume 72, Issue 2, Pages 240-251 (February 2007) developed on behalf of the European First Aid Manual project by the Belgian Red Cross-Flanders

First aider

This is a layperson trained and certified in first aid, who is able to use this knowledge and skills to protect and save lives, as well as to mobilise and assist a community to be prepared to respond to emergency situations.⁴

First aid education

This is an approved programme for providing knowledge and skills in procedures and techniques that require little or no equipment and can be taught to the general public. This programme has defined outcomes and is provided by qualified trainers or facilitators.

First aid certification

This is formal recognition of competence to an agreed standard by an approved national authority. It should be time limited and able to be renewed on expiry.

First aid services

These are planned services provided during public events to respond to potential emergencies. They are established by agreement between the event organizers, communities and the volunteers and staff in their Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

First aid in the community (Community-based first aid)

This aims to build the resilience of communities by working with them in an inclusive and flexible approach in first aid. It includes identifying local capacity and vulnerability to common injuries, community health priorities (such as prevention, health promotion and control of common diseases), disaster preparedness and response capacity. It also helps the recruitment and retention of effective volunteers who are close to that particular community.⁵

Scope:

This policy establishes the basis of Red Cross and Red Crescent first aid activities whether carried out by a single Branch of a National Society, by an individual National Society, by a group of National Societies working together or by the International Federation.

Statement:

This policy confirms the commitment of the International Federation and the individual member National Societies to first aid and to adopting a community based approach in first aid. The emphasis is on prompt and appropriate first aid action to protect and save lives, alleviate suffering, prevent disability and improve quality of life. It is also noted that:

- First aid provides an initial rapid response to a health emergency, offering protective and effective life saving measures until the affected person's condition is stabilised or remedied, or professional help is available;
- First aid education is an important part of health promotion by including information on injury and accident prevention and safe and healthy behaviours, such as first aid information and skills for use in drug- and alcohol-related emergencies, HIV and other disease prevention;
- Quality first aid education and services must be delivered according to up-to-date evidence based guidelines and best practice to ensure compliance with agreed

⁴ International harmonisation of First Aid: First recommendations on life-saving techniques, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004

⁵ First aid in the community, a framework for National Society programming, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2006.

standards. Flexibility and adaptation to local context with respect to gender and diversity is important;

- Community based first aid knowledge and skills provided by trained volunteers and staff can contribute to improved maternal and child health and other health-related priorities;
- First aid activities can support the role of National Societies in civil society by emphasising the empowerment and community development gained by a community-based approach. Volunteers help to build the resilience of individuals and communities in disaster preparedness and disaster response as well as in their daily lives ;
- First aid activities strengthen the capacity of National Societies by serving as a strong link to other activities especially the development of youth and community volunteer networks. First aid training and service provision should be included in the strategic development plan of National Societies;
- Marketing of first aid training and related products is a useful means of resource mobilisation and income generation. The International Federation needs to profile its first aid work and cooperate with multinational corporations to expand the first aid training market with National Societies;
- First aid should be accessible to all. This includes vulnerable people with specific needs.

The International Federation shall:

- Support member National Societies in developing first aid programmes at different levels and according to their specific needs. This includes the development of tools to support coherent community based approaches in first aid and health promotion, marketing as well as quality management of commercial first aid activities;
- Establish policies and internal procedures to support reliable and consistent first aid programmes including a process of quality assurance with a monitoring framework to measure coverage and impact;
- Support National Societies and participate in the development of harmonized first aid techniques⁶ in accordance with scientific research, international standards, good practice guidelines and measures of quality services as expressed by beneficiaries and referral structure. This can be achieved by setting up alliances with scientific bodies, public health experts including injury prevention such as in road safety, and pedagogical specialists to ensure a continuous information flow. This includes trend and situation analysis and the latest evidence based developments in the fields of first aid and education;
- Strengthen the harmonisation process and mechanism to develop standards for first aid certification in order to guarantee a minimum degree of quality and international recognition;
- Build on the comparative advantage of the Movement's global presence by ensuring shared learning and the replication of successful first aid activities, while maintaining the Movement's traditional position as a major definer and provider of first aid;

⁶ International harmonization of First aid – First recommendations on life-saving techniques, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004

- Facilitate the development of learning networks, resource centres and centres of excellence with an emphasis on the dissemination and exchange of programs, resources and relevant experiences including innovations in learning and marketing;
- Cooperate closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross and form partnerships with international bodies such as World Health Organisation to share knowledge and meet emerging needs. This includes offering additional training support in first aid team action in disasters, armed conflicts and situations of violence;
- Advocate and work with partners for legislation and directives to include first aid education or training courses such as in school curricular, at workplaces, and among driving school applicants.;
- Take a leading role in global promotion activities such as the World First Aid Day, international First Aid Conventions and others.
- Establish global key messages and use media to raise awareness of the importance of first aid.

National Societies shall:

- Work with communities and individuals to
 - build on existing local structures, experience and skills;
 - plan, develop and manage appropriate first aid activities which best respond to local needs, including the establishment of communication link with local referral structures;
 - respect the local profile and environment;
 - develop flexible and relevant first aid programmes which respond to changes and new vulnerabilities in injury, diseases and health priorities;
 - consider how to meet the physical and psychosocial needs of all people concerned, including volunteers, staff and beneficiaries;
- Adapt first aid programmes to meet local needs and the specific needs of particular groups – e.g. children, people in particular work places, people with special learning needs. Empower people with first aid skills to help themselves and their communities in injury and disease prevention and health promotion;
- Ensure that they meet their national workplace legislative requirements to have the required number of employees trained in first aid and to provide the necessary first aid materials. First aid volunteers must be recognised and supported.
- Establish relationships and cooperation with public health authorities and other governmental bodies to ensure official recognition as appropriate of their National Society first aid certificates – e.g. first aid courses for driving licence applicants, first aid training for occupational health and safety officers.
- Improve the quality and impact of their first aid programmes by developing and/or making use of appropriate and relevant first aid follow-up and refresher programmes and materials as well as improving and regularly updating the trainers’ training and education using recognised learning tools including distance, web based and E-learning;
- Allocate sufficient resources at all levels to plan, implement, manage and sustain first aid programmes within their national frameworks. Proper marketing of first aid training and activities for the public and among vulnerable communities must be an integral part of their strategic plan.

- Build into all first aid programmes a system for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to show impact on the capacity of the individuals, communities, volunteers and staff involved to respond effectively to injuries and health emergencies;
- Link first aid activities with other activities to achieve maximum beneficiary coverage, participation and commitment of volunteers and the best use of resources and financial performance;
- Form working partnerships with relevant government institutions and agencies, non-governmental organisations and other civil institutions, media and the private sector in order to truly mobilise the power of humanity.
- Promote first aid in order to have at least one person per household trained in first aid. Promote first aid without discrimination and participate in International Federation global events such as the World First Aid Day using good communication channels, including all media in order to reach the public with key first aid messages.
- Participate in good practice studies and research in first aid and related topics such as pre hospital care, psychological support, education and community development.

Responsibilities:

The International Federation and National Societies are responsible for ensuring that

- all first aid programmes comply with this policy;
- all staff and volunteers contributing to the development and provision of first aid activities and programmes are aware of and adhere to the rationale and details of this policy;
- all staff and volunteers have at least basic first aid knowledge and skills to respond to a first aid incident. They are equipped with the necessary tools, support and protection equipment in providing first aid in different situations. Additional training and preparation must be provided for staff and volunteers who may be involved in armed conflicts and other situations of violence;
- all relevant partners are adequately informed of this policy.

First aid is at the interface of a number of Red Cross and Red Crescent activities. This policy should be considered in conjunction with the Global Health and Care Strategy 2006-2010 and all other Federation policies, with specific references to those on health, development, voluntarism, youth, disaster-preparedness and response and fund-raising.

National Societies have the responsibility of identifying their role in the overall national first aid and emergency response plan while adhering to other policies and guidelines of the International Federation.

Reference:

This policy was adopted by the Governing Board meeting on 5 October 2007 in Geneva.