Refugees and other displaced people

Introduction

During the past two decades causes and patterns of displacement have changed and numbers have increased, particularly amongst internally displaced persons and others not protected by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol. The Movement, including the Federation and its National Societies, continues to provide support to those in need or made vulnerable by displacement disaster.

Current displacement policy of the Movement comprises the International Conference Resolution 1981/21, and other International Conference and Council of Delegates resolutions prior to and after this, notably the Council of Delegates’ Resolution 2001/4, which particularly addresses co-ordination and cooperation needs within the Movement and with outside actors.

This present policy specifically reflects the expansion and change in the work National Societies are doing and need to do for refugees and other displaced people, in their own countries, as well as that undertaken under international appeals launched by the Federation.

Scope

This policy addresses protection and assistance offered by National Societies and their International Federation to all those affected by displacement, regardless of their status and including refugees, all other displaced persons as well as those indirectly affected by the displacement such as host families and local populations. This policy recognizes, supports and is complementary to the mandate of the International Committee of Red Cross which is to ensure protection and assistance to victims of armed conflicts.

Statement

The International Federation and each individual National Society shall:

- Be ready at all times to protect and assist all victims of displacement in accordance with their mandate and existing Movement policy.
- Recognize that the causes of displacement are complex and varied and thus, resultant need and vulnerability must be addressed within their specific context using best practice and taking into account relevant aspects of international law (Refugee Law, Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law).
- Recognize that displacement disasters, as all other disasters, are dynamic and that national societies have a role to play in all phases. What might be an appropriate intervention in the beginning may change with the time and therefore, when planning interventions. It is necessary to ensure that they are appropriate to the phase of the disaster. Five phases of displacement have been identified:
  - Early warning/prevention/preparedness
  - First emergency
  - Care and maintenance
  - Solutions (return; local settlement; resettlement to a third country)
  - Integration
- Recognize that the priority for intervention is the extension and expansion of existing programmes and services to specifically include the displaced.
- Promote and engage in the activity of tracing in order to facilitate the exchange of family news and information, encourage and support the reunification of dispersed family members, assist in locating missing persons, provide support to the families of the missing persons.
- Take into account and build upon the capacities of the displaced themselves. National societies should encourage and develop such capacities with a view to maximum self-sustainability, thus working towards the elimination of apathy and dependency as well as preparation for the solution phase. Those affected by displacement disaster need to be a part of the planning and decision making process.
- Recognize that displacement may have different impact on men and women, on different individuals and groups of people. Programmes should be designed, and implemented in a diversity and gender sensitive way to consider biological, social, and cultural differences.
■ Ensure that the displaced are represented appropriately among National Society volunteers and staff both in terms of numbers and position.

■ Advocate actively on behalf of those affected by displacement. Such advocacy should work towards:
  ● ensuring access to internationally agreed procedures of protection and to services in accordance with law and basic rights
  ● promote awareness of the law which protects refugees and other displaced persons which includes International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights Law, Refugee Law and The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement which are a useful compilation of existing law for the protection of internally displaced persons.
  ● linking local, regional and global concerns
  ● promoting the equal value of all human beings and the fighting of all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia
  ● fair, efficient systems and regimes for those seeking and gaining asylum
  ● the peaceful resolution of conflict and the reduction of violence

■ Pursue the solution phase with vigour, on the understanding that it can only be undertaken voluntarily, in dignity, in safety and with prospects for the future, and that integrating or reintegrating a group of people is difficult and requires sensitive, long term input.

■ Work together with other components of the Movement, to ensure the highest level of co-operation and collaboration in providing protection and assistance to all those affected by displacement

■ Co-operate and collaborate with authorities, the UN system and the NGO sector in the best interests of all those affected by displacement.

■ National Societies have an obligation to inform the International Federation Secretariat and/or the ICRC of any negotiations likely to lead to a formal agreement between them and any United Nations agency or any other international organisation. They are reminded of the advantages in doing so, as the International Federation and/or the ICRC are able to assist them in negotiations likely to lead to an agreement. They must concur with the terms of any such agreement in order to ensure coherence and complementarity.

Responsibilities

National Societies and the International Federation have a responsibility to ensure that all activities and programmes designed to prevent displacement and to mitigate the effects of displacement disaster are carried out in compliance with this policy as well as the Fundamental Principles and Rules of the Movement; that staff and volunteers participating in such programmes are aware of the rationale and content of the policy; and that all relevant governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners are adequately informed of this policy. In situations of conflict and internal strife, National Societies and the Federation will co-ordinate their actions with ICRC.

Reference

This policy replaces all previous resolutions of the General Assembly. It is complementary to Council of Delegates resolution 2001/4 ‘MovementAction in Favour of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons.’

Further reference text

■ Disaster Preparedness Policy
■ Emergency Response Policy
■ Post-Emergency Rehabilitation Policy
■ Development Policy
■ HIV/AIDS Policy
■ First Aid Policy and Health Policy
■ Gender Policy, the Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief
■ the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards
■ the Statutes of the Movement
■ the 1997Agreement on the Organization of the International Activities of the Components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Seville Agreement)
■ the ICRC position paper entitled Internally Displaced Persons - The Mandate and Role of the ICRC