



# FIRST AID POLICY

SEPTEMBER 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.

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# INTRODUCTION

Today, there are 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies involved in first aid as part of the largest humanitarian network in the world. It all started more than 162 years ago with the battle of Solferino, when first aid was given to wounded soldiers, the sick and injured without discrimination. This led to a worldwide integration of the knowledge of first aid that is found within National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. First aid is at the grassroots of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) network. With the creation of the League of the Red Cross Societies in 1919 and the globally increased need for safety, first aid expanded across the world and grew, including important aspects such as Psychological First Aid (PFA). The IFRC network serves many audiences with first aid programming, from community first aid to advanced first aid and paramedical health care depending upon the auxiliary role that is agreed upon between the public authorities and National Societies as well as contextual needs.

In 2018, over 23 million people were trained in first aid by National Societies , and around the globe, there are more than 1,650,000 active first aid trainers. Over the past 10 years, the IFRC network has collectively reached more than 200 million people through first aid education, training, and services at the community level. First aid enables National Societies to access communities, including those in harder to reach urban and rural settings. First aid is also one of the most traditional entry points to attract youth and volunteers, and it has become the most well-known mechanism for National Societies to access financial resources to sustain emergency services. Finally, first aid services contribute to social cohesion, inclusion and offer job opportunities, and in times of emergencies, National Societies use their first aid expertise to act in their role as an auxiliary to public authorities.

# SCOPE

The IFRC reaffirms its commitment to first aid within the changing context of global health.

This policy aims to support National Societies in the provision of quality first aid education, harmonise training delivery, and empower volunteers and communities with a combination of life-saving knowledge and skills along with the willingness to save lives and to improve recovery from accidents and emergencies. The policy also aims to promote the use of innovation and technology by the National Societies and the IFRC secretariat to leverage and help address gaps, reaching more communities and providing first aid education and services with few resources and in a more timely way. The policy also aims to strengthen the IFRC network's collective capacity and capability to advocate, collaborate and scale up first aid actions and services at the community, national, and international levels, with one person trained by National Societies in first aid in every home, workplace, and school. The policy will also help increase the recognition of the IFRC network as the partner of choice for first aid by communities, public authorities and other stakeholders at the country and the international level.

The IFRC's Strategy 2030 sets out how National Societies and the IFRC secretariat will build on over 100 years of success in creating a more humane and peaceful world and adapting to 21st-century challenges. First aid contributes to addressing all five of the challenges identified in the IFRC Strategy 2030.

First aid enables resilience at the community level in different settings:

- 1** / Enhancing community preparedness during daily crises and large-scale disasters;
- 2** / Promoting healthy behaviours and involving many different audiences and stakeholders that can be an actor for their community;
- 3** / by being context-based and therefore respecting local challenges and cultures.

The IFRC Health and Care Framework 2030 provides for the integration of first aid education and practice into all health and care activities. This policy aligns with and builds upon relevant IFRC network commitments, policies, and resolutions. It is informed by professional standards, evidence-based guidelines, relevant global frameworks, and advancements in first aid.

The policy is and should be read as part of IFRC First Aid Vision 2030 and its operational framework. This policy replaces the IFRC policy on First Aid adopted by the IFRC Governing Board in 2007. It will be reviewed regularly, at the latest by the IFRC General Assembly 2029.

# DEFINITIONS

The definitions below are adapted for this policy from the IFRC's International First Aid, Resuscitation and Education Guidelines.

<b>First Aid</b>	First aid is immediate assistance provided to an ill, injured or emotionally distressed person until professional help arrives. It is concerned not only with resuscitation and physical illness or injury but also with other initial care, including psychological first aid (addressing the emotional and social needs of individuals). First aid interventions seek to preserve life, alleviate suffering, recognize risky contexts, prevent further illness or injury, and promote recovery.
<b>First Aid Education</b>	First aid education is a programme that develops behaviours, knowledge, skills, and confidence in first aid procedures and techniques.
<b>First Aid Services</b>	First aid services are planned services that vary depending on the National Society's auxiliary role, resources, and expertise, such as delivering training, awareness-raising, prehospital care or providing first aid at an event in the case of an emergency.

# STATEMENTS

This policy confirms the commitment of the National Societies and the IFRC secretariat to scale up and deliver quality first aid education, training, and deliver community-based health and care services in all contexts at all times. This policy emphasises prompt and appropriate first aid action to protect and save lives, alleviate suffering, and improve quality of life. If the IFRC is to fully realise the potential of first aid, together with National Societies, the IFRC secretariat must make a concerted effort through an evidence-based community-led approach to build more resilient communities. Together, the National Societies and the IFRC secretariat commit to:

## **Provide first aid for all, at all times and in all contexts.**

The IFRC secretariat and National Societies shall increase the ability of volunteers and staff to respond effectively in crises and daily situations and have the confidence to act through first aid and first aid education. The IFRC shall contribute to the accessibility of first aid to all and whenever needed, including to people who are experiencing vulnerability (e.g., physical challenges), people on the move, or living in fragile environments with specific needs. Hence, the community will be prepared with the skills, knowledge, and resources required to be effective.

### **Integrate first aid education and services as part of the core work of National Societies**

National Societies shall include first aid in national strategic plans and ensure that staff and volunteers reaffirm the importance of first aid within the community. This will also contribute to improved health and care outcomes through community-led first aid knowledge, skills, and injury prevention provided by trained volunteers, community health workers, and staff. The IFRC secretariat shall promote and highlight National Societies' first aid activities nationally, and at global levels.

### **Deliver inclusive and innovative first aid education as a lifelong learning pathway towards a wide range of audience**

First aid training can be delivered starting from young people to ageing populations, using evidence-based practises, advances in technology (e.g., first aid app or blended learning), and the accumulated experience of people, volunteers, and staff.

In addition, the IFRC network will promote the importance of first aid education, training and services and extend the reach through participation in global, international, and national platforms, public awareness events and days like World First Aid Day and/or World Restart a Heart Day.

### **Promote an evidence-based and quality improvement approach in all first aid activities**

The IFRC's International First Aid, Resuscitation, and Education Guidelines and best practises of National Societies, shall support all first aid programmes to be delivered and to reach the quality standards recognized by academic institutions. Furthermore, they can be supported through capacity building of first aid trainers, innovative educational, training and teaching methodology, professional advancement, communities of practises etc.

Continuously strengthening and measuring the impact of National Societies' first aid education and services in the communities and use the outcomes for further improvement in developing effective first aid training.

### **Leverage first aid to be an integral component of holistic community-led cross-sector strategies**

First aid is diverse and is integral to different areas of work of National Societies and IFRC secretariat, from youth and volunteer engagement, community-based disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to health and care services, including road and water safety programmes. To that extent, and when applicable, National Societies shall guarantee that quality pre-hospital care and ambulance services are delivered in collaboration with public authorities in different contexts, including emergency operations. Finally, integrating psychological support and mental health in all first aid education, training and services in all contexts shall ensure consistencies in our programme development.

### **Strengthen partnerships and allocate financial and human resources to expand first aid services and education worldwide**

National Societies and IFRC secretariat shall allocate financial and human resources as well as maximise partnerships, collaborating with private and public institutions to first aid services and education. This will enable National Societies to generate income, which can then be invested to improve essential community-based services, including first aid programmes in a sustainable manner.

# RESPONSIBILITIES

National Societies and the IFRC secretariat (including the IFRC Global First Aid Reference Centre) are jointly responsible for ensuring that:

- All staff and volunteers contributing to the development and provision of basic first aid activities and programmes are aware of and adhere to this policy.
- All staff and volunteers have at least basic first aid knowledge and skills to respond to an incident if the resources are available.
- Establish regular follow up and evaluation processes and mechanisms to ensure quality first aid education and services by all first aid responders and trainers; and
- Relevant partners and stakeholders globally and locally are informed of this policy.

Each of these responsibilities is carried out in accordance with the respective entity's mandate and role; the needs and gaps identified in the specific contexts in which they are working; and their resources, capacities, and expertise. In addition to these responsibilities, National Societies are responsible for identifying their role in the overall national first aid and emergency response plan while adhering to other existing policies and guidelines of the IFRC such as:

- [IFRC Strategy 2030](#)
- IFRC Health and Care Framework 2030
- Movement Policy on addressing mental health and psychosocial needs
- IFRC Volunteering policy
- [IFRC Youth policy](#)
- [IFRC Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy](#)
- IFRC First aid and Resuscitation guidelines 2020
- IFRC Care in communities' guidelines 2016
- [Guidance document for NS Statutes](#)





**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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