**Humanitarian Principles**

The ACT Alliance has made a very strong commitment during the WHS that its members shall adhere to and promote the following four Red Cross movement humanitarian principles (HP).

1. **Humanity:**

*“Born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours… 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”.*

Humanity: Is our action guided by the fundamental assumption of the equality of human suffering, fundamental rights and dignity?

To answer this question, members need to undertake a self-assessment/self-reflection by identifying their primary source of motivation for humanitarian engagement as well as identify and understand the various internal and external factors which may influence their humanitarian engagement. This is a useful exercise to undertake at different levels within the organization to get a clear understanding of how the staff members perceive/explain their humanitarian engagement.

1. **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”.*

Impartiality: Are we making our choices based on need only?

To answer this question members need to scrutinize the way they are implementing their projects and to see what procedures and mechanisms they have in place to ensure that impartiality is adhered to. Firstly, they need to make sure that they can access all affected persons and communities to make a needs assessment (for example: not only those who are easiest to reach for security or logistics purposes). Furthermore, once the comprehensive needs assessment has taken place, the beneficiary selection must be based on needs; meaning that there needs to be an objective and impartial weighing (score card) mechanism in place which prioritizes the most needy and vulnerability. This also implies that beneficiary lists should be put together according to specific criteria and can be verified at any time.

Members need to arrange for people’s access to impartial assistance and services – in proportion to need and without any barriers (i.e. discrimination, violence or exploitation); paying special attention to individuals and groups who may be particularly vulnerable or have difficulty accessing assistance and services. Ultimately the goal is to be able to put into place measures to maximise chances of the most needy and vulnerable groups of being included in the service provision.

1. **Neutrality:**

*“In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the (member) may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature”.*

Neutrality: Are we perceived as a neutral actor by the society in which we are working?

Neutrality has to do principally with the members’ positioning vis-à-vis different political stakeholders and the perception of the population of the member as a neutral (apolitical) entity. The members need to open dialogue with all political stakeholders and clearly explain that they are not taking part in any activities generating political influence for the organization. This also has to do with targeting messages for advocacy, how is the message communicated so as not to be politically charged but rather be based on principles and human rights.

1. **Independence:**

*“The (member) is independent… (and) must always maintain their autonomy so that the (member) may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the (Red Cross)”.*

Independence: How do we ensure the highest grade of independence from political influence (local, national, international) in our own decision-making?

This principle refers to members’ ability to remain independent from political sphere or other types of pressure in order to act in accordance to principles (impartial, neutral, independent, etc.). As for the principle of neutrality, the members need to carry out a self-assessment/self-reflection to determine to what degree internal/external factors influence the level of independence that the organization has to carry out its work in accordance to the humanitarian principles.