



Strategic Policy Agenda

Thematic Policy Positions



Inherent to all themes and actions under **themes** include:

1. Following humanitarian principles as embodied by the **Fundamental Principles**

Humanitarian action is founded by core principles to guide programs and activities. The Canadian Red Cross embodies seven Fundamental Principles that include: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality. These principles allow us to provide help immediately to whoever needs it, wherever they are, whatever their race, political beliefs, religion, social status, or culture.¹

2. Systems Reform to Enable **Humanitarian Action**

Systems Reform to Enable Humanitarian Action
Our humanitarian action and activities occur within a regulatory, policy, legal and programmatic environment and includes interconnected operational and institutional entities that deliver humanitarian aid in both international and domestic contexts. Entities are diverse, provide and serve different functions, and have varying interests.²

Systems, and their enabling machinery, have strengthened, gaps and weaknesses. The Canadian Red Cross actively engages in efforts to address gaps and weaknesses through reform. Key reform efforts that the Canadian Red Cross and the broader Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement monitor and advocate for include: ensuring that systems are firmly rooted in localization and the agency of local actors; reflects the current complexities of crises; is flexible and adaptable; places the voices of those most affected at the centre; and has an adequate humanitarian workforce to respond.

3. Enhanced **anticipatory action**

Anticipatory action, including risk reduction and resiliency measures, is a set of actions taken to prevent or mitigate the impacts of known or potential hazards or disaster events to reduce or prevent acute impacts before an event occurs.³

4. The principle of '**do-no-harm**'

The principle that humanitarians and their interventions, including program delivery and standards, must do all they reasonably can to mitigate or eliminate the risks of negatively impacting the people they serve, including physical, environmental, and sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarians themselves.

5. Adherence to **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)**

Foundational to the role of a national society in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, IHL is a branch of international law composed of rules that seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the use of violence in armed conflicts. IHL protects and spares persons who are not, or are not longer, directly or actively participating in hostilities, and imposes limits on the means and methods of warfare. It restricts the amount of force and violence necessary to achieve the aim of the conflict which, independently of the causes fought for, can only be to weaken the military potential of the perceived enemy. IHL is also known as 'the law of war' or 'the law of armed conflict.'⁴

6. Protection, **Gender Equality, Social Inclusion, Community Engagement and Accountability (PGIE)**

- Protection – ensure the rights of individuals are respected and preserve the safety, physical integrity and dignity of those affected by disasters, emergencies or conflicts.⁵
- Gender Equality – women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunity to realize their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results.⁶
- Social Inclusion – the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged in the basis of their identify to take part in society.⁷
- Community Engagement and Accountability – an approach to Red Cross and Red Crescent programming and operations that recognises and values all community members as equal partners, whose diverse needs, priorities, and preferences guide everything we do.⁸

¹ <https://www.redcross.ca/about-us/about-the-canadian-red-cross/red-cross-fundamental-principles>

² <https://www.oecd.org/dac/imagining-humanitarian-aid.htm>

³ <https://www.international.gc.ca/news-nouvelles/2022/2022-05-14-saaha-raaah.aspx?lang=eng> and <https://www.ifrc.org/document/operational-framework-anticipatory-action-2021-2025>

⁴ <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/what-international-humanitarian-law>

⁵ <https://www.ifrc.org/document/minimum-standards-pgi-emergencies>

⁶ <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/gender-equality>

⁷ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion#1>

⁸ https://communityengagementhub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/RCRC_CEA_Guide_2022.pdf



Turkish Red Crescent

SPA Policy Position

Climate Change and Environmental Crises

The Canadian Red Cross recognizes that climate-related disasters and extreme weather events are not exceptional, but are growing in frequency, complexity and severity. We also recognize that climate change and environmental crises are a humanitarian crisis that disproportionately impacts people who are marginalized based on their social, legal and/or economic status and can lead to conflict, disasters, loss of life and livelihood, displacement, exploitation, chronic hunger and food insecurity. As an organization that is focused on all-hazard emergency preparedness, risk reduction, response and recovery in Canada and abroad, the Canadian Red Cross will:

- advocate for climate change adaptation, risk reduction, mitigation and emissions reduction policies and programs with levels of government and partners that address the whole risk environment to identify gaps and propose solutions;
- work with partners to address increasing financial, social, and health impacts of climate change and disasters, with a focus on supporting resilient communities, reducing humanitarian impacts of climate change and bolstering inclusive resilience;
- advocate for systemic changes to improve the effectiveness of systems to respond to climate change impacts;
- increase our accountability as it relates to climate change, and include climate change considerations and anticipatory action in planning, preparedness and program delivery; and
- seek culturally appropriate pathways to address preparedness, response, recovery, and resiliency and adopt and advocate for distinct Indigenous considerations for climate change and environmental crises.

Migration and the Displacement of People



The rate of international migration, (voluntary and involuntary) including internally displaced people, continue to grow due to evolving, expanding and complex conflicts, crises and disaster events across the world and in Canada. The Canadian Red Cross recognizes that all migrants face risks and barriers during transit, when in host countries and communities, upon resettlement in a new place or when trying to return home. Risks and barriers can include exploitation, violence, family separation, lack of access to health and social services, cultural and language barriers, and discrimination and exclusion. To address humanitarian issues experienced by migrants in Canada and internationally, the Canadian Red Cross will:

- advocate for the protection, rights and access to assistance for migrants irrespective of legal status throughout their journey in accordance with international humanitarian law and applicable international and domestic frameworks;
- work with partners and governments to identify gaps in policies, programs and services, including the need for holistic responses, durable solutions and wrap-around supports along with the recognition and inclusion of new types of migrants, such as climate migrants;
- recognize and prioritize the individual needs and specific vulnerabilities of migrants and work to better integrate these aspects into our work to provide needed services in a culturally safe way and that align with the principle of do-no-harm and PGIE, and community engagement and accountability; and
- increase our accountability through knowledge sharing and learning/training opportunities within our organization, with partners and with those we serve.

Inequity in [REDACTED] and Wellbeing

The Canadian Red Cross recognizes that the wealth and gender-poverty gap is widening.

This is due to several factors such as the growing impacts of climate change, increased movement of people from migration and displacement, urbanization, and growing economic inequality that continues to be exacerbated by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine and many protracted conflicts such as in Yemen and Syria.

This situation has widespread consequences that include increased ill-health, both mental and physical, with a growing number of people facing poverty and extreme poverty. Those who are already in vulnerable situations and who are marginalized are disproportionately affected, with little to no access to healthcare or basic support systems. Leveraging our experience and expertise in health, the Canadian Red Cross will:

- improve our accountability to the people we serve by integrating social determinants of health and inclusive resilience in planning, preparedness, response and through advocacy efforts;
- work with partners to advance and advocate for system changes and holistic approaches to health and wellbeing in programs and policies including integrating Indigenous perspectives on health;
- further efforts to address gaps in health systems, including barriers to inclusion, safe and dignified access to health care, and identifying factors that influence health and wellbeing, such as climate change.



J. Keith Howie Photography



Indigenous Reconciliation

Indigenous peoples worldwide are disproportionately thrust into poverty and structured vulnerability due to colonialism, historical harm and sustained colonialist structures. Indigenous communities have inequitable access to healthcare, economic participation, justice and are often not included in decision-making processes. In addition, Indigenous cultural practices and knowledge are often unrecognized which cause additional harm to Indigenous peoples.

The Canadian Red Cross is committed to reconciliation and working in collaboration with Indigenous people in line with humanitarian principles and is guided by the Canadian Red Cross Indigenous Peoples Framework and principles set out under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. To further our commitment to reconciliation, the Canadian Red Cross will:

- advocate for the full adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada;
- collaborate with and learn from Indigenous peoples to decolonize and develop culturally appropriate approaches to programs and services;
- increase our accountability through listening, learning, working and partnering with Indigenous peoples;
- seek opportunities to work with partner National Societies to learn from, and identify gaps in approaches to working with, Indigenous communities across global contexts; and
- advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous peoples, knowledge and experiences in decision-making with partners, including levels of government.

Inclusion and Social Equity

The Canadian Red Cross recognizes that individuals experience situations, including crises and disaster events, differently based on factors such as ability, age, language, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and race. These differences in experience impact the effectiveness and appropriateness of mechanisms used in policies and programs, including preparedness, response and recovery mechanisms.

Guided by the principles and framework set out under Protection, Gender Equality, Social Inclusion, Community Engagement and Accountability, the Canadian Red Cross is committed to promoting and strengthening approaches to inclusion and social equity. To further this commitment, the Canadian Red Cross will:

- enhance practices and approaches to incorporate the experience and voices of those we serve into program and policy design, taking an intersectional approach to address gaps in services and to foster culturally safe and appropriate pathways;
- advocate for the robust integration of inclusion and social equity considerations and components in government programs and policies, and to ensure that funding can facilitate sustained and meaningful incorporation; and
- work with internal and external partners to increase awareness and education on inclusion and social equity.

