



# Guiding Principles for Public-Private Collaboration for Humanitarian Action

*Prepared by the World Economic Forum  
and the United Nations Office for  
the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*



## **PREAMBLE**

**Background:** Over the past three years, the private sector has shown increasing interest in supporting humanitarian operations worldwide. Given this growing engagement, the World Economic Forum and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have devised the following set of principles to guide public-private collaboration for humanitarian action. These principles are meant to serve as a guide to the private sector and the humanitarian community, with an emphasis on communicating key humanitarian principles as well as integrating elements of lessons learnt from previous private sector engagement. These principles are the product of broad consultations with the humanitarian community and the private sector, though they are not meant to supersede or replace agency and sector specific guidelines and standards.

**Framework for International Humanitarian Action:** Humanitarian action is governed by international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law, and several related principles. Three main principles are particularly important and strongly guide humanitarian action:

- *Humanity: Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable populations such as children, women, and the elderly. The dignity and rights of all victims must be respected and protected.*
- *Neutrality: Humanitarian assistance must be provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious, or ideological nature.*
- *Impartiality: Humanitarian assistance must be provided without discriminating by ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political opinions, race, or religion. Humanitarian relief must be guided solely by needs.*

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# I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In order to most benefit communities affected by humanitarian crises, partnerships between humanitarian actors and private sector companies should be developed, with the shared goal of alleviation of human suffering and provision of quality assistance to those most in need.

In the context of these partnerships, both parties would work best together by ensuring that their collaborative efforts adhere to the principles for humanitarian action outlined in the preamble, and the following guiding principles:

## 1) *Leveraging of Core Competencies*

Partnerships between humanitarian actors and private sector companies should be developed in which the core competencies of both parties are valued and leveraged. Though financial contributions may sometimes be easier for humanitarian actors to accept and use, humanitarian action would benefit significantly from access to the expertise, resources, and global, regional, and local networks of the private sector.

## 2) *Needs-Driven*

Both parties should work together to ensure that all of their collaborative efforts are aimed at meeting identified needs and respect the culture, customs, and structures of affected communities. Field-based needs should be determined through professional needs assessments performed in collaboration with the local community. Both parties should work together to ensure that their collaborative efforts do not have unintended consequences and do not undermine local economies or affected communities' own coping strategies. Furthermore, both parties will try to make their collaborative efforts be as flexible as possible in order to redirect them to areas of greater need if required.

## 3) *Standards and Codes of Conduct*

The humanitarian community has developed professional standards and codes of conduct for the provision of quality assistance.<sup>(1)</sup> Both parties should work together to ensure that their collaborative efforts, and all involved in them, adhere to these standards and codes. In particular, it is recommended that private sector employees involved in their organization's humanitarian assistance programmes at the global, regional, and local levels, are pre-trained by their humanitarian partners in the principles, standards, and codes of conduct for humanitarian action as well as their partnership policies and procedures, especially through field-level training in relevant contexts. During deployments, both parties should work together to ensure the safety and security of all deployed staff, including those from both humanitarian actors and private companies.

## 4) *Relationships with Governments*

Both parties will work together to engage national and local authorities as much as possible in their collaborative efforts if appropriate. In the context of these efforts, private sector partners should ensure that they respect the organizational policies

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and operational independence of humanitarian actors.

### **5) Building Local Capacity**

Both parties will aim to build local skills and resources in the context of their collaborative efforts. Though this may not be possible in all contexts, both parties should work together to always ensure that their efforts do not undermine local capacity.

### **6) Donation Cost Coverage**

The acceptance of in-kind donations sometimes necessitates significant additional costs on the part of humanitarian assistance providers. Private sector companies and humanitarian actors should work together to ensure that all in-kind donations are needs-driven and that additional cost is not necessitated from in-kind donations over local purchase alternatives. Where such additional costs can not be avoided, both parties should work together to ensure that any additional expenses related to in-kind donations are covered.

### **7) Distinction between humanitarian and commercial activities**

Both parties should establish a clear separation between their divisions managing public-private partnerships for humanitarian action and those responsible for procurement. This does not preclude private sector actors from participating in procurement processes, nor does it preclude them from perceiving a business case for their engagement in philanthropic partnerships. That being said, their collaborative efforts with the humanitarian community to alleviate human suffering should not be used for commercial gain.

### **8) Public Relations**

Both parties will work together to ensure that their public relations activities accurately reflect their collaborative efforts and respect affected communities. It is recommended that both parties collaboratively plan their communications strategies in advance if possible, taking into consideration each organization's policies, procedures, and communication needs.

### **9) Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Both parties will work together to ensure that they report publicly on their collaborative efforts using clear, consistent, and transparent reporting policies. Furthermore, both parties will work together with local communities to monitor and evaluate the impact of their collaborative efforts on affected populations. They will develop and use defined procedures to qualitatively and quantitatively monitor and evaluate their efforts with the aim of being as systematic and impartial as possible to generate lessons to improve future engagement.

### **10) Predictability**

Both parties should work together to develop partnerships that are predictable in nature. To this end, long-term partnerships should ideally be developed in which risk, needs, and support are identified in advance, and all related relationships and processes are defined in advance for effective partnership implementation. Such long-term partnerships will allow both parties to continually learn and thus improve the impact of their relationships on communities affected by humanitarian crises worldwide.

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## References:

### 1) Standards and Codes of Conduct for Humanitarian Action

- The Sphere Project’s Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response: <http://www.sphereproject.org>
- Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief: <http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct>
- Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights: <http://www.voluntaryprinciples.org/>
- Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship: <http://goodhumanitarianandonorship.org/>
- Six Principles for Gender Equality in Disasters: [http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/documents/subsidi/tf\\_gender/gender-broadsheet.pdf](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/documents/subsidi/tf_gender/gender-broadsheet.pdf)
- Statement of Commitment on Eliminating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN and Non-UN Personnel: <http://www.icva.ch/doc00001962.html>
- InterAction’s Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) Standards: <http://www.interaction.org/pvostandards>
- Global Hand: <http://globalhand.org/standards>

### 2) Best Practices for Philanthropic Private Sector Engagement in International Humanitarian Action

- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: <http://ochaonline2.un.org/businesscontributions>
- The UN and Business : <http://www.un.org/partners/business>
- UN Global Compact: <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/>
- WHO Guidelines for Drug Donations: [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1999/WHO\\_EDM\\_PAR\\_99.4.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1999/WHO_EDM_PAR_99.4.pdf)
- International Business Leaders Forum: <http://www.iblf.org/activities/disaster.jsp>
- Center for International Disaster Information: <http://www.cidi.org/guidelines/donate-corp.htm>

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<sup>(1)</sup> Please refer to the References section for links to major set of standards and codes of conduct.