

A GUIDE FOR NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT TO THE

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement



NEW ZEALAND
RED CROSS
RIPEKA WHERO AOTEAROA



The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) is the world's largest humanitarian network. Neutral and impartial, it endeavours to prevent and alleviate human suffering – in particular during times of disasters and conflicts.

This guide aims to familiarise parliamentarians and government officials with the Movement, particularly the role of the 191 Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies (National Societies) throughout the world. **A strong and active National Society, such as New Zealand Red Cross, can do much to assist public authorities at all levels of government in the humanitarian field.** In Aotearoa New Zealand, we specialise in three service pillars: emergency management, migration and international, with a focus on the Pacific.

This guide will also cover a number of characteristics – such as the use of the red cross emblem – that distinguish New Zealand Red Cross from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the United Nations (UN) and other elements of civil society. It will also discuss our role in the dissemination of International Humanitarian Law.

The information in this guide will help build on the existing strong and valuable relationships between New Zealand Members of Parliament, government officials and New Zealand Red Cross.



What is the Movement?

The Movement is the world's largest humanitarian network, because it benefits from the support of millions of committed volunteers and dedicated local staff spanning almost every country and territory in the world. It is also one of the most experienced, established in 1863.

The Movement is made up of three main components:

- 191 National Societies, including New Zealand Red Cross
- The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, or the Federation)
- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Through development projects and humanitarian activities, the Movement supports communities to become stronger and safer and to recover from crises. It works in cooperation with governments, donors, other humanitarian organisations and the private sector to assist vulnerable people around the world, no matter who they are and no matter where they live.

Governments are not members of the Movement, but they take part in the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held every four years. Through these Conferences, significant commitments are made with governments, and these commitments build upon the obligations and responsibilities that States have assigned to various components of the Movement in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols.

The mission of New Zealand Red Cross is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity and enhancing community resilience.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

NGĀ MĀTĀPONO TAKETAKE

HUMANITY

TE NGĀKAU ATAWHAI

IMPARTIALITY

TE TŌKEKETANGA

NEUTRALITY

TE WHAKARAUPAPA

INDEPENDENCE

TE TŪ MOTUHAKE

VOLUNTARY SERVICE

HE RATONGA TŪAO

UNITY

TE KOTAHITANGA

UNIVERSALITY

O TE AO

The Movement is guided by seven Fundamental Principles

The principles of Humanity and Impartiality reflect the purpose of the Movement. In other words, our purpose has two parts: 1) to ‘prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found,’ and 2) to ‘relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.’

The principle of Neutrality prohibits the components of the Movement from taking sides in political controversies and the principle of Impartiality prohibits the Movement from discriminating in its work. Through domestic legislation and agreement on resolutions at International Conferences of the Movement, governments give their own commitments to work with and support National Societies in conformity with the Fundamental Principles.

The Movement has three distinctive emblems – the red cross, the red crescent and the red crystal. These all carry equal protective status and meaning. To attack a person, equipment or a facility bearing a protected emblem is a breach of the Geneva Conventions and those who perpetrate the attack can be charged with committing a war crime. These three emblems are all neutral in the sense that they are not intended to carry any religious or political connotations.

What are the different components of the Movement?

National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC are separate bodies, with their respective roles co-ordinated by the Seville Agreement. Each has its own individual status and role, and has agreed to mechanisms for ensuring that its actions are well coordinated and fit a common policy framework where appropriate.



National Societies

National Societies, including New Zealand Red Cross, exist in 191 countries and territories. National Societies rely heavily on volunteers, particularly at the community level, to perform their humanitarian and development work. A National Society is neither a department or entity of the State, nor is it an NGO. From its inception, a National Society has a different relationship with its government and public authorities, and in the UN system has a special status not accorded to NGOs. Before a National Society can become part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, a number of conditions need to be met, including that the State must have agreed to be bound by the Geneva Conventions of 1949. In many States, domestic legislation recognises the National Society as a voluntary aid society which is auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field.

IFRC (The Federation)

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the Federation, or IFRC) is an international humanitarian organisation whose membership is the 191 National Societies. The Federation coordinates and directs international assistance from the Movement following disasters (such as earthquakes, tsunami, flooding and other severe weather) in non-conflict situations. The organisation also works to combat discrimination and violence, promote humanitarian principles and values, and provide assistance for migrants.

ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (the Committee, or ICRC) is an independent, neutral organisation ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. The Committee also promotes respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and its implementation in national law. It has a particular mandate under IHL to visit prisons, organise relief operations, reunite separated families and undertake other humanitarian activities during armed conflicts.

The ICRC is widely considered the ‘custodian’ or ‘guardian’ of IHL. It promotes dissemination and compliance with IHL, supports its development, and draws attention to universal humanitarian principles.



Photo (Above): Loretta Fitzgerald. Photo (Right): Alejandro Bravo/IFRC.



What does the 'auxiliary role' actually mean?

The 'auxiliary role' is a term used to express the specific and distinctive partnership a National Society can have with public authorities in providing humanitarian services. Historically, these were services provided largely in times of war under the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. However, in the contemporary world, New Zealand Red Cross takes on a range of broad tasks involved in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable within New Zealand and worldwide.

The practical implications of the auxiliary role differ from country to country, however the common thread is that National Societies are generally considered among the most reliable partners for national and local public authorities.

New Zealand Red Cross is officially recognised by the New Zealand Government as the national Red Cross organisation of New Zealand, a voluntary aid society auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field and to the Medical Services of the Armed Forces in accordance with the Geneva Conventions. In relation to the public authorities and the government, New Zealand Red Cross maintains an autonomy, which allows it to act at all times in accordance with the Fundamental Principles. The authorities respect New Zealand Red Cross' adherence to the Fundamental Principles.



Photo: Ene Abba/IFRC.



What is international humanitarian law?

International humanitarian law (IHL) is a set of internationally binding rules that seek to limit the negative effects of armed conflict on people and objects.

Also known as the law of war, IHL protects certain categories of people and restricts the methods and means of warfare, with the aim of reducing suffering during times of armed conflict. The key messages of IHL are:

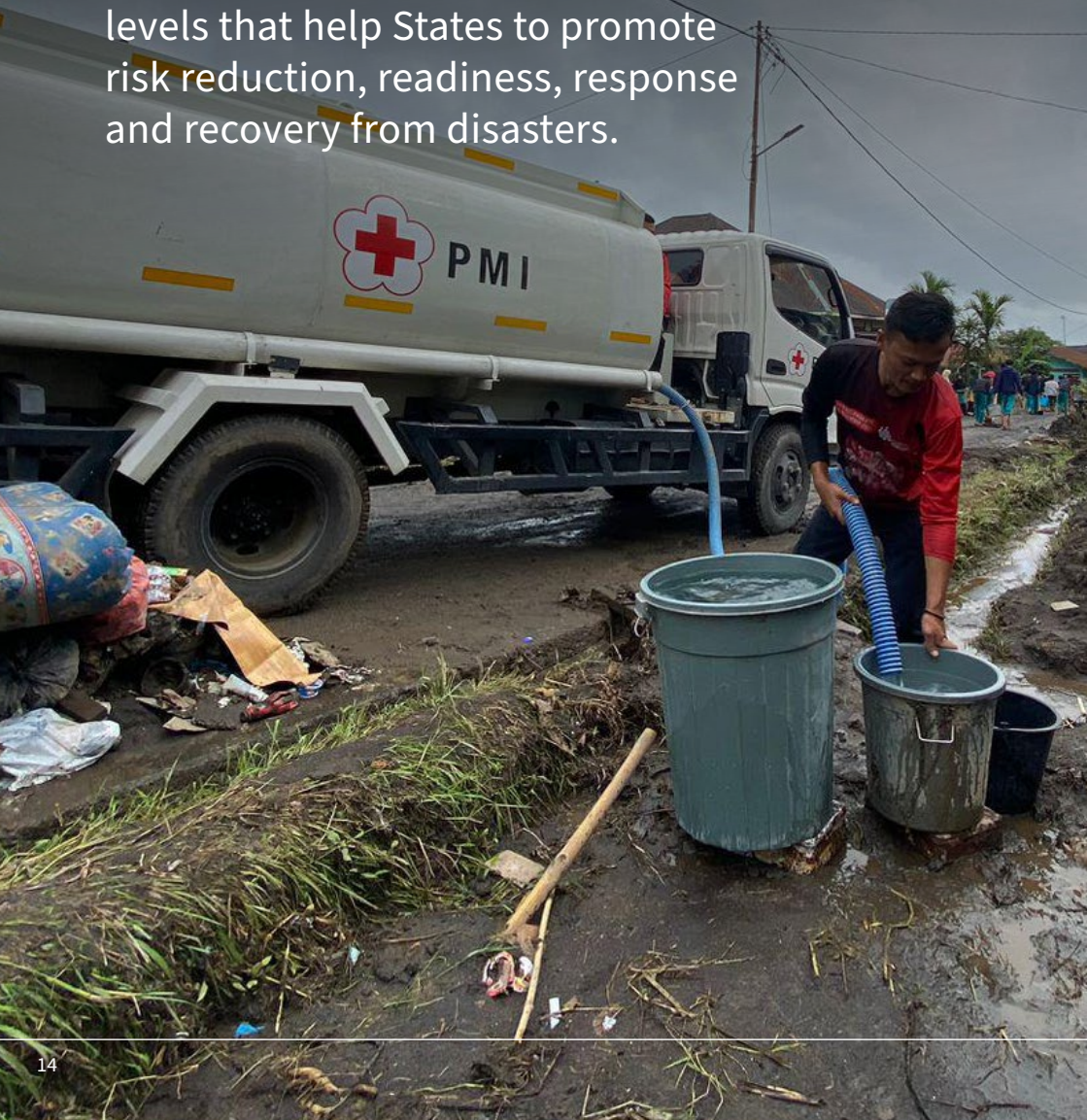
- Do not attack people who do not, or are no longer taking part in armed conflict (such as civilians, wounded or captured enemy soldiers); and
- Do not use weapons that make no distinction between civilians or combatants or cause unnecessary suffering and damage.

IHL is found in many international treaties (in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their 1977 Additional Protocols) as well as in customary international law. There are also a number of treaties which relate to the limitations and prohibitions placed on particular weapons.

National Societies have strong roles to play and are obliged, in accordance with International Conference resolutions, to promote and disseminate IHL within their countries. Parliamentarians and government officials have a key role in ensuring domestic implementation of IHL and have committed to work with their National Society partners towards this end. At the 32nd ICRC International Conference, held in 2016, the New Zealand Government and New Zealand Red Cross jointly pledged to collaboratively promote the dissemination of IHL.

What is disaster law?

Disaster law is the ensemble of laws, regulations, policies and procedures at the national, regional and international levels that help States to promote risk reduction, readiness, response and recovery from disasters.



As a global humanitarian network of community-based, volunteer-driven National Societies, the Federation and its membership have a unique perspective on disaster law. Since 2001, the Federation has had a formal programme of research and consultation on this topic to support its members in providing advice and support to their authorities.

More than two decades of research and consultations on a global scale revealed gaps in legal frameworks for managing international relief. As a result, many operations have been hampered by unnecessary bureaucracy, fees and delays on the one hand, as well as poor quality, poor coordination and failures of complementarity to domestic response on the other.

In recent years, the Federation and its members have also turned their attention to other disaster law issues of particular importance, including how legislation can promote and empower disaster risk reduction at the community level, and how to reduce regulatory barriers to providing shelter in the aftermath of disasters.



Photo (Far Left): Noval, Public Relations Staff of PMI Agam Regency.

Photo: Guatemalan Red Cross.

What can you do as a parliamentarian or government official to strengthen and support your National Society?

As auxiliaries to its public authorities, New Zealand Red Cross has a responsibility to build relationships of trust and openness with its parliament and to bring humanitarian concerns to the attention of public authorities. New Zealand Red Cross greatly appreciates the support, collaboration and highly constructive relationships it has with New Zealand authorities.

1. Access

Per the resolutions of the International Conferences, and in light of their neutral humanitarian role, the public authorities should ensure National Societies have effective and safe access to persons in need of their services. This applies equally to migrants, irrespective of their legal status. Parliaments can support this through their oversight mechanisms concerning the enforcement of laws and by examining and correcting any provisions of law that would hamper such access.

2. Harness expertise and understand capacity to respond to emergencies and disasters

National Societies can assist governments through participation on panels, boards or in an advisory capacity on matters within their expertise (such as emergency management or dealing with impacts from migration). New Zealand Red Cross is always available to offer its services in this capacity.

3. Support our IHL committee

Parliamentarians can be involved in parliamentary debate or committee deliberations on the ratification/acceptance of IHL treaties. Furthermore, if required, they can be involved in the subsequent creation of domestic laws relating to IHL. Many States, including New Zealand, have a national IHL committee on which members of government agencies such as Foreign Affairs, Defence and Police are represented to encourage dialogue with the National Society and ICRC on ways to ensure respect for IHL. Such committees allow an exchange of information and expertise and assist in understanding and implementing IHL obligations.

4. Understand and implement the resolutions and pledges from the International Conferences

Every four years the Movement holds an International Conference comprising National Societies, the Federation, ICRC and States party to the Geneva Conventions. The aim of the International Conference is to bring together governments and all components of the Movement to debate and agree on key humanitarian priorities for the four years ahead. The International Conference priorities are passed as resolutions and usually have unanimous support from all members of the Conference. Pledges are bilateral agreements between National Societies and States. While resolutions and pledges are not legally binding, they represent a significant, formal, written commitment to humanitarian action by International Conference participants.

5. Legal recognition

The strength of individual National Societies is dependent upon their government creating proper legal regulations recognising their existence and confirming the National Society's capacity to follow the Fundamental Principles and undertake its activities as auxiliary to public authorities in the humanitarian field. Domestic legislation provides this capacity for National Societies to be part of the Movement and act as a strong and capable organisation.

6. Emblem usage

There is a need for up-to-date domestic legislation regulating the correct use of the red cross, red crescent or red crystal emblem. Such legislation assists in ensuring that the emblem is understood by the broader community as a symbol of protection. The Geneva Conventions Act 1958 which supports the correct use of the emblem needs to be widely known within the government.

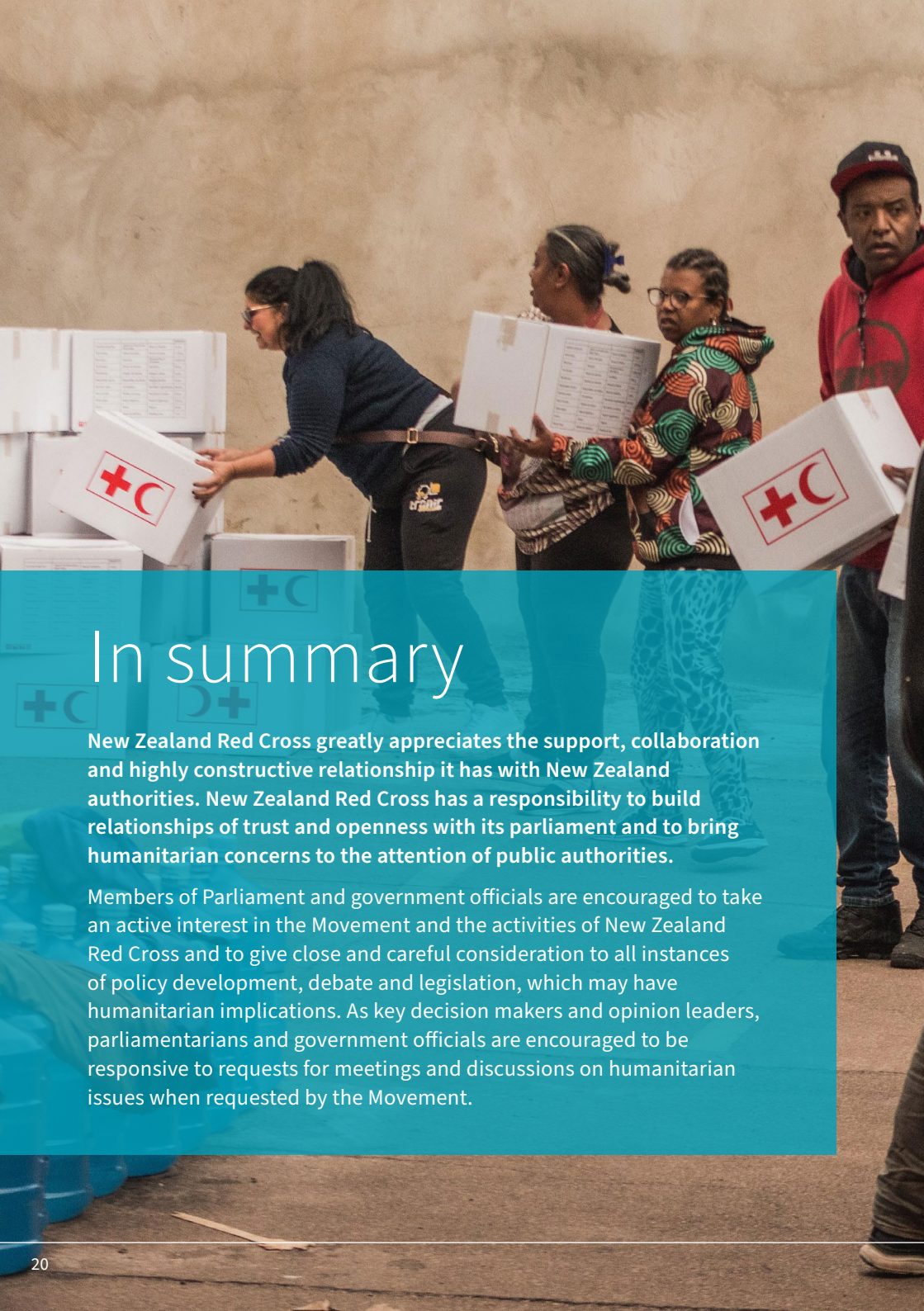
7. Funding and financial concessions

In agreements and resolutions of the International Conference, governments have committed to supporting National Societies by maintaining the humanitarian space for their activities and, often, by providing resources. Although raising funds is not the primary goal of the auxiliary role, the trust built through a well-functioning auxiliary relationship makes New Zealand Red Cross an ideal partner and an attractive funding option for government.

Support for New Zealand Red Cross may include tax exempt status, exemption from customs duties and beneficial rates on governmental services. Governments may provide extensive and varied in-kind support for National Societies, such as the provision of land or office space, or contracting a National Society to provide fee-based services like first aid training, while ensuring these arrangements cover the full cost of services provided.



Photo: Jillian Robertson/IFRC.



In summary

New Zealand Red Cross greatly appreciates the support, collaboration and highly constructive relationship it has with New Zealand authorities. New Zealand Red Cross has a responsibility to build relationships of trust and openness with its parliament and to bring humanitarian concerns to the attention of public authorities.

Members of Parliament and government officials are encouraged to take an active interest in the Movement and the activities of New Zealand Red Cross and to give close and careful consideration to all instances of policy development, debate and legislation, which may have humanitarian implications. As key decision makers and opinion leaders, parliamentarians and government officials are encouraged to be responsive to requests for meetings and discussions on humanitarian issues when requested by the Movement.





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