




The Netherlands Red Cross TOWARDS 2020

The Netherlands  **Red Cross**

 A part of the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The Fundamental Principles

The Red Cross was born of a desire to bring assistance – without discrimination. Across the world, we are committed to, and bound by, the same seven Fundamental Principles:

Humanity

Impartiality

Neutrality

Independence

Voluntary service

Unity

Universality

To the Red Cross these imply that every human being has a right to assistance, respect and dignity when his/her survival is at stake. Priority is given to the most urgent cases of distress, without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions.

The Red Cross does not take sides in hostilities and will always advocate on behalf of the victims. Where possible and desirable we cooperate with third parties, provided that their aims and principles match ours.

A separate agreement, formalised by Royal Decree, is in place with the Dutch government with regards to the tasks carried out by the Red Cross within the Kingdom of the Netherlands as an auxiliary to the government in its humanitarian assistance.

The emblem: symbol of protection and recognition



Since 1864, the emblem of a Red Cross on a white background has been the international symbol of protection for all those in need of, and all those providing, assistance. The Red Crescent followed shortly after as a recognised symbol of equal standing. End of 2005, a third symbol was added: a red crystal on a white background. All three symbols have the same neutral status and meaning, which is: 'don't attack'. Their protective use is defined in the Geneva Conventions, the Additional Protocols and in national legislation. In addition, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are entitled to use the emblem as an indicative symbol for their activities.

The mission of the Red Cross is based on a legally binding international mandate and, in the context of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, has been formalised in a Royal Decree. Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide are united within the international Red Cross Movement - we help and assist each other on the basis of equality.

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1. Introduction



This strategy is the result of a dialogue on the future of our assistance held within the Netherlands Red Cross since 2009. We have consulted many inside and outside of our organisation on what we would like to have achieved together by 2020. We were particularly interested in finding answers to the following questions: Who are our beneficiaries? What do they want us to do? What can we offer and what do we want to offer? The strategy of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies served as a basis for our dialogue. The 'Strategy House' (see picture) was used as a guiding principle. The result lies in front of you: a clear and ambitious strategy which looks to the future.

Our strategy is explained by means of the Strategy House:

- Paragraph 3 covers the roof: **Who we are**
What is our mission, vision and ambition?
- Paragraph 4 covers the rooms: **What we do**
What are our strategic aims?
- Paragraph 5 covers the foundation: **How we work**
What does this mean for our organisation?

We start in paragraph 2 with a description of our field of operations.

2. The Netherlands Red Cross and its field of operations

The Red Cross operates in a world which is changing constantly, and in many different ways. In order to anticipate these changes we observe our surroundings carefully. We listen to our beneficiaries, volunteers, members and staff. We respond to new needs and make use of new opportunities where possible and required. It goes without saying that we stay in close contact with other (humanitarian) organisations, governments and businesses because together we can achieve so much more than by ourselves. We continue to search for new ways to further improve our assistance, and wherever our response is under threat we try to find a fitting response as quickly as we can. In the coming years we foresee the following international and national trends.

Global

We live in a world in which disasters have an ever-growing impact. The number of natural disasters such as floods or droughts is increasing due to climate change. At the same time we are dealing with the negative side effects of unchecked economic growth and development. Due to urbanisation more than half of our world population lives packed together in cities, often in vulnerable circumstances. Other areas are subject to depopulation, with a growing number of people having to rely on themselves. Some countries witness a rapid growth in population. Shortage of food, pandemics and violence threaten life and health of large groups of people, in particular the poor, and leads to migration which renders people - in their own country or on foreign soil - even more exposed.

Above trends make that disasters affect the economic security of an increasing number of people. But positive developments can be seen as well. Globalisation and new communication technologies make it easier to contact, and work together with, people across the world. And economic growth allows more people to escape poverty.

Western world

Population in the Western world is aging rapidly. Even though the elderly stay younger for a longer period of time, calls for assistance are increasing and becoming more complex.

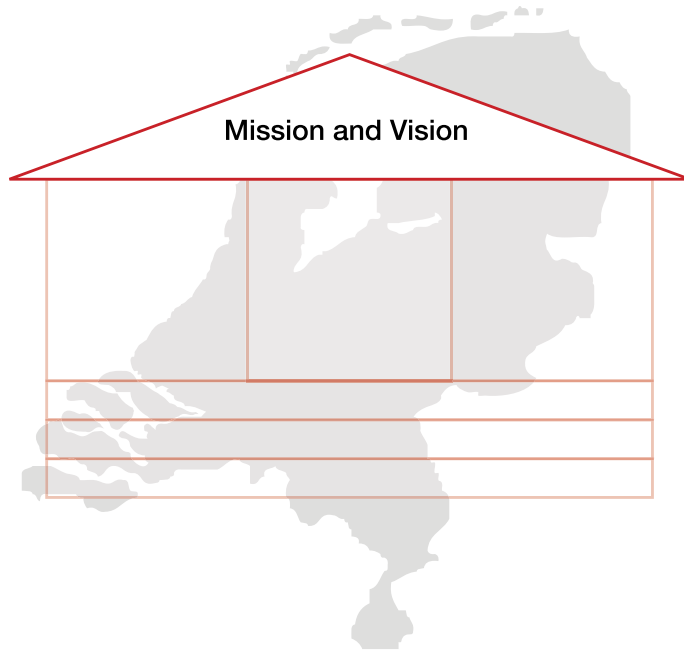
Growing individualism has led to certain people being forgotten or excluded. Many find it difficult to make contact of their own accord. Society is hardening while social etiquette is eroding. At the same time a growing number of businesses acknowledge the importance of ethical entrepreneurship: they support voluntary work financially or through sharing of expertise, or choose another way to contribute socially.

Netherlands

Many in our country are contributing to a better society – in our own country or abroad - through voluntary work. Schools stimulate voluntary work by including work placements in their curriculum. There is a clear trend towards project-based voluntary work, especially amongst youths. The government promotes civilian resilience, both in emergencies and in care. Due to extensive cut-backs lesser funds are available for care initiatives, even though the quality of care is subject to higher requirements. Accountability with regards to an activity and transparency in finance, management and ownership are essential. Donations are no longer a given.

All these trends show how the world around us is changing constantly, even for the Red Cross. In order to be able to continue bringing assistance to the most vulnerable in times of crisis it is important that we set priorities. In this strategy document we have therefore set ourselves three strategic aims, described in paragraph 4, which determine our actions.

3. Who we are



Our origins

The International Red Cross was founded in 1863, and the Netherlands Red Cross followed in 1867. It was the first international humanitarian organisation of its kind, originally dedicating its assistance solely to war victims. After the First World War the need to continue Red Cross work in peace time grew and the Netherlands Red Cross, like many other National Societies, developed social activities in peace time next to its emergency assistance to war victims.

Following the Second World War many more humanitarian organisations were established, usually focusing on specific types of assistance (such as food or medical assistance) or target groups (such as the poor, people suffering from a specific illness, children). Wherever we meet and where possible and required, we stay in close contact with these organisations. At present the Red Cross has 97 million members and volunteers, making it the largest voluntary humanitarian organisation in the world.

The Red Cross has a special relationship with the government: in general it operates independently from the public authorities but in certain circumstances it works alongside or together with the government. The way in which cooperation takes form is guided by our Fundamental Principles - in particular in those cases where the government itself takes part in an armed conflict.

Mission

Our mission is to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found, to protect lives and health and to ensure respect for the human being. Our special attention goes to those who are most vulnerable: those who, without our help, would not or only barely survive, or whose health would be at risk.

Vision

Through our volunteers and our local presence we contribute actively to stronger communities, so that nobody stands alone in times of crisis. Through our assistance we aim to strengthen the independence of communities in such a way that their members are able to help themselves and others on the basis of respect and humanity.

Internal analysis

Through the years the Red Cross has built an excellent name and reputation. Within the Kingdom of the Netherlands everyone knows us! This is a formidable strength. Through our network of local branches and our many thousands of volunteers we have a profound presence in our society. Internationally we cooperate closely with our network of fellow Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which allows us to deliver the necessary assistance swiftly and to mobilise people to help each other wherever they are.

We take up a prominent position when it comes to voluntary assistance. Our volunteers are very involved, to a point where we want to be involved in everything. This is our pitfall. To always carry on blurs one's outlook on the situation, and on questions such as: Are we the best partner in this situation? Would we maybe be helping more by taking a step back? In short: we should not only ask ourselves **what** we should do but also **whether** we should do it and for **how long**. Can someone else maybe do as good a job, or a better one? Does this type of assistance still fit the Red Cross? Are there any parties outside the Red Cross who could (eventually) take over certain tasks? So that we, together with our volunteers, can take up new tasks and reach out to other

vulnerable people or groups who have so far remained invisible.

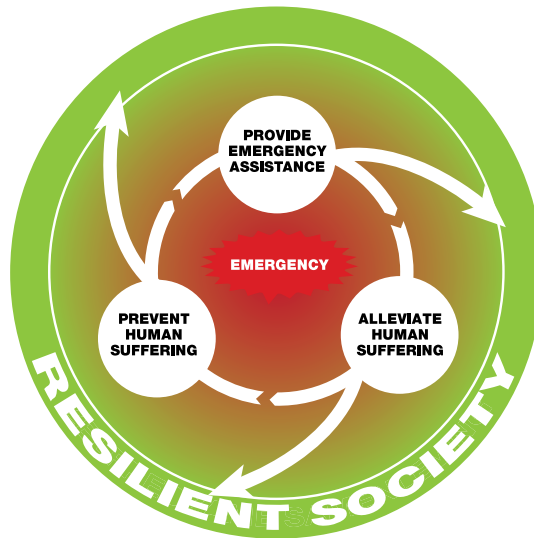
Ambition

While discussing these questions it became apparent that a clear direction requires clear choices. We need to change our way of thinking. Instead of trying to do everything because it has always been that way, our challenge for the future should foremost be to strengthen and concentrate our response to a (possible) emergency, either in the Netherlands or abroad. This is the essence of the Red Cross and was the reason behind its initial establishment.

In order to visualise this process we have developed the 'Circle of Assistance'. In the future we will first of all determine whether a call for assistance falls within this circle. The circle revolves around an emergency. We will do what we can to prepare people for a (looming) emergency, help them to limit the impact of an emergency in case it does happen, and stay involved in the aftercare until it is no longer necessary or can be handed over to other



parties. This implies that our assistance is ending. If carried out correctly, this approach will prepare people to better cope with the next emergency situation. In case of a new crisis we can build on previously achieved results. This creates a power-generating dynamic which is based on our Fundamental Principles.



THE CIRCLE OF ASSISTANCE

Our assistance focuses on vulnerable people and groups **in need**, it is **temporary** in character and its objective is to make people and groups **stronger and more resilient**. With this strategy the Red Cross distinguishes itself from other organisations, as only few focus on all parts of the Circle of Assistance.

Independent, resilient citizens make society as a whole stronger. This is why our assistance should have a temporary character. We help people to anticipate and react to emergency situations, and at a later stage to continue normal life again as a stronger and more resilient individual. At the core of this approach lies a strengthening of a mutual willingness to help. Interaction between mutual respect and willingness to help is crucial for a human society.

In the area of international cooperation, too, resilience is our goal. Our objective when assisting a National Society is to make it stronger so that, eventually, it can operate (more) independently. Our support is aimed primarily at helping Societies to prevent, or recover from, a disaster. We in turn receive support – preferably structural in kind, and not just financial help but also expert advice - from partners such as knowledge centres, NGOs and

the corporate world. This allows us to further increase the vigor and impact of our work. With the correct networks in place we are able to find the right experts, and can in turn be found by our beneficiaries.

Within the Netherlands we aim to improve our response to risks regularly mapped out by the government, such as disasters but also emergency situations. Think for example of our response to the outbreak of epidemics or in case of extended electricity cuts.

In summary, our ambition is to offer high-quality, temporary assistance, based on the needs of the most vulnerable. We wish to excel in our three strategic aims:

1. Limiting the impact of emergency situations

2. Strengthening resilience

3. Promoting respect and willingness to help

The thousands of volunteers in the Netherlands and our Caribbean Branches, and many millions more worldwide, are crucial to achieving this ambition. Together they are the Red Cross and gel the society. Regardless of the different backgrounds and needs of the beneficiaries: our volunteers put humanity first. Without prejudice, without desire for gain, and for as long as assistance is needed.

4. What we do



Strategic aim 1 **Limiting the impact** **of emergency situations**

During a crisis or disaster we assist people in meeting their basic needs: shelter, water, food, access to medical care, security and restoring family links. In the Netherlands we work together with the professional emergency services lead by the government; internationally we cooperate with other National Societies, the Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross. We are experts in emergency assistance and are able to provide high-quality assistance based on the needs of our beneficiaries. Limiting the impact of an emergency situation starts with thorough preparation. In this respect, information on risks is key. In addition we make sure that our people receive the appropriate training and kit. This so that they know what to do to prevent an emergency situation, and act decisively in case this is required.

Example at national level

We offer easily-accessible First-Aid courses via our website in order to stimulate the average citizen to become a helper in need. This is one way to limit the impact of emergency situations.

Example at international level

The Belgian Red Cross, the Luxemburg Red Cross and the Netherlands Red Cross have established an emergency unit which can be deployed anywhere in the world within 24 hours. This unit is specialised in logistical support during an emergency.



Strategic aim 2 **Strengthening resilience**

Individuals and communities can actively contribute to bettering their own situation. The Red Cross helps to map the needs and link these to structural solutions. We assist people in building networks that are essential for good assistance. Where necessary we fill gaps in such networks. Once the assistance runs smoothly and other parties who can take over present themselves, we hand over and withdraw. We involve beneficiaries in the development of our assistance. We refer to other organisations in case they offer the necessary assistance already. We monitor and facilitate.

Example at national level

Through our Buddy projects we teach vulnerable people over a certain period how to be involved in society and build up a network. These skills prevent them from having to act on their own in times of crisis.

Example at international level

In Indonesia we assist the national Red Cross Society in setting up an early warning system for sudden high tides in Jakarta. The system warns people in time so that they can bring themselves, their families and their belongings to safety.



Strategic aim 3

Promoting respect and willingness to help

Throughout the world the Red Cross promotes a society in which people can, and wish, to help each other. We promote respect and willingness to help – spontaneously. Besides offering assistance we bring people into contact with each other, with the aim to build bridges and increase respect. It is the reason behind our knowledge-sharing on international humanitarian law and humanitarian values with both the general public and professionals.

Example at national level

In cooperation with school we offer an increasing number of work placements in order to bring youth in contact with different groups in society.

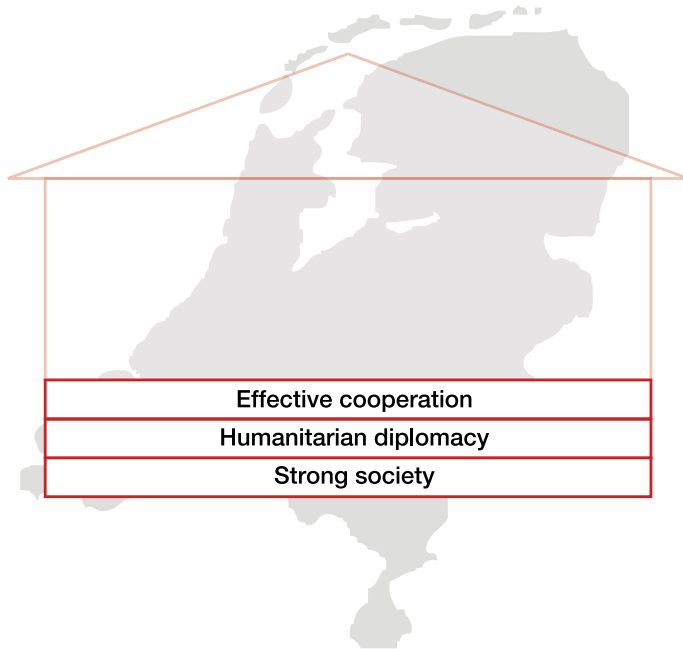
In short this means that Red Cross assistance in 2020:

- Is based on the needs in society;
- Fits in with our strategic aims;
- Fits in with the Circle of Assistance;
- Is of a high standard;
- Has been developed together with the beneficiaries
- Uses people's strength (and not their weakness) as a base;
- Does not create a situation of dependence;
- Has a temporary character;
- Is offered when no other party is responding;
- Leads to structural resilience.

Example at international level

We assist other Societies in starting a discussion on HIV/Aids and in preventing HIV-infected individuals from being excluded by their communities. HIV-infected in particular can play an important role in providing information to their communities and the public at large, both in cooperation with, and independently from, the Red Cross.

5. How we work



In the previous paragraphs we have described who we are/would like to be, who our beneficiaries are and what our ambition is. In this paragraph we will discuss the conditions necessary to fulfil this ambition: the foundation of the Strategy House. Which are they?

1. Effective cooperation

Both within and outside the Red Cross there is a wealth of knowledge, experience, expertise and networks that we want to utilise and share more effectively. With our strategic aims as a basis we actively seek cooperation as a means to share knowledge and come to clear agreements, so that every party's task and quality contributes to better assistance. Cooperation is sought in particular with experts in the areas of emergency assistance, first aid and international humanitarian law, with the aim to make these liaisons our added value to our partners, the general public and the government.

2. Humanitarian diplomacy

The Red Cross is politically neutral, but acts on behalf of those who are most vulnerable around the world. Humanitarian diplomacy gives these people a voice and is therefore interlinked with our mission. In practise it means that whenever our Fundamental Principles are compromised we speak up on behalf of the most vulnerable, with the aim to establish changes in behaviour, policies, visions or certain approaches by the government or general public. In this way we can achieve an improvement in the situation of our beneficiaries.

3. Strong society

We are building a strong society with the following characteristics: decisive, transparent, diverse, financially sound and based on our Integrity Policy. We do this on a basis of shared responsibility: together we contribute to the best result for our beneficiaries, in the Netherlands and abroad.

Decisive

By making conscious decisions with regards to our assistance and by establishing a clear link between the different activities, we allocate our attention, energy and knowledge as efficiently as

possible. We are supported by a professional organisation with the required knowledge and expertise, and stimulate cooperation and sharing of knowledge. We test the quality of our assistance continuously, and are open to innovative ideas to further improve our assistance or organisation.

Transparent

In line with our Fundamental Principles we are open and accessible to all. This openness shows itself in the welcoming atmosphere in our organisation, in our internal and external communication and through our handling of financial accountability. By conducting ourselves in a transparent way we remain a trustworthy party to anyone who feels connected to our principles and values.

Diverse

As the Netherlands Red Cross we wish to be connected and be recognisable to the Dutch society as a whole. We aim to involve people from all ethnic and social backgrounds in our organisation as volunteers, paid staff, members or donors. We acknowledge the importance of diversity and different characteristics as key to running a strong organisation.

Financially sound

A strong society is financially healthy. We have a good picture of cost and income development in the coming years and adapt our operations accordingly. Non-earmarked income allows us to make independent decisions with regards to our projects and thereby to guarantee continuity. An emergency fund enables us to act instantly in case of an emergency. We are careful to spend money wisely and save where possible.

Integrity

The basis for financial and behavioural transparency lies in an honest attitude of anyone linked to the Netherlands Red Cross. Within the Red Cross it is our custom to show respect for each other and each other's work. In addition, everyone is aware of a clear line between personal interest and the interests of the society, and we know that acting under the flag of the Red Cross will always be subject to the Fundamental Principles.



6. Where we go from here

This strategy is a guideline for the future. The future of a strong Netherlands Red Cross: indispensable and distinctive. An organisation which uses its knowledge, years of experience, energy and willpower to help the most vulnerable wherever and whenever needed.

This strategy springs from the Circle of Assistance and shows all those directly involved with the Red Cross, and its partners, what our principles are, what we do and what we don't do. And it creates expectations with those who can count on us. The strategy, whose aim it is to ensure that no one stands alone in times of crisis, consists of three components which are intrinsically linked, partly overlap and enforce each other.

By limiting the impact of an emergency situation **we** help the most vulnerable (Strategic aim 1).

By strengthening resilience more people are able to help **themselves** in case of an emergency (Strategic aim 2).

By promoting respect and willingness to help people will help **others** (Strategic aim 3).



With this strategy we take an important step. However, to a humanitarian organisation such as the Red Cross a strategic process is always dynamic in character. Circumstances change constantly and we wish to adapt to those changes in a flexible manner. This implies that we continue to fine-tune our guidelines

and priorities on the basis of our three strategic aims. They provide the foundation for answers to questions such as: What do we call an emergency situation? Who are the most vulnerable? What are ways to strengthen resilience?

It is evident that on the basis of our strategy clear actions are needed to effectively diminish people's vulnerability and bring them the necessary assistance quickly in case of an emergency. To this end, we work with three-year plans which require the Netherlands Red Cross to achieve concrete results, and serve as a base for assessment and measuring success so that we can better our service constantly. In this process we are open to contributions of others at all times, as active involvement of members, volunteers and external partners allows us to continuously improve the quality of our assistance.



The Netherlands  **Red Cross**

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