

24 Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship

In 2003 the Government of Sweden convened a meeting to discuss good humanitarian donorship, during which a set of “Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian-Donorship” was agreed. The meeting was attended by representatives from 16 donor governments as well as the European Commission, the OECD, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, NGOs, and academics.

At the June 2018 High Level Meeting in New York, GHD members adopted a new, 24th principle on the use of cash transfers.

The 24 Principles and Good Practice defined by the group provide both a framework to guide official humanitarian aid and a mechanism for encouraging greater donor accountability. These were drawn up to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of donor action, as well as their accountability to beneficiaries, implementing organizations and domestic constituencies, with regard to the funding, co-ordination, follow-up and evaluation of such actions.

Objectives and Definition of Humanitarian Action

1. The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations.
2. Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; impartiality, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; neutrality, meaning that humanitarian action must not favor any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and independence, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.
3. Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods.

General Principles

4. Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.
5. While reaffirming the primary responsibility of states for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders, strive to ensure flexible and timely funding, on the basis of the collective obligation of striving to meet humanitarian needs.
6. Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.
7. Request implementing humanitarian organizations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.

8. Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.
9. Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.
10. Support and promote the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and co-ordination of international humanitarian action, the special role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the vital role of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations in implementing humanitarian action.

Good Practices in Donor Financing, Management and Accountability

Funding

11. Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises.
12. Recognizing the necessity of dynamic and flexible response to changing needs in humanitarian crises, strive to ensure predictability and flexibility in funding to United Nations agencies, funds and programs and to other key humanitarian organizations.
13. While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organizations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.
14. Contribute responsibly, and on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals, and actively support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritization and co-ordination in complex emergencies.

Promoting Standards and Enhancing Implementation

15. Request that implementing humanitarian organizations fully adhere to good practice and are committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action.
16. Promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.
17. Maintain readiness to offer support to the implementation of humanitarian action, including the facilitation of safe humanitarian access.
18. Support mechanisms for contingency planning by humanitarian organizations, including, as appropriate, allocation of funding, to strengthen capacities for response.
19. Affirm the primary position of civilian organizations in implementing humanitarian action, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict. In situations where military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian action, ensure that such use

is in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and recognizes the leading role of humanitarian organizations.

20. Support the implementation of the 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defense Assets in Disaster Relief and the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defense Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies.

Learning and Accountability

21. Support learning and accountability initiatives for the effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian action.
22. Encourage regular evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance.
23. Ensure a high degree of accuracy, timeliness, and transparency in donor reporting on official humanitarian assistance spending, and encourage the development of standardized formats for such reporting.

Modalities of Humanitarian Assistance

24. Systematically consider the use of cash transfers alongside other modalities according to context, in order to meet the humanitarian needs of people in the most effective and efficient manner.