

# The Swedish Red Cross Protection Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

This policy describes how the Swedish Red Cross will work to ensure a Minimum Protection Approach (MPA) in all activities. Assisting people to exercise their rights and safeguard their interests are central parts of the Swedish Red Cross' work to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

This policy applies to all elected representatives, volunteers, employees, delegates, trainees, students, consultants, or others who have undertaken assignments on behalf of the Swedish Red Cross, or otherwise represent the Swedish Red Cross, in Sweden and/or abroad. The policy also applies to the international cooperation of the Swedish Red Cross with other National Societies and other components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The Swedish Red Cross shall ensure that all parties are informed of the existence of this policy and its implications.

## BACKGROUND

The Swedish Red Cross has extensive experience of working with people in vulnerable situations and in need of protection. According to our statutes, the mission of the Swedish Red Cross is to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever and whenever it occurs, to protect life and health and uphold human dignity, especially in times of armed conflict and other emergencies. The Swedish Red Cross shall also provide assistance and protection to people affected by armed conflict as well as to people affected by natural disasters and other emergencies.

Protection activities are designed to protect people against violations of their rights. A Minimum Protection Approach is important to ensure and safeguard the rights of individuals and prevent harm, but also to ensure that our activities are designed according to the needs and perspectives of the affected population. Protection is therefore essential for all activities within the Swedish Red Cross. As a humanitarian actor, the Swedish Red Cross has a responsibility to bring a Minimum Protection Approach to the centre of humanitarian activities. Our Fundamental Principles provide a framework for how a National Society can act to provide protection. The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement call upon/require National Societies to prioritise the protection of life and health. The principles of humanity and impartiality place the individual at risk at the centre of our actions.

Failure to identify and address the protection needs of affected people could have negative consequences for them and would therefore not be consistent with the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the principle of Do No Harm.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The Swedish Red Cross Governing Board and Senior Management bear the overall responsibility to ensure that the organisation complies with the policy. The Boards of the

local branches and the regional councils are responsible for ensuring that activities at the local level are carried out in line with the policy. Management in the organisation is responsible for making sure that relevant guidelines and follow-up procedures are in place to ensure compliance with the policy. All Red Cross staff have a personal responsibility to act in accordance with the policy as well as to pay attention to and act on policy breaches.

Everyone who works for the Swedish Red Cross must have basic knowledge of the Minimum Protection Approach and ensure that their actions are in accordance with this policy.

A protection dialogue with authorities and other relevant actors should be conducted by staff. In some cases, volunteers may engage in protection dialogue in consultation with a staff member, especially in the local context. Contacts with authorities and relevant external actors, both national and international, are always made by the responsible staff member.

Informed consent is always required in individual cases and in all actions in which individuals could be identified.

Support to branches in implementing a Minimum Protection Approach will be provided, for example, through guidelines and tools for conducting needs assessments.

### **The Minimum Protection Approach (MPA)**

The Minimum Protection Approach means having the ability to identify and address the protection needs of affected people. However, the Minimum Protection Approach does not mean that we must respond to all protection needs, but that we have the capacity to prioritise and act on them.

The Swedish Red Cross shall promote the participation and engagement of affected people in protection work. An important element is that the affected people is aware of and can exercise their rights.

The Minimum Protection Approach also implies the ability to respond to protection needs without discrimination and taking gender and diversity perspectives into account. Protection needs, as well as vulnerability and risk, are shaped by a complex interplay between various individual factors such as socio-economic, political and environmental factors that fluctuate over time.

To ensure that our programs and activities are adequate, relevant and effective, they should be based on an assessment of the vulnerability, risk and protection needs of the affected population. Since vulnerability and risk, as well as protection needs, can vary over time, such an assessment should be updated and evaluated regularly. Some affected groups may be in a particularly vulnerable situation as a result of discrimination and marginalisation and may therefore need specific protection measures.

### **Child protection**

Children may need special protection and care, including appropriate legal protection. Particular attention must therefore be given to protecting children and involving them in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities that affect them. The Swedish Red Cross will shall uphold children's rights and work to ensure that authorities and other relevant actors comply with the obligations imposed on them, such as under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The best interest and safety of the child shall be of primary concern for

all our activities, where children are involved, and in particular, to minimise the risk of abuse. What is in the best interest of the child must be determined on a case-by-case basis, considering the child's views and experience.

## Definitions

*Protection* means all activities aimed at protecting every person against violations of his or her rights under applicable law. Protection must address the causes, consequences, and circumstances of violations. Protection aims to ensure that authorities and other actors comply with their obligations and respect the rights of individuals.

A *need for protection* arises when an individual or group does not have access to or is unable to enjoy their fundamental rights or interests and no longer receives protection from public authorities. A protection measure or activity refers to acts, measures or activities carried out to meet the protection needs of the affected group and/or the individual.

A *protection measure or activity* means those acts, measures or activities, which are carried out to meet the protection needs of the affected population and/or the individual. Protection actions can be preventive, immediate, restorative or community building. Maintaining a Minimum Protection Approach often requires a combination of these activities, which may vary in size and scope.

A *protection dialogue*, or so-called humanitarian diplomacy, is a communication - written and/or oral, formal and/or informal - with the aim to persuade the authorities concerned or other responsible actors to act in the benefit of the affected population group and/or remind them of their obligations. A protection dialogue can, among other things, aim to protect individuals from ongoing abuses and violations or to bring about social improvements for many, such as changes in legislation and policy. Protection work is therefore also part of our advocacy work and takes place at different levels (local, national, and international).