

# Non-Proselytizing Policy

## 1. Purpose

This policy applies to Habitat for Humanity International and its affiliated organizations (HFH).

The purpose of this policy is:

- 1) To provide internal and external clarity regarding HFH's approach to humanitarian aid and development assistance as a Christian ministry;
- 2) To ensure alignment with recognized international standards on acceptable humanitarian aid and development assistance practices.

## 2. Background/ Rationale

Habitat for Humanity is a Christian ministry dedicated to a vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live. HFH conducts its programs in ways that are sensitive and respectful to the cultural context and the local faith community and reflect our belief that all are created in God's image and deserve to be treated without discrimination.

Globally, faith-based organizations from all religions approach their work with a range of motivations that inform their development approach. This policy is intended to ensure that HFH conforms to recognized global standards that clearly state that agencies may not condition the receipt of assistance or participation in their work on any requirement that people listen and respond to a message intended to induce people to join a religious movement, political party, or other cause or organization.

HFHI's motivation is to unite people around the concept of "putting God's love into action" along with others from all faiths or with no faith convictions who are interested in helping those in need of improved shelter.

## 3. Policy

Habitat for Humanity International and its affiliated organizations (HFH) will not proselytize. Nor will HFH work with entities or individuals who insist on proselytizing as part of their work with HFH. This means that HFH will not offer assistance on the expressed or implied condition that people must (i) adhere or convert to a particular faith or (ii) listen and respond to messaging designed to induce conversion to a particular faith.

## 4. Referenced International Standards

- a. Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and NGO's in Disaster Relief. (HFHI is a signatory)
- b. The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE project)
- c. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18)

## APPENDIX and RESOURCES

### I. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966 (ICCPR): Article 18

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.
2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.
4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

### II. Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response: The Sphere Project (excerpt)

The right to receive humanitarian assistance is a necessary element of the right to life with dignity. This encompasses the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, water, clothing, shelter and the requirements for good health, which are expressly guaranteed in international law. The Sphere Core Standards and minimum standards reflect these rights and give practical expression to them, specifically in relation to the provision of assistance to those affected by disaster or conflict. Where the state or non-state actors are not providing such assistance themselves, we believe they must allow others to help do so. Any such assistance must be provided according to the principle of impartiality, which requires that it be provided solely on the basis of need and in proportion to need. This reflects the wider principle of non-discrimination: that no one should be discriminated against on any grounds of status, including age, gender, race, color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, religion, disability, health status, political or other opinion, national or social origin.

### III. The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief [excerpts]

Prepared jointly by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC 1995

#### Purpose

This Code of Conduct seeks to guard our standards of behaviour. It is not about operational details, such as how one should calculate food rations or set up a refugee camp. Rather, it seeks to maintain the high standards of independence, effectiveness and impact to which disaster response NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement aspires. It is a voluntary code, enforced by the will of organization accepting it to maintain the standards laid down in the Code. In the event of armed conflict, the present Code of Conduct will be interpreted and applied in conformity with international humanitarian law.

### IV. The Code of Conduct

#### Principles of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes

##### 1. *The Humanitarian imperative comes first*

The right to receive humanitarian assistance, and to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle which should be enjoyed by all citizens of all countries. As members of the international community, we recognize our obligation to provide humanitarian wherever it is needed. Hence the need for unimpeded access to affected populations is of fundamental importance in exercising that responsibility. The prime motivation of our response to disaster is to alleviate human suffering amongst those least able to withstand the stress caused by disaster. When we give humanitarian aid it is not a partisan or political act and should not be viewed as such.

##### 2. *Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone*

Wherever possible, we will base the provision of relief aid upon a thorough assessment of the needs of the disaster victims and the local capacities already in place to meet those needs. Within the entirety of our programmes, we will reflect considerations of proportionality. Human suffering must be alleviated whenever it is found; life is as precious in one part of a country as another. Thus, our provision of aid will reflect the degree of suffering it seeks to alleviate. In implementing this approach, we

recognize the crucial role played by women in disaster-prone communities and will ensure that this role is supported, not diminished, by our aid programmes. The implementation of such a universal, impartial and independent policy, can only be effective if we and our partners have access to the necessary resources to provide for such equitable relief, and have equal access to all disaster victims.

**3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint**

Humanitarian aid will be given according to the need of individuals, families and communities. Notwithstanding the right of NGHAs to espouse particular political or religious opinions, we affirm that assistance will not be dependent on the adherence of the recipients to those opinions. We will not tie the promise, delivery or distribution of assistance to the embracing or acceptance of a particular political or religious creed.

**4. We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy**

NGHAs are agencies which act independently from governments. We therefore formulate our own policies and implementation strategies and do not seek to implement the policy of any government, except in so far as it coincides with our own independent policy. We will never knowingly - or through negligence - allow ourselves, or our employees, to be used to gather information of a political, military or economically sensitive nature for governments or other bodies that may serve purposes other than those which are strictly humanitarian, nor will we act as instruments of foreign policy of donor governments. We will use the assistance we receive to respond to needs and this assistance should not be driven by the need to dispose of donor commodity surpluses, nor by the political interest of any particular donor. We value and promote the voluntary giving of labour and finances by concerned individuals to support our work and recognize the independence of action promoted by such voluntary motivation. In order to protect our independence we will seek to avoid dependence upon a single funding source.

**5. We shall respect culture and custom**

We will endeavour to respect the culture, structures and customs of the communities and countries we are working in.

**6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities**

All people and communities - even in disaster - possess capacities as well as vulnerabilities. Where possible, we will strengthen these capacities by employing local staff, purchasing local materials and trading with local companies. Where possible, we will work through local NGHAs as partners in planning and implementation, and co-operate with local government structures where appropriate. We will place a high priority on the proper co-ordination of our emergency responses. This is best done within the countries concerned by those most directly involved in the relief operations, and should include representatives of the relevant UN bodies.

**7. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid**

Disaster response assistance should never be imposed upon the beneficiaries. Effective relief and lasting rehabilitation can best be achieved where the intended beneficiaries are involved in the design, management and implementation of the assistance programme will strive to achieve full community participation in our relief and rehabilitation programmes.

**8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs**

All relief actions affect the prospects for long term development, either in a positive or a negative fashion. Recognizing this, we will strive to implement relief programmes which actively reduce the beneficiaries' vulnerability to future disasters and help create sustainable lifestyles. We will pay particular attention to environmental concerns in the design and management of relief programmes. We will also endeavour to minimize the negative impact of humanitarian assistance, seeking to avoid long-term beneficiary dependence upon external aid.

**9. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources**

We often act as an institutional link in the partnership between those who wish to assist and those who need assistance during disasters. We therefore hold ourselves accountable to both constituencies. All our dealings with donors and beneficiaries shall reflect an attitude of openness and transparency. We recognize the need to report on our activities, both from a financial perspective and the perspective of effectiveness. We recognize the obligation to ensure appropriate monitoring of aid distributions and to carry out regular assessments of the impact of disaster assistance. We will also seek to report, in an open fashion, upon the impact of our work, and the factors limiting or enhancing that impact. Our programmes will be based upon high standards of professionalism and expertise in order to minimize the wasting of valuable resources.

**10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognize disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects**

Respect for the disaster victim as an equal partner in action should never be lost. In our public information we shall portray an objective image of the disaster situation where the capacities and aspirations of disaster victims are highlighted, and not just their vulnerabilities and fears. While we will cooperate with the media in order to enhance public response, we will not allow external or internal demands for publicity to take precedence over the principle of maximizing overall relief assistance. We will avoid competing with other disaster response agencies for media coverage in situations where such coverage may be to the detriment of the service provided to the beneficiaries or to the security of our staff or the beneficiaries.

*Note*

1. Sponsored by: Caritas Internationalis\*, Catholic Relief Services\*, The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies\*, International Save the Children Alliance\*, Lutheran World Federation\*, Oxfam\*, The World Council of Churches\*, The International Committee of the Red Cross. (\* members of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response)

## **V. Habitat for Humanity Vision, Mission and Principles**

### **VISION**

**A world where everyone has a decent place to live.**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

**Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.**

### **PRINCIPLES**

#### **1. Demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ.**

We undertake our work to demonstrate the love and teachings of Jesus Christ, acting in all ways in accord with the belief that God's love and grace abound for all, and that we must be "hands and feet" of that love and grace in our world. We believe that, through faith, the miniscule can be multiplied to accomplish the magnificent, and that, in faith, respectful relationships can grow among all people.

#### **2. Focus on shelter.**

We have chosen, as our means of manifesting God's love, to create opportunities for all people to live in decent, durable shelter. We put faith into action by helping to build, renovate or preserve homes, and by partnering with others to accelerate and broaden access to affordable housing as a foundation for breaking the cycle of poverty.

#### **3. Advocate for affordable housing.**

In response to the prophet Micah's call to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God, we promote decent, affordable housing for all, and we support the global community's commitment to housing as a basic human right. We will advocate for just and fair housing policy to eliminate the constraints that contribute to poverty housing. And, in all of our work, we will seek to put shelter on hearts and minds in such powerful ways that poverty housing becomes socially, politically and religiously unacceptable.

#### **4. Promote dignity and hope.**

We believe that no one lives in dignity until everyone can live in dignity. We believe that every person has something to contribute and something to gain from creating communities in which all people have decent, affordable places to live. We believe that dignity and hope are best achieved through equitable, accountable partnerships.

#### **5. Support transformational and sustainable development.**

We view our work as successful when it transforms lives and promotes positive and lasting social, economic and spiritual change within a community; when it is based on mutual trust and fully shared accomplishment; and when it demonstrates responsible stewardship of all resources entrusted to us.

## **VI. Interfaith Advocacy Toolkit**