

Basic Operating Rules for Humanitarian Organisations Working in Pakistan¹

The present Basic Operating Rules provide guidance to humanitarian organisations to enhance our ability to access and assist persons affected by armed conflict, in accordance with well-established and recognised humanitarian principles and in a manner respectful of local culture and traditions.

Humanity

The sole purpose of humanitarian activities is to prevent and alleviate suffering, wherever it may be found, to protect life and to ensure respect for the human being.

Impartiality

Humanitarian activities must be carried out without discrimination as to ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political opinion, race or religion. They endeavour to relieve suffering and are guided solely by need, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

Humanitarian activities must be carried out without taking sides in hostilities or engaging at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

Humanitarian activities must remain autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any other actor may hold with regard to the areas where humanitarian activities are being implemented.

In order to comply with these principles, and be seen as doing so, we undertake to operate in accordance with the following Basic Operating Rules.

1. We will engage with all relevant parties to secure and maintain access to the population in need.
2. Our vehicles will only be used to transport persons or goods that have direct connection with our activities.
3. We will not transport weapons or uniformed personnel in our vehicles. We will not allow weapons in our premises. The only exception to this rule is security measures for persons identified as being at high-risk.
4. We will only use armed escorts as a measure of last resort if all other methods for ensuring our safety have been exhausted.
5. Our equipment, supplies and premises will be used exclusively for purposes connected to our activities.
6. We will take the necessary measures to ensure that our assistance reaches its intended beneficiaries and is not diverted for military, political, sectarian or other purposes. We will make every effort to involve local and beneficiary populations in the design and implementation of our activities.
7. We will report any theft, diversion or misuse of our equipment and supplies to the relevant authorities for investigation and appropriate follow up action.
8. We will refuse improper demands from any actor for relief items, assets or cash nor will we make contributions in cash or in kind to any parties or actors.
9. We will report threats, harassment, intimidation, violence and abduction of our workers to the relevant authorities for investigation and appropriate follow up action.

¹ Approved by HCT, and agreed upon by the UN Agencies participating in the Humanitarian Response to respect BOR in practice.

10. We will recruit workers on the basis of suitability and qualification for the job and not on the basis of political or any other considerations.

While fully committed to the humanitarian imperative, we will consider curtailing and, in extreme cases, suspending our activities if we are unable to operate in accordance with humanitarian principles and the present Basic Operating Rules. In such circumstances the humanitarian community will continue its advocacy efforts and explore alternative humanitarian options.

We expect and call upon relevant parties to comply with international humanitarian law and human rights law, including the obligations to respect humanitarian actors and to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian services, supplies, equipment and personnel. We also call upon all actors to refrain from undermining our capacity to operate in a principled manner.

A Steering Committee, established by signatory organisations, will oversee adherence to the present rules and promote a coordinated and coherent approach by signatories to the issues addressed herein. The Steering Committee will report regularly to the humanitarian Country Team.

Islamabad, 28 April 2009