



LESSONS LEARNED REPORT

DREF Operation: Fire in Nightclub

North Macedonia

August, 2025



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INTRODUCTION

To showcase the effective implementation of the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) operation in response to the fire in a nightclub in Kočani and to critically reflect on areas requiring further improvement, the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia (RCRNM) organized a comprehensive three-day Lessons Learned Workshop (LLW). This event served as a retrospective evaluation of the DREF operation's impact, examining operational strengths, encountered challenges and opportunities for strategic enhancement. The main goal was to improve future disaster response by using lessons learned and feedback from stakeholders to strengthen humanitarian programmes.

Supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Country Cluster Delegation to Central and South-Eastern Europe (CCD CSEE), the workshop brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- 1 RCRNM:** Mobile team coordinators and front-line volunteers who were directly engaged in the field response.
- 2 Government authorities:** Representatives from the Crisis Management Centre.
- 3 Local government structures:** Members of the Territorial Fire Brigade Kočani.
- 4 Academic institutions:** Representatives from public universities.
- 5 Healthcare professionals:** Nurses from the General Hospital in Kočani who were involved in the emergency medical response.
- 6 Civil society actors:** Members of the Association of Volunteer Fire Brigade Kočani and licensed professionals from the Chamber of Psychologists of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The LLW was guided by the following core objectives:



To capture and apply key lessons that can improve the quality, impact and scalability of DREF-supported operations by the RCRNM, especially in emergency preparedness and response.



To add to global learning on how emergency response mechanisms work in real situations, using the fire in Kočani as a case example.



To help develop practical tools and methods that turn lessons learned into concrete actions, making future responses by National Societies faster and more effective.

OVERVIEW OF THE DREF OPERATION

On 16 March 2025, a devastating fire broke out at the Pulse nightclub in Kočani, North Macedonia, during a live concert, resulting in 62 deaths, many of whom were minors, and over 193 injuries. The fire spread rapidly due to the use of indoor pyrotechnics and a lack of basic safety measures in the overcrowded venue, which hosted around 500-650 people in space designed for only 250. This tragedy stands as the deadliest fire in the country's modern history and one of the most tragic nightclub disasters in Europe in recent memory.

In the wake of the tragedy, the RCRNM launched an emergency response operation with the support of the IFRC through DREF. The operation was launched on 29 March 2025 and implemented over four months, concluding on 31 July 2025. The intervention prioritized psychosocial support (PSS), first aid, emergency logistics and community-based recovery initiatives, and it played a critical role in mitigating the social and emotional impact of the fire, while laying the groundwork for longer-term mental health support systems in the region.

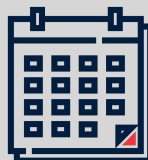


DREF IN NUMBERS



CHF 155K

total DREF allocation



4 MONTHS

duration



KOČANI

and surrounding
municipalities,
with national-level
mobilization



CHF 2.3M

funds raised via
public donations



160

volunteers and staff
directly involved
in the emergency
response



140

licensed
psychologists
provided emergency
psychological first aid
and mental health
support



24

vehicles deployed for
field operations



10.338

calls received
through three
telephone helplines
activated in Štip,
Skopje and Kočani

ACHIEVEMENTS

Rapid Response and Deployment

The immediate deployment of mobile response teams from the Red Cross branches in Kočani, Štip and Skopje demonstrated the operational readiness and agility of the RCRNM. Within hours of the nightclub fire, trained personnel and volunteers were mobilized to deliver critical first aid, psychological first aid (PFA) and logistical support. Response teams established humanitarian aid and PSS stations in the vicinity of local hospitals treating the families having their children hospitalized, providing a vital bridge between emergency medical care and community recovery. These stations served as visible and trusted points of contact for families and others affected by the tragedy, providing a sense of support, connection and reassurance during a time of crisis.

The rapid deployment was not only an operational success but also a reflection of RCRNM's strategic preparedness, enabled through previous capacity-building investments. Additionally, mobile support units were established to assist bereaved families in the hometowns of the deceased, providing both logistical and emotional support during funeral services as well as traditional seven-day and forty-day memorials. These efforts were coordinated closely with the Red Cross Branch of Kočani to ensure compassionate and timely assistance. RCRNM also provided transport services for injured people following their discharge from hospitals, prioritizing those with mobility challenges or insufficient family support.

This immediate response helped stabilize the most acute humanitarian needs, restore a sense of safety and demonstrate early leadership in coordinating recovery efforts with local and national institutions.



Psychosocial Support and Community Healing

Recognizing the profound emotional and psychological impact of the fire in a nightclub in Kočani, RCRNM prioritized PSS as a central pillar of the operation. A dedicated Counselling Centre was opened at the Red Cross Branch of Kočani, offering weekday services to affected people and their families. Additionally, toll-free helplines were activated in Kočani, Štip and Skopje to extend mental health and informational support beyond geographical limitations.

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia, in collaboration with the Chamber of Psychologists and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), developed guidelines to support students, teachers and school staff in coping with the psychological aftermath of the disaster. These guidelines emphasized the importance of creating a supportive environment within schools, encouraging teachers to prioritize student welfare over academic testing and providing opportunities for students to express their feelings. This was especially important in the aftermath of the fire in a nightclub in Kočani, as many young people were directly or indirectly affected by the tragedy. Schools became central spaces for emotional support and stability, helping students and teachers process their grief, manage trauma and begin the path toward healing.

Youth-focused healing was further supported through peer workshops, facilitated by the Municipal Youth Council of Kočani, offering a safe space for young people to share and support each other. PSS was offered to injured individuals during their physical rehabilitation in Ponikva, seamlessly integrating mental health care into their comprehensive recovery journey. In parallel, RCRNM initiated preparatory work for the establishment of a Regional Mental Health Centre in Kočani, as part of the IFRC Emergency Appeal for Ukraine and Impacted Countries Crisis, aiming to provide long-term mental health services to the eastern region of the country.

Collectively, these interventions advanced community healing, built social resilience and positioned the RCRNM as a key actor in mental health and psychosocial response.



Volunteer Engagement and Training

The DREF operation underscored the centrality of trained volunteers in the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. A total of 160 Red Cross volunteers and staff were mobilized across the country, working in coordination with 140 licensed psychologists to deliver comprehensive support services. Volunteer debriefing sessions were also held to make sure front-line responders received the support they needed.

After the deployment, targeted training sessions on First Aid and PSS were held in Struga in June 2025, equipping responders with both technical and emotional preparedness for future engagements. These sessions were complemented by follow-up capacity-building workshops to consolidate learning and improve operational coherence. Volunteers served not only as responders but as emotional anchors within their communities, offering care and empathy. Their engagement during the response and recovery phases exemplified the spirit of solidarity and the impact of local capacity in crisis management.

Moreover, structured debriefing and recognition sessions ensured volunteer well-being was safeguarded, setting a positive precedent for future operations. The DREF-funded training and deployment also contributed to long-term institutional memory and preparedness within RCRNM, strengthening the volunteer base for future crises.



Resource Mobilization and Aid Distribution

A robust and highly visible resource mobilization campaign was launched nationally in the aftermath of the fire in Kočani, engaging individuals, private sector donors and institutional partners. The campaign resulted in an unprecedented fundraising total of MKD 159,124,171 (CHF 2,377,697) channelled toward relief and recovery support for the affected population. This achievement reflects both the trust placed in RCRNM by the public and the transparency and accountability mechanisms the organization maintains.

In parallel with financial mobilization, the RCRNM coordinated the in-kind distribution of essential relief items, including blankets, hygiene kits, mobility aids and food parcels. Coordination with external partners ensured that distributions were non-duplicative, needs-based and equitably delivered. This success also reinforced the RCRNM's auxiliary role to public authorities in emergencies, showcasing its ability to convene resources efficiently and ethically in times of crisis.

Additionally, RCRNM supplied clothing and footwear to numerous injured people upon their hospital discharge, addressing their immediate needs and supporting their dignified recovery.



CHALLENGES

Fragmented Crisis Coordination

The fire in a nightclub in Kočani revealed critical deficiencies in the architecture of national crisis coordination. Despite the rapid mobilization of humanitarian actors, including the RCRNM, coordination among institutions at the municipal and national levels lacked cohesion. The national Crisis Management System (CMS), although designed to serve as a unifying framework, demonstrated structural ambiguities regarding the division of roles and responsibilities. This resulted in delayed decision-making, parallel actions by different entities, and a lack of unified leadership in the crucial early hours of the disaster response.

In the absence of clearly delineated mandates, stakeholders such as the Fire Brigade, the Ministry of Health, local municipalities and civil society organizations often acted in silos. Coordination meetings, when held, were ad hoc and largely reactive. The absence of a lead coordinating entity with predefined authority to convene stakeholders and allocate roles added to the operational strain. Moving forward, this fragmentation emphasizes the urgent need for revisiting and restructuring the national CMS, particularly the development of emergency coordination blueprints that incorporate all relevant actors, including humanitarian organizations like the RCRNM, into a shared operating platform.



Legal and Procedural Barriers to Mobilizing Funds and Donations

The aftermath of the tragedy witnessed an extraordinary outpouring of solidarity from the public. However, legal and procedural hurdles significantly impeded the speed and effectiveness of financial resource mobilization. Several civil society associations, many of which were formed spontaneously in response to the tragedy, undertook fundraising campaigns to support the victims and their families. Unfortunately, due to existing legal provisions in North Macedonia, these associations were not exempt from income taxation on the funds they collected. As a result, these organizations encountered bureaucratic roadblocks that delayed their ability to disburse much-needed financial assistance.

In contrast, the RCRNM, recognized under national law as a humanitarian actor, was exempt from such taxation and therefore became the primary recipient of redirected donations. While this workaround ultimately benefited the affected population, it highlighted an acute legislative gap that restricts the capacity of civil society to respond in times of crisis. Delays in fund transfers exacerbated the suffering of families already grappling with grief, funeral costs and urgent medical expenses. This experience demonstrates the critical importance of developing fast-track, tax-exempt mechanisms for certified fundraising entities during declared or undeclared national emergencies.



Absence of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Rapid Deployment and Inter-Agency Cooperation

Another systemic weakness was the lack of SOPs to govern rapid deployment and inter-agency cooperation during large-scale emergencies. In the hours and days following the fire, the absence of a formalized response structure resulted in avoidable delays in team mobilization, resource sharing and field-level coordination. Different institutions operated using internal protocols without aligning them to a common national emergency framework. The result was operational confusion, particularly in determining who held jurisdiction over specific components of the response (e.g., PSS, medical transport, forensic coordination).

The lack of SOPs not only delayed the effective scaling up of support services but also risked duplicating efforts or leaving critical needs unmet. For example, while RCRNM was deploying PSS teams to local schools, the Ministry of Health was acting independently with little knowledge of ongoing activities. Such disconnects reduced the potential impact of providing mental health support to the General Hospital staff in Kočani. In the future, SOPs need to be jointly developed and tested through simulation exercises that include all relevant stakeholders, governmental, non-governmental and international partners, to ensure alignment in both mandates and field actions.



High Psychological Toll on First Responders

While significant attention was given to the psychosocial needs of affected and bereaved families, the emotional and psychological burden placed on first responders was no less severe. Firefighters, nurses, emergency medical teams and RCRNM staff were exposed to deeply traumatic sights. Many responders reported symptoms of psychological distress in the weeks following the incident, including insomnia, emotional numbness and acute anxiety. These conditions were often exacerbated by a lack of structured decompression or psychological support mechanisms tailored to frontline staff.

The burden extended to RCRNM volunteers, many of whom had no prior experience responding to mass casualty events. Despite their training in First Aid and PSS, the sheer emotional weight of the tragedy pushed many beyond their coping thresholds. Moreover, no formal mental health intervention was deployed to support responders at the institutional level, either by the Ministry of Health or the Centre for Crisis Management. This highlights the pressing need for integrating mental health and PSS into standard emergency response protocols, not as optional components, but as essential pillars of duty of care for responders. Structured debriefing sessions, trauma-informed peer support and access to professional counselling must be institutionalized for all frontline personnel.



Absence of a State of Emergency Declaration

A particularly constraining factor in the Kočani response was the lack of a formal state of emergency declaration, which significantly limited the capacity of national institutions to act swiftly and decisively. According to insights shared by the Centre for Crisis Management during the LLW, such a declaration would have granted the government broader legal and administrative powers to bypass bureaucratic delays, mobilize additional personnel and reallocate public resources more efficiently. The absence of this declaration meant that multiple ministries and local authorities were left to operate within the bounds of standard procedures, which are often too slow for acute crisis response.

Without the legal weight of a state of emergency, institutional mandates were constrained, slowing down inter-ministerial coordination and limiting the involvement of national assets such as military logistics, emergency reserve stocks, or surge medical support. Municipalities had to act independently, often with limited budgets and unclear authority. From a legal and policy standpoint, this incident reinforces the need to establish flexible, tiered emergency declaration mechanisms that can be activated rapidly in response to sudden-onset disasters, even at a subnational level. In parallel, awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts are needed to help municipal leaders recognize the procedural and protective advantages of declaring an emergency promptly.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening Enabling Environments for Rapid Response

There is an urgent need to modernize and harmonize national legislation governing disaster response, with a focus on three pillars: (1) legally recognizing and protecting emergency volunteers, including their rights, insurance and scope of engagement; (2) enabling tax-exempt, fast-track procedures for donation campaigns and emergency fund distribution and (3) operationalizing the Law on Crisis Management to allow for quicker activation of coordination structures, including the declaration of emergency when appropriate. These reforms must be inclusive of civil society voices, particularly humanitarian actors like RCRNM, during legislative review processes. Embedding clear legal mandates will reduce delays and confusion in future crises, while reinforcing institutional accountability.

Prioritizing Long-Term Psycho-social Recovery

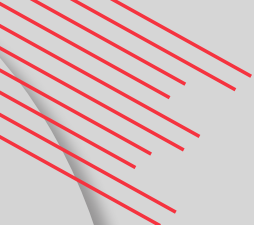
While PSS and PFA were provided in the immediate aftermath, gaps in long-term mental health support were evident. Addressing such widespread trauma requires a shift from short-term interventions to systemic, community-based mental health strategies.

Key among these is the integration of psychoeducation and emotional resilience programming into school curricula, enabling students, parents and teachers to develop coping mechanisms in both preparedness and recovery phases. At the same time, broadening access to sustained psychosocial services including counselling centres, mobile therapy units and youth mental health workshops must be prioritized through partnerships between government, humanitarian actors and mental health professionals. Furthermore, structured post-response care protocols for volunteers and staff should be institutionalized, including peer support networks, clinical follow-ups and psychological debriefing sessions.

Ensuring Ethical, Accurate and Unified Crisis Messaging

The response to the fire in Kočani revealed inconsistencies in media reporting and gaps in public communication, which at times contributed to misinformation, heightened public anxiety and distress among victims' families. The lack of standardized crisis communication protocols meant that government bodies, humanitarian organizations and media outlets operated with differing narratives, timelines and levels of sensitivity. In some cases, unverified reports and graphic images circulated online, undermining public trust and violating the dignity of those affected.

To mitigate these risks, there is a need to develop and implement national-level crisis communication protocols that establish clear roles, messages and ethical standards for all actors involved in disaster response. These protocols should include pre-approved message templates, designated spokespersons and rapid information verification systems.



Equally important is the training of media professionals in responsible, trauma-informed journalism, particularly in emergencies involving mass casualties or people in vulnerable situations. The establishment of a cross-sector communications task force, bringing together government public relations (PR) units, Red Cross communicators and media associations, would help ensure message consistency, protect affected populations from secondary trauma and improve overall transparency and accountability in crisis.

Institutionalizing Preparedness through Standardization and Partnerships

This DREF underscored the critical importance of consistent training and strong pre-established relationships between key institutions. While RCRNM staff and volunteers demonstrated high levels of professionalism and commitment, variability in training standards and a lack of formal agreements with service providers posed barriers to a fully integrated response. The absence of signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with hospitals, municipal authorities and school systems delayed coordinated actions in several operational areas.

To address these issues, the standardization of First Aid and PSS training must be institutionalized across sectors, ensuring that health workers, teachers, civil protection actors and volunteers share a common skillset, language and response approach. National and local authorities should collaborate with humanitarian actors to embed these trainings into their annual preparedness plans and simulation exercises. In parallel, the formalization of inter-agency cooperation frameworks through MoUs will ensure smoother deployment, shared resources, and clearly defined roles in future emergencies.

Finally, the co-creation and testing of SOPs for joint responses should be prioritized. These SOPs must reflect the complexity of real-life scenarios, such as mass casualty incidents and emphasize practical workflows, information-sharing channels and leadership hierarchies. Through these measures, future responses can be more timely, effective and cohesive, ultimately saving lives and reducing human suffering.



CONCLUSION

The fire in a nightclub in Kočani was a tragic and defining moment that exposed both the vulnerabilities and strengths of North Macedonia's emergency response system. Through the activation of the DREF, the RCRNM, with the support of the IFRC, was able to mobilize immediate humanitarian assistance, offer PSS to the affected population, and provide logistical and emotional aid to grieving families. Despite these achievements, the operation also revealed critical gaps in institutional coordination, legal preparedness, mental health infrastructure and communication mechanisms.

This operation brought to light the need for stronger legal frameworks, standardized operational procedures and sustained investment in community-based mental health services. Most importantly, it emphasized the human dimension of emergency response, volunteers, first responders, families and affected people, whose resilience and commitment underscored the heart of this operation.

By documenting these findings and articulating clear, actionable recommendations, this report aims to serve as a blueprint for strengthening future disaster preparedness and response in North Macedonia. It calls upon all stakeholders, governmental, humanitarian and civil society, to translate these lessons into policy and practice, ensuring that future emergencies are met with greater speed, coordination, compassion and care.



Сплотени

Гори во нас еден оган
Еден оган неизгаснат
Не лански туку Кочански
Тлее
Како старци млади не белее

И еве нè, еве нè болуваме заедно
Еден по еден
И сите заедно
Сплотени во болката
Растопени во школката
Со рацете ширум отворени како богомолката

Не избегаме од огнот
Туку ги вложивме сите снаги
И се она што го знаеме и умееме
Да бидеме луѓе оти човек премалку беше да
се биде
Оти секој од нас луѓе виде
Луѓе со отклучени духовни стражи

Станавме одеднаш и жени и мажи
А кога застанавме видовме дека сме надлуѓе
Барем за момент
До кај што пуштивме домет

И еве сме се рехабилитираме
Преку подадена рака
Не за заработка туку за соработка
Преку отворена врата
Преку добра волја
Преку одиграна уште една животна ролја

Во животот Жртвата е неизбежна
З ж - живот, жртва- неизбежна тријажа
Сите ние ја дадовме!
Заедно , за едно
за нова надеж
За нова младеж
Со сплотеност
За нов плод да се роди
Низ надеж да не прооди
Низ болката да не породи

Author: Nikola Dukoski

United

A single flame within us glows,
Unyielding fire that never slows
Not last year's spark, but Kochani's fire,
Still smoldering, soft, yet burning bright.
Like aged souls that time won't pale,
And here we are in pain, yet near,
One by one,
And all sincere
Bound in sorrow's quiet tide,
Melted in a common hide,
With open arms, like saints we stand or
hands of prayer across the land.
We did not run from fire's breath,
But gave our strength, defied the death.
All we knew and all we dared,
To be more than human — for "man" was
too bare.
Each of us saw deeper things,
Souls unguarded, spirit wings.
In that moment — women, men —
We rose, and dared to rise again.
And when we stopped, we saw anew,
We had become beyond what's true
More than human, for a while,
As far as stretched our hope and trial.
And now we mend, we softly rise,
Through offered hands, not crafted lies
Not for profit, not for pride,
But side by side,
Through doors flung wide,
Through will made good, through roles
well-played,
Through silent strength that does not fade.
For sacrifice, it haunts our name
Three sacred S's in life's flame:
Soul. Sacrifice. Saving lives.
We gave it all.
Together. For One.
For hope reborn beneath the sun.
For youth anew, for future's seed,
In unity, we plant the need
That fruit may bloom,
That hope may tread,
That pain may birth the dawn ahead.

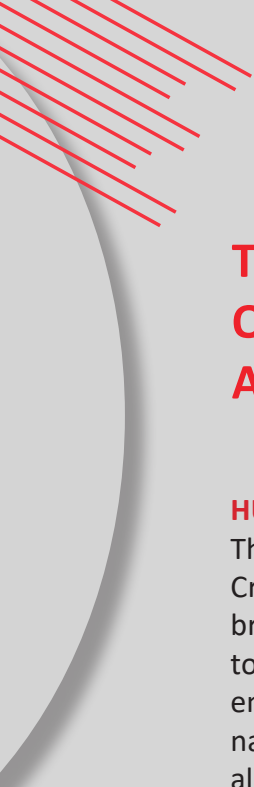


ANNEX 1: AGENDA

Sunday, 13 July	Day One: Operational Reflection and Coordination
14:00 – 15:30	Welcome and Introduction, What was done? How did we respond? Red Cross perspective
15:30-15:45	<i>Break</i>
15:45 – 16:15	Overview of the operation, partnerships and collaborations
16:15 – 17:00	Wrap up (energizer) and closure of the day
18:30 – 19:30	<i>Dinner</i>
Monday, 14 July	Day Two: Institutional response and implemented activities
08:00 – 09:00	<i>Breakfast</i>
09:30 – 09:45	Opening of the day and recap
09:45 – 10:45	Interventions – group work (successes and innovations)
10:45 – 11:00	<i>Break</i>
11:00 – 13:30 Red Cross and Macedonian Chamber of Psychologists and MHPSS activities	Work with first responders School-based interventions and youth clubs Challenges in delivering MHPSS Long-term psychosocial recovery
13:30 – 14:30	<i>Lunch</i>
14:30 – 15:45	PowerPoint Presentations of implemented activities of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, General Hospital Kochani, Territorial Fire Brigade Kochani, DPD Kochani (15 min each)
15:45 – 16:15	Discussions
16:15 – 16:30	<i>Break</i>
16:30 – 17:00	Institutional networking activity – problem solving
17:00 – 17:30	Positive examples and success stories
Tuesday, 15 July	Day Three: Lessons learned, good practices, recommendations and action planning for future responses
08:00 – 09:00	<i>Breakfast</i>
09:00 – 09:15	Opening of the day and recap
09:15 – 11:00	Lessons learnt and recommendations (group work)
11:00 – 11:15	<i>Break</i>
11:15 – 13:00	Planning and readiness for future responses

ANNEX 2: PARTICIPANT LIST

Name and Surname	Organization/Institution
Suzana Tuneva Paunovska	Secretary of City Red Cross of Skopje
Sandra Tomovska	Field Coordinator, Migrants Programme
Nikola Dukoski	Psychologist
Kristijan Gramov	Disaster Response Team Member
Nadezhda Angelova	Nurse from the General Hospital in Kočani
Dragan Apostolov	Commander from the Territorial Fire Department Kočani
Zlatko Iliev	President of the Kočani Volunteer Fire Department
Aneta Koceva	Secretary of the the Red Cross Branch of Kočani
Simona Gjorgjeva	Psychologist from the Red Cross Branch of Kočani
Bojana Postolova	Psychologist from the Red Cross Branch of Kočani
Aleksandra Sokolova	Psychologist/Volunteer from the Red Cross Branch of Kočani
Marija Velichkova	Psychologist from the elementary school Kiril and Metodij, Kočani
Marjan Mitev	Red Cross Štip
Filip Kuzmanovski	Red Cross Kumanovo
Floriye Sinani	Red Cross Gostivar
Katerina Naumoska	Red Cross Ohrid
Veroljub Dodeski	Red Cross Veles
Hristina Stojkoska	Red Cross Bitola
Mirjana Jovanovska Stojanovska	President of Chamber of Psychologists
Ali Samet	National Disaster Management Coordinator, the RCNM
Emira Ramadani	National Coordinator for Mental Health and PSS, the RCNM
Ivona Gjeorgjeva	Coordinator for Mental Health and PSS, City Red Cross of Skopje
Ajshe Isljam	Psychologist/Volunteer
Dejan Smokovski	Psychologist/Volunteer
Ferik Beluli	Representative of the Crisis Management Centre of the Republic of North Macedonia
Ali Redzeqi	Representative of the Crisis Management Centre of the Republic of North Macedonia
Fatima Smajlovic	Disaster Management Senior Officer, the IFRC
Sara Hussain	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER) Officer, the IFRC



THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

HUMANITY

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

IMPARTIALITY

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

NEUTRALITY

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

INDEPENDENCE

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

UNITY

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

UNIVERSALITY

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.