

Learning Resources

# IR Beliefs, Values and Code of Conduct

Islamic Relief Worldwide



الإغاثة الإسلامية  
*Secours Islamique*

Islamic Relief is dedicated to alleviating the poverty and suffering of the world's poorest people.

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**Part**

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**1**

**1.3 IR Code of Conduct**

## 1.3 IR Code of Conduct

### Islamic Relief Organisational Beliefs, Values and Codes of Conduct in the Management of its Programmes & Field Offices

The nature and role of the Ethical Code of Conduct

Islamic Relief's Vision and Mission

Islamic Relief's Values and beliefs.

External Codes of Conduct to which we subscribe

The Islamic Relief Code of Conduct

## 1. The Nature and Role of the Ethical Code of Conduct

**As an international humanitarian organisation founded on Islamic principles and values, we believe it is important to clearly state the code by which we operate.**

Islamic Relief staff and board of trustees and senior management have embraced the ethical values declared herein, and consider the code a working document. It is available for distribution to interested stakeholders, partners and donors.

In a general sense, ethics is concerned with the development of reasonable and universal standards of human conduct. In Islam, ethics governs all aspects of life and specifically addresses such principles as truthfulness, honesty, trust, sincerity, brotherhood, and justice. The conditions for everlasting success or *falah* in Islam are the same for all Muslims, whether conducting business or carrying out their daily activities. Without specifying any situational context, Allah describes people who attain success as those we are "inviting to all that is good (*khayr*), enjoining in what is right (*ma'aruf*) and forbidding what is wrong (*munkar*) (3: 104).

The Qur'an uses the term *taqwa* to describe the human quality that encompasses the concept of the ideal ethical value. It is referred to in various forms over two hundred times in the Qur'an, and represents, on the one hand, the moral grounding that underlies human action, while on the other, it signifies the ethical conscience which makes human beings aware of their responsibilities to God and society. Applied in a broader social context, *taqwa* becomes the universal, ethical mark of a truly moral community:

*"O humankind! We have created you out of male and female and constituted you into different groups and societies, so that you may come to know each other - the noblest of you, in the sight of God, are the ones possessing taqwa." (49: 11-13)*

*More specifically, when addressing the first Muslims, the Qur'an refers to them as 'a community of the middle way, witnesses to humankind, just as the Messenger (i.e. Muhammad) is a witness for you' (2: 132).*

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**The Islamic Relief Ethical Code of Conduct has been developed in order to:**

- Provide moral, ethical and professional guidance to all our employees and partners we work with.
- Set standards for the organisation against which we can measure and evaluate our performance
- Inform our beneficiaries and donors of the standards they should expect from the services we provide.

**Who will implement the code and how?**

The code will be implemented and embodied by our offices, staff and partners by the following means:

- Our policies and procedures will reflect and embody the code
- Our induction and training of staff will ensure that they are made aware of the underlying beliefs, values, standards and codes of conduct that underpin our work.
- Our Quality Assurance System will inform offices clearly how the code should be reflected in action and improved performance.
- In developing relationships and agreements with partner organisations, respect for, and adherence to our code of conduct and quality standards will be established through training and agreement.

**How this implementation will be monitored and by whom?**

Implementation will be monitored by means of IR's monitoring & evaluation framework, which includes both local review and evaluation of programme work and also external periodic appraisal and evaluation of both our programmes and offices.

## 2. Islamic Relief's Vision & Mission

### Vision:

**A caring world where the basic requirements of people in need are fulfilled.**

### Mission

Inspired by Islamic values, Islamic Relief will be a worldwide role model in:

- assisting individuals, groups and institutions to develop safe and caring communities
- helping the poor and suffering to enjoy self reliance with dignity
- making it possible for those who wish support others reach those who need their help

To achieve this, we will raise funds, build partnerships and communicate key messages as we:

- work to mitigate disasters, prepare for their occurrence and respond by providing relief and rehabilitation
- promote sustainable development through programmes in education, health & nutrition, water & sanitation and income generation
- advocate on behalf of the poor and suffering

We will do all this without regard to race, gender or belief, and without expecting anything in return.

*“And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive,- (Saying), “We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.” (Qura’an Surah 76 verses 8-9)*

### 3. Islamic Relief's Fundamental Beliefs and Values

**The Islamic Relief Code of Conduct emerges out of the fundamental values and beliefs of the organisation and together form our Conceptual Framework which governs both how we see the world (Iman) and how we work within it (Suluk).**

The values and beliefs Islamic Relief adhere to stem from:

- The ideological and spiritual inspiration contained in divine revelation and revealed through all of the Creator's messengers from Adam to Muhammad, peace be upon Them, and in the scriptures and guidance contained in revealed texts, culminating with the Qu'ran.
- They also stem from the knowledge and practice gained over the years from dedicated and principled humanitarian workers, academics and professionals from all faiths and regions who have developed universally recognised good practice in this field

In relation to our mission of providing humanitarian and developmental assistance to poor people, we believe in:

#### **Beliefs**

##### **i. The right to life with dignity**

This right is reflected in the legal measures concerning the right to life, to an adequate standard of living and to freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. We understand an individual's right to life to entail the right to have steps taken to preserve life where it is threatened, and a corresponding duty on others to take such steps. Implicit in this is the duty not to withhold or frustrate the provision of life-saving assistance. In addition, international humanitarian law makes specific provision for assistance to civilian populations during conflict, obliging states and other parties to agree to the provision of humanitarian and impartial assistance when the civilian population lacks essential supplies

##### **ii. The right to humanitarian assistance.**

Islam teaches us that it is not only our duty to provide for the poor and afflicted out of a sense of social justice. The poor, whatever faith or nation they belong to, have a right over our wealth and we will be held accountable in this world and the next for the rights that living creatures, both humans and animals have over us. God describes the role of human beings in the Qu'ran as *Khulafaa* – which can be translated as Custodians. In reality we do not own resources, we are only custodians over them, and we will answer to the real owner of them as to whether we fulfilled the needs of those who had rights over our wealth. The payment of Zakah tax on our wealth to the poor just represents the minimum required to remain classified as a Muslim. Islamic jurisprudence is also built around the principles of protection of life, dignity, honour, security and lawful provision.



### **iii. Poverty is avoidable and needs to be tackled at its causes**

We should not be fatalistic about poverty. God says in the Qu'ran: 'We do not wrong them, but surely they wrong themselves'. In many cases poverty and suffering is the result of human beings' own misguided actions and policies. Tackling the causes of poverty often involves integrated development approaches involving more than one sector and several groups in society.

It also involves at a global level, rising above national and religious differences and selfishness to solve global problems that are causing poverty.

### **iv. Accountability**

We are accountable to:

- our Creator in all that we do.
- our supporters for the way we utilise their contributions.
- our beneficiaries to provide the assistance they require at the time they need it in an appropriate manner.
- our colleagues to carry out our responsibilities to the best of our abilities.
- the authorities to fulfil legal requirements.

### **v. Charity takes many forms and degrees**

Islam teaches us that any deed that is done for the pleasure of the Creator and His creation can be considered as charity, even if it might be removing a harmful item from the path.

### **vi. We believe in peaceful resolution of conflict**

We believe in a world that seeks to resolve conflicts through peaceful negotiation.

### **vii. Development**

Development is an integrated process involving a balance of material, intellectual and spiritual empowerment that is in harmony with the other communities, other life forms that inhabit the planet, the environment and the will of the Creator.

### **viii. Empowerment**

We believe that it is the duty of Islamic Relief to ensure all our operations are designed to empower local communities and people to the maximum extent they can in taking control over their lives and services and maximising their full potential as human beings.

## Values

### **i. We are People Driven**

**We will provide help as required to the best of our abilities. In doing so we will ensure:**

- We preserve our beneficiaries' dignity.
- We ensure that our beneficiaries are involved in the design and delivery of projects to help them.
- We communicate with our supporters courteously.
- We deal with our colleagues with respect.
- We abide by the laws and customs of the environments in which we work.
- That staff are empowered to carry out their responsibilities.

### **ii. Pioneering & Risk Taking**

In being responsive to people in need, we will adapt to changing circumstances. To achieve this we will:

- Constantly develop innovative ways to help people in need.
- Overcome challenges to reach those in need wherever they may be.
- Be responsive to our colleagues to ensure we deliver help to those who need it even when this is going to inconvenience us.

### **iii. Neutrality**

When offering help in conflict areas we will remain neutral between the warring parties. We will be independent when taking decisions in the best interests of our beneficiaries.

### **iv. Integrity**

We will:

- act with sincerity, honesty and truthfulness.
- always conduct our work according to best practice.
- ensure the means we use will be based on the highest moral values.

### **v. Diversity**

We will work alongside others, to help the world's poorest people regardless, at all times, of race colours, colour gender or belief.

## vi. Co-operation & Partnership

We will seek to co-operate and co-ordinate with others to achieve efficiency in our vision of helping people in need.

## 4. External Codes of Conduct to which we subscribe

**Islamic Relief is currently signed up to three international codes of conduct;**

- The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, [see section 2.8.4](#)
- The Sphere Standards - Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response [see section 2.8.5](#)
- The People in Aid Code of Good Practice - The following link will enable you to access the People in Aid code of good practice.  
<http://www.peopleinaid.org/pool/files/code/code-en.pdf>

## 5. The Islamic Relief Code of Conduct

**As an Islamic organisation founded on the Islamic principles set forth in the Qur'an and Shari'ah, we are dedicated to the promotion of tolerance and better understanding among the peoples of the world and transparency in all our actions.** We, the board of trustees and senior management and employees of Islamic Relief shall uphold the following ethical standards:

### **In Our Humanitarian Work:**

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

We reaffirm our belief in the humanitarian imperative and its primacy. By this we mean the belief that all possible steps should be taken to prevent or alleviate human suffering arising out of conflict or calamity, and that civilians so affected have a right to protection and assistance. It is on the basis of this belief, reflected in international humanitarian law and based on the principle of humanity, that we offer our services as humanitarian agencies. We will act in accordance with the principles of humanity and impartiality, and with the other principles set out in the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief (1994).

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 recognise our obligation to provide humanitarian assistance 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 recognise 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 recognise 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. We 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. Recognising 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 minimise 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 recognise the need to report on our activities, both from a financial perspective and the perspective of effectiveness. We recognise 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 minimise the wasting of valuable resources.

**10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise 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 maximising 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.

**11. We will endeavour to uphold the SPHERE Minimum Standards for Disaster Response**

By adhering to the standards set out in chapters 1 - 5 we commit ourselves to make every effort to ensure that people affected by disasters have access to at least the minimum requirements (water, sanitation, food, nutrition, shelter and health care) to satisfy their basic right to life with dignity. To this end we will continue to advocate that governments and other parties meet their obligations under international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law.

We expect to be held accountable to this commitment and undertake to develop systems for accountability within our respective agencies, consortia and federations. We acknowledge that our fundamental accountability must be to those we seek to assist.

**12. State the standards that apply in our humanitarian assistance work and inform beneficiaries of them**

We will inform, and consult with stakeholders, particularly beneficiaries and staff, about the standards adopted, programmes to be undertaken and mechanisms available for

addressing concerns.

### **13. Enable beneficiaries and staff to make complaints and to seek redress in safety**

Management will enable beneficiaries and staff to report complaints and seek redress safely

**In our Programme work we will:**

### **14. We will promote empowerment amongst the communities we work with.**

We stand in solidarity with poor and marginalised people, and support their efforts to take control of their own lives and fulfil their rights, responsibilities and aspirations. We ensure that key participants and organisations representing affected people are partners in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of our programmes.

### **15. We work with Partners**

We are committed to working in collaboration and complementarily with individuals, organisations, governments and other institutions which can contribute to the prevention and resolution of conflict.

We work with others to maximise the impact of our programs make them sustainable and ensure community empowerment. We will build alliances and partnerships with those who complement our organisational strategies, are able to adopt effective programming approaches, and/or who might fulfil rights and reduce poverty through policy change and enforcement.

### **16. Ensure Accountability and Promote Responsibility**

We seek ways to be held accountable to poor and marginalised people whose rights are denied. We identify individuals and institutions with an obligation toward poor and marginalised people, and support and encourage their efforts to fulfil their responsibilities. We also monitor and evaluate our projects and programmes in order to ensure accountability to our beneficiaries, donors and staff and ensure our resources are being used in the most effective way.

### **17. Address Discrimination**

In our programs and offices we will not tolerate discrimination and the denial of rights based on sex, race, nationality, ethnicity, class, religion, age, physical ability, illness, caste, opinion or sexual orientation.

### **18. Promote Non-violent Resolution of Conflicts**

We promote just and non-violent means for preventing and resolving conflicts at all levels, noting that such conflicts contribute to poverty and the denial of rights. In particular, we believe sustainable conflict transformation is dependent upon effective co-operation with individuals and organisations within conflict-affected societies.

### **19. Provide a safe and secure environment for children**

It is Islamic Relief policy to provide a safe and secure environment in which children can thrive and develop, and where all aspects of their welfare are protected.

### **20. Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

Our Field Offices and staff have a responsibility to ensure that beneficiaries are treated with dignity and respect and that certain minimum standards of behavior are observed in order to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. (See standards on Protection)

### **21. Seek Sustainable Results**

As we address underlying causes of poverty and rights denial, we develop and use approaches that ensure our programmes result in lasting and fundamental improvements in the lives of the poor and marginalised with whom we work.

### **22. We seek an integrated approach to development**

We will seek to ensure that wherever possible holistic and integrated approaches are adopted to poverty alleviation that take into account the fact that poverty is usually a result of multiple interrelated factors. Through properly designed programme strategies our various programmes must complement each other to seek maximum impact in alleviating poverty.

### **23. We see institutional learning as central to our mission of improving the lives of poor people.**

Learning from our programming experiences is central to improving the services we provide and making them more effective. We are committed to building up our collective pool of knowledge, institutional memory and experience through undertaking regular reviews and evaluations of our work and developing the skills of all our staff. Furthermore, we endeavour to share the lessons we learn with relevant individuals and organisations who may benefit from them and, in turn, learn from the experiences and knowledge of others.

### **24. Promoting People with Disabilities**

Consistent with its mission and the constituency it serves, IR offices will promote and monitor the inclusion of people with disabilities in programmes.

Disability inclusion strategies will be integrated into each stage of the programme process, from review of project proposals to implementation and evaluation, to ensure that projects foster participation and benefits for all affected groups, including disabled men, women, and children. Members will collaborate with local NGO partner organisations in the field on these efforts.

Programmes and activities should be held in accessible locations to the maximum extent feasible. Member agencies should plan financially to reasonably accommodate people with disabilities in member programs and activities.



**25. Implement these standards of conduct and service provision when working with partner organisations.**

Management and staff will ensure as far as possible that our codes of conduct and standards will be maintained and respected when we work through partners

**In Managing our Staff****26. We will consider Human resources to be an integral part of our strategic and operational plans**

Our human resources strategy is central to our organisational strategy. Our human resources strategy is long-term and encompasses every part of the organisation.

**27. We will ensure our human resource policies are effective, fair and transparent.**

We recognise that our policies must enable us to achieve both effectiveness in our work and good quality of working life for our staff. We do not aim to respond solely to minimum legal, professional or donor requirements.

**28. We see the adequate support, management and leadership of our staff as being key to our effectiveness.**

Our staff have a right to expect management which prepares them to do their job so we can, together, achieve our mission. Our management policies, procedures and training equip our managers to prepare and support staff in carrying out their role effectively, to develop their potential and to encourage and recognise good performance.

**29. We will encourage dialogue with our staff on matters likely to affect their employment and enhance the quality and effectiveness of our policies and practices.**

We recognise that effective development implementation and monitoring of human resources policies and practices rely on appropriate consultation and communication with the people who work for us. We aim to include all staff, whether salaried or contract, and volunteers in these processes.

**30. Our policies and practices aim to attract and seek a diverse workforce with the skills and capabilities to fulfil our requirements.**

Our recruitment and selection process tells candidates about our agency. How we recruit and select our staff significantly influences how effective they are in fulfilling our objectives.

**31. We shall promote learning, training and staff development throughout the organisation.**

We recognise the importance of relevant training, development and learning opportunities, both personal and professional to help staff work effectively and professionally. We aim to instil a culture of learning in the organisation so that we and

the staff can share our learning and develop together.

**32. The security, good health and safety of our staff are a prime responsibility of our organisation.**

We recognise that the work of relief and development agencies often places great demands on staff in conditions of complexity and risk. We have a duty of care to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of our staff before, during and on completion of their period of work with us.