



The humanitarian community in Lebanon is made up of United Nations (UN) agencies as well as national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – with various mandates and capacities. The Joint Operating Principles (JOPs) have been adopted by humanitarian organizations coordinated by the Lebanon Humanitarian Country Team under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator. Those include UN agencies as well as humanitarian members of the Lebanon Humanitarian and Development NGOs Forum (LHDF) and the Lebanon Humanitarian International NGO Forum (LHIF).

The JOPs outline internationally accepted principles governing the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection and puts forward common positions on their implementation in Lebanon.

### **Humanitarian principles**

United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) activities are guided by four humanitarian principles: humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. They are central to establishing and maintaining access to affected people.

- Humanity means human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.
- Neutrality means humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature.
- Impartiality means humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class, or political opinions.
- Independence means humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military, or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

All humanitarian workers must operate in strict adherence to humanitarian principles, including non-involvement in political or military activity, and in adherence to local laws and regulations.

The application of humanitarian principles in Lebanon means:

- Humanitarians assist all civilians in need, irrespective of status, on the basis of needs.
- Humanitarians strive to « do no harm », that is to avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of the presence of humanitarian organizations or the provision of assistance and services.
- Humanitarian organizations coordinate with all relevant authorities and communities. Moreover, humanitarian organizations seek engagement with all parties and stakeholders, including armed groups as necessary, to obtain access to populations in need.
- Humanitarians strive to ensure that work is conducted in an open and honest manner, being as clear as possible about objectives, activities and timeline.



- Humanitarian organizations and their staff should not be subject to any political, social or financial pressures, including interference in the selection and hiring processes of staff; types of intervention, locations of programs and targeting of beneficiaries. Further, humanitarian staff should not be subjected to violence, threats, harassment or intimidation.
- Humanitarian organizations have no tolerance for any corruption, theft, diversion of aid or misuse of humanitarian assets. Humanitarian actors will not provide payments or material support outside of the requirements of their programs or allow the use of humanitarian assets and premises for non-humanitarian purposes – including for purposes of obtaining access to affected people.
- Selection of beneficiaries is based on needs, using vulnerability and selection criteria defined by the agencies and relevant sectors in line with international standards, in consultation with the relevant technical authorities and affected communities.
- Safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access is a fundamental prerequisite to effective humanitarian action. Restrictions on movements and activities that suspend or prevent the delivery of humanitarian assistance and services imperils the lives of affected people. Exceptionally, authorities can (temporarily and geographically) restrict relief activities if imperative reasons exist, including security.
- The use of armed security escorts interferes with the ability of aid agencies to observe their neutrality and impartiality. Humanitarian agencies will only accept escorts from security forces as a last resort and on exceptional, case-by-case basis, in line with international guidelines. Decision to request or accept escorts by security forces must be made in coordination with other humanitarian actors and UNDSS through the appropriate fora, including the AWG and the HCT. It should not be imposed by civilian, security or military authorities and be based solely on humanitarian criteria.

### **Accountability to affected populations**

Principled and effective aid and protection assistance should place communities at the center. Accountability to Affected People (AAP) is the active commitment of humanitarians to ensure communities themselves have the power and influence to determine, and act on, their own priorities not only for response, but also for preparedness, recovery and reconstruction. In practice, this means that communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.

### **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

Humanitarian organizations have a ‘zero tolerance’ policy on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). The commitment to combat SEA is outlined in a strategy that ensures a collective approach and minimum standards. All people, especially the most vulnerable, should remain safe from SEA while receiving humanitarian assistance and services. If SEA does occur, they should have access to safe and confidential reporting channels and receive immediate and appropriate services and assistance.

### **Data privacy**



The management of data of beneficiaries (including data which may identify an individual) by humanitarian organizations is governed by a number of obligations and legal frameworks. While the level of those obligations may differ from one organization to the other, all stem from the right to privacy requiring that organizations receive explicit consent from beneficiaries to share such information. Any data exchange with national or sub-national authorities should adhere to applicable international law, data protection and privacy principles, and should be evaluated based on proper due diligence and risks assessments.

As a matter of principle, humanitarian organizations will not provide personal data of beneficiaries or list of beneficiaries to third parties.

### **Requests for information to NGOs**

NGOs are registered with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM), and the registration information is updated on a yearly basis. The information provided includes the organization's name, address, key personnel's contact information, sector of activities as well as budget. As such, national authorities, including security forces, are encouraged to coordinate with the MoIM to obtain relevant information on NGOs.

Lebanese authorities legitimately require information on humanitarian organizations' activities in order to verify credentials. Humanitarian organizations respect principles of accountability to national authorities and transparency. However, such requests should not result in interruption or disruption of humanitarian programming. As a matter of principle, and with a view to ensure that information is structured and coherent, NGOs should not have to not provide information beyond that which is given to the MoIM for the purposes of registration, unless in circumstances agreed by the Humanitarian Coordinator with relevant authorities.