

A stylized human figure is composed of several thick, red, brushstroke-like shapes. The head is a simple oval at the top. The torso is a long, horizontal bar. The arms are two diagonal bars extending downwards from the sides of the torso. The legs are two diagonal bars extending downwards from the bottom of the torso. The overall effect is that of a simple, expressive drawing made with paintbrushes.

Ethical questions in disaster relief interventions

International symposium on disaster ethics

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Outline

- Present examples of different relief operations in disasters, and the ethical questions posed
- Show the difficulty of answering to those questions through existing ethical framework
- Discuss how academics could help disaster relief workers

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed are my own. They do not represent any position or policy of Médecins Sans Frontières.

Haiti Earthquake: Amputations

Over 1000 amputations performed in the first weeks after the earthquake.

Foreign emergency medical team in non-ideal

Heavy personal, social, and economic burden



Amputations relevant factors

- Lowered standard of care:
 - Professionalism
- Uncertainty:
 - Medical guidelines
 - Individual preferences
 - magnitude of the needs
- Underestimation of existing capacities

Questions:

- Release from ordinary constraints: under which conditions?
- Professional standards in non-ideal circumstances
- Research

Arab uprisings: Trauma Hospital



Hundreds of demonstrators admitted in trauma hospitals during uprisings

Governmental efforts in Maintaining security

Confusing and Conflicting perspectives: peaceful civilian demonstrators, freedom fighters, criminals, terrorists, etc

Trauma in demonstrations relevant factors

- **Conflicting moral duties: Questions**
 - Individual health versus collective security
 - Neutrality challenge
- **Yemen & Syria cases:**
 - Protection of one patient versus protection of health facility
- **Definition of disaster?**
- **Legal standards in disaster relief?**
- **How much is too much?**

Ebola: admission to treatment

Fatality rates:
60-90%

Transmission
unknown risk
especially
high in health
care settings

Early symptoms:
unspecific

Availability of test in areas prone to epidemics: none



Ebola suspicion relevant factors

- Duty of care:

- National versus international duty of care
- Protection of one patient versus protection of health population
- Cost / Benefit calculation for macro triage choices

Questions

- Over-investment in emergencies?
- Role of ethicist when scientific uncertainty is so high?
- Role of research?

Central African Republic: Relief in insecure conditions

- Sectarian and criminal violence
- Pre-existing health, social, and economic vulnerability
- Necessary armed escort organized for civilians fleeing conflict areas towards neighbouring countries
- Refugee camps bound to become permanent



Relief in insecurity relevant factors

- Prioritization:
 - Relief aid in the midst of war crimes
- Complicity:
 - Protection of population movements while support of ethnic cleansing
 - Neutrality challenge

Questions

- What are aid's limitations in a man-made disaster?
- Should humanitarian actors advocate for military intervention?

Many disasters, same uncertainty

Arab Uprisings violence – 2012



Central African Republic Conflict – 2014

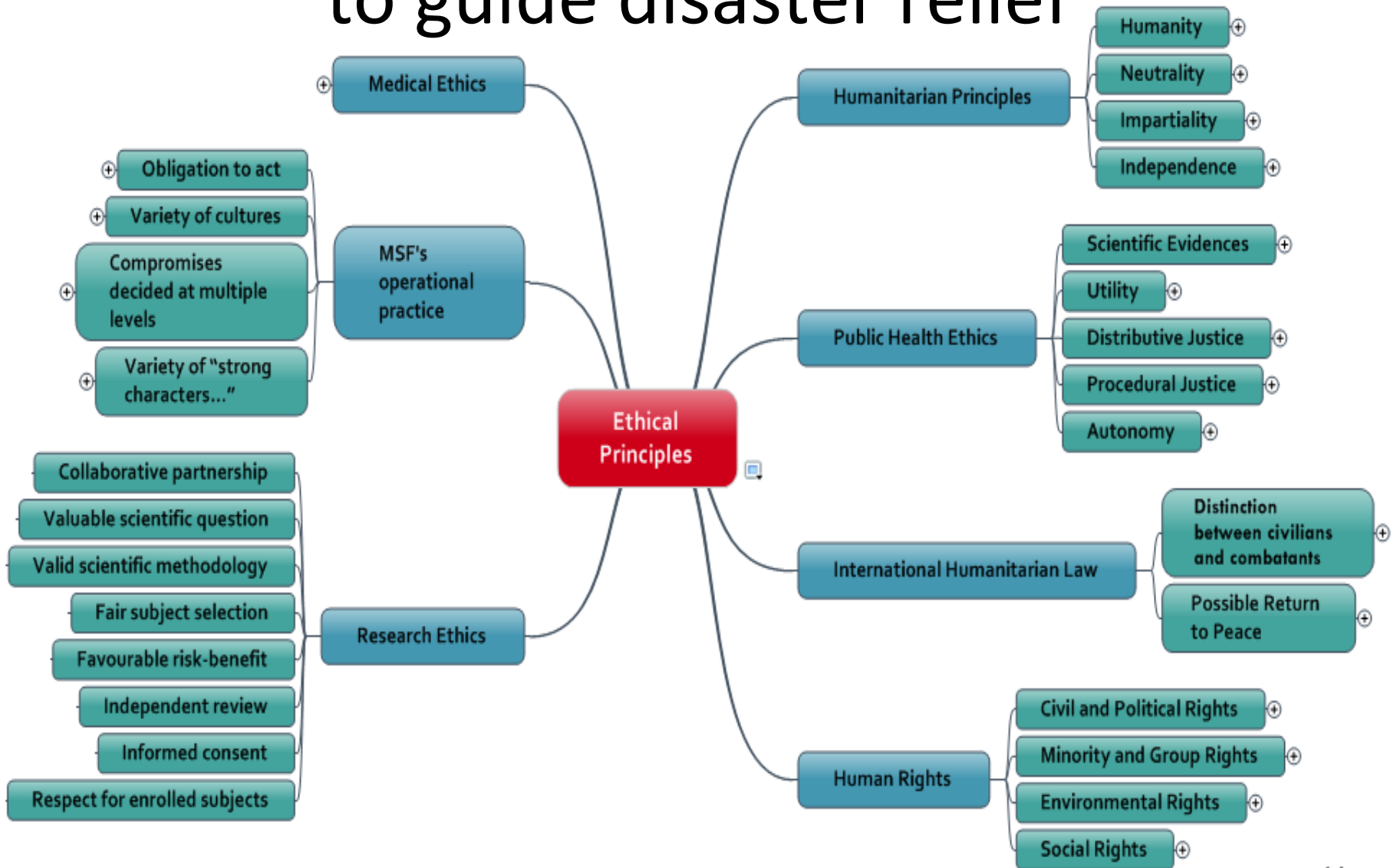


Ebola epidemics – Guinea 2014

Principles of conduct for ICRC and NGOs in disaster response

- The humanitarian imperative comes first
- Aid is given regardless to race, creed or nationality of the recipient and without adverse distinction of any kind
- Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint
- We shall respect culture and custom
- We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities

Existing ethical codes to guide disaster relief



Why this does not help?

Characteristics of Disasters

- Sudden Unexpected Onset
- Massive Damage, Large number of Casualties
- Complications to relief efforts
- Insecurity

Characteristics of existing ethical support for disaster management

- Long , complicated
- Never relating principles with Size or Time
- Aspirational principles for idealistic staff
- Uncompromising

What could help?

- Decrease uncertainty:
 - Medical Research
 - Public Health Surveillance
 - Existing Data Analysis
- Decrease moral stress:
 - Timing and Sizing of ethical circumstances
 - **Ethics of a “lesser evil”**

How?

- Training specific for different roles
- Ethical Structuring of interventions
 - Planning on size and timing
 - Checklists (What to do when, what to discuss, what not to do)
 - Definition of legal standards
 - Monitoring and Evaluation

The background features several thick, expressive pink brushstrokes of varying lengths and orientations, creating a dynamic and artistic composition. The strokes are layered, with some overlapping others, and have a slightly textured, hand-painted appearance.

THANK YOU