International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Guidelines: an overview and quality appraisal

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INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES

Over the years the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has published dozens of guidelines, guidance series, etc. to assist and guide millions of volunteers and staff in their work. Given the importance of guidelines by an organization such as the IFRC, the objective of this study is to appraise the quality of IFRC guidelines aimed at guiding the work of staff and volunteers of all National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in the field of emergency relief, development cooperation and organizational development, and which were developed between 2001 and 2015.

METHODS

Guideline identification

- Online library catalogue (http://weblis.ifrc.org/Libcat/index.html)
- Search strategy ('advanced search' function):
  - Keyword from title: guideline*
  - Keyword from record: guideline*
- Search performed on November 27, 2015
- Administrative and managerial guidelines excluded
- Guidelines published between 2001 and 2015

Quality appraisal

- AGREE II[1,2]
- 2 assessors

Data analysis

- Domain score: $\frac{\text{Obtained score} - \text{Minimum possible score}}{\text{Maximum possible score} - \text{Minimum possible score}} X100$
- Agreement between assessors → intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC)
- Overall assessment: average of scores for each item
  - If more than half of domains has overall score of >60%: recommended for immediate use
  - If the majority of the domain scores >30%: recommended with modifications
  - If the majority of the domain scores <30%: not recommended

Figure 1: flowchart of guideline selection

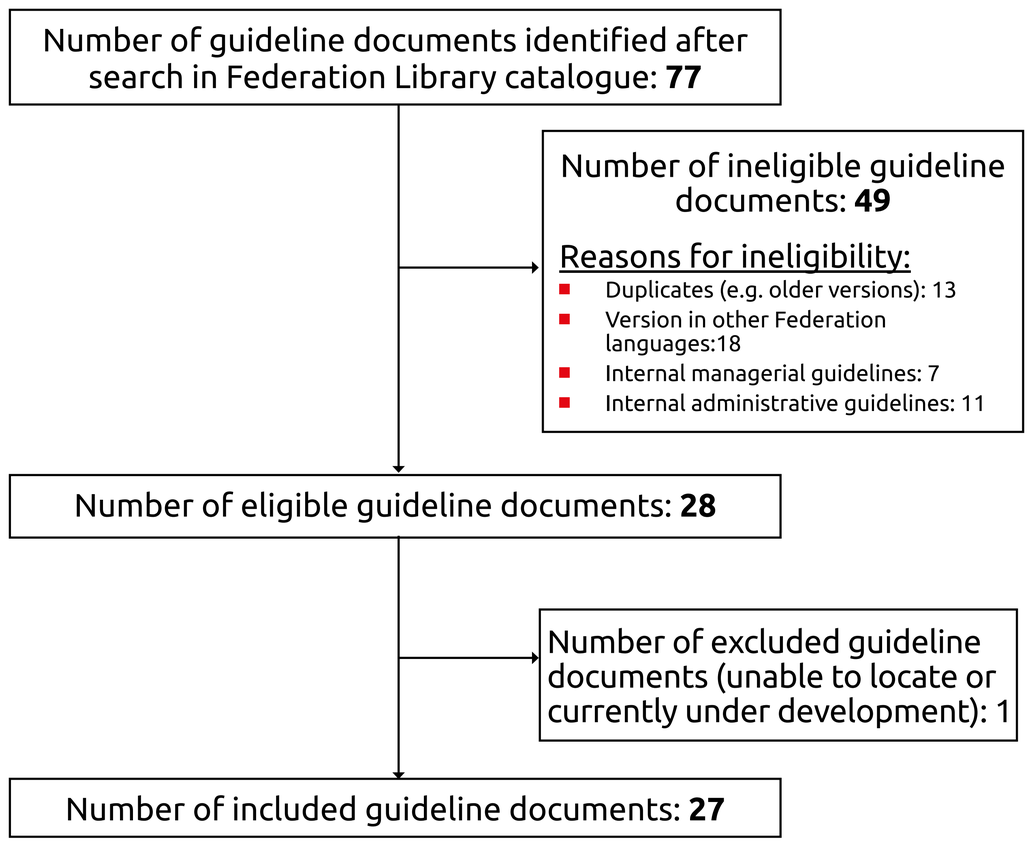
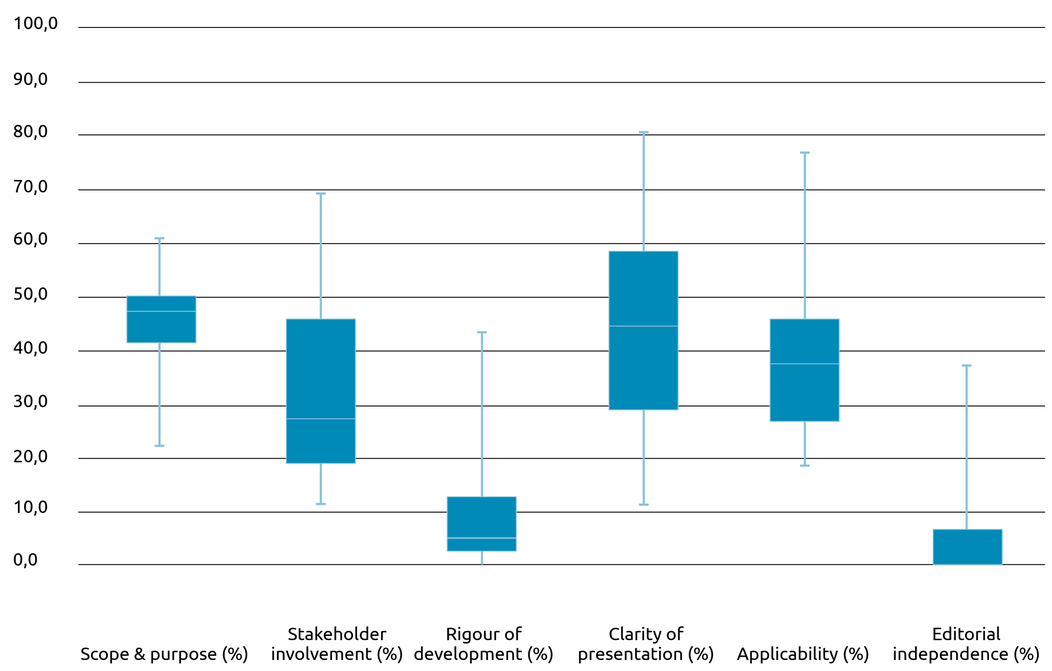


Figure 2: Agree II domain scores across the guidelins



RESULTS

Guideline identification

- 27 guidelines (Figure 1)
  - 13 aimed at humanitarian aid context
  - 8 related to health issues
  - 6 other topics: e.g. cash transfer programming, humanitarian diplomacy, strategic planning

Guideline appraisal

- Domain scores across guidelines: Figure 2
- Initial level of agreement: ICC 0.79, 95%CI [-1.871; 2.084]
- Level of agreement after discussion: ICC 0.90, 95%CI [-1.240; 1.443]
- Overall quality:
  - Moderate to low
    - ✓ Best scoring domain: Scope & purpose
    - ✓ Lowest scoring domain: Editorial independence
  - Quite variable
  - Mean overall quality score: 3
- Recommendation for use of guidelines:
  - 0 recommended for immediate use
  - 23 recommended with modifications
  - 4 not recommended

CONCLUSIONS

Considering that the IFRC has no uniform guideline development process and that the results of the AGREE II assessment indicate that the quality of the guidelines needs to be improved, the IFRC could improve its guidelines by:

- setting up a formal procedure for guideline development and/or revision process;
- setting up a Guideline Review Committee (GRC) to ensure that IFRC guidelines are of high quality and are developed following a transparent, evidence-based decision making process;
- drafting a handbook to provide guidance on the development of guidelines and other documents detailing the procedures to follow to submit a guideline or document with recommendations to the GRC;
- setting up a formal procedure to monitor the implementation of the guidelines by the individual Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies.

References: [1] Brouwers MC, Kho ME, Browman GP et al. AGREE II: advancing guideline development, reporting and evaluation in health care. CMAJ 2010;182(18):E839-E842
[2] AGREE Next Steps Consortium (2009). The AGREE II Instrument. 2013. http://www.agreetrust.org

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