



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs

Strategy

# Norway's Humanitarian Strategy

An effective and integrated approach





# Contents

Foreword .....	4
<b>1 Norway's humanitarian role and aims .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Main goals .....	7
<b>■ PART I A Changing Humanitarian Landscape .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2 The global humanitarian situation .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Protracted, complex crises and increased humanitarian needs .....	10
A changing humanitarian sector .....	10
Different humanitarian crises require different responses .....	12
<b>3 International humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>■ PART II Effective Humanitarian Response: Implementing Norway's Humanitarian Policy .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4 Protection and humanitarian assistance .....</b>	<b>18</b>
People affected by crisis at the centre of the response .....	18
Increased focus on protection .....	19
Protection against sexual and gender-based violence .....	20
Protection of children and young people .....	20
Protection of refugees and internally displaced people .....	22
Protection of civilians against weapons and explosives during and after conflict .....	23
Rapid, effective and principled response .....	24
Use of cash in humanitarian aid .....	25
Humanitarian diplomacy .....	26
<b>5 An integrated approach .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Coordination of humanitarian efforts, long-term development assistance and peacebuilding .....	28
Education and health .....	31
A comprehensive refugee response .....	32
Preparedness, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation .....	33
<b>6 Reform and innovation .....</b>	<b>34</b>
Change and reform needed for an effective, integrated approach .....	34
The role of the private sector .....	36
Innovation .....	36
Green humanitarian response .....	39
Innovative financing .....	39
<b>7 Partnerships .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>8 Competency and learning .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>9 Follow-up .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>10 APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>44</b>
Acronyms and abbreviations .....	44
Overview of humanitarian terminology .....	45
Overview of Norway's humanitarian aid in 2017 .....	47
The humanitarian budget 2008–2018 .....	48

# Foreword

The humanitarian landscape is changing. Armed conflict, climate change and persistent poverty in countries and regions affected by fragility are now creating complex crises that last longer and affect more people than previously. The unmet needs are increasing even though donors are providing more funding and humanitarian organisations are reaching more people than ever before.

The intention of this strategy is to set the direction for Norway's humanitarian policy and response in the years ahead, and to highlight key areas for action that are important for meeting the greatest humanitarian challenges of our time.

*Firstly, we will give priority to responding to the protection crisis that is exacerbating the humanitarian situation in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan and many other conflict-affected countries. Women, men and children are being subjected to violence and abuse. Humanitarian aid workers are being attacked and denied access. Millions are being forced to flee, both within and across country borders. Civilians are being killed and injured in hostilities in densely populated areas, where the parties to the conflict are unable, or unwilling, to distinguish between civilians and combatants, as they are obliged to do under international humanitarian law.*

*We will increase our focus on protection, with particular emphasis on combating sexual and gender-based violence and safeguarding women's rights, protection of children and young people, and protection of civilians against mines and other explosives. We will do so through new initiatives, increased funding and active humanitarian diplomacy. It has already been decided that Norway will seek the presidency of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention for 2019. Our ambition is to revitalise global support for mine action.*

*Secondly, we will take part in the endeavour to break the downward spiral that is turning protracted, complex crises into the new norm in several regions. It is often the same areas that are affected by armed conflict, climate-related crises and refugee crises, and these conflicts and crises are mutually reinforcing. As a result, the population in these areas remains in need of humanitarian aid year after year. A special effort is needed to prevent these people from being left behind as we seek to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.*

Every crisis is unique and requires a unique response. In order to provide an effective humanitarian response, and at the same time prevent humanitarian needs from arising in the future, it is vital to have a thorough understanding of the context, to respond appropriately, and to take an integrated approach that includes coordination between humanitarian, development, and peace and reconciliation efforts.

The responsibility for Norway's humanitarian policy lies with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, while the Minister of International Development has the main responsibility for Norway's development cooperation. In order to achieve the aims of this strategy, we will take an integrated approach and ensure close coordination between our humanitarian efforts and our development policy in countries and regions affected by conflict and fragility. This will be particularly relevant for our efforts in the field of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

*We will develop a new strategy for our efforts in the field of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, in which the humanitarian response will be an important dimension.*

*Thirdly, we will play a part in efforts to close the gap between the increasing humanitarian needs and the resources available, and to ensure that the limited resources reach those in greatest need.*

Norway will maintain a high level of humanitarian funding. We will continue to be a major humanitarian donor to the UN, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Norwegian humanitarian organisations, and will continue to promote reform of the humanitarian sector. We will provide predictability and flexibility for our partners, so that they are able to respond rapidly to changing humanitarian needs. At the same time, we expect quality and results. This includes the requirement to maintain good systems and practices for preventing and dealing with sexual abuse. We will also take steps to boost innovation and thus promote new approaches and new technologies, for example the use of cash-based assistance.

*We will take new initiatives to continue the development of cooperation with current and new partners in these areas. We will establish strategic partnerships with Norwegian organisations with a view to strengthening our humanitarian response. We will also launch a humanitarian innovation programme in cooperation with Innovation Norway to develop, test and scale up new solutions. This will take the form of a partnership where public funding is matched by private funding.*

Humanitarian action is an important part of the Government's international engagement. The areas for action outlined here will be at the heart of this engagement in the years ahead. At the same time, Norway will continue its humanitarian efforts in other areas. These efforts will be firmly based on international humanitarian law, the humanitarian principles, human rights and the gender perspective. Norway will be an active and consistent advocate of a rapid, effective response that saves lives, alleviates suffering and protects human dignity in humanitarian crises.

We would like to thank all the organisations that have provided valuable input to Norway's new humanitarian strategy.



Ine Eriksen Søreide  
Minister of Foreign Affairs



Nikolai Astrup  
Minister of International Development

---

# 1 Norway's humanitarian role and aims

---

Norway is to play a leading role in global humanitarian efforts both as a donor country and as a humanitarian actor. Our overall aim is to save lives, alleviate suffering and protect human dignity in humanitarian crises, in line with the humanitarian imperative.

In order to achieve this aim, we will be clear about the values and principles underlying our humanitarian engagement. Norway will promote a multilateral, norm-based system where international law, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles are respected.

Norway has a long tradition of actively promoting compliance with, and the further development of, the international norms that provide the basis for humanitarian action. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Safe Schools Declaration are a few examples. We have also been actively engaged in the work to strengthen the operational framework for global humanitarian efforts. We will continue our engagement in this area. We will make use of active humanitarian diplomacy in areas where Norway is in a position to achieve results.

In a complex and increasingly polarised multilateral landscape, it is more important than ever to forge alliances that include not only like-minded countries and traditional partners, but also countries and actors we do not usually cooperate with.

This strategy sets out Norway's intention to step up its efforts to protect people against armed attack, violence, abuse and other human rights violations in humanitarian crises. We will highlight the importance of protecting women, children and young people, as well as the need to protect civilians against mines and other explosives. Norway will continue its efforts to promote education in situations of crisis and conflict. We will also play a key role in the efforts to enhance protection for internally displaced people, and will promote a coordinated and long-term

response to the major refugee situations the world is facing.

Norway will seek to increase the involvement of people affected by crises in humanitarian efforts so that instead of simply being *recipients* of humanitarian aid, they are *participants* in the response. Humanitarian efforts must be adapted to meet the different needs of people affected by different types of crises. The gender perspective is to be integrated into all our humanitarian efforts, and special priority is to be given to women's rights and participation.

Norway is to take an integrated approach that considers the efforts in different thematic areas as parts of a coherent whole, with a view to preventing humanitarian crises and reducing future humanitarian needs. An integrated approach is particularly important in our priority areas, such as education and health. We will also put climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction high up on the international agenda, and we will ensure that our humanitarian action, development cooperation and peacebuilding efforts complement each other. Where possible, our efforts must support the work of local and national actors.

Ensuring a rapid, effective response to emergency needs is a key humanitarian task. Norway will seek to strengthen the humanitarian sector. We will promote predictability in the humanitarian response with a view to reducing the scale of both sudden-onset and slow-onset crises. We will be at the forefront of efforts to promote effective and coordinated international humanitarian action.

It is the obligation and responsibility of national authorities to protect and provide assistance to their own population in the event of a humanitarian crisis. The task of the international community and the various humanitarian organisations is to respond in areas where the authorities are unable or unwilling to protect or provide assistance to people in need of humanitarian aid.

Norway will demonstrate transparency and a willingness to make use of new effective solutions, innovative approaches and new technology to strengthen its humanitarian efforts, for example through the increased use of cash-based assistance. We will promote green humanitarian response and will seek to ensure that climate change and environmental considerations are better integrated into humanitarian efforts.

Norway's humanitarian funds will primarily be channelled through the UN, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and Norwegian humanitarian organisations. We will provide both predictability and flexibility for our partners, and at the same time we will set requirements regarding quality and results. Norway will also work to increase the number of donors contributing to global humanitarian efforts, and will invest in good humanitarian funding mechanisms at both global and country level with a view to ensuring that humanitarian action is well-coordinated and effective.

In our response to humanitarian crises, we will put people's needs and vulnerabilities before other considerations. In order to address today's growing

humanitarian needs, tough choices will have to be made and priorities will have to be set. It is important not to spread our efforts too thinly or to pull out of one crisis too quickly when a new crisis emerges. Decisions concerning Norwegian humanitarian support will depend on the scale of the humanitarian needs, the level of funding from other donors, and the availability of partners with a local presence and access to people in need. The thematic areas and countries that have been identified as priorities by Norway – areas and countries where our efforts can make a real difference – will also be taken into account when decisions about humanitarian funding are taken.

It is important that our humanitarian efforts are further developed on the basis of knowledge and lessons learned and through our interaction with a wide range of actors. Research-based knowledge and dialogue with different specialist groups, humanitarian partners and other countries will help to ensure that Norwegian humanitarian policy is tailored as far as possible to the challenges of our time.

## Main goals

**The goal of humanitarian action is to save lives, alleviate suffering and protect human dignity in humanitarian crises. Norway will work with other countries and partners to:**

- ensure that people in need are given the necessary protection and assistance, in line with the humanitarian principles;
- promote an integrated and rights-based approach with a view to preventing humanitarian crises and reducing humanitarian needs;
- push for innovation and reform in the humanitarian sector; promote effective, flexible and predictable funding for humanitarian efforts.
- promote effective, flexible and predictable funding for humanitarian efforts.



On 26 April 2016 in Yemen, the Al-Thawra Hospital in Taiz city was badly damaged in the recent conflict. Photo: © UNICEF/UN026945/Basha



A man in a white lab coat stands in profile, looking out a large window in a dilapidated hospital room. The room is filled with debris, including a gurney, buckets, and wooden planks. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange-red filter. The text "PART I" and "A Changing Humanitarian Landscape" is centered over the image.

PART I  
A Changing Humanitarian  
Landscape

---

## 2 The global humanitarian situation

---

### Protracted, complex crises and increased humanitarian needs

During the ten years that have passed since the white paper *Norway's Humanitarian Policy* (Report No. 40 (2008–2009) to the Storting) was presented, humanitarian crises have become more complex. They last longer and affect far more people. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection as a result of armed conflicts and natural disasters has risen from 53 million (in 2010) to 136 million (in 2018).<sup>1</sup>

More than 68 million people have been forced from their homes and are either internally displaced or have fled across borders to other countries. The number of refugees worldwide is now the highest since the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) was established in 1950. Half of these refugees are children.<sup>2</sup> Many of the refugee crises have lasted for many years, some of them for generations.

Humanitarian crises are complex. In many cases, there are strong links between conflict, fragility and climate change, and the situation is further exacerbated by a high population growth rate and rapid urbanisation. Climate change-related crises are occurring more and more frequently and are affecting larger numbers of people. Protracted crises are reversing development progress and leading to increased poverty.

Armed conflicts cause immense humanitarian suffering. Many of today's conflicts are taking place in densely populated areas and are having a severe impact on the civilian population.<sup>3</sup> Children are particularly vulnerable: one in six children worldwide lives in a conflict area, and the number of children who are injured or lose their lives in armed conflicts has risen considerably.<sup>4</sup> Many people do not have access to education or health services. Sexual and gender-based violence is a widespread problem

in conflict situations. This type of violence affects women and girls in particular, but men and boys are also affected.

The increasing politicisation of humanitarian action combined with a failure to comply with international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles are making it more and more difficult to ensure humanitarian access and provide protection for people affected by crisis. The security risks are often so high that humanitarian actors are prevented from delivering emergency relief to those who need it most.

The scale of global humanitarian needs we are now seeing is largely due to protracted, complex crises. On average, crises today last twice as long as they did in 1990.<sup>5</sup> Over two-thirds of international humanitarian aid goes to countries that have received humanitarian aid for more than eight years. In six countries, the UN has held annual appeals for 13 years in a row.<sup>6</sup> Many crises receive limited attention and are severely underfunded.

Between 2007 and 2017, the total amount of funding requested through UN-coordinated appeals increased by more than four times<sup>7</sup> from USD 5.5 billion to USD 24 billion, but only half of the amount sought in 2017 was provided. Although global humanitarian aid has now reached an unprecedented level, the gap between humanitarian needs and the resources available is continuing to widen. New donor countries are providing more funding, but humanitarian aid is still largely dependent on a few Western countries. Since 2013, Norway has increased its humanitarian budget by more than 50 %.

### A changing humanitarian sector

In recent years, the humanitarian sector has grown, and has become more professional and more effective. Humanitarian actors are helping more people than ever before, and humanitarian efforts

---

<sup>1</sup> Global Humanitarian Overview 2018, OCHA

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2017/6/5941561f4/forced-displacement-worldwide-its-highest-decades.html>,

<sup>3</sup> See the UN's New Urban Agenda: <http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>

<sup>4</sup> Children and Armed Conflict: What Existing Data Can Tell Us, PRIO, 2018

<sup>5</sup> Towards a Better System for Humanitarian Financing, Lowcock, 2018

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2017, Development Initiatives

are better coordinated and achieve better results. However, protracted, complex crises and increased humanitarian needs are putting great pressure on the humanitarian system, which to some extent was designed with other challenges and needs in mind. It has become clear that the capacity of humanitarian actors to respond during the acute phase of a crisis is insufficient, particularly in situations of armed conflict.

Humanitarian financing is often unpredictable and short-term, whereas humanitarian crises often have clear warning signs and tend to last for a long time. It can be difficult to mobilise resources early enough to prevent and reduce the scale of slow-onset crises. This makes long-term planning difficult for humanitarian actors.

Humanitarian crises cannot be resolved through humanitarian action alone. A more integrated approach is essential in order to implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under this Agenda, the world's countries

have committed themselves to achieving measurable progress in areas that are vital for safeguarding the right of individuals to have their basic needs met. Intensified and better coordinated efforts to reach the most vulnerable people are needed if we are to live up to the principle of leaving no one behind.

Coordination of efforts in different thematic areas is being improved through the ongoing process of UN reform and the increasingly close cooperation between the UN and the multilateral development banks in countries affected by conflict and fragility and in the response to refugee situations. Promoting a more effective and integrated approach is also an important part of the follow-up to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, at which major aid organisations and donors, including Norway, endorsed the Grand Bargain (see Box 6.1). The Grand Bargain initiative is essentially about enhancing efficiency; its aim is to strengthen humanitarian response and reduce the financing gap by increasing effectiveness, innovation and coordination with long-term development efforts.

Garowe, Puntland in Somalia 2017.  
Photo: Håvard Bjelland/Norwegian Church Aid



More investment is needed in capacity building at local and national level to prevent humanitarian crises and address major humanitarian challenges. Ensuring ownership and participation by national and local authorities and organisations will require new ways of thinking about partnerships, inclusion, coordination and financing.

New actors are now contributing to humanitarian financing and response. The private sector has taken on a more important role. Cash-based assistance and digital innovation are saving lives and creating new opportunities, increasing aid effectiveness and improving results. At the same time, these developments require new knowledge and skills, are challenging existing coordination mechanisms and are making it necessary to find new ways of working.

### **Different humanitarian crises require different responses**

Crisis situations vary considerably. In order to meet the actual needs of the people affected, the response must be tailored more specifically to the context. In other words, different humanitarian crises require different responses.

Protracted, complex crises have become the new norm. Many countries are experiencing a negative spiral where national and regional conflicts, combined with the impacts of climate change and faster population growth, are putting pressure on resources and causing severe food insecurity. This in turn is increasing the level of conflict and creating more refugees and migrants. Fragility is exacerbated by corruption, organised crime and violent extremism. Human trafficking is a major problem in many crises. Closer coordination between the various actors involved and between efforts in the various thematic areas is needed if we are to reduce fragility and lay the foundation for more sustainable solutions.

Humanitarian assistance to refugees is often provided in countries that are not parties to a conflict themselves, as is the case, for example, in Jordan, Lebanon and Bangladesh. Large numbers of refugees are putting pressure on the host countries' limited resources and infrastructure. An integrated approach that addresses the needs of both the refugees and the host communities and ensures that the host countries have ownership of the refugee response is therefore needed.



Armed conflict situations are by nature politicised and unpredictable. A serious incident can trigger a new humanitarian crisis, but can also occur in an already protracted and complex crisis. For example, violence can flare up causing large numbers of people to flee or an epidemic can break out in an area where refugees and internally displaced people have already been living in poor conditions for a long time. Providing humanitarian assistance in unpredictable conflict situations is extremely difficult. It is dangerous, complicated and expensive.

Some of today's worst conflicts are taking place in cities and densely populated areas where siege is a tactic used by the warring parties. The result is a high civilian death rate and large numbers of wounded. Children are particularly vulnerable. The destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of large numbers of people in densely populated areas present challenges for humanitarian actors that are different from those they face in rural areas.

Natural disasters also cause immense human suffering. Women and vulnerable groups are particularly at risk. Sudden-onset disasters such as floods,

tropical storms and tsunamis are expected to be a growing problem in the years ahead. At the same time, complex, slow-onset natural disasters are creating new humanitarian needs. These crises develop over time as a result of climate change and a combination of other factors. One example is the climate phenomenon *El Niño*, which is causing increasing drought, flooding and extreme weather, with devastating consequences for millions of people in Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia.

In other words, there are major differences between crisis situations, which means that different responses and expertise are required in each case. Whatever action is taken, it should always be based on needs and should be in line with our overall aim to save lives, alleviate suffering and protect human dignity. A good understanding of the context, an effective humanitarian response and compliance with the humanitarian principles are vital if we are to achieve this aim.



The Fijeh spring in the mountains over Damascus provides water for five million people. In January 2017 the water supplies were cut off, due to the ongoing fights. Damascus was without water for 40 days. Water experts from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, supported by Norway, were able to restore the water supply.  
Photo: Olav A. Saltbones/Norwegian Red Cross

---

# 3 International humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles

---

The principle of providing assistance and protection to people affected by conflict, as enshrined in international humanitarian law, is a cornerstone of Norway's humanitarian policy.

Under international humanitarian law, parties to conflict have a number of obligations. Among the most important of these are the obligations to protect civilians and wounded people, regardless of which side they are on, to protect health workers and medical facilities, to distinguish between military targets and civilians, and to refrain from military action that could result in disproportionate civilian deaths and injuries.

Failure to respect and comply with these rules is a widespread problem in many armed conflicts, and the consequences for civilians are severe. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that many of today's armed conflicts are taking place in densely populated areas.

Today, the constellation of actors involved in armed conflicts tends to be more fragmented than it was in the past, and it can be difficult to identify who precisely the warring parties are at any one time. Non-state actors, including terrorist networks, do not always respect international norms and conventions, which also makes the picture more complicated. The development of new weapons technology, such as autonomous weapons, and the use of unconventional warfare, including cyber attacks, are also undermining efforts to ensure compliance with the established principles of international humanitarian law.

More civilians are being attacked and it is becoming harder to gain humanitarian access and provide protection.<sup>8</sup> Health workers, hospitals and ambulances are increasingly being targeted in conflict areas.

In order to ensure safe and unimpeded access to civilians, it is important to engage in dialogue with

the various parties to a conflict on their obligation to comply with international humanitarian law and on the specific challenges associated with ensuring humanitarian access to the civilian population.

Norway will work actively to promote compliance with international humanitarian law and to counter attempts to weaken international humanitarian law obligations. We will show political engagement in situations where international humanitarian law is violated, and help to ensure that these violations are documented and prosecuted. Norway will also seek to ensure that international action against terrorism complies with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

There are good examples of the issue of protection of civilians being put on the international agenda. In recent decades, the majority of the world's states have reached agreement on a number of important instruments that have further developed international humanitarian law, such as the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. New political initiatives, such as the Safe Schools Declaration (see Box 4.1), which was initiated by Norway, have helped to improve the protection of schools against the effects of armed conflict. The UN Security Council recently adopted a resolution on protection of civilians in armed conflict highlighting the problem of conflict-induced food insecurity,<sup>9</sup> which could represent a step in the right direction in terms of promoting respect for international humanitarian law. This shows that it is still possible to carry out normative work in today's complex multilateral landscape.

Norway's humanitarian efforts are based on the humanitarian principles (see Box 3.2). Compliance with these principles is important in order to ensure access to those in greatest need, especially in conflict-related crises. Norway will choose humanitarian

---

<sup>8</sup> WHO's Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care: <https://publicspace.who.int/sites/ssa/SitePages/PublicDashboard.aspx>, Insecurity Insight, Aid in Danger: <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/sind-kik-country-incident-data>, Report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/report-secretary-general-protection-civilians-armed-conflict-s2018462-enarru>

<sup>9</sup> UN Security Council resolution 2417 (2018)

partners that seek to comply with the humanitarian principles.

International human rights law and international humanitarian law make up the fundamental normative framework for humanitarian action. It is crucial that humanitarian efforts are rights-based. This means that the focus is on those in need, and that emphasis is given to participation, non-discrimination and accountability, in addition to the right to life, food, health services and education. Human rights are particularly relevant in a humanitarian context, and will always form the basis for humanitarian action in situations where international humanitarian law is not applicable, for example in natural disasters.

The interplay between humanitarian and military actors can make it difficult to uphold the humanitarian principles. When roles are not clearly defined, it can be difficult for the population to distinguish between political, military and humanitarian actors. It can be confusing for both civilians and parties to armed conflict when people act as armed soldiers at one moment, and aid workers the next. This can also increase the risk of attacks on humanitarian aid workers. The fact that some states sometimes use emergency aid as part of a political or military strategy is also a serious problem.

Nevertheless, in order to save lives, it is sometimes necessary for humanitarian operations to have military support in the form of logistics support or in order to gain safe access to those in need. There are many dilemmas that can arise in the interface between different types of action, and it is important to address these. This is particularly important when military assets are used to back up the humanitarian response in conflict situations. Norway has supported the work to develop international guidelines on the use of military assets,<sup>10</sup> with a view to ensuring that both international military support and support from individual countries that is provided in humanitarian crises is based on a clear division of roles. It is crucial that these guidelines are more widely complied with. The guidelines set out that all support must be based on the humanitarian principles, that the UN's coordinating role must be recognised, and that any military contribution must be a last resort in situations where no adequate civilian resources are available. Even though military contributions can fill a humanitarian gap that may arise in connection with a natural disaster and in difficult security situations,

any military engagement must be limited to exceptional situations and must be closely coordinated with humanitarian organisations and the host country.

### **Box 3.1 International humanitarian law**

International humanitarian law sets out the responsibilities of parties to armed conflict, and includes a number of conventions and a body of customary international law. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 together with Additional Protocols I and II of 1977 form the core of international humanitarian law. Almost all countries are states parties to these Conventions.

### **Box 3.2 The humanitarian principles**

The humanitarian principles are derived from the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and are enshrined in international humanitarian law. They are to form the basis for all humanitarian action in both conflict situations and natural disasters, as set out in UN General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114. The four principles are:

#### **Humanity**

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.

#### **Impartiality**

Humanitarian action must make no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.

#### **Neutrality**

Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

#### **Independence**

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.

<sup>10</sup> Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief, 1994 – revised 2007 (the Oslo Guidelines), Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies, 2004 – revised 2006 (the MCDA guidelines)



Polio vaccinations for new arrivals in Lawan Karta camp for internally displaced people. Baga, Borno State, Nigeria.  
*Photo: Yasmina Guerd/OCHA/unocha.org*





PART II

**Effective Humanitarian Response:  
Implementing Norway's  
Humanitarian Policy**

---

## 4 Protection and humanitarian assistance

---

Norway's humanitarian policy is put into practice through the provision of humanitarian assistance and the implementation of measures to protect people who are affected by humanitarian crises. Assistance and protection are two closely intertwined areas of humanitarian action.

*In this strategy, 'humanitarian assistance' is used in a broad sense to include material relief and logistics support. Assistance may for example be in the form of health services, medicines, food, water, sanitation, shelter, or education.*

Humanitarian organisations are now delivering assistance to far more people than they did in the past. This is primarily due to an increase in financing, new technology and better coordinated ways of working. Providing humanitarian assistance is an important part of Norway's humanitarian efforts.

We will continue to promote reform of the humanitarian sector, and will increase our focus on innovation with a view to achieving better results. This will involve maintaining our efforts to increase the use of, and improve the coordination of, cash-based assistance in humanitarian response.

*In a humanitarian context, 'protection' is understood to cover strengthening and increasing compliance with international law, including the obligation of warring parties to protect civilians and other vulnerable groups against armed attacks and the consequences of such attacks, in situations of armed conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Further, protection includes action in all humanitarian crises to protect civilians and other vulnerable groups against violence, abuse and violations of international law, including international human rights law, that occur as a result of a humanitarian crisis.*

One of the main challenges we face in modern-day crises is protecting the people who are affected. National authorities, the international community and humanitarian actors have not done enough to address this challenge. Norway will give greater

priority to protecting people affected by conflict and crisis, with a particular emphasis on protection against sexual and gender-based violence and the protection of children and young people and of refugees and internally displaced people, as well as the protection of civilians against weapons and explosives during and after conflicts.

Norway's efforts to provide protection and assistance are to be rights-based and tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable people. The people affected by crisis are to be at the centre of our humanitarian response efforts. Norway will seek to ensure a rapid, effective response that is in line with the humanitarian principles at all stages of humanitarian action. We will engage in active humanitarian diplomacy to promote compliance with, and the further development of, the international norms on which humanitarian action is based, and to strengthen the overall framework for humanitarian efforts.

### **People affected by crisis at the centre of the response**

Norway's humanitarian efforts are to focus on the people who are affected by crisis and their needs. Ensuring accountability to affected populations is a fundamental principle. In order to engage affected populations, humanitarian organisations need to ensure that all those affected can participate actively in the planning and implementation of the humanitarian response on an equal footing and without discrimination. This is about protecting human dignity and enabling people to take responsibility for their own lives and health. People affected by crisis must also be able to hold the humanitarian organisations to account for the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian efforts. Humanitarian action has greater impact and legitimacy and there is a broader sense of ownership if we include the people who are affected in the response efforts.

The use of new technology and digital solutions in humanitarian efforts is making it easier to put the people affected by a crisis at the centre of the

response. At the same time, digital advances and the use of data are creating new challenges. It is vital to ensure that collected data is dealt with in a way that does not create new protection challenges.

In humanitarian crises, vulnerable groups are affected in different ways. 'Vulnerable groups' here refers to those who are particularly at risk in humanitarian crises, and includes religious and sexual minorities, children, elderly people and people with disabilities. Vulnerable groups must be included in the planning and implementation of humanitarian efforts in order to ensure that the response is tailored to meet their respective needs. Young people must also be listened to and their needs addressed.

All humanitarian efforts must recognise the fact that women and girls and men and boys have differing needs. Women's rights and participation are to be given priority, in line with our *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* and our *Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and Development Policy*.

### **The Government will**

- seek to ensure that people affected by crisis can participate in the planning and implementation of the humanitarian response, with a particular emphasis on women's rights and participation.

### **Increased focus on protection**

International humanitarian law, refugee law and the international human rights instruments form the legal framework for protection. In humanitarian action, a distinction is made between the protection of civilians in armed conflict under international humanitarian law and the implementation of concrete protection measures in all types of humanitarian emergencies. This includes situations where there is no armed conflict, where international humanitarian law does not apply.

Norway will increase its focus on protection in situations of crisis and conflict. Special priority will be given to the protection of women, children and young people, as well as to the protection of civilians against mines and other explosives. As part of this work, Norway will seek to take new initiatives to enhance its protection efforts, both globally and at country level, for example through strengthened partnerships and humanitarian innovation. Norway will also be at the forefront of efforts to provide protection for internally displaced people and will con-

tribute to a rights-based, coordinated and long-term response to the world's major refugee situations.

In order to strengthen the protection of civilians, it is essential that humanitarian aid workers have safe access to people in need, in line with international humanitarian law. Attacks on humanitarian aid workers are a widespread and growing problem. Health workers and health facilities are particularly at risk. Attacks on the health sector undermine the delivery of life-saving assistance and have major consequences for healthcare provision both during and after a crisis.

Another significant problem for people affected by crisis is the fact that they often lack certified documentation verifying their identity, marital status, family relationships and property ownership. It increases their vulnerability and can severely reduce their access to assistance and protection both during and after a crisis. Missing documents, or documents not being recognised, is a problem that affects single women and children in particular. Norway will draw attention to this issue at the international level and will support measures to provide people affected by crisis with certified documents, not least through the increased use of innovative solutions and technology.

Many people disappear during crises and conflicts and remain missing. This has long-term humanitarian consequences for families and local communities. The authorities in the country concerned have primary responsibility for preventing disappearances and for respecting the next of kin's right to information about the missing person. When a family member has missing person status, this often creates a range of practical and legal challenges and puts severe psychological strain on the rest of the family, not least the women. Norway will work with other actors to draw attention to these challenges and will support relevant measures in this area.

### **The Government will**

- be a strong advocate in international forums of the need to strengthen the protection of civilians, and support relevant measures in this area;
- work to improve the protection of humanitarian aid workers and health workers;
- support efforts that make it easier to provide people affected by crisis with vital documents verifying their identity, marital status, family relationships and property ownership;
- strengthen efforts to prevent disappearances and to find missing people.



Young refugees from South Sudan volunteer on UN Women funded programme to end sexual and gender-based violence in Pagirinya Refugee Settlement, Northern Uganda.  
Photo: Aidah Nanyonjo/UN Women Uganda

## Protection against sexual and gender-based violence

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a widespread problem in humanitarian crises. In many conflicts, sexual violence and abuse is used as a method of warfare. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, but men and boys are also affected. More attention needs to be given to the issue of violence and abuse against men and boys, and efforts in this area need to be intensified.

Protection against SGBV is to be given high priority in Norway's humanitarian efforts. Norway will call for more international action in this area, and will increase its support for operational measures to prevent this kind of violence and to follow up the survivors. Providing psychosocial support will be an important part of this work. In addition, we will work to ensure that our partners have the necessary capacity and expertise in this area.

We will support existing processes and efforts, and will seek to establish new initiatives and partnerships that can help combat SGBV in humanitarian

situations. This could include awareness-raising efforts targeted at the parties to a conflict, the police or local leaders. Priority will be given to improving the protection of women and children who are particularly at risk of human trafficking, child and forced marriage and organised prostitution.

### The Government will

- step up its efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence by establishing new initiatives and increasing support for relevant measures, such as the provision of psychosocial support to survivors;
- give priority to efforts to protect people from human trafficking and organised prostitution in humanitarian crises.

## Protection of children and young people

Children and young people are particularly at risk and in special need of protection. They are especially vulnerable during military attacks in densely populated areas, and many are recruited by armed



Khamir Settlement for internally displaced people, Yemen 2017. Photo: Giles Clarke/OCHA. <http://www.unocha.org/>

groups. The risk of abuse is high. Many children and young people are traumatised by having witnessed murder, or by having witnessed or experienced mutilation, sexual abuse, or other forms of violence. Psychosocial support is therefore vital.

High priority must be given to protecting children and young people in our humanitarian efforts. Norway will play an active role in various forums with a view to ensuring that the international community steps up its efforts to protect children and young people. We will give priority to measures to prevent violence and abuse against children and young people, as well as to the follow-up of survivors. In conjunction with our work in other policy areas, Norway will seek to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers and strengthen efforts to reintegrate former child soldiers into society.

In many crisis situations, children and young people experience armed attacks on their schools. Ensuring safe schools will therefore continue to be an important priority in Norway's humanitarian efforts (see Box 4.1).

In humanitarian crises, children and young people are often left to fend for themselves, without the care and support of their families. In many cases, they do not have identity papers, in part because their births have not been registered. This can undermine their chances of gaining citizenship and their access to health services and education.

### **The Government will**

- support measures and initiatives that strengthen the protection of children and young people in situations of crisis and conflict;
- support efforts to protect schools in crisis-affected countries and encourage more states to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration;
- draw attention to methods of warfare that affect children and young people as part of our international advocacy work;
- strengthen efforts to prevent children from being separated from their parents or carers in humanitarian crises, and help them to regain contact in cases where they have been separated.

#### Box 4.1 Safe Schools Declaration

Norway and Argentina led the consultations that resulted in the Safe Schools Declaration, which was launched in May 2015. The main aim of the Declaration is to prevent attacks on schools and universities and protect these institutions from military use. States that endorse the Declaration commit themselves, among other things, to implementing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. These are practical guidelines that are intended to help prevent the military use of educational institutions and thus prevent them from being seen as military targets. The Declaration is also intended to raise awareness of how conflicts prevent access to safe schooling for millions of children. Some 37 states endorsed the Declaration on the day it was launched in 2015. Now, three years later, that number has risen to 76.

### Protection of refugees and internally displaced people

The number of people who have been forced to flee their homes as a result of conflict has increased dramatically in recent years. Close to two-thirds of these people are displaced in their own countries, while the rest have fled across borders to other countries. In addition to this, there are large numbers of vulnerable migrants, who are not recognised as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention, but who may nevertheless be in need of humanitarian aid. Women and girls who have been forced to flee are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, violence and sexual abuse.

Norway's efforts to ensure the protection of refugees are based primarily on its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Unlike refugees, internally displaced people are not entitled to special international protection beyond what is set out in international human rights law and international humanitarian law. However, the humanitarian needs of internally displaced people are similar to, and in many cases greater than, the needs of refugees. The last significant step forward at the global level with regard to the protection of internally displaced people was in 1998 when the UN adopted the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.<sup>11</sup> At present, it is only the African Union that has adopted a convention for the protection of internally displaced people (the Kampala Convention).<sup>12</sup>

Norway has played a leading role in international efforts to improve the protection of internally displaced people for several years, in particular by highlighting this issue in the UN. This engagement is difficult in a multilateral climate where more states are citing state sovereignty as grounds for not expanding the international protection regime, despite the immense scale of humanitarian needs in areas where internally displaced people are living. The Government will continue its international engagement to improve protection for internally displaced people.

Many displaced people outside their home country are not protected under the Refugee Convention. Nevertheless, they may be in need of humanitarian assistance and protection in line with the humanitarian imperative. People living in unacceptable conditions in transit countries, as we have seen in Libya in recent years, are one example.

The situation for displaced people can be challenging and complex. Migrants and refugees often follow the same migration routes. Moreover, a person's legal status may change while in transit. This can make it more difficult to determine people's status and give them the protection they need.

#### The Government will

- maintain Norway's engagement relating to protection of and assistance to refugees;
- be a strong advocate in the UN of the need to improve protection for internally displaced people and help find durable solutions in this area.

<sup>11</sup> See the text of the resolution on the UN website: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G98/104/93/PDF/G9810493.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>12</sup> See the text of the Convention on the AU website: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7796-treaty-0039\\_-\\_kampala\\_convention\\_african\\_union\\_convention\\_for\\_the\\_protection\\_and\\_assistance\\_of\\_internally\\_displaced\\_persons\\_in\\_africa\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7796-treaty-0039_-_kampala_convention_african_union_convention_for_the_protection_and_assistance_of_internally_displaced_persons_in_africa_e.pdf)

## Protection of civilians against weapons and explosives during and after conflict

As part of our humanitarian efforts to protect civilians and ensure compliance with international humanitarian law in armed conflict, Norway is working to combat the use of weapons and methods of warfare that have particularly harmful effects on civilians. This engagement derives from Norway's obligations as a state party to various conventions and agreements and is reflected in the new global humanitarian initiatives that Norway supports.

Norway has played an active part in the development and implementation of legally binding instruments such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. These efforts have helped to reduce the number of people who have been killed or injured by mines, cluster munitions or other explosive weapons during or after conflict.

Norway will continue to defend these conventions and encourage more countries to become party to them. With a view to further strengthening the global mine clearance efforts, Norway is seeking the presidency of the Mine Ban Convention for 2019.

We will also continue our efforts to secure greater support for the Arms Trade Treaty. We will support the work to safeguard stockpiles of weapons and thus prevent weapons and ammunition from falling into the wrong hands during or after a conflict.

The urbanisation of warfare and the extensive use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas are among the reasons why protection needs have changed and increased. Norway will work to ensure compliance with the obligation under international humanitarian law to protect civilians. We will focus on urban warfare and the provisions of international law that apply specifically to military operations in urban areas. We will also give high priority to efforts to combat the use of weapons that continue to cause death and injury long after a conflict is over.

### The Government will

- take a leading role in international efforts to combat the use of weapons that have unacceptable humanitarian consequences and support efforts to clear mines and other explosives during and after conflict.



Dog handler from Norwegian People's Aid with mine detection dog in Santa Helena, Colombia. Photo: Giovanni Diffidenti/Norwegian People's Aid

## Box 4.2 Norway's engagement in global mine clearance

The Mine Ban Convention (1997) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008) provide the international legal framework for the prohibition of all use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. The Mine Ban Convention and, in particular, the Convention on Cluster Munitions were groundbreaking instruments in that they set out clear obligations to provide assistance for victims. They have also helped to enhance the rights and situation of people with disabilities in a number of affected countries. After many years of declining numbers of mine victims, we have seen the renewed use of mines and homemade explosives on a wide scale in recent years, particularly by non-state actors. Warfare in urban and densely populated areas puts civilians particularly at risk. Protection of civilians against mines and other explosive weapons is a key humanitarian task. Norway is one of the world's largest contributors to the efforts to map and clear landmines, cluster munitions and other explosives. Mine clearance is a concrete, effective way of helping displaced people to return to their homes, and of promoting social and economic development.

## Rapid, effective and principled response

The Government's humanitarian policy is designed to contribute to humanitarian assistance and protection efforts in areas where the needs are greatest and where Norway is particularly well placed to deliver results in cooperation with our humanitarian partners.

During the last decade, the global humanitarian response has increased in both scope and quality. Humanitarian budgets have never been bigger and humanitarian organisations have never reached as many people as they do now. However, given the growing needs and complex situations we are now facing, this is still not enough.

Particularly during the acute phase of conflict-related crises, the humanitarian sector is finding it difficult to respond rapidly enough and to reach those in greatest need. The most vulnerable people are often in hard-to-reach areas. In the areas where the needs are greatest, there are often too few humanitarian organisations present at country level that have adequate knowledge of the context and are able to work in line with the humanitarian principles.

Norway will work together with its humanitarian partners to achieve a more rapid and effective response to humanitarian crises that is targeted towards areas where the needs are greatest. We therefore need partners that work in line with the

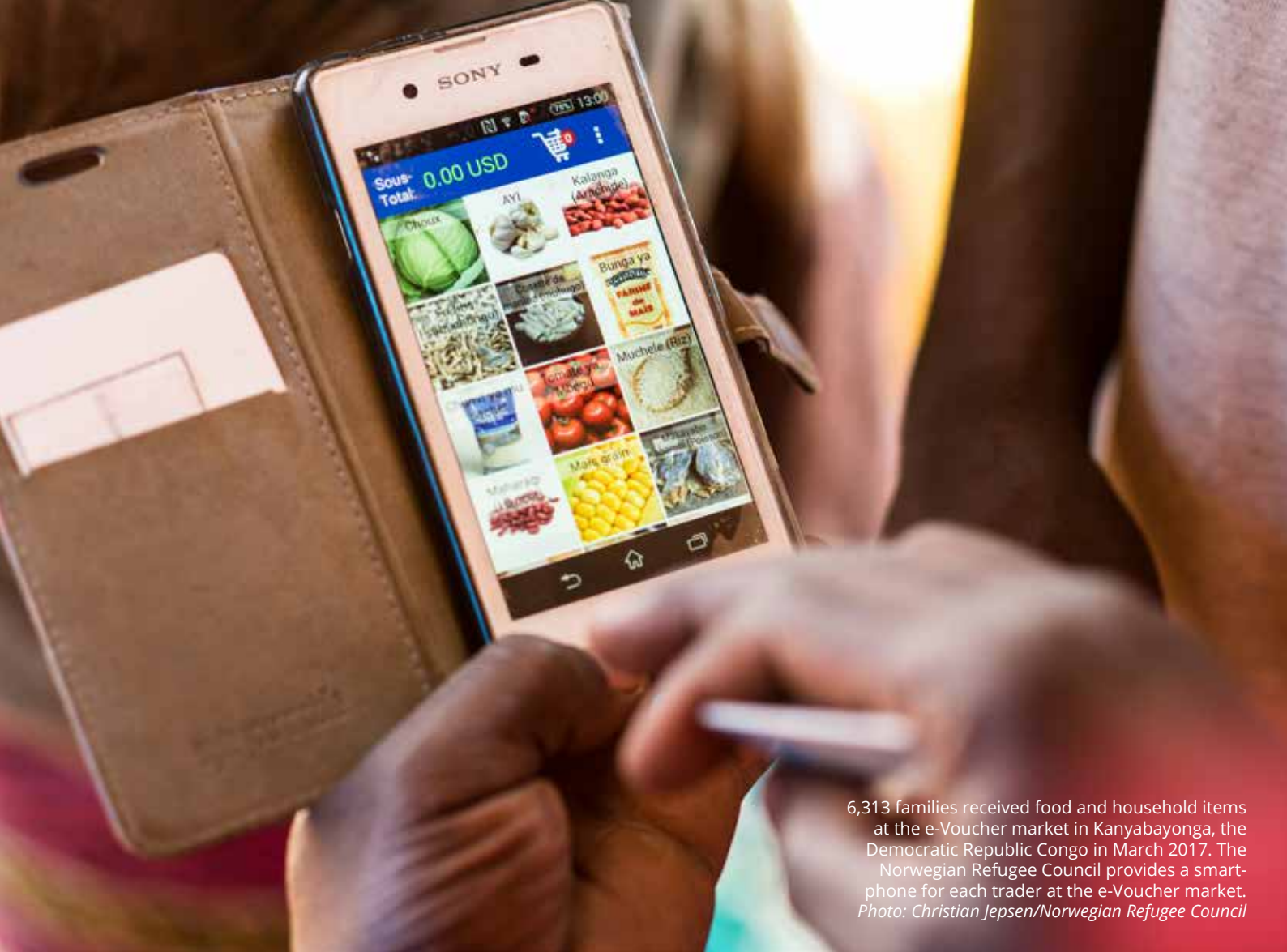
humanitarian principles, and have extensive local knowledge and a good understanding of the context. Conflict sensitivity is crucial in many situations, and all action must be based on the 'do no harm' principle.

Norway will provide predictable and flexible financing in order to promote a rapid and effective response to situations of acute need. This type of financing gives our partners the freedom to adjust priorities to respond to new acute needs that arise in unpredictable and ever-changing crisis situations. It also strengthens organisations' preparedness and their ability to respond rapidly when new crises emerge. Predictable and flexible financing makes it necessary to maintain an open dialogue with our partners on the risks involved in their humanitarian efforts and the quality and results of their work. How the organisations and their local partners can ensure compliance with the humanitarian principles is another important issue in this dialogue.

### The Government will

- work to achieve a more rapid, effective and principled humanitarian response, in cooperation with Norway's partners;
- provide predictable and flexible financing to Norway's humanitarian partners and engage in open dialogue with them on risks, results, quality of efforts and compliance with the humanitarian principles.





6,313 families received food and household items at the e-Voucher market in Kanyabayonga, the Democratic Republic Congo in March 2017. The Norwegian Refugee Council provides a smartphone for each trader at the e-Voucher market. Photo: Christian Jepsen/Norwegian Refugee Council

## Use of cash in humanitarian aid

The use of cash rather than traditional forms of humanitarian assistance can be an effective way of addressing some of the challenges in the humanitarian system. However, globally, the use of cash is still limited.<sup>13</sup> Norway has therefore decided to champion cash-based humanitarian assistance internationally in order to increase the use of, and improve coordination of, this type of assistance and thus promote reform of the humanitarian sector.

Increasing the use of cash transfers will benefit both individuals and communities. This form of assistance is also more cost-efficient than other forms of assistance because the logistics and administration costs are lower.

An increasing number of studies and evaluations are concluding that cash programmes produce

good results. Greater use of cash also helps people affected by crisis to regain their dignity, by improving their financial situation and enabling them to set their own priorities. This is in line with the principles of rights-based aid. The use of cash can make it easier to reach especially vulnerable groups, and can be an effective way of helping people in hard-to-reach areas. The use of cash is also beneficial for the local community, as increased demand has positive ripple effects on the local economy. Furthermore, cash transfer systems that are used in humanitarian crises can provide a basis for the development of social security systems in the future. Cash-based assistance can thus help to build bridges between humanitarian assistance and long-term development.

Although studies show that the risk of corruption and misuse of funds is lower with cash-based assistance, risk management must be a key element of

<sup>13</sup> The State of the World's Cash Report, drawn up by the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP): <http://www.cashlearning.org/downloads/calp-sowc-report-web.pdf>

all cash transfer programmes. These programmes must also be designed to ensure that they do not undermine protection efforts. In particular, women's interests must be safeguarded.

As is the case with all forms of assistance, the extent to which it is appropriate to make use of cash transfers will be determined by the local situation, and in many cases it will be necessary to combine cash transfers with other forms of assistance. It is therefore vital to carry out thorough analyses of the needs, markets and social conditions before deciding on the most appropriate approach. Moreover, cash-based assistance should be implemented in a way that gives the recipients the greatest possible freedom of choice and predictability.

### The Government will

- play a leading role internationally in efforts to increase the use of, and improve the coordination of, cash-based assistance across sectors in a way that ensures the greatest possible freedom of choice for the recipients;
- require Norway's partners to use cash in situations where this is the most effective way of providing assistance.

#### Box 4.3 Use of cash in humanitarian aid

Cash transfers to individuals, households or groups can replace or complement traditional aid in the form of food, or other goods and services. Using cash means that decision-making on how to use funding is transferred from the donor to the recipient. Cash assistance can be provided as cash in hand, or can be transferred via banking systems or other money transfer systems, via mobile telephones, or using other forms of financial technology.

## Humanitarian diplomacy

Both as a donor country and as a humanitarian actor, Norway will face a number of complex challenges in the years ahead. We will have to ask ourselves how and where Norway is best able to protect and assist people in need.

Our engagement should not be limited to responding when a crisis emerges. Norway will work to prevent humanitarian crises from arising in the first place, and in cooperation with our partners, we will help to strengthen the overall framework for humanitarian efforts. In order to ensure that the humanitarian response is as effective as possible, we must promote an integrated approach and consider the various thematic areas and tools as parts of a coherent whole. Through our peace and reconciliation work, Norway will also seek to promote inclusive political solutions to conflict-related crises. The interface between political and humanitarian efforts has never been more important.

Humanitarian actors often have to negotiate with authorities and armed groups in order to gain safe and unimpeded access to all those in need. Humanitarian access can be a highly politicised issue, and sometimes problems relating to access at the local level can become a political issue at the international level. This can help to improve access, but it can just as often make it harder for humanitarian organisations to protect the people affected.

Norway will therefore work to depoliticise humanitarian efforts and to make it clear that, in order to protect civilians, international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles must be respected. This will entail active humanitarian diplomacy at both international and country level. The most effective approach will depend on the context.

Geopolitical changes and major global challenges are placing new demands on international cooperation and the multilateral system. The UN enjoys unique legitimacy and plays a unique role both globally and at country level. As a member state and a major contributor to the UN, Norway wishes to use its influence to help to ensure that the organisation is as effective as possible, including in the humanitarian area. This will continue to be an important element of Norway's humanitarian diplomacy.

People in the most severely affected areas tend to have the greatest needs but are often the hardest

to reach. We will cooperate with our partners to improve access to the most vulnerable people in humanitarian crises. We will also continue our dialogue with our partners on how we can work together to strengthen principled humanitarian action, especially in situations of armed conflict.

New countries and actors have become engaged in humanitarian efforts in recent years. Not all of them comply with the humanitarian principles. As part of our humanitarian diplomacy work, we will therefore engage in dialogue with new actors on the importance of humanitarian values and principles. This is also relevant in the context of the normative work being done in international forums. In addition, we

will work to expand the humanitarian donor base beyond the traditional group of OECD donors, and to facilitate inclusive cooperation.

### The Government will

- make use of active humanitarian diplomacy to help to ensure that parties to conflict comply with international humanitarian law;
- take a leading role and support international initiatives that seek to improve the quality and coordination of humanitarian efforts;
- help to ensure that Norway's partners develop the necessary skills and capacity to negotiate humanitarian access.

#### Box 4.4 Guidance note on the humanitarian principles

In consultation with several Norwegian humanitarian organisations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has drawn up a guidance note aimed at enhancing respect for and compliance with the humanitarian principles.<sup>14</sup>

Our partners frequently face challenges and dilemmas relating to compliance with the humanitarian principles. Through an open, structured, experience-based dialogue on these challenges, we aim to strengthen the ability of these organisations to provide humanitarian aid in line with these principles. The guidance note is intended to be a dynamic tool to promote mutual learning opportunities and better understanding of the principles.

The principles of humanity and impartiality are to form the basis for all Norway's humanitarian efforts. The principles of neutrality and independence are important for gaining the necessary trust and access to be able to provide humanitarian assistance and protection in a humane and impartial way. How the principles of neutrality and independence can best be complied with will depend on the humanitarian context. It is precisely because there are not always simple answers to the challenges humanitarian organisations have to face that Norway is seeking to promote an experience-based approach aimed at ensuring that the humanitarian response can reach those who are most vulnerable.

<sup>14</sup> *Ensuring Respect for the Humanitarian Principles: Guidance Note for Support Provided from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to NGOs* (19.12.16): <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/hum-prinsipper/id2568659/?q=humanitære>. The guidance note was drawn up as follow-up to the evaluation report 'Striking the Balance': Evaluation of the Planning, Organisation and Management of Norwegian Assistance related to the Syria Regional Crisis.

---

# 5 An integrated approach

---

Protracted and complex humanitarian crises require an integrated approach and closer coordination between the various actors and initiatives. This is a key principle for Norway's overall efforts, in line with the white paper on the Sustainable Development Goals and Norwegian development policy, *Common Responsibility for Common Future* (Meld. St. 24 (2016–2017)) and the strategic framework for Norway's engagement in conflict prevention, stabilisation and resilience building in countries and regions affected by conflict and fragility.<sup>15</sup>

## Coordination of humanitarian efforts, long-term development assistance and peacebuilding

At the global level, humanitarian efforts will have to be intensified if people in need are to receive the protection and assistance they have a right to. Norway's efforts are to be based on the humanitarian principles and respond to acute humanitarian needs. At the same time, we will take a long-term perspective and seek to contribute to more sustainable solutions.

Evaluations of Norwegian and international efforts to reduce vulnerability and build resilience show that it is important to improve coordination between humanitarian efforts, long-term development assistance and peacebuilding.<sup>16</sup> Efforts to promote human rights are also an integral part of this broader picture. The concept of sustaining peace is guiding efforts in the UN. In order to successfully build lasting peace and prevent new outbreaks of violence and new humanitarian crises, the UN system needs to work more effectively across institutional boundaries, and ensure that its processes are inclusive and that priority is given to peacebuilding measures. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will require more coherent efforts at global, regional and national level. This also applies to efforts to prevent natural disasters, including those related to climate change. We therefore need to take an integrated approach; only by doing so will

our efforts in the various areas achieve the best possible overall results (see Box 5.2 on food security).

One of the aims of Norway's humanitarian efforts is to reduce fragility and vulnerability and lay the foundation for more sustainable solutions. Through our support, we seek to help people affected by conflict and crisis to meet their own needs, so that they can return to a normal daily life as soon as possible. Rehabilitation of schools, health clinics and homes, repair of water pipes and water sources, humanitarian mine clearance and efforts to promote education and health are all examples of humanitarian measures that can increase the resilience of individuals and local communities.

At the same time, the fact that humanitarian organisations sometimes have to carry out tasks relating to infrastructure and services in protracted crises is also a challenge. This may be due to a failure, for whatever reason, on the part of the national authorities to take responsibility, or to a shortage of development actors on the ground. There are good reasons why humanitarian organisations take on such tasks for short periods of time. Their efforts can help to prevent systems from collapsing and may be necessary to save lives and alleviate suffering. It is important that these efforts are always carried out in line with the humanitarian principles. It is also important that, wherever possible, the humanitarian organisations concerned cooperate with, and, in due course, transfer these tasks to other organisations that have the expertise and resources necessary to carry out long-term development work. Otherwise, the capacity of the humanitarian organisations to meet acute needs may be undermined. It is crucial to underline the fact that infrastructure and basic services are the responsibility of the national authorities. In protracted conflict situations, humanitarian organisations may face an impossible dilemma if they see that their work is indirectly prolonging the conflict. This can be the case in situations where the warring parties are using all their resources on the conflict, leaving the responsibility for providing basic services to humanitarian organisations.

---

<sup>15</sup> Strategic framework for Norway's engagement in conflict prevention, stabilisation and resilience building in countries and regions affected by conflict and fragility. Norwegian version available here: [https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/saarbare\\_stater/id2563780/](https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/saarbare_stater/id2563780/)

<sup>16</sup> How to engage in long-term humanitarian crises: a desk review, NORAD, 2017

A substantial portion of Norway's long-term development assistance goes to countries and regions with a high degree of fragility. Norway also cooperates closely with the UN, the World Bank and the other multilateral organisations in order to draw attention to these regions and increase international assistance to them. Efforts to protect and assist the most vulnerable and marginalised people are of crucial importance for achieving the SDGs.

In contrast to the objective of humanitarian action, the objective of long-term development and stabilisation efforts is to address the root causes of armed conflict and fragility. This involves strengthening the ability of states, local communities and regional actors to prevent and respond to crises and to ensure that the population has access to basic services. This includes measures to support inclusive political processes and stabilisation of the security situation and efforts to promote respect for human rights, good governance and the rule of law, inclusive growth, and better living conditions.

There is a need for greater tolerance of risk and greater flexibility in long-term development efforts in countries and regions affected by fragility. In particular, this applies to the risk of not achieving the desired results. Long-term aid to states and regions affected by conflict and fragility may have to be altered or discontinued at short notice, which can mean that the results achieved are undermined or even reversed.

There is growing awareness of the need for more development actors to become engaged in protracted humanitarian crises at an earlier stage, as they bring both long-term development expertise and more sustainable financing. This applies especially to actors in the multilateral system. Development actors need to maintain a closer dialogue with humanitarian actors, they need to become more aware of the benefits they can bring to countries and regions affected by fragility, and they need to adapt to a higher level of risk and rapidly changing situations. Many of the organisations that Norway supports carry out both humanitarian work and more long-term development projects.

Cooperation with the authorities is normally an important aspect of peacebuilding and development efforts. In countries where the authorities are not able, or willing, to provide basic services to the population, new approaches are necessary. The engagement of the World Bank is important in this context. Through the International Development Association (IDA), efforts in countries and regions

affected by conflict and fragility have doubled. Special mechanisms for responding to crises and refugees situations have also been developed to channel funding to UN organisations and other organisations at country level. In addition, innovative financing mechanisms have been established to support middle-income countries that are receiving large numbers of refugees. These mechanisms play a crucial role by financing measures to stimulate private sector development and create jobs, which in turn give people the opportunity to earn a living. Norway supports schemes and mechanisms such as these. Norway has also played a leading role in promoting the increasingly close cooperation between the UN and the World Bank on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Intensified efforts in the interface between humanitarian and development assistance will mean that donors such as Norway will have to make changes, for example by increasing coordination and cooperation in the management of development aid and humanitarian action, not least at country level. Our embassies will play a key role here, by contributing to better evaluations and analyses.

### **The Government will**

- actively promote a more integrated approach at both global and country level to enhance the humanitarian response and reduce future humanitarian needs;
- support humanitarian action aimed at reducing the vulnerability of individuals and local communities;
- seek to increase flexibility and tolerance of risk in long-term development efforts in states and regions affected by conflict and fragility, and give priority to providing relevant development assistance to such areas;
- view efforts funded under the humanitarian budget and efforts funded under other relevant budget items as parts of a coherent whole, and continue to have a flexible budget item for measures to promote stability, prevent conflict, reduce vulnerability, and increase local resilience.

### **Box 5.1 An integrated approach in Iraq**

In recent years, Norway has provided substantial humanitarian support to Iraq. This funding has been used to meet the urgent needs for assistance and protection of the many millions of civilians caught up in ISIL's campaign of violence, and to support the fight against the terrorist group. Norway continues to provide humanitarian support based on the humanitarian principles. At the same time, we are providing increasing support for stabilisation efforts under other budget items, and much of this funding is channelled through UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which was established to ensure rapid stabilisation of areas previously occupied by ISIL. The UN has reported that many displaced people trying to go back to these areas end up returning to the refugee camps because their homes are still in ruins and there has been a dramatic deterioration in public services and economic opportunities. Early recovery and the re-establishment of services are therefore crucial, to enable displaced people to return home and prevent armed conflict from flaring up again. Through our contributions to the FFS, and in close cooperation with the Iraqi authorities, Norway is supporting the reconstruction of basic infrastructure (such as electricity, water, and sewage systems), social infrastructure (such as schools and hospitals), and infrastructure relating to law enforcement and the justice sector. In addition, measures are being implemented to stimulate the local business sector. Due in part to these efforts, the number of internally displaced people who returned home in 2017 was higher, for the first time since 2013, than the number still displaced.

### **Box 5.2 Food security**

Globally, 815 million people have inadequate or unstable access to food as a result of conflict and climate change.<sup>17</sup> The UN member states have agreed to end hunger by 2030. Food assistance accounts for a considerable part of Norway's humanitarian assistance. Much of this funding is channelled through the World Food Programme (WFP). Among other things, WFP provides school meals for 18.3 million children. As part of our humanitarian efforts to reduce vulnerability and build resilience, Norway provides support to people affected by conflict and crisis with a view to helping them to provide for themselves. Most hunger crises have clear warning signs, and a great deal can be achieved through preventive and early action. At the same time, Norway also provides long-term development aid to increase people's resilience to fluctuations in food production. This funding is provided both bilaterally and through multilateral organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The Government is drawing up an action plan on sustainable food systems in the context of Norwegian foreign and development policy,<sup>18</sup> which aims to link Norway's efforts in the areas of nutrition, food security and climate-resilient agriculture to the five thematic priority areas in our development policy: education; health; private sector development and job creation; climate, renewable energy and the environment; and humanitarian aid.

<sup>17</sup> Annual Performance Report for 2017, WFP

<sup>18</sup> The action plan is to be launched in autumn 2018



## Education and health

Almost 37 million children and young people in countries affected by conflict and crisis do not have access to education.<sup>19</sup> Access to education is a human right, and it is essential for development. Investing in education in humanitarian crises and in countries and regions affected by conflict and fragility is crucial if we are to achieve SDG 4 on quality education.

People in areas affected by conflict and crisis want their children to be able to have access to education. Schooling can help to protect these children, bring a sense of normality to their lives, and give them greater opportunities in the future. In this way, education has both an immediate and a long-term positive effect for individual children and for their communities. Schools can also be used to provide nutrition programmes and health services for children.

Nevertheless, education has not traditionally been a high priority in humanitarian action. Norway will continue to play a leading role internationally to promote access to education in situations of crisis and conflict, and will attach particular importance to girls' education. It is important that education is given priority and integrated into the humanitarian response. Norway will work to secure a stronger and broader donor base for education in situations of crisis and

conflict, and to enhance coordination between humanitarian assistance and long-term aid. The Education Cannot Wait fund, which Norway helped to establish, makes an important contribution in this area.

National authorities and development actors have generally done too little to ensure that children and young people in countries and regions affected by conflict and fragility have regular access to quality education. In protracted refugee situations, too, there is a need for development actors to do more.

Norwegian humanitarian aid is to contribute to the protection of schools and improve access to quality education in the period *before* conditions allow more long-term efforts. This means that education measures that are financed with humanitarian funds must not be extended once it is possible to transfer responsibility to national authorities or development actors. It is the national authorities of a country that have responsibility for the education sector. If they, for whatever reason, fail to shoulder this responsibility, it is the task of development actors to promote capacity development until the national authorities are able to assume responsibility.

Close cooperation between humanitarian and development actors is also crucial if we are to achieve SDG 3 on health.

<sup>19</sup> Global Education Monitoring Report 2016, UNESCO

Support for lifesaving basic health services is an important element of Norway's humanitarian efforts. Norway's humanitarian and development efforts have many of the same priorities, such as women's, children's and young people's health, sexual and reproductive health, and the prevention of pandemics and non-communicable diseases.

Long-term investments in health systems make it easier to maintain or re-establish health services when crises arise or escalate. Norway is taking an integrated approach to strengthening health service provision, with a view to preventing new health crises.

There are also close links between the results of humanitarian health efforts and the results achieved in other areas, such as the provision of food, water, education and protection. Furthermore, there is growing recognition of the need for mental health services and psychosocial support in humanitarian response.

In humanitarian crises, access to sexual and reproductive health services is reduced. Women face greater risks during childbirth, and many women experience unwanted pregnancies. It may be difficult for menstruating women to find sanitary products.

Norway will give high priority to measures that promote women's and girls' reproductive health in humanitarian crises. These measures include the provision of sexual and reproductive health services at health clinics and hospitals in conflict areas, and the use of mobile health clinics that can reach women in areas that are not easily accessible.

### **The Government will**

- continue to give priority to education in situations of crisis and conflict;
- provide support for lifesaving and basic health services in connection with Norway's humanitarian efforts;
- increase support for sexual and reproductive health services in crisis situations;
- promote closer coordination between humanitarian and development efforts in the areas of education and health.

## **A comprehensive refugee response**

At the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants in New York in 2016, the international community agreed to take a more long-term and innovative approach in its future refugee response. The New York Declaration<sup>20</sup>

for Refugees and Migrants, the outcome document from the Summit, sets out important principles for this work. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework was also adopted at the Summit. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is responsible for the roll-out of the framework in relevant countries. Negotiations on a global compact on refugees are also under way in the UN. The global compact will be based on the same principles as the framework, and is due to be adopted at the UN General Assembly in 2018. Norway is participating in the formal consultations on the compact, which, once adopted, will be used as the basis for our efforts in this area in the years ahead.

Key aims of this work are to promote fairer and more predictable responsibility-sharing at the international level, to develop a longer-term approach to improving refugees' living conditions where they are, and to alleviate the situation of the host countries. These aims take into account the huge contribution made by the host countries and their need for assistance in dealing with the refugee situation and achieving the SDGs. However, the authorities of host countries are sometimes sceptical about long-term support for the refugee population in their countries, partly in order to sustain pressure on the refugees to return home as soon as the situation in their country of origin permits.

Norway is one of the largest contributors to UNHCR, which leads and coordinates the international efforts to protect and assist refugees and is the most important actor in the UN system in this field. The aims of the international refugee response are still to find durable solutions in the form of voluntary repatriation, resettlement, or local integration. Repatriation is the durable solution of choice, provided that the returns are voluntary, safe, and dignified, and provided that the information on conditions in the country of origin is accurate. Refugees often have to wait a long time – many of them decades – for a durable solution. It is therefore crucial to take a comprehensive approach and provide long-term development aid to refugees where they are, for the years it may take to find a durable solution.

The Government will continue to give priority to helping refugees where they are, and will promote a better division of responsibilities internationally and a longer-term approach to efforts in countries of origin and their neighbouring countries. This calls for closer coordination between humanitarian action and long-term development efforts. The aim is to

<sup>20</sup> The New York Declaration on the UNHCR website: <http://www.unhcr.org/57e39d987>



reduce refugees' dependence on aid and increase the opportunities for development, while alleviating the host countries' financial burden in protracted refugee situations. A comprehensive refugee response gives refugees more dignity, by allowing them to take greater control over their lives and their futures. The Government will place particular emphasis on the gender perspective, education, and protection in its efforts in this area.

### The Government will

- work at the multilateral level to achieve a more effective and better coordinated refugee response, in line with the Refugee Convention and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants;
- integrate the gender perspective, education, and protection as central elements of a comprehensive refugee response.

### Preparedness, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation

Preparedness, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian efforts and long-term development aid produce the best results and are most effective when they form part of an integrated approach. While good emergency preparedness systems reduce the negative impact of a disaster when it occurs, the aim should be to prevent the onset of a humanitarian crisis in the first place. The impacts of climate change and the increased number of climate-related natural disasters are having a particularly harmful effect on poor countries and vulnerable groups. The impacts

can be so dramatic that they lead to humanitarian crises, which often become protracted. The prevention of disasters of this kind is therefore essential if we are to reach the SDGs.

There is a clear connection between the need for climate change adaptation and prevention of climate-related and other natural disasters on the one hand, and the need for humanitarian efforts on the other. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction has given us a set of agreed global targets and indicators for disaster risk reduction, and has also put this issue higher on the international agenda.

Although disaster risk reduction measures are expensive, there can be no doubt that disaster response and reconstruction cost more. The Government is therefore helping to put the prevention of climate-related and natural disasters on the international agenda, and will set out its priorities in this area in a new strategy. Intensified efforts in the areas of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation will be part of an integrated approach to risk management and humanitarian response in disasters.

### The Government will

- support efforts to promote preparedness, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation as part of an integrated approach to reducing vulnerability and humanitarian needs;
- develop a strategy for Norway's efforts in the field of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

Sandstorms can appear in minutes, with wind speeds up to 40 kilometers per hour. These weather conditions provide extreme pressure on shelters and may even be lethal.

*Photo: Ingrid Prestetun/Norwegian Refugee Council*



---

## 6 Reform and innovation

---

### Change and reform needed for an effective, integrated approach

The widening gap between humanitarian needs and the resources available is a symptom of systemic problems that extend far beyond the humanitarian sector. Action needs to be taken at several levels. The UN High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing identified and made recommendations concerning three key aspects of the humanitarian financing challenge:

- preventing and reducing humanitarian needs through a more integrated approach;
- mobilising additional funding through innovative partnerships, new donors and new financing mechanisms;
- improving the efficiency of humanitarian assistance and introducing new ways of working (see Box 6.1 on the Grand Bargain).<sup>21</sup>

The Government will give priority to work in these areas.

The UN plays a crucial role at both global and country level in ensuring close coordination and effective planning and implementation of efforts in the various thematic areas. A well-functioning UN and, wherever possible, cooperation with non-governmental organisations and national and local authorities are vital factors for effective, well-coordinated humanitarian efforts. The UN resident coordinators/humanitarian coordinators and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) play a key role here.

The aim of ongoing UN reform processes is to improve effectiveness and coordination at country level, so that different UN organisations cooperate more closely across their mandates and deliver better results together. A vital aspect of this work is to strengthen the role of the resident coordinators/humanitarian coordinators, who are responsible for both humanitarian action and long-term development efforts, by giving them greater authority and more resources. The UN Secretary-General will also engage in dialogue with donors on reducing earmarked funding and increasing core funding to UN organisations, so that their efforts to deliver results are better coordinated

and more cost-effective. Increased support for funds that promote cooperation, such as the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), is another of his proposed reforms in the area of financing. Norway is actively supporting the Secretary-General's reform initiatives both politically and financially. Norway is also supporting concrete initiatives such as the New Way of Working,<sup>22</sup> which brings together various UN organisations and the World Bank in an effort to develop new collaborative solutions. An important approach in the New Way of Working is more systematic use of multi-year humanitarian response plans that give greater priority to measures to strengthen resilience. At the same time, it is important to ensure that increasing coordination between the various actors does not reduce independence, flexibility or the ability to respond rapidly, factors that are vital for effective humanitarian action.

Strengthening the UN's humanitarian efforts is an important element of Norway's UN policy. The way Norway and other donors support and finance the UN has a major effect on the results that can be achieved. More flexible and predictable funding is vital in order to make humanitarian action more effective and to improve coordination with long-term development efforts. It is also needed to increase the capacity and effectiveness of humanitarian organisations in response to acute humanitarian situations.

Norway's large, multi-year pledges to CERF are helping to ensure a rapid, effective and coordinated response to acute humanitarian crises. This also helps to ensure urgently needed support for underfunded emergencies. Norway will play a proactive role in the efforts to develop a more effective and strategic international system for financing the response to humanitarian crises. This includes increasing the financing available to deal with slow-onset humanitarian crises through various mechanisms and innovative financing solutions.

The diversity of the humanitarian sector needs to be better utilised. Local and national organisations need to be given a bigger role in order to meet the vast humanitarian needs. They have many advantages

---

<sup>21</sup> High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the Secretary-General: Too important to fail - addressing the humanitarian financing gap (2016).

<sup>22</sup> Read more about the New Way of Working on OCHA's website: <https://www.unocha.org/story/new-way-working>

when it comes to meeting the specific humanitarian needs in a particular crisis, such as local knowledge, proximity to those who are affected, and presence at country level – before, during and after the crisis. This improves coordination of preventive measures, crisis response and long-term development.

It is an international goal to channel a larger share of humanitarian aid as directly as possible to local responders. However, if local responders are to play a more prominent role, their capacity must be strengthened systematically over time. This is also one of the changes in working practices identified in the Grand Bargain (see Box 6.1). To achieve this goal, we need to take an integrated approach, including the use of long-term development aid to develop capacity.

The UN Country-based Pooled Funds will continue to be important channels for Norway's funding, as they help to ensure an effective, well coordinated response at country level. They are also important channels for strengthening local and national capacity to respond to humanitarian crises. In 2017, around 25 % of the money raised for these funds went directly to national organisations.<sup>23</sup>

However, we must also recognise that, in some situations, local capacity may be so reduced that it is difficult to respond to the acute needs. In other cases, local capacity may be adequate, but may be under such tight political control that the local responders are unable to deliver humanitarian aid in line with the humanitarian principles.

Humanitarian action should be as local as possible and as international as necessary to ensure that people in need receive proper assistance and protection.

### **The Government will**

- take part in developing a more effective and strategic international system for financing humanitarian action;
- push for UN reforms that put the needs of people affected by conflict and crisis centre stage and that involve greater coordination and a more integrated approach across mandates;
- play a part in strengthening local and national capacity to respond to humanitarian crises through relevant funding mechanisms such as the UN Country-based Pooled Funds;
- provide multi-year contributions to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

### **Box 6.1 The Grand Bargain**

The Grand Bargain was adopted at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. The aim is to reduce the humanitarian funding gap through increasing effectiveness, innovation and improving coordination with long-term development efforts. Key areas for action are more flexible and predictable funding, better coordination, strengthening partnerships with local and national responders, the inclusion of people affected by conflict and crisis, greater use of cash-based assistance and digital tools in the humanitarian response, and harmonised reporting requirements. Norway endorsed the Grand Bargain at the Summit together with the UN, a range of non-governmental organisations and other top donors.

Norway already complies with many of the commitments made under the Grand Bargain, for example by providing large un-earmarked and flexible contributions to the UN and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Norway also makes multi-year contributions for both protracted crises and thematic priority areas. Norway is an advocate for increased use of cash-based assistance in the humanitarian response. We are also working to strengthen local and national capacity to respond to humanitarian crises, for example through our support to the UN Country-based Pooled Funds, which also ensures a well-coordinated response. We will maintain a dialogue with our partners on how and to what extent they cooperate with local organisations. At the international level, we are working to harmonise reporting requirements in order to reduce the reporting burden on humanitarian organisations. Norway reports on how it is following up the commitments it made at the Summit, including the Grand Bargain, through established multilateral processes.

<sup>23</sup> Towards a Better System for Humanitarian Financing, Lowcock, 2018

## The role of the private sector

The private sector could play a more prominent role in humanitarian efforts, and has a crucial part to play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Private companies and organisations can not only provide funding, but also contribute knowledge and technologies that others do not have. Partnerships between humanitarian actors and the private sector can drive the development and scaling up of relevant technology and new solutions, and thus have greater effects than either of the partners could have achieved alone. In particular, there is great potential for cooperation between the private sector and humanitarian actors in the field of digital innovation and technology.

The part played by local business and industry both during and after a crisis is also important. For example, during a protracted crisis, local businesses can stimulate local markets, create jobs and contribute to the financial inclusion of refugees and internally displaced people. Humanitarian actors should therefore seek to buy goods and services locally whenever appropriate. However, in countries and regions affected by crisis, there may be a limited number of businesses that offer the required goods or services, and corruption may also be a widespread problem. Humanitarian organisations must therefore have a sound understanding of local economic conditions and markets.

Norwegian companies that have special expertise can offer technology and innovation that will make the humanitarian response more effective and sustainable. This applies to sectors such as financial technology and green solutions, and to companies that have a presence in countries affected by conflict and crisis.

Cooperation with the private sector in humanitarian response must be results-oriented and pragmatic, and must uphold humanitarian principles and the integrity of the humanitarian actors.

### The Government will

- encourage the involvement of local business and industry in dealing with humanitarian crises;
- seek to improve the framework for cooperation between the private sector and humanitarian actors.

## Innovation

Technological developments are making it possible to bring about major changes in humanitarian efforts. The term humanitarian innovation refers to new products, forms of cooperation or other solutions that are measurably better than those that are in use today. Such solutions may lead to improvements in effectiveness or in quality. They may be more sustainable and environmentally friendly or have other positive ripple effects. Innovation and innovative solutions may also reduce costs, and thus help to reduce the humanitarian funding gap. However, it is also important to bear in mind that some innovations may throw up new challenges, for example related to protection, corruption or a lack of digital expertise.

One weakness of innovation in the humanitarian sector is that the affected population is rarely involved. Humanitarian innovation is also slowed by short-term financing, limited risk appetite, and weak links between the humanitarian sector and the private sector. This makes it important to promote cooperation on innovation, both between humanitarian organisations and between the humanitarian sector and the private sector.

The Government will give priority to innovation and new working methods that lead to better and more effective results for people affected by conflict and crisis. The Government will also facilitate the creation of new meeting places. The establishment of a Norwegian humanitarian innovation programme in cooperation with Innovation Norway will be one important step to this end. Innovation partnerships between humanitarian organisations and private companies will be established through this programme.

### The Government will

- support innovative measures, especially in the fields of protection and green humanitarian response;
- strengthen coordination between humanitarian organisations and the private sector by establishing a Norwegian humanitarian innovation programme.

WFP in partnership with UNHCR has introduced its innovative iris scan payment system in Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp, allowing refugees to purchase food from the camp's supermarkets using a scan of their eye instead of cash, vouchers or e-cards.  
*Photo: Mohammad Batah/WFP*



The Norwegian-developed solar lamp SunBell is included in more than two millions standard arrival packages that the UNHCR provides for newly arrived refugees in refugee camps.  
*Photo: Taral Jansen/K8*



## Green humanitarian response

Awareness of the environmental and climate-related aspects of humanitarian efforts must be increased. Humanitarian disasters and humanitarian response put pressure on the environment and natural resources; for example, displaced people are often dependent on wood or charcoal for cooking. This can result in conflict over resources with the local population and forest degradation in areas around camps for displaced people. Planning humanitarian operations from a short-term perspective may also result in costly and more polluting solutions, for example the use of diesel generators.

The Government will promote green humanitarian response to ensure that environmental and climate-related considerations are taken more fully into account and integrated into all stages of the humanitarian response. The objective of green humanitarian response is to minimise the negative impacts of the response on the climate and environment. Cooperation with national authorities, the private sector and other stakeholders will be essential in this context. The Government will promote greater use of new technology and innovation, especially in the field of environmentally sound energy solutions. The use of technology and innovative solutions such as cash-based assistance may also simplify the logistics of operations and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### The Government will

- require Norway's partners to choose sustainable and more environmentally friendly solutions for their humanitarian operations.

## Innovative financing

New, untraditional forms of financing are needed to adapt our efforts to changes in the humanitarian landscape and improve the results for the affected population.<sup>24</sup>

Innovative financing means financing mechanisms and models designed to address development challenges and humanitarian needs that are not adequately met by traditional funding sources. These mechanisms and models are also intended to provide quicker, more efficient funding and achieve better results than traditional models. Many innovative financing mechanisms are intended to raise fresh funding, for example from the private sector, and include a variety of models and approaches, such as insurance-based mechanisms for natural disaster management, forecast-based financing, various forms of public-private financing and risk-sharing with the private sector through bonds.

Innovative sources of financing will be an important means of ensuring increased, better and more predictable financing. Forecasting, early warning systems and good preparedness systems will be of crucial importance. New financing mechanisms may also encourage the use of traditional aid as a catalyst to mobilise other and larger capital flows.

The development of innovative financing will largely have to be driven by the humanitarian sector itself, in close cooperation with the multilateral development banks, the private sector and other relevant actors. The Government will support this work and evaluate Norway's investments in new and innovative financing mechanisms. This can also promote the development of good financing mechanisms for the future. Our approach will be based on lessons learned from long-term development efforts in areas such as global health, education and forest conservation.

### The Government will

- promote the development of and investments in innovative financing mechanisms.

<sup>24</sup> To receive support, innovative financing mechanisms must be in line with the Appropriation Regulations for the Storting and the Regulations for Financial Management in Central Government.

### **Box 6.2 Forecast-based financing**

In many cases, it is possible to forecast natural disasters, and early action is more effective than responding after the disaster has arisen. The Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has developed a forecast-based financing mechanism. It ensures greater exchange of information, rapid decision-making and predictable financing just before a disaster strikes. This is a cost-effective mechanism that saves lives and reduces human suffering in slow-onset natural disasters.

Mir Hassan Shar village in Sanghar Khorri, Pakistan. Photo: Håvard Bjelland/ Norwegian Church Aid





---

# 7 Partnerships

---

The main channels for translating Norway's humanitarian priorities into action are the UN, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and Norwegian organisations. The way in which we support and cooperate with our partners is decisive for our ability to achieve results – both at operational and at policy and normative level.

Norway chooses partners that work in line with the humanitarian principles. All their humanitarian action must be rights-based. Women's rights and needs must be integrated into all stages of humanitarian response, from needs assessment and planning to implementation and reporting.

Other important considerations are partners' presence and insight into the context, as well as relevant expertise for the specific crisis. Taking these into account can make it easier to gain humanitarian access in challenging areas and to direct efforts towards the most vulnerable groups.

Norway's partners are also expected to fulfil their duty of care towards their local partners.

Collaboration with Norwegian organisations is an important element of Norway's humanitarian efforts. Close cooperation combined with a clear division of roles between the Norwegian authorities and the organisations concerned has had a positive effect on the development of both Norwegian and international humanitarian policy. It has also helped Norwegian organisations to play a leading role internationally in several areas.

We want to further develop this cooperation by entering into strategic partnerships with Norwegian organisations. We will also consider entering into agreements with other partners that have particular geographical or thematic expertise to offer.

Our strategic partners will be chosen through an open process and on the basis of clear criteria. These will include compliance with the humanitarian principles, response capacity, humanitarian access,

and integration of the gender perspective into all stages of humanitarian response.

Strategic partnerships will be important in the process of strengthening our humanitarian efforts and achieving the aims of this strategy. Strategic partnerships will also increase predictability for the organisations concerned and give them better opportunities to respond rapidly and flexibly to crises. Dialogue on risks and results will be an important part of this cooperation.

Norway will be at the forefront of efforts to ensure a coherent and effective UN response that meets humanitarian needs and paves the way for more durable solutions.

Norway will also support the mandate and role of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with a view to upholding and further developing international humanitarian law. Norway will continue to be an important supporter of the ICRC's operational activities.

In recent years, most of our multi-year agreements in the humanitarian field have been with Norwegian organisations. However, in 2018 Norway signed a multi-year agreement with the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for the first time. This will enhance international coordination and the ability to respond rapidly to acute crises, and will ensure more support for underfunded emergencies.

The Government will consider increasing its support to the UN and the ICRC in the form of un-earmarked funding and multi-year agreements. This would give the organisations greater predictability and more freedom of action in their humanitarian response. However, Norway needs to ensure a balance between the use of multi-year agreements and its need as a donor to have sufficient funding available throughout the budget year in order to be able to respond if a humanitarian crisis arises or escalates. Furthermore, all multi-year agreements are subject to the approval of the Storting (Norwegian parliament).

The objectives of Good Humanitarian Donorship<sup>25</sup> and the Grand Bargain, and the commitments we have made under these initiatives, form part of the basis for Norway's humanitarian efforts, including the aim of strengthening national and local partners.

An overarching policy goal for Norway is to improve, simplify and streamline aid management.

All partners are required to have guidelines and whistleblowing mechanisms in place to prevent violence and abuse by humanitarian aid workers and to prevent sexual harassment.

## The Government will

- choose partners that work in line with the humanitarian principles;
- enter into strategic partnerships with relevant Norwegian organisations;
- consider additional multi-year agreements with and more un-earmarked funding for key international partners;
- require organisations that receive humanitarian support from Norway to take a rights-based approach and integrate the gender perspective into all aspects of their work.



March 2016  
Photo: Rejaf East/UN Photo

<sup>25</sup> Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) is an informal network of 42 donors, including Norway, that are working together to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of donor action. Read more about GHD here: <https://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/home-page.html>

---

## 8 Competency and learning

---

Humanitarian crises generally arise in complex political situations and when circumstances are already difficult. It is therefore vital that the Foreign Service has the necessary expertise and makes the best use of its overall resources. Priority will therefore be given to competence-building within the Foreign Service in the humanitarian field.

Norway will interact with a wide range of stakeholders in its humanitarian response. In countries where Norway has a diplomatic presence, the embassies will play an important role in assessing the humanitarian situation and following up the organisations that receive humanitarian funding from Norway. Our embassies also play a key role in ensuring an integrated approach and seeing the tools and approaches at our disposal in a broader context.

Norway establishes country teams to coordinate its engagement in certain countries more closely. The country teams include representatives from various areas of expertise so that continual assessment of the interplay between humanitarian aid, stabilisation efforts and longer-term development is possible. We will continue to make use of this system of cooperation. Coordination with other relevant ministries and government agencies will also be strengthened by involving them more closely in the country teams' work.

To this end, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will, in cooperation with Norad and its humanitarian partners, use evaluations and reviews to strengthen learning and knowledge development in the Foreign Service. Developing new initiatives and engaging in new efforts requires considerable resources and expertise in the areas we intend to focus on, such as the gender dimension, children and young people, and humanitarian innovation.

We will seek to cooperate with other donors to share knowledge and try out new forms of collaboration that may give better results and ease both Norway's and our partners' administrative burdens.

Cooperation with innovation actors and with Norwegian and international research and knowledge centres will be continued with a view to developing new solutions, increasing analysis capacity, and enhancing knowledge-based decision-making in humanitarian response. Our humanitarian partners are also important discussion partners in this connection.

### **The Government will**

- strengthen humanitarian expertise in the Foreign Service;
- continue to cooperate with humanitarian research and knowledge centres.

---

## 9 Follow-up

---

This strategy covers the period 2019-2023. A mid-term review will be carried out, and the follow-up of the strategy will be evaluated at the end of the period.

---

# 10 APPENDIX

---

## Acronyms and abbreviations

ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
AU	African Union
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund (UN)
DREF	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDA	International Development Association (World Bank)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development (UN)
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme (UN)

## Overview of humanitarian terminology

**Accountability to affected populations:** Accountability to affected populations (AAP) is generally understood as an active commitment by humanitarian organisations to be held to account by the people they seek to assist for the quality and effectiveness of their humanitarian action. It also means that people affected by a crisis should be able to participate in and influence decisions without discrimination or differential treatment, and that their dignity, capacity and abilities are recognised.

**Protection:** In a humanitarian context, protection is understood to cover strengthening and increasing compliance with international law, including the obligation of warring parties to protect civilians and other vulnerable groups against armed attacks and the consequences of such attacks, in situations of armed conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Further, protection includes action in all humanitarian crises to protect civilians and other vulnerable groups against violence, abuse and violations of international law, including international human rights law, that occur as a result of a humanitarian crisis.

**Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework:** This framework was adopted at the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants in 2016 and is intended to ensure more comprehensive and predictable responses for refugees.

**The humanitarian principles:** Humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence must be the underlying principles for all humanitarian action. They are derived from the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and are enshrined in international humanitarian law. See Box 3.2.

**The 'Do no harm' principle:** This is a precautionary approach to prevent humanitarian and development efforts from having negative impacts.

**Education Cannot Wait:** This global fund for education in crises was established in 2016. Its aim is to mobilise political will to strengthen education in crises through increased financial support and better coordination of efforts, including better coordination between humanitarian and long-term development efforts.

**Refugee:** Under the 1951 Refugee Convention, refugees are people who have a 'well-founded fear

of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion'. Further, they must be 'outside the country of their nationality', i.e. must have crossed an international border, and must be unable to, or due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country. Stateless persons who are outside their country of habitual residence are also considered to be refugees if they meet the same criteria.

**International refugee law:** The 1951 Refugee Convention defines the term 'refugee', sets out the principle of *non-refoulement*, which means that refugees may not be returned to a country where their life or freedom would be threatened, and outlines the rights of refugees. The scope of the Convention was extended under the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which was adopted in 1967 and removed the temporal and geographical restrictions of the 1951 Convention.

**Good Humanitarian Donorship:** The Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship were adopted by a group of donors in 2003, and the Good Humanitarian Donorship forum has since been working to advance these principles and good practices. Its objective is to 'encourage and stimulate principled donor behaviour and, by extension, improved humanitarian action'.

**Grand Bargain:** The Grand Bargain was adopted at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. The aim is to reduce the humanitarian funding gap through increasing effectiveness, innovation and coordination with long-term development efforts. See Box 6.1.

**Humanitarian assistance:** 'Humanitarian assistance' is used in a broad sense to include material relief and logistics support. Assistance may, for example, be in the form of health services, medicines, food, water, sanitation, shelter and education.

**Humanitarian innovation:** The development of new products, forms of cooperation or other solutions that increase the effectiveness and/or quality of humanitarian action.

**Innovative financing:** Financing mechanisms and models that seek to address development challenges and humanitarian needs that are not adequately met by traditional funding sources, and that seek to provide quicker, more efficient funding and achieve better results than traditional models.

**International humanitarian law:** International humanitarian law sets out the responsibilities of parties to armed conflict, and includes a number of conventions and a body of customary international law. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 together with Additional Protocols I and II of 1977 form the core of international humanitarian law. These instruments contain provisions on the protection of civilians and medical personnel and on the treatment of prisoners of war, and wounded and sick soldiers, among other things. See Box 3.1.

**Internally displaced people:** People who are forced to leave their homes due to armed conflicts, widespread violence, violations of human rights or natural disasters, but who have not crossed an internationally recognised border.

**Leaving no one behind:** The principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that no individual, group, region or country is to be left behind.

**Safe Schools Declaration:** The Safe Schools Declaration was adopted in Oslo in 2015 with the aim of strengthening protection of schools in situations of armed conflict. The signatories to the Declaration have committed themselves to avoiding military use of schools and other educational institutions in such situations in order to prevent them from becoming military targets.

**Sendai Framework:** The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction was adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015. It sets out agreed global targets for work in this area, and progress is being monitored using a set of indicators.

## Overview of Norway's humanitarian aid in 2017<sup>26</sup>

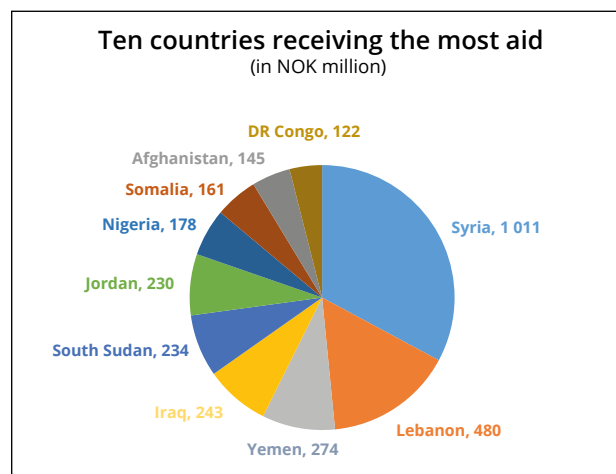
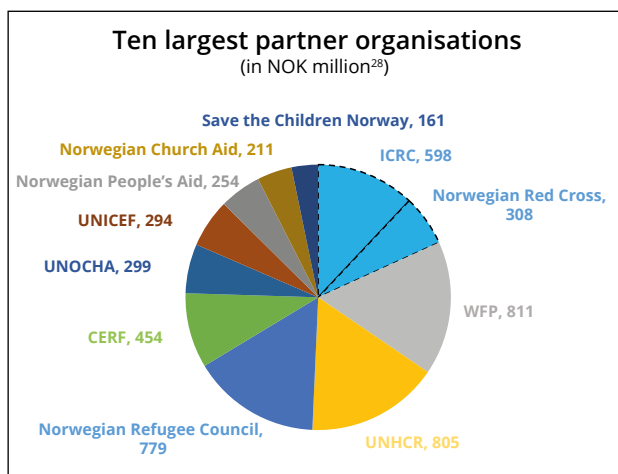
A total of NOK 5.79 billion was disbursed via the overall humanitarian budget in 2017<sup>27</sup>.

These funds were channelled through our partner organisations, primarily UN organisations (54 %) and Norwegian and international aid organisations (44 %).

The 10 largest partner organisations were the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC and the Norwegian Red Cross), WFP, UNHCR, the Norwegian Refugee Council, CERF, UNOCHA, UNICEF, Norwegian People's Aid, Norwegian Church Aid, and Save the Children Norway.

Norway provided support to people affected by humanitarian crises in **47 countries**. The **ten countries receiving the most aid<sup>28</sup>** were Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, South Sudan, Jordan, Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Nearly one-third<sup>29</sup> of Norway's support was **un-earmarked or softly earmarked**, which means that the partner organisations could decide themselves how the funds were to be used. Norwegian funding was also used in various thematic areas, including education, health, humanitarian mine clearance, water and sanitation, food security, shelter, and efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence.



<sup>26</sup> Total amounts disbursed under budget items 163.70, 170.74 and 170.73, after adjustments were made to the budget.

<sup>27</sup> Figures rounded to the nearest million.

<sup>28</sup> NB This does not include un-earmarked contributions to organisations.

<sup>29</sup> 32.6 %

## The humanitarian budget 2008–2018<sup>30</sup>

Budget year	Humanitarian aid	Natural disasters <sup>32</sup>	World Food Programme (WFP)	UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)	Humanitarian budget as percentage of total aid budget
2008	2 253 434	335 000	145 000	240 000	13,3 %
2009	2 110 000	335 000	145 000	240 000	10,8 %
2010	2 020 600	335 000	145 000	240 000	10,0 %
2011	2 075 600	458 000	145 000	290 000	11,0 %
2012	2 196 200	500 000	145 000	290 000	11,2 %
2013	2 313 600	500 000	170 000	300 000	10,9 %
2014	2 394 600	517 500	170 000	300 000	10,7 %
2015	3 339 042		212 000	300 000	11,7 %
2016	4 389 042		237 000	350 000	13,3 %
2017	4 436 124		277 000	350 000	15,0 %
2018	4 511 000		290 000	350 000	14,6 %

*(Figures in NOK thousand)*

<sup>30</sup> The table shows funding disbursed for emergency relief and humanitarian aid under budget chapters 163 and 170 in the period 2008–2018. NB In 2008 and 2009, support for human rights was included in the budget item for humanitarian aid. The figures in the table are from the approved budget for the year in question, i.e. adjustments made in the revised budget are not included.

<sup>31</sup> As of 2015, humanitarian aid and natural disasters have been combined in a single budget item.





Published by:  
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Public institutions may order additional copies from:  
Norwegian Government Security and Service Organisation  
E-mail: [publikasjonsbestilling@dss.dep.no](mailto:publikasjonsbestilling@dss.dep.no)  
Internet: [www.publikasjoner.dep.no](http://www.publikasjoner.dep.no)  
Telephone: + 47 222 40 000  
Publication number: E-977 E

Coverphoto: Children on their way to school in Aleppo, Syria 2017  
Photo: Nadim Sherum, Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

Print: Norwegian Government Security and Service Organisation  
08/2018 – Impression 300

