



# Norway's Humanitarian Policy



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*Front page photo:*

*Sandstorm in the Hamadiya camp, West Darfur. More than two million people have been forced to leave their homes in Darfur since the beginning of the war. Several hundred thousand people have been killed.*

*Photo: Lynsey Addario/Corbis/Scanpix*

# Norway's Humanitarian Policy



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



# Foreword

*One of more than 40,000  
Cambodian mine victims learning  
to walk again. Approximately six  
million landmines were laid in  
Cambodia between 1970 and  
2000.*

*Photo: EPA/Scanpix*



This strategy concerns Norway's international humanitarian policy to protect and assist individuals in distress, whether due to war, conflict or natural disaster.

Between the time when the first two Red Cross representatives were sent to the Battle of Dybbøl between Prussia/Austria-Hungary and Denmark in April 1864 and the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, humanitarian assistance has gradually become a central issue in international affairs.

In addition to conflicts, climate change and global warming are having a critical impact on people's lives and livelihoods in many parts of the world. Climatic and environmental change is now one of the main causes of the growing number of humanitarian disasters.

New food crises and health challenges arise in areas where political, demographic, economic and other factors provide fertile ground for social unrest, political radicalisation and instability.

There are many possible answers to the question of how the world community is to deal with these challenges and how Norway can best contribute. Many Norwegians are engaged in these issues and possess a great deal of knowledge in this area. We must ask where and how Norway, in collaboration with humanitarian organisations and through international cooperation, can make a difference in efforts to save lives and alleviate distress.

Humanitarian action is about helping people in need, regardless of political or other factors. Humanitarian efforts are founded on respect for universal human rights. Everyone in need is entitled to necessary help and assistance.

Humanitarian action also influences political processes in the countries concerned. While humanitarian assistance can promote political dialogue and reduce conflicts, the situation in Aceh after the tsunami in 2004 and the lessons learned from relief efforts in Burma in May this year are examples of how international humanitarian assistance may be regarded as a

political instrument. This also applies to assistance in connection with the growing number of natural disasters.

We are therefore faced with dilemmas and considerations that, at worst, may prevent emergency aid from reaching the most vulnerable. As an actor in the humanitarian arena, Norway shares the responsibility for taking these dilemmas and considerations seriously and seeking solutions when necessary assistance comes to a halt.

Norway's humanitarian engagement is part of a coherent foreign and development policy that aims to promote peace and sustainable development. We are both responsible for meeting these challenges through a variety of measures that are as coordinated as possible, and we strongly emphasise the importance of close cooperation and collaboration within the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and between our respective areas of responsibility.

Our humanitarian engagement must be based not only on principles and values but also on knowledge and expertise. Our management of humanitarian funds must lead to desired and measurable results.

This humanitarian strategy is linked to the Government's other initiatives to set the course for Norway's foreign and development policy in the years ahead, primarily *the Reflex Project*, which concerns Norway's interests in a globalised world, and the Report to the Storting on development policy that is currently being prepared.

We should like to express our thanks for the helpful contributions and comments we have received during the preparation of this strategy.



Erik Solheim

Minister of the Environment  
and International Development



Jonas Gahr Støre

Minister of Foreign Affairs

## Main goals

As a humanitarian policy actor and a financial donor, Norway will face many serious, complex global challenges in the years ahead. In cooperation with others, we will:

- ensure that people in need receive the necessary protection and assistance
- finance humanitarian assistance based on the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality
- equip the international community to meet future global humanitarian challenges
- prevent, respond to and initiate the recovery of communities after humanitarian crises



## Humanitarian engagement policy

*A victim of the tsunami on 26 December 2004 lying at the roadside near Galle, Sri Lanka.*

*Photo: REUTERS/Thomas White*

## **Norway's humanitarian vision**

Our vision is for Norway to be a leading political and financial partner in humanitarian efforts and help ensure that the international community is as well equipped as possible to meet future challenges.

Norway aims to be a good humanitarian donor. Our main focus is to ensure a rapid, flexible, and effective response to changing humanitarian needs in both sudden and protracted crises.

The core of humanitarian assistance is to save individual lives, alleviate suffering and safeguard human dignity, regardless of race, gender, religion or political affiliation. Compliance with this humanitarian imperative is a crucial element of Norway's engagement policy.

Can the humanitarian imperative be combined with political considerations and priorities? Is there a conflict between principles and policies?

We believe that they can be combined. As a political actor, Norway has no desire to be neutral, but we respect and understand the need of humanitarian organisations to maintain their independence and integrity. The key to good cooperation between the Norwegian authorities and the humanitarian organisations lies in this interface between policy and humanitarian principles and values.

Every state is responsible for protecting and helping its own citizens when they are

affected by a humanitarian crisis, but the international community also has a responsibility for providing assistance when the state or the local community cannot or will not provide the necessary protection and life-saving assistance.

In recent years, humanitarian issues have gained an increasingly important place in international politics. Humanitarian crises are more frequently addressed in the UN Security Council. Serious abuses and breaches of human rights have led to stronger focus on protecting civilians and displaced persons, for example in Darfur, DR Congo and Afghanistan. The enormous human suffering caused by natural disasters is immediately broadcasted through the media.

The experience gained from natural disasters and conflicts has shown that humanitarian assistance must be viewed in a broader political context. However, more coherent international engagement does not mean that humanitarian considerations should be subordinated to political considerations. On the contrary, humanitarian values must always be safeguarded and promoted in the overall effort.

Our involvement is not limited to responding to humanitarian needs. Together with our partners, we wish to change the operating parameters for humanitarian activities. Humanitarian crises require political solutions. Our peace and reconciliation efforts, our political dialogue with the countries concerned, our contributions to international peace operations, our development cooperation, our

efforts to combat climate change and to promote humanitarian disarmament and strengthen human rights are all important contributions towards preventing human suffering.

The international humanitarian system has grown strongly. The non-governmental organisations have become increasingly professionalised and are coordinating their efforts more effectively under the overall leadership of the United Nations. At the same time, the requirements regarding the quality and results of humanitarian aid have become stricter. The requirements for documentation and dissemination of information also apply to Norway's efforts.

The national authorities, local communities and organisations in the countries that are most often affected by humanitarian crises are responsible for a large part of the assistance that is provided. However, the northern and western organisations and donors still set the parameters for the humanitarian system. We face a major challenge in making this system more universal in intent and better adapted to local conditions and cultures while still upholding universal humanitarian principles.

### **Humanitarian values and Norwegian traditions**

---

Civilians and the wounded in wars and armed conflicts have a right to protection, respect and assistance, regardless of which side they are on. The Geneva Conventions are the fundamental pillars of international humanitarian law, which requires countries to

protect civilians, wounded and sick soldiers and prisoners from the consequences of war. The vast majority of countries in the world have adopted these principles and values. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been given a special mandate by the international community to protect and assist people in war and armed conflict in accordance with humanitarian law.

Norway has played an important role in further developing and elaborating humanitarian law, most recently in the "Oslo Process", which led to an important breakthrough with the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008.

On the basis of humanitarian law, countries, the Red Cross movement, UN agencies and non-governmental organisations have jointly developed a set of more general and universal principles for humanitarian assistance: *humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality*. Operational humanitarian assistance in response to both conflicts and natural disasters is based on these principles.

The UN agencies and other non-governmental organisations largely base their activities on this overall value base, even though the mandates and approaches of the various organisations vary considerably. It is also the foundation for Norway's humanitarian policy.

Norway has a long tradition of broad-based popular commitment to solidarity with repressed and impoverished people, and with refugees and internally displaced persons. Norwegians strongly support the

humanitarian principles and believe that, as a nation with substantial political and financial resources, Norway has a moral obligation to make a substantial contribution to humanitarian assistance.

This commitment has been a prerequisite for the development of the “Norwegian model”, i.e. close cooperation – but also a clear division of roles – between the Norwegian authorities and the humanitarian organisations. The Norwegian model has been instrumental in Norway’s becoming a prominent donor country with a broad international perspective. It has also contributed towards Norwegian humanitarian organisations being at the forefront in their respective areas at the international level. Norway has also built up its own emergency preparedness system, NOREPS, which can provide assistance at short notice in crisis situations (see p. 29).

## **The international humanitarian system is changing**

Through our partners, we seek to reach the most vulnerable individuals in order to save lives, alleviate distress and ensure human dignity and protection in times of humanitarian crisis. The UN agencies, the Red Cross movement and the non-governmental organisations constitute our key partners in the humanitarian system.

As a UN member and as a donor country, we wish to exert influence to ensure that the humanitarian system functions as well as possible. Continuous humanitarian reform is therefore an important task for Norwegian humanitarian diplomacy.

## **The gender perspective in humanitarian activities**

Women and children have a special need for protection in humanitarian crises. Furthermore, women must be given far greater influence in humanitarian activities. So far, the humanitarian system has not managed to achieve this. Consequently, Norway gives special priority to promoting more balanced, needs-based activities where all affected groups are consulted.

Norway was one of the driving forces when, in 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. This resolution states that women must participate on equal terms in decision-making processes concerning conflict resolution, peace and security, and that girls and women must be protected from sexual violence.

As part of the Government’s plan of action to follow up this resolution, Norway has contributed to the production of a Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action, which has now been adopted by the UN, the Red Cross and non-governmental organisations in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Norway requires its partners to ensure that the needs of girls and women are taken into account in *all* humanitarian activities, on a par with the needs of boys and men.

Norway has helped to initiate several important reforms. Our goal is to improve financing, strengthen coordination and rationalise the division of work. Norway wants humanitarian efforts to be better adapted to new global challenges. We are concerned to ensure that humanitarian activities are more broadly supported, less dominated by western countries and better adapted to the needs of individuals in crisis situations.

The international community is still struggling to invest enough in preventive measures and to ensure a good transition from crisis to long-term development. Recovery activities should begin quickly whenever possible, and will often be carried out in parallel with humanitarian activities.

Wherever possible, activities must be based on local resources. The continued strengthening of international humanitarian efforts must not take place at the expense of the development of essential local capacity for preparedness and response.

### **Humanitarian principles under pressure**

---

In many of today's conflicts, humanitarian activities take place alongside peace and reconciliation efforts, development cooperation, international police activities and military peace-keeping operations. One of the greatest challenges in this type of complex operation is to provide coherent, well-coordinated assistance while safeguarding humanitarian principles.

### **The humanitarian space**

The term "humanitarian space" was first formulated in 1990 by Rony Brauman, former head of Médecins sans Frontières: *"A space of freedom in which we are free to evaluate needs, free to monitor the distribution of and use of relief goods and have a dialogue with the people."*

The UN agencies, the ICRC and other humanitarian organisations base their activities on the principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality. Reference is often made to the need to ensure a "humanitarian space" in conflict situations.

The emphasis on the humanitarian space is closely connected to the ability of and possibilities for civil organisations to gain access to vulnerable population groups in difficult security situations. Often, the only source of security and access for civil society players is that they are regarded as neutral by various armed groups and by the local population. Consequently, they must necessarily distance themselves from military forces.

As a result of the grey areas between humanitarian aid, development aid and other forms of assistance, it is not always easy to set clear boundaries for the humanitarian space. In several conflict areas, debate has arisen about where the borderline for independence and neutrality lies and who can rightly invoke humanitarian principles. Does it also include development assistance and peace and recon-

ciliation efforts? In some situations this issue poses difficult considerations and dilemmas.

There are many good reasons why humanitarian assistance must be viewed in close conjunction with other types of aid. Never-

### **Guidelines for humanitarian-military coordination**

The main guidelines for international military contributions in the case of humanitarian crises are the OCHA *Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Defence Assets in Disaster Relief* (the Oslo Guidelines) in the case of natural disasters, and the *Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies*.

Another important document is the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Principles on Civil-military Coordination*. What these guidelines have in common is their statement of humanitarian principles, their recognition of the overarching coordinating role of the UN, and the fact that they regard the use of military contributions as a last resort when no corresponding civilian resources are available.

The message of the guidelines is clear: even if military forces can do an important job in filling humanitarian gaps when natural disasters and difficult security situations occur, their engagement should be limited to being a "last resort" and closely coordinated with humanitarian actors and the host country.

This approach governs Norway's involvement in UN integrated and multi-dimensional peace operations and our overall civil-military contribution in Afghanistan.

theless, it is important to insist on maintaining the unique character of humanitarian action. Humanitarian protection and assistance for individuals must in some cases be safeguarded and protected from other political considerations. Humanitarian assistance must not become a political instrument in a struggle for power.

International military forces will often involve themselves in various types of aid and reconstruction efforts, both to meet genuine needs and to ensure the support of the local population. This is understandable and sometimes necessary, but in many cases it has also led to an unfortunate confusion of roles.

Assuming the role of armed soldier one minute and humanitarian aid worker the next can lead to confusion among both civilians and warring parties. In the worst case, this confusion of roles may put the security of the civilian population and humanitarian organizations at risk.

In Norway's view, there must be a coherent approach to the various types of activity in international peace operations and other peace-building activities that is based on a clear division of roles between the various players. At the same time, there are no easy answers to the many dilemmas that arise in the interface between various types of assistance.



# Global humanitarian challenges

*Women queuing at a refugee camp  
in Karaitivu, Sri Lanka.*

*Photo: REUTERS/Kieran  
Doherty/Scanpix*

New global challenges will affect security and social development in many countries. These challenges are likely to lead to more, and more complex humanitarian crises in the years ahead.

Norway's humanitarian policy will be affected by this development, as will the rest of Norway's foreign and development policy. The international humanitarian system is not well enough equipped to meet these challenges, even though humanitarian reforms have resulted in many necessary improvements.

### **Climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction**

We are facing a clear rise in the number of humanitarian disasters resulting from climatic and environmental change. Nine out of ten humanitarian disasters are now related to climate change in one way or another. In particular, we will experience more floods, droughts and extreme weather in the years ahead.

The areas that are likely to be most affected are Africa, small island states and the large deltas in Asia. The population as a whole will experience more water shortages, food insecurity and increased health risks. The most vulnerable groups will be people living in dry regions and tropical areas, poor people in large towns and groups that are already vulnerable, such as children, single carers, the elderly and the disabled.

How various countries will respond to these challenges is unclear. Future disasters may

threaten stability and security in the countries that are affected. Some regimes will choose to suppress civil society, while others will strengthen the capacity of civil society to deal with the challenges. Some fragile states may collapse completely.

This may reinforce existing patterns of conflict, but it may also create new ones. These conflicts will not necessarily be between countries but between various local populations within a country. Regardless of which of these scenarios becomes a reality, it will have a strong impact on people's access to water, food, health and protection.

At present, we do not know enough about where the limit for people's adaptation to climate change lies, or where they will have to capitulate to the forces of nature. However, because the consequences of climate change appear likely to occur earlier than anticipated, we need to invest more in reducing disaster risk.

This effort will require far better dialogue between international players and national and local authorities and social structures. It will also require better coordination between humanitarian aid, climate adaptation and development cooperation. The experts working on climate change and disaster risk reduction must collaborate far more closely if we are to achieve effective adaptation to climate change.

### **Responsibility to protect**

The genocide in Rwanda gave rise to an international debate on the responsibility of the international community to protect civilians from serious abuse. This led to the final document from the UN Summit in 2005 confirming the principle that states are responsible for protecting their own citizens from genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and war crimes. This document also confirms that the international community has a joint responsibility to provide protection in special cases when states themselves cannot or will not protect their people. The debate about the international community's possibility, willingness and ability to assume this responsibility, both by peaceful means and through the use of force, has been raised both in connection with the conflict in Darfur and following the cyclone in Burma. The agreement in principle on the "responsibility to protect" raises challenges when the international community is faced with specific situations where the principle proves difficult to realise in practice.

### **Protection of civilians in complex conflicts**

---

In addition to natural disasters, armed conflicts create the most suffering and distress.

In the two decades since the end of the Cold War, the pattern of conflict has changed, in terms of both our perception of conflicts and the nature of conflicts. The war in Georgia in 2008 showed that unresolved conflicts can flare up at any time and cause new human suffering. Conflicts are becoming increasing complex and protracted, such as those in Darfur, Somalia, DR Congo and Afghanistan. Humanitarian organisations' access has

become more difficult, and the lack of security for humanitarian aid workers often prevents aid from reaching the victims of conflict.

Protecting civilians from violence and abuse has become an increasingly important element of humanitarian assistance. The distinction between civilians and combatants is becoming blurred. Civilian populations have become a target for military and paramilitary forces. Abuse of women, children and young people is a conscious tactic. Children and young people are forcibly conscripted into armed rebel movements. In today's conflicts, as many as 90 per cent of casualties are civilians and only 10 per cent are combatants. Moreover, important civil society institutions are being destroyed.

These conflicts are often asymmetrical. The parties use unconventional methods of warfare. Rebel groups hide among the civilian population and use the people as a shield, as we saw in Iraq and in the conflict in the Nahr el Bahred refugee camp in Lebanon in 2007. The use of heavy weapons against such adversaries exposes civilian populations to disproportionate risk.

The number of internally displaced persons is increasing, while the number of cross-border refugees has declined in recent years. This highlights the problem that internally displaced persons are not protected by the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. One important goal of the humanitarian reforms in recent years has therefore been to improve protection for internally displaced persons.

The use of rape as a weapon seriously entered the agenda during the Balkan wars in the 1990s. Widespread gender-based violence, such as sexual abuse and mass rape, has been proved to have taken place in several countries, including DR Congo. Sexual violence may be classified as a war crime or a crime against humanity and the perpetrators must be prosecuted, but up to now far too few of the perpetrators have been sentenced for such crimes.

Weapons such as landmines and cluster munitions mainly kill civilians, not least children and young people while conflict is in progress. Unexploded mines and cluster munitions also result in ruined livelihoods and safety problems for returnees long after the war has ended.

Conflicts will occur in countries where the government no longer functions or is disputed, either through armed uprisings or riots in the rapidly-growing towns. These types of weak or collapsed states lack a well-functioning administration that takes responsibility for health services, education and security for its citizens.

## **Migration and urbanisation**

Climatic and environmental change and population growth will lead to more migration and urbanisation. These are not new phenomena; migration is a traditional adaptation strategy. The new factor is that agricultural lands in particular are more depleted than before. Desertification is a contributory factor to the rapid urbanisation

that is taking place in Africa. People are also more mobile.

The term “climate refugees” is misleading. People leave their homes for many different and complex reasons. The desire to rise out of poverty is decisive. Most migrants will not be defined as refugees under international law, but as economic migrants or internally displaced persons.

Migrants may be exposed to greater security risk in countries of origin, transit countries and recipient countries. Violence, human trafficking and abuse are key factors, as was the case with Zimbabweans in South Africa in spring 2008. Several thousand people die every year in the attempt to cross the Mediterranean, in the Caribbean and along the border between the USA and Mexico.

The year 2008 marks a demographic turning point. A majority of the world's population is now living in towns. Many migrants have settled in rapidly-growing slums. Urban populations are becoming increasingly vulnerable to humanitarian disasters due to their proximity to the coast, the lack of building regulation and control and deficient social services.

Technological and ecological disasters can have unimaginable humanitarian consequences in large cities. Uncontrolled chemical or radioactive emissions, including those resulting from terrorist acts, would lead to massive destruction and a need for humanitarian assistance. These challenges are not taken

### **Further development of humanitarian law: humanitarian disarmament**

Humanitarian disarmament means regarding disarmament as a humanitarian act. This type of disarmament has a different perspective than traditional arms control. It takes into account the humanitarian and development consequences of the use of arms for the civilian population. We can help strengthen humanitarian disarmament through targeted international efforts. It was processes such as these that resulted in the Mine Ban Convention in 1997 and the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008.

The Mine Ban Convention prohibits the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines. The process leading up to the Convention was based on effective new forms of cooperation between states and non-governmental organisations, and between states across traditional regional groups.

In 2006, Norway initiated an international process to prohibit cluster munitions, which have unacceptable humanitarian consequences. The process culminated in the adoption of a new Convention in Dublin in May 2008. The Convention will be signed in Oslo on 3 December 2008.

The Convention prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of cluster munitions. It imposes a total ban on the entire category of cluster ammunition and cluster weapons, which we know have created a humanitarian problem. The Convention is regarded as having set a new standard in humanitarian law, with clear, strict rules and obligations regarding the clearance of affected areas, the destruction of stockpiles and assistance for victims and their communities. It also contains comprehensive reporting requirements that will be crucial in monitoring compliance with the Convention, which was signed by 111 states in Dublin. The Convention is supported by the UN, the ICRC, other humanitarian organisations and human rights organisations.

sufficiently into account in the established humanitarian system.

### **Food security and health**

The strong rise in food prices in the past year is creating social unrest and exacerbating poverty, malnutrition and disease. A high rate of population growth, increased wealth in Asia and persistently high oil and energy prices may affect food prices for many years to come. This will especially affect urban populations and others who cannot cultivate their own land.

Rapid, coordinated action will be required to increase food security. Humanitarian assistance is not enough. The most important

course is to engage in long-term efforts that target the underlying causes, such as increasing productivity in the agricultural sector.

A decline in food surpluses on global markets will make emergency relief, such as food aid, more expensive and will also necessitate better needs assessments and prioritisation. Food aid must be used with caution so that it does not undermine sustainable local and regional agriculture. The distribution of seeds must also be based on thorough needs assessments.

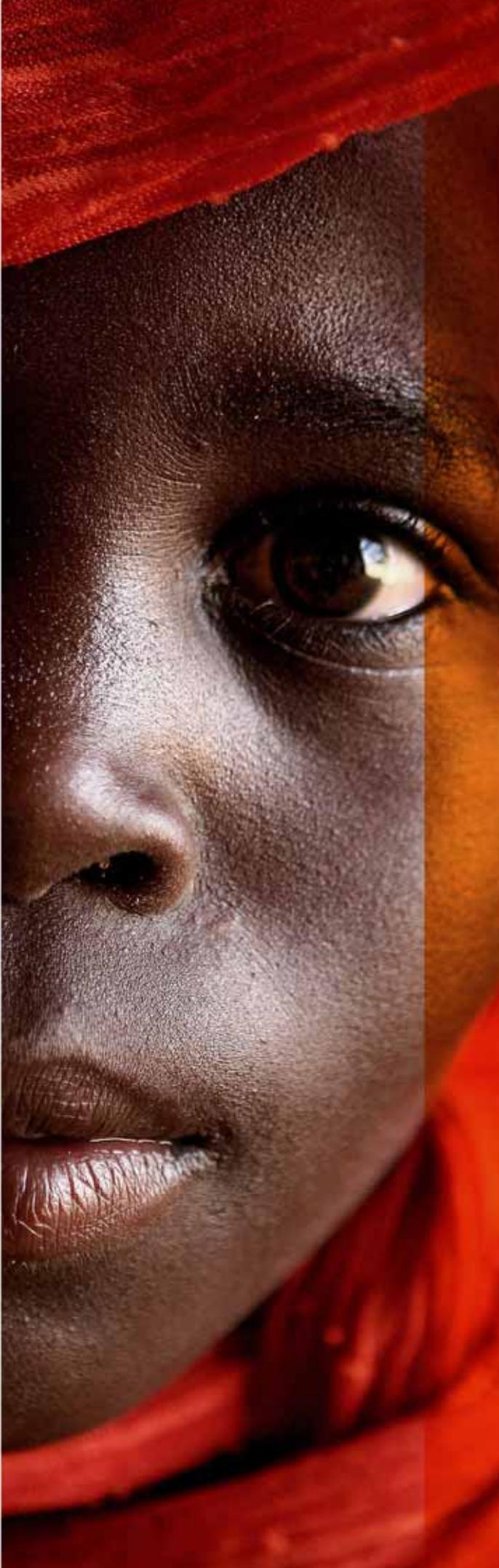
Humanitarian disasters increasingly concern human health. Epidemics and pandemics

cause humanitarian disasters, and are also an important driver of poverty and underdevelopment. Climate change creates new health risks; floods lead to new waterborne diseases, while higher temperatures lead to the spread of diseases such as malaria.

One important consequence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in recent years has been the establishment of global mechanisms that could provide good models for meeting new global

challenges, such as avian influenza. The WHO takes the view that it is no longer a question of *whether* but of *when* this type of global pandemic will occur.

This means there is a growing need for coherent health programmes in the field, and not least for better collaboration between the WHO and UNICEF and coordination between the UN agencies and other organisations working in the health sector.



## Norway's humanitarian priorities

*Children and young people have a special need for protection in conflict situations. Norway will contribute to intensified efforts to meet the special needs of children and youth in humanitarian crises.*

*Photo: AFP/Stuart Price*

## Main goals

As a humanitarian policy actor and a financial donor, Norway will face many serious and complex global challenges in the years ahead. In cooperation with others, we will:

- ensure that people in need receive necessary protection and assistance
- finance humanitarian assistance based on the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality
- equip the international community to meet future global humanitarian challenges
- prevent, respond to and initiate the recovery of communities after humanitarian crises.

In order to achieve these goals, Norway will give priority to the following areas:

### A global humanitarian system

*As long as the international humanitarian system is dominated by a few western donor countries, it will be unable to meet future humanitarian challenges. Norway will work to promote a more balanced and universally representative humanitarian system to make it more robust in the face of new global challenges.*

#### New humanitarian alliances

Humanitarian values are universal. They do not belong to a specific cultural group. To be able to deal with global humanitarian challenges, not least in the light of climatic and environmental changes and the growing

number of natural disasters, the humanitarian system must also be globalised. Countries that are vulnerable to humanitarian disasters and have experienced extensive humanitarian operations will be valuable partners in efforts to further develop the humanitarian system. Consequently, we will build new humanitarian alliances and thereby also help to foster greater understanding of the necessity of the humanitarian space.

#### Norway will:

- engage in active humanitarian diplomacy, as an important part of Norway's engagement policy, based on universal humanitarian principles
- work to expand the circle of humanitarian donors by including non-western donors, and strengthen dialogue with countries that are affected by humanitarian crises
- follow up and strengthen cooperation on prevention, preparedness and adaptation to climate change with countries that are especially vulnerable to natural disasters, such as China.

#### Continued support for the UN and humanitarian reform

Norway's effort to promote humanitarian reform in the UN is an important part of our UN policy. In addition to its normative agenda, the UN plays a pivotal role in coordinating humanitarian assistance at country level. A well-functioning UN and close cooperation between the UN and non-governmental humanitarian organisations are essential in

order to ensure an effective, coordinated humanitarian response.

Examples of the results of humanitarian reforms supported by Norway include strengthening the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), new coordinating mechanisms, such as the cluster approach, innovative financing facilities, such as the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Common Humanitarian Funds at country level, support for the reform process in the UNHCR and better, more equitable partnerships between the UN and non-governmental organisations. A great deal has been achieved, but there is still ample room for improvement. The focus should, to a greater extent, be on strengthening humanitarian preparedness and response capacity in countries that repeatedly experience humanitarian disasters.

#### **Norway will:**

- make significant, predictable contributions to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund, Common Humanitarian Funds and UN humanitarian appeals, and help to further develop financing facilities
- be an active, critical partner for the UN agencies in further efforts to reform the humanitarian system, with a view to improving the effectiveness and capacity of the UN's humanitarian response
- assume positions and responsibilities in the most important humanitarian organisations, including chairmanship of the OCHA Donor Support Group

- work to improve coordination between the UN's humanitarian arm and the UN's development activities in order to achieve "One UN" at country level and fulfil the UN Millennium Development Goals
- continue to promote further development of the UN's multi-dimensional and integrated peace operations in order to achieve a coherent approach in which humanitarian considerations are also taken into account
- support the UN's new food security plan (the Comprehensive Framework for Action) and strengthen cooperation with national authorities to meet the global food crisis.

### **Promote respect for humanitarian principles**

---

*The humanitarian space is under considerable pressure. Norway will promote respect for fundamental humanitarian principles and for international humanitarian law, and will work to promote a clear division of roles between humanitarian organisations, other civil society players and military forces in increasingly complex situations.*

#### **A more complex humanitarian system**

The humanitarian system is changing. The number of non-governmental organisations with different value bases is increasing. Untraditional players, such as military forces, civil-military stabilisation teams, national and local authorities, and private companies and foundations, are playing an increasingly

strong role. In particular, the growing use of private security companies for various reconstruction measures in conflict situations, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, poses a challenge, both for the established humanitarian system and for international humanitarian law.

**Norway will:**

- continue its efforts to ensure the best possible collaboration and a clear division of roles between humanitarian organisations, other civil society actors and military peace-keeping forces
- promote the use of UN guidelines for military contributions to humanitarian operations, which set clear limits for such contributions
- work to ensure that humanitarian access and the protection of aid workers becomes a priority issue in important international forums, and especially at the UN
- with other humanitarian donors and organisations, consider the consequences for humanitarian assistance of the increased use of private companies.

**Strengthen international humanitarian law and support the Red Cross movement**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is one of the main channels for Norwegian humanitarian assistance in crisis and conflict situations. The ICRC is also the most important individual player in efforts to ensure a well-functioning humanitarian system based on international humanitarian law. Together with the Norwegian Red Cross, Norway can help to reinforce respect for

international humanitarian law, both nationally and internationally.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) also plays a particularly important role in helping local communities affected by natural disasters.

**Norway will:**

- promote respect for international humanitarian law and counter efforts to undermine it
- support the unique role of the ICRC as a defender of humanitarian principles and support the operational activities of the ICRC
- continue tripartite cooperation between the Norwegian authorities, the Norwegian Red Cross and the ICRC, and supplement this with closer cooperation with the ICRC, among other things through increased direct financing
- assume positions and responsibilities to support the mandate and role of the Red Cross movement, including as Chairman of the ICRC Donor Support Group.

## Humanitarian disarmament

---

*The economic, social and humanitarian consequences are enormous when people cannot live a normal life due to unexploded cluster bombs, abandoned landmines or illicit small arms. Humanitarian disarmament is one of the main priorities in Norway's humanitarian diplomacy.*

The 1997 Mine Ban Convention and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions are important contributions towards strengthening humanitarian law. These two conventions are the only multilateral disarmament agreements that have been signed in the past decade.

Since the Mine Ban Convention entered into force in 1999, the use of landmines has almost ceased. No states, whether they are signatories to the Convention or not, can use this weapon without political consequences.

Landmines are now regarded as an illegitimate and unacceptable weapon. A total of 156 states have adopted the ban and this number is increasing. However, a number of challenges remain to be solved. Anti-personnel mines pose a serious humanitarian problem in many countries. It is therefore important to continue demining operations and assist mine victims. Several states have still not signed the Convention, including the USA, Russia, China and India.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions is also a good example of effective prevention of humanitarian disasters. It prevents the spread

of cluster munitions to new countries and regions. The humanitarian organisations have played an important role in putting this issue on the international agenda.

Small arms and armed violence constitute a widespread and complex problem. Most victims of violence do not die in war but as a result of violent acts in their own communities. Norway supports measures to prevent illegal trade in and the spread of hand guns, including the work being done on a special convention on arms trading.

### Norway will:

- play a leading role in efforts to promote the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention, with emphasis on mine clearance and assistance for mine victims, strengthen national ownership and capacity, and further develop and disseminate knowledge about effective demining methods
- continue to support the work being done by humanitarian organisations to monitor the States Parties to the Convention in order to ensure that they fulfil their obligations
- work to promote the rapid entry into force and full implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions
- work to establish the Convention on Cluster Munitions as a norm, also for non-States Parties, and participate actively in further development of the framework around the Convention
- work to improve control of the production of, trade in and proliferation

of hand guns, among other things through the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and continue activities in the field in cooperation with national, regional and international humanitarian actors.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on children and armed conflict, Security Council Resolution 1612 on child soldiers, and the Paris Principles on prevention and response. Norway's commitment in this area remains firm.

## Needs-based assistance

*Women and men, children and the elderly, are affected differently by war, conflict and natural disasters. Norway will give priority to programmes to protect women and children from sexual abuse and strengthen the gender sensitivity of the UN and other humanitarian actors.*

Integrating the gender perspective into humanitarian initiatives means acknowledging the fact that women and men, boys and girls are affected differently by war, conflict and humanitarian crises. To meet their various needs and achieve the best possible results, all humanitarian activities must be based on gender-sensitive analyses.

Important tools, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) handbook and guidelines are now in place and set a common standard for the entire UN system. Many humanitarian organisations are currently integrating the gender perspective into their activities. However, much remains to be done, including developing indicators for the achievement of goals.

Work with children and young people particularly focuses on compliance with the

In addition to children's need for protection in conflict situations, environmental and climatic changes have serious consequences for children's health, nutrition, protection and education. In many cases, there is still a lack of awareness of the needs of children and young people in international humanitarian work, as regards not only their rights and protection but also their potential as resources and agents of change in areas relating to peace, environment and climate change.

### Norway will:

- continue to make efforts to ensure that Norwegian and international organisations use gender-sensitive needs assessments in the field and improve their reporting on the results of these efforts
- give priority to ensuring that the UN intensifies its efforts in accordance with the IASC handbook on gender sensitivity and improves its reporting on results and lessons learned.
- seek to ensure that gender-sensitive data is used more actively in emergency relief operations and that gender experts are included in the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams (UNDAC)
- promote measures to combat gender-related violence, in cooperation with the

UN and relevant humanitarian organisations, focusing on DR Congo and Darfur

- promote intensified efforts to meet the special needs of children and young people in humanitarian crises, including natural disasters
- support educational programmes adapted to the needs of children and young people in refugee situations, including the internally displaced, and support reintegration programmes for children who have been associated with military forces.

### **Protection of refugees and internally displaced persons**

---

Refugees and internally displaced persons are among the most important target groups for Norway's humanitarian assistance. At present, there are more than 40 million people who have fled from wars and conflicts. While the number of serious conflicts declined in 2007, the number of refugees increased. The number of asylum-seekers has also increased for the first time in several years. The reasons for flight and migration are becoming increasingly complex. Growing numbers of people have to leave their homes due to natural disasters and deteriorating living conditions.

Protection is a key task for some of our most important humanitarian partners, primarily the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other organisations that have a mandate to protect, such as the ICRC, UNICEF and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).

Humanitarian organisations, such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, also play an important role in assisting refugees and the growing number of internally displaced persons.

There is a growing need to find lasting solutions for the large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. Protracted refugee situations, for example in the Middle East, have political causes and call for political solutions. Providing support for the same group of refugees over several generations poses a dilemma for humanitarian donors.

#### **Norway will:**

- prioritise measures to protect refugees, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups, including measures to strengthen the rights of internally displaced persons
- work to ensure that the UNHCR improves its own capacity and expertise relating to protection of internally displaced persons, and work to ensure that national authorities take more responsibility for their own internally displaced citizens
- support educational programmes for children and young people in humanitarian crises in order to prevent them from becoming victims of exploitation as child soldiers or prostitutes
- contribute to efforts to find lasting solutions for protracted refugee situations, based on good interaction between humanitarian, foreign policy and development policy instruments

- improve dialogue with partners on measures to prevent sexual abuse by their own employees and the implementation of zero tolerance policies.

### More coherent assistance

*More coherent assistance can improve conflict management, humanitarian assistance and the prevention of humanitarian crises, and should, where possible, be based on local participation in aid activities*

To prevent, respond to and initiate the reconstruction of communities in the wake of humanitarian disasters there must be far greater coordination between the various actors and technical experts. So far, the world community has not achieved good enough interaction between national and international efforts, between long-term development and humanitarian measures, or between different international institutions and organisations.

A more coherent approach is also necessary in development policy in order to reinforce disaster risk reduction, achieve effective adaptation to climate change and contribute more effectively towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals. More attention must be paid to reducing vulnerability and improving coping capacity and participation at the local level, as laid down in Report No. 9 to the Storting (2007-2008) concerning Norwegian Policy on the Prevention of Humanitarian Crises.

Especially in the case of protracted humanitarian crises, it is important for humanitarian initiatives to be adapted to local conditions and to promote local participation, organisation and sustainability. It is in situations such as these that there is the greatest danger of aid leading to an abdication of responsibility by national authorities, aid dependency and corruption, and indirectly cementing power structures.

More attention must be paid to starting recovery at an early stage. More natural disasters will mean more recovery activities. The need for coherent assistance, where several instruments are focused on the same goal, is more urgent. Norway has flexible instruments, such as transitional aid, that can be used for early recovery.

#### Norway will:

- strengthen the participation of affected parties in humanitarian activities, especially in connection with prevention and preparedness
- work to promote a broad approach to climate change adaptation and invest in the whole range of adaptation measures, from emergency preparedness and crisis management to recovery and long-term development
- help to mobilise increased awareness of the humanitarian consequences of climatic and environmental change, as a follow-up to the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- coordinate Norway's contributions in early recovery and transition

- promote stronger focus on the long-term effects of humanitarian assistance, with a view to reducing undesirable consequences for individuals and local communities.

## Norway as a good donor

*Norway aims to be a good humanitarian donor. To be able to meet humanitarian challenges, Norway must strengthen its management and follow-up of humanitarian assistance.*

### Flexibility and predictability

Humanitarian needs are, by their very nature, unpredictable. Norway must therefore maintain its flexibility and its ability to act rapidly to meet changing needs, on the basis of the current model for allocating grants. At the same time, however, it is desirable to increase predictability for important organisations by increasing the use of framework allocations that are disbursed early in the budgetary year.

### Norway will:

- increase the proportion of non-earmarked funds disbursed early in the year to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund, Common Humanitarian Funds and UN and ICRC appeals
- maintain the necessary flexibility in Norwegian humanitarian assistance to meet changing humanitarian and political needs
- have sufficient reserves to respond quickly, with substantial funding, to at least two new humanitarian crises per year, without this being at the expense of other crises
- consider multi-year cooperation agreements with selected partners to provide more predictable financing for priority humanitarian areas in cases where these partners have comparative advantages.

### Further development of the Norwegian model

The Norwegian model for humanitarian assistance has made Norway a dynamic, flexible and respected partner in the international humanitarian system. The tradition of solidarity and compassion still has deep roots in the Norwegian population. There is strong support for humanitarian organisations.

In recent years, the Norwegian humanitarian organisations have become more professional institutions. Most of them have a broad network of international contacts, often with their own sister organisations. They possess unique competence and proximity to grass-roots organisations and institutions. Financing these organisations is one of the ways in which the Norwegian authorities can reach out to individual people, in terms of both response and prevention.

## The Norwegian Emergency Preparedness System (NOREPS)

The Norwegian Emergency Preparedness System (NOREPS) is a partnership between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB), Norwegian humanitarian organisations and Norwegian manufacturers of emergency relief goods. NOREPS provides emergency personnel and ready-to-deploy stocks of relief goods in response to international humanitarian crises.

This partnership was established to strengthen the response capacity of humanitarian organisations, especially in the critical first phase of a humanitarian crisis. The goal is to be able to rapidly deploy necessary personnel and goods for emergency relief operations. Having stockpiles of goods and stand-by personnel enables the organisation to have goods and equipment in the air within 24 hours, and to have service functions and personnel in place within 72 hours. As well as having its own stockpiles in Norway, NOREPS also has stocks in UN emergency supply warehouses. NOREPS' emergency personnel, NORSTAFF, are administered by the Norwegian Refugee Council.

The main recipients of goods through NOREPS are UN agencies and Norwegian and international humanitarian organisations. Funding either comes directly from the non-governmental organisations themselves or through their applications for funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. NOREPS was established on the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is administered by Innovation Norway.

This means that we are dependent on a good relationship of trust between the Norwegian authorities and non-governmental organisations. At the same time, we must focus more strongly on the achievement of goals, quality assurance, efficiency and ethical norms. More resources will be invested in humanitarian research.

### Norway will:

- maintain close cooperation with Norwegian humanitarian organisations, but collaborate on a more strategic, less project-oriented, more predictable basis
- make clearer demands on our partners and support professionalisation, competence development and improved follow-up of results
- continue efforts to ensure that the Norwegian Emergency Preparedness

System (NOREPS) can mobilise emergency relief goods, personnel and services rapidly and effectively when natural disasters and crises occur, with emphasis on further developing ready-to-deploy stocks in cooperation with Norwegian and international partners

- require organisations that receive Norwegian humanitarian funds to have clear ethical guidelines for the conduct of their employees in humanitarian situations
- increase investment in humanitarian research and establish a strong humanitarian research capacity in Norway.

### More effective administration and learning

We work continuously to further develop the administration of Norwegian humanitarian assistance. As funding increases, the need for the administration to have adequate capacity and optimum efficiency also increases. More

knowledge, research, learning and evaluation of humanitarian activities is necessary. Norad and international networks and organisations will play an important role in evaluating the management of humanitarian funds.

In countries where we have a diplomatic presence, Norwegian embassies will play a key role as a contact point for Norwegian organisations, and as a link to the UN at country level and to the national authorities.

**Norway will:**

- improve administrative capacity for humanitarian assistance and introduce revised procedures for allocations
- simplify the system for reporting on the use and results of humanitarian allocations
- increase the involvement of Norwegian embassies in the monitoring and assessment of humanitarian assistance
- improve our ability to document that Norwegian humanitarian assistance brings the intended results, among other things by preparing a results-based annual report on humanitarian assistance
- increase the use of evaluations and reviews in cooperation with Norad in order to facilitate learning and the development of new knowledge
- have zero tolerance for fraud and corruption and require the recipients of Norwegian aid funds to ensure good financial management.

## **Duration and follow-up of the strategy**

---

*This strategy will apply for five years from September 2008 to September 2013. A detailed plan of action will be drawn up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a review will be carried out after two years, i.e. by September 2010. Follow-up of the strategy will be evaluated after the expiry of the strategy period.*





Published by  
The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
PO box 8114 Dep.  
NO-0032 Oslo, Norway  
October 2008

E-mail: [post@mfa.no](mailto:post@mfa.no)

Design: Torbjørn Vagstein  
Printed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' printing service  
First impression. Print run: 1000

Cover photo: Lynsey Addario/Corbis/Scanpix

ISBN: 978-82-7177-736-4  
Publication code: E-851E