

PROGRAMME DOCUMENT FOR

RESEARCH ON HUMANITARIAN POLICY

(HUMPOL)

2011–2015

1. INTRODUCTION

The Norwegian Government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has committed funding for a four-year research programme on humanitarian policy. The programme is based on the recommendations in the white paper *Norway's Humanitarian Policy* (Report No. 40 (2008–2009) to the Storting)¹.

The programme is administered by the Research Council of Norway under the NORGLOBAL programme. The tentative budget is NOK 40 million over five years (2011–2015).

2. PROGRAMME GOALS

The programme aim to achieve the following goals:

- To develop new knowledge in the humanitarian policy field, to establish a strong multidisciplinary research capacity on humanitarian policy in Norway, and to engage with South-based research institutions and humanitarian organisations, with a view to shape the international humanitarian debate on humanitarian policy issues.
- To lay the foundation for a more knowledge-based formulation of Norwegian humanitarian policy and to increase the capacity of Norwegian research institutions, so that they are better able to advise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on humanitarian policy issues.
- To contribute to increased public awareness and debate in Norway and in the South, on humanitarian action and the current dilemmas relating to the principles of humanitarian preparedness and response.

¹ Norway's strategy on humanitarian policy
http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Hum/humpolicy_eng.pdf

3. RESEARCH ORIENTATION

The Norwegian Government has identified four main goals for Norway's humanitarian policy:

- 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 humanitarian community to meet future global humanitarian challenges; and
- Prevent, respond to and initiate the recovery of communities after humanitarian crises.

The policy emphasises that the core task of humanitarian assistance is to save lives, alleviate suffering and safeguard human dignity, regardless of race, gender, religion or political affiliation.

While all states are responsible for protecting and helping their own citizens when they are affected by humanitarian crises, the international community also has a responsibility to provide assistance when the state or the local community cannot or will not provide the necessary protection and lifesaving assistance.

However, international involvement should not be limited to responding to humanitarian needs. Large-scale humanitarian crises need to be addressed at political level. This may entail peace and reconciliation efforts, dialogue with affected countries, peace operations, development cooperation, efforts to combat climate change and armed violence and to promote human rights.

An international humanitarian system is in place to provide humanitarian assistance, including the United Nations humanitarian organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and various non-governmental organisations. A set of principles for humanitarian assistance have been developed on the basis of humanitarian law: humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. This is the foundation of Norwegian humanitarian policy.

Research under HUMPOL should be field-oriented and informed by practical challenges on the ground, taking into account local contexts and focusing on the countries and regions most prone to humanitarian crises. The research should reflect relevant minimum standards in humanitarian assistance. It should be possible to use the research results in comparative analyses and both qualitative and quantitative research methods will be

relevant. Projects should seek to develop knowledge and practical suggestions for improving humanitarian policy with a clear focus on four main topics:

- a) Prevention of and preparedness for humanitarian disasters;
- b) Protection of civilians;
- c) Armed violence; and
- d) Future challenges for international humanitarian assistance.

These and related crosscutting issues are described in more detail below.

a) Prevention of and preparedness for humanitarian disasters

Humanitarian disasters can have a wide range of causes, natural or man-made that increase societal and individual vulnerability. The consequences of humanitarian disasters are determined by how well the country, region and community concerned, as well as the international humanitarian community, is prepared to respond. There has been increase in natural disasters, and contributing factors include population growth, urbanisation, construction in risk prone areas and climate change.

Conflicts and violence frequently lead to damaged infrastructure, reduced food production and large numbers of internally and externally displaced persons. These factors further increase vulnerability both in the affected areas and in the areas where victims seek shelter and protection. Norway has identified a number of pilot countries to strengthen national, regional and international focus on prevention and preparedness.

Relevant research questions are:

- How do victims of natural disasters cope under difficult circumstances? How do they perceive and respond to different humanitarian actors and their own government? To what extent are they able to organise and support themselves over time? What types of local interventions and responses have proved successful, and what roles can local NGOs and community groups play?
- How can humanitarian actors help build national and local capacity for preparedness and response in disaster prone areas?
- What are the implications of climate and environmental changes on humanitarian disasters? To what extent and in what way could such changes increase the vulnerability of different groups, and are there prevention and preparedness strategies that could reduce these threats and mitigate the impacts, including mechanisms for early warning?
- What are the implications and consequences, positive and negative, of the use of military interventions (national and/or international) in disasters, as a “last resort” in humanitarian-led disaster response?

- What are the main practical differences between short-term humanitarian assistance and long-term development aid? How can these differences be bridged in order to ensure a smooth transition from relief to recovery and development? Can emergency assistance be provided in a manner that promotes long-term vulnerability reduction? Can humanitarian organisations provide both humanitarian and development assistance, and if so, how?

b) Protection of civilians

While the responsibility for protecting civilians lies with national authorities, sometimes governments themselves are perpetrators of abuses or support groups that are conducting atrocities. In other cases, governments simply do not have the capacity to protect civilians. We see many examples today of parties to a conflict conducting their military operations in disregard of fundamental principles of international humanitarian law (IHL). Lack of respect for these principles may be due to conscious policy decisions or to a lack of knowledge or understanding of them, or even to a lack of capacity to enforce them. This may manifest itself in the conduct of both non-state armed groups and states. A number of these conflicts do not fit fully into the traditional categories of international or non-international armed conflict. This is further complicated by the fact that there is often a lack of distinction between situations of non-international armed conflict and situations with organized armed violence (often a combination of political and criminal violence), where armed actors who are largely motivated by criminal intentions are attacking the population and generally undermining security (this is further addressed below - under 3 c “armed violence”).

Civilians are targeted directly in many of today’s conflicts. Militias and gangs now tend to be the principal non-state actors engaged in armed conflict rather than organised insurgent groups. All of these factors raise difficult questions for UN and other international actors.

Many different kinds of international actors seek to protect civilians during conflict. Even those without explicit protection mandates can affect the safety of civilians. A key issue in the humanitarian debate of today is the multiple roles of the United Nations (e.g., political actor, deployer of peacekeeping operations, humanitarian responder), the role of international humanitarian and human rights NGOs, and the role of national military forces.

A non-exhaustive list of relevant research questions is:

- What are the practical implications of the humanitarian principles and norms with regard to the protection of vulnerable groups? How are these principles and norms

applied in the field? What have been the policy and programme implications and to what extent have these principles and norms increased access for humanitarian actors and safeguarded the humanitarian space?

- How can vulnerable groups best be protected in humanitarian situations, including against gender-based and sexualised violence?
- How are humanitarian organisations perceived by host governments, local populations and the parties to conflicts? To what extent are humanitarian actions by the UN constrained by the need to work closely with national governments? What are the effects on popular perceptions of the UN humanitarian agencies when a UN peacekeeping mission is seen to be supporting an authoritarian government?
- Have development in organizational logistics, new funding modalities and increased professionalization in the humanitarian sector led to unintended changes in humanitarian values and compromises on the humanitarian principles?
- To what extent have internationally and nationally developed guidelines helped to clarify humanitarian roles and responsibility between civilian and military actors and in different types of humanitarian operations?
- Are there differences between civilian and military interventions in terms of ensuring a gender-sensitive approach, involvement of beneficiaries and the protection of vulnerable groups?
- How do humanitarian assistance and peace-building interact? Are some forms of assistance more conducive to reducing tension and violence? Can ceasefires for the provision of assistance contribute to confidence building? And can humanitarian organisations engage in peace-building activities and still maintain their neutrality and impartiality?

c) **Armed violence**

Armed violence is a generic term that includes the use of small arms, explosives, mines, cluster munitions and other conventional weapons. According to UNDP, more than 2 million people die or suffer mutilation every year as a result of armed violence, which is described as a pressing humanitarian and development problem. What the various issues related to armed violence have in common is that people in and outside areas of armed conflict suffer unacceptable humanitarian consequences, they may be denied their basic human rights and their development is impeded.

Addressing armed violence has been a priority for Norway for more than a decade. In the Norwegian humanitarian policy armed violence is an integral part of humanitarian disarmament, and is described as "... disarmament motivated by humanitarian and development considerations". Efforts to reduce the incidence of and impact from armed

violence has been multi-tracked, through support to programs aimed at reducing armed violence in affected areas and assisting victims, initiatives aimed at strengthening and developing relevant international normative and regulative frameworks, including export controls, International Humanitarian Law and human rights instruments.

The OECD defines armed violence as “... the use or threatened use of weapons to inflict injury, death or psychosocial harm, which undermines development”. The OECD guidelines outline the two programming approaches of Armed Violence Reduction; direct and indirect. Direct programming aims to explicitly prevent and reduce armed violence. While indirect programming requires development agencies to adapt existing sector-specific strategies and interventions in order to better address known risk factors that contribute to armed violence or to enhance protective factors. The OECD has also introduced an analytical tool, the “armed violence lens” that captures the key elements and levels that shape armed violence patterns, namely: the *people* affected by armed violence, the *perpetrators* and their motivations, the availability of *instruments* (arms), and the wider *institutional/cultural* environment that enables and/or protects against armed violence. This tool is also be used to shape programmatic and policy responses to armed violence. Norway takes a comprehensive approach to armed violence, and supports the OECD/DAC guidelines and perspective outlined above.

Relevant research questions are:

- It is a key principle that both multilateral efforts and programming has to build on the experiences of the affected individuals and communities, and of the practitioners involved in concrete field-work. How can national, regional and international policies best be informed by experiences from field-based work on armed violence? To what degree can best practices from one context be useful in different geographical and political contexts?
- The lack of information on the needs of victims of armed violence is hindering the development of effective policy and programmatic responses. Who, how and where are people affected by armed violence, and what are their needs? How are their rights and needs addressed in different contexts?
- How does armed violence affect women and men differently?
- Is there a relationship between armed violence and domestic and sexual violence? What is the role of weapons in domestic and sexual violence?
- Norway recognises that there is a strong interdependent and dynamic relationship between armed violence and development. Can armed violence be a threat to development? What tools for measuring and monitoring armed violence are relevant?
- In what way could prevention and reduction of armed violence better be integrated into national and international development plans and strategies?

d) Future challenges for international humanitarian assistance

There are several trends in the issues above that will continue to be of concern. At the same time, there has been an increase in the provision of assistance and a sharp increase in the number of assistance providers, primarily NGOs but also various community groups and political and religious organisations. We are also seeing a geopolitical shift with emerging economies that are taking different approaches and setting different priorities. This may pose challenges regarding the role of and funding for the UN and other international organisations, as well as the type of assistance provided and the priority groups. There is also the question of whether new actors and donors are being invited to – or are willing to – take part in more coordinated protection and assistance efforts. Developments here could influence the UN's ability to plan and coordinate humanitarian efforts, particularly through the cluster approach, and could also affect the legitimacy of international organisations, the opportunity of national governments to influence priorities and work actively together with aid organisations, and it could also affect overall accountability to the recipients of aid.

Relevant research questions are:

- Who are the new humanitarian actors? What are their humanitarian priorities and how do they organise their efforts? And to what extent do they support an international emergency assistance agenda?
- What are the characteristics and priorities of the new humanitarian donors? Do they prefer state-to-state aid or other forms of assistance? Do they have different concepts of humanitarianism? What opportunities and challenges does the inclusion of non-Western countries in the present humanitarian assistance system entail? And are there ways that policy development could build bridges between emerging and established humanitarian actors?
- What are the best practises for humanitarian leadership and coordination in different types of humanitarian disasters? Are there any particular models or approaches, for example the inclusion of local actors/authorities, or particular skills/expertise that can enhance leadership and enhance humanitarian action?
- How can the UN and its humanitarian organisations adapt to new challenges and ensure their relevance and acceptance as humanitarian actors, at the international, regional and national level?
- What challenges and opportunities does the sharp increase in NGOs and diaspora groups participating in international emergency relief operations entail, and how can this increase best be addressed within the framework of the humanitarian system?
- Are there approaches to local/national humanitarian capacity-building that can help mitigate agency/donor differences and thereby help improve collaboration and the effectiveness of the humanitarian response?

- How can modern technology (such as mobile phones and GPS) and social media make humanitarian assistance more effective and available, improve control of the use of humanitarian funds and secure feedback from beneficiaries?
- What different security arrangements for humanitarian personnel and operations are in use, and do they block or facilitate humanitarian interventions?

e) Cross-cutting issues

The following cross-cutting issues should be considered in all proposals:

- The role of host governments and local communities in the response to and recovery from disasters.
- The needs of the beneficiaries in humanitarian planning and action and how feedback from recipients of humanitarian aid could be used to improve provision of assistance and enhance accountability.
- Women, men, boys and girls are affected differently by natural disasters, conflicts and armed violence. The response has to be gender sensitive and tailored according to the different needs for protection and assistance.

4. ORGANISATION AND FUNDING

One of the aims of the programme is to build up research capacity on humanitarian policy in Norway, and although the quality of the projects is more important than their size, priority will be given to large-scale projects rather than funding several small projects. In addition to capacity-building, strategic international positioning and quality improvements, large-scale projects offer economies of scale, senior research staff and efficient institutional and infrastructure support. Projects do not necessarily have to be located in one institution. The development of networks, cooperation mechanisms and clusters of projects involving collaboration between several researchers and institutions is welcome.

Projects should include doctoral and/or postdoctoral components, as well as established networks and international collaborative partners, particularly with research institutions based in the South. Researchers are encouraged to cooperate with humanitarian actors with relevant field and policy experience. Large-scale projects can apply for funding for up to NOK 10–12 million for the whole project period.

At the same time, it is important to assure baseline funding for projects of a more modest scale (around NOK 3–5 million) and to ensure that the programme includes a broad range of expertise and approaches.

Large-scale projects would be particularly relevant for the topics 3 a (*Prevention and preparedness for humanitarian disasters*) and 3 b (*Protection of civilians*).

It is expected that the proposed projects be in accordance with the strategic plans of the institution in questions and demonstrate how the project is informed by and related to field practice and on-going international policy debates.

All research proposals will be reviewed by a panel of international experts with thorough knowledge on humanitarian issues and international humanitarian law. The final decision on the approval of proposal and the awarding of grants will be the responsibility of the NORGLOBAL Programme Board.

The HUMPOL-programme will be subject to a mid-term review to assess overall progress and to determine its future direction.

5. PUBLICATION, COMMUNICATION AND RESEARCH OUTPUT

The research programme is expected to contribute to the body of international academic literature on humanitarian policy through publication in internationally recognised journals. Applicants must therefore aim to maintain rigorous academic standards. At the same time, projects are expected to provide the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with regular updates on thematic and policy issues through policy briefs, fact sheets and seminars. Such dialogues and exchanges are intended to generate synergies for both the Ministry and the research community, to contribute to a common understanding of humanitarian policy and the development of a constructive humanitarian policy debate. As a first step, the researchers responsible for the projects selected for support are expected to meet representatives of the Section for Humanitarian Affairs in the Ministry within the first six months of the project to present their respective project plans. Researchers should otherwise be prepared to participate at events organised by the programme and the Ministry to discuss their findings at any stage.

An important programme aim is to increase the general knowledge and awareness of humanitarian policy issues in Norway and internationally. This will require a carefully prepared communication strategy for each project on how information can be disseminated to government authorities and a wider audience in Norway, and potentially in the South, in collaboration with research partners. Regular dialogue with the authorities can also provide researchers and research institutions with important insights.