



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Guidance note

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A comprehensive approach to humanitarian, development and peace efforts (triple nexus)

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This guidance note has been drawn up to help Foreign Service and Norad employees who work in, or with, countries affected by protracted crises to better realise the goal of ensuring a comprehensive approach to humanitarian, development, and peace efforts. It sets out key elements to consider when implementing the triple nexus approach in practice. The guidance note may also be used to support the work in the governing bodies of multilateral organisations.

1. A comprehensive approach: three pillars

The various actors working within each of the three nexus pillars – the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors – have differing roles and mandates. Peace efforts are targeted towards preventing the outbreak of conflicts or helping communities resolve conflict situations. Humanitarian action is aimed at saving lives, alleviating suffering and protecting human dignity in humanitarian crises. Development cooperation seeks to address the root causes of vulnerability and lay the foundation for sustainable development. The UN plays an important role in promoting coherence at country level. In 2019, the UN established a new Resident Coordinator system to strengthen coordination of UN activities and ensure a coherent approach. All UN organisations are contributing to the Common Country Analysis, which also encompasses humanitarian needs. The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework ensures that the various UN actors work towards common goals. The humanitarian system employs its own programme cycle and coordination structure. The development banks also play an important role in promoting a comprehensive approach through financing and presence in crisis-affected countries. The World Bank has increased its flexibility and responsiveness to crises and conflicts. Partnerships with other actors, including the UN and humanitarian organisations, are crucial in this context. Norway and most of our partners adhere to the OECD DAC Recommendation on strengthening coherence between humanitarian, development, and peace efforts.¹ A key principle of the Recommendation is to prioritise prevention, mediation and peacebuilding, investing in development whenever possible, while ensuring that immediate humanitarian needs continue to be met.

¹ See [The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Interim Progress Review | en | OECD](#)

1.1 Humanitarian action

Humanitarian action aims to ensure that people in need are given the necessary protection and assistance, in line with 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.² 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.

The humanitarian principles provide an essential ethical and practical framework for humanitarian organisations, enabling them to provide humanitarian assistance and protection, and reaching the most vulnerable groups. The principles also serve as risk mitigating measures and differentiate humanitarian actors from other civilian or military actors who may support one or more parties in an armed conflict.

1.2 Development cooperation

Development cooperation involves long-term efforts to contribute to sustainable societies. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide the framework for Norwegian development cooperation. Ensuring the involvement of stakeholders in partner countries, from local communities and organisations to national authorities and multilateral actors, is a priority for Norway. Development efforts are intended to promote social change and build resilience that lead to durable solutions in countries dealing with poverty, crisis and conflict situations, and transition processes. In its development cooperation, Norway attaches importance to supporting national plans and strategies in the partner country.

² See [Guidance note on ensuring respect for the humanitarian principles - regjeringen.no](https://www.regjeringen.no)

1.3 Peace efforts

Peace efforts encompass peacebuilding to promote dialogue and reduce drivers of conflict, supporting local peace initiatives, facilitating peace processes and mediation initiatives at a high political level. Peace operations, various types of verification mechanisms and security sector reform are also important peace supporting measures. Peace efforts may include peacebuilding and conflict prevention before an armed conflict breaks out; mediation, conflict prevention and peace operations while a conflict is ongoing; and reconciliation efforts, transitional justice and/or peace operations and/or security sector reform after a peace agreement has been reached, or once hostilities have ended. Norwegian policy gives priority to ensuring inclusive peace processes and strengthening women's participation in all phases of peace processes.

2. Comprehensive approach in practice³

Humanitarian response and development efforts often take place alongside peace efforts aimed at finding lasting political solutions. How are all these various activities interlinked and what can be done to enhance coordination and ensure a comprehensive approach? Norway responds to crisis and conflict situations by providing support to a range of international and national actors such as civil society organisations, the UN system and the multilateral development banks. Key elements to consider are outlined below:

2.1 Assessment of programmes receiving support from Norway

Points to consider:

- Does the partner organisation demonstrate an adequate understanding of the context and conflict?
- Does the organisation conduct context/conflict analyses? Does the organisation take a conflict- and gender-sensitive approach?
- Are the activities laying the foundation for more durable solutions and reducing humanitarian needs? Will the activities help to reduce future vulnerabilities? How is this demonstrated in the practical implementation?
- How are the measures helping to build local resilience and positive coping mechanisms?
- How are the measures affecting local unity and cohesion?
- Have the local population, local leaders, women, authorities, marginalised groups and other relevant stakeholders been adequately involved in the planning and implementation of the measures?
- Do the measures promote peacebuilding? What impact are the measures having on the relationship between different social groups? Are there any potential negative effects?

³ The questions in the boxes below can serve as checklists to guide efforts to ensure a triple nexus approach.

2.2 Coordination

Points to consider:

- Have the relevant sections in the Ministry (and other ministries when relevant), the embassies/missions and Norad been consulted? Has a common understanding of Norway's approach and policy been established to ensure a comprehensive Norwegian approach?
- Do Norway's efforts, both overall and in connection with individual programmes and projects, promote a comprehensive approach?
- How are efforts being coordinated at government and country level, and in multilateral forums?
- Is Norway coordinating its efforts with other donors?

At country level:

- What steps can Norway take to support and strengthen the UN Resident Coordinator's ability to coordinate efforts at country level?
- What results have the UN Resident Coordinator and UN Country Team achieved? What are the challenges?
- How does the UN system implement UN reform and enhance coordination?
- What coordinating bodies exist and how do they work? Are there any overall coordination initiatives that encompass the humanitarian, development and peace pillars?
- What are the main challenges when it comes to coordination and how can Norway help to address these?
- How effective is coordination between the UN and the development banks?
- How are Norway and partners receiving funding from Norway helping to enhance coordination and information sharing?
- Is there potential to coordinate efforts with the authorities at the national and local levels?

2.3 Finansiering

Points to consider:

- Is Norwegian funding seen as predictable and flexible, allowing partners to reallocate funds to meet changing needs?
- Can Norway help to reduce the earmarking of funds in order to enable the UN and other partners to channel funding to where it is most needed?
- Does funding provided by Norway under different budget items promote complementarity or lead to duplication/overlap? Are we providing support to the right and most effective actors at country level in each specific case from among local and international organisations, the UN, and the development banks?

- Does Norwegian funding facilitate cooperation between a range of actors, for example through the use of pooled funding mechanisms?
- Do partners receiving funding from Norway help to cover indirect costs (overheads) for, and promote exchange of expertise with, local partners?

3. Guiding principles

Rights-based: A rights-based approach puts people affected by crisis at the centre of the response and ensures that emphasis is given to participation, non-discrimination and accountability, in addition to the right to life, food, health services and education.

Understanding of the context: Efforts must be based on an in-depth understanding of the national and local context and must be conflict-sensitive. Experience shows that efforts can have unintended consequences when responding rapidly in an unpredictable situation. For this reason, it is important to have good context and conflict analyses in place. These are to describe the potential positive and negative impacts of the measures Norway is supporting, outline risks and opportunities, and identify unintended consequences. The aim is to ensure that any action taken is tailored to the specific context and alleviates the situation, or, at the very least, does not do harm. The analyses must be gender-sensitive and assess how discrimination and inequality may intersect, given that crises and conflicts have differing impacts on different segments of the population.

4. Challenges and dilemmas

Local ownership: Local actors have unique access to the population and are usually the first-line responders when a crisis strikes. They are also often agents of change and can play a decisive role in the transition from crisis response to more long-term development and peace efforts. Strengthening the capacity of local and national actors to manage crisis situations can be an investment in sustainable national preparedness systems and helps to build viable institutions in the long term. Norway is committed to increasing locally-led response, including humanitarian efforts.⁴ The fact that local organisations have a strong social and political affiliation with their communities can raise questions regarding their ability to work in line with the humanitarian principles. Even when actors are not politically neutral, it is essential that humanitarian support is provided based on needs and without discrimination.

It is crucial to strengthen **local resilience**, for example by building on and improving the population's own knowledge and coping mechanisms. Partners must take steps to ensure the inclusion of the local population/ local actors, such as national and local authorities, local organisations or

⁴ The Grand Bargain, which Norway has signed, sets a target to channel 25 % of humanitarian support as directly as possible to local actors.

other legitimate representatives of the people, in the planning and implementation of humanitarian, development and peace efforts. Partners must also ensure that women, young people and marginalised groups have the opportunity to participate. Measures that enhance local cohesion can be very beneficial. It is essential to seek long-term solutions that address the needs of different groups in society, e.g. internally displaced people/refugees and host communities. Basic services such as water, sanitation and electricity as well as ensuring their safety in the local community are key priorities. In communities where resources such as water and land are limited and the livelihoods of various groups are under pressure, ensuring equitable access to these resources may be vital in preventing conflict.

Authorities: Cooperation with local/national authorities is important to promote local and national ownership and find durable solutions. In many countries that are undergoing protracted crises, such cooperation may be problematic because the authorities are parties to the conflict or part of a political culture that undermines development. There are certain regimes with which formal cooperation is neither in Norway's interest nor in line with Norwegian policy. Nonetheless, partners will have to enter into agreements, or at least establish an understanding, with the de facto authorities in a given area in order to gain access to people in need and provide life-saving assistance and protection. In some cases, when official cooperation with national authorities is difficult or impossible, some form of cooperation may still be viable. The UN has tried an area-based approach. Another possibility is to pursue technical cooperation in limited areas, for example health or education, while ensuring that this does not entail any recognition of the regime in question. Cooperation with organisations representing individual groups, farmers or religious leaders can also increase local ownership and promote more sustainable solutions at local level. This is challenging political terrain, and navigating this landscape successfully requires close contact between embassies/missions, the Ministry and Norad, and between the authorities in Norway and other countries and the UN, the multilateral development banks and international organisations.

Willingness to accept risks: Donors and other international stakeholders must be willing to accept a higher level of risk than would normally be the case in more stable contexts. This includes accepting the risk of not achieving the expected results. Expectations and objectives must be realistic and achievable. At the same time, it is vital to ensure the safety of aid workers and the affected population. Implementing actors must be able to ensure adequate security measures.⁵

⁵ See the [Risk Sharing Framework.pdf \(interagencystandingcommittee.org\)](https://www.interagencystandingcommittee.org/).



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