

Strategy of the Federal Foreign Office for Humanitarian Assistance Abroad

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1. Preliminary remarks and Key messages

Climate change and the raw materials crisis, population growth, urbanization, extreme poverty and exclusion, armed conflicts and protracted crises in many parts of the world have become global challenges with a direct humanitarian impact. The consolidated appeals issued by the United Nations, which are crucial for quantifying the global need for humanitarian assistance, reached a record 8.83 billion US dollars in 2011. And the need for humanitarian assistance is expected to rise even further.

Against this background, international humanitarian assistance is undergoing a paradigm shift. Beyond the reaction to sudden disasters and crises humanitarian assistance increasingly needs to be forward-looking. Responsible humanitarian assistance is not only reactive but also has a formative effect. Risk analysis and management are just as essential as the quick availability of assistance in the case of acute need, while coordinated cooperation with national, regional and international partners is vital.

The overriding goal of humanitarian assistance is to help people who are suffering great hardship or who are at risk of great hardship due to a crisis, conflict, natural disaster or another cause according to their needs. The aim is to enable them to live in dignity and security and to alleviate the suffering of those who are in dire need that is beyond their power to alleviate. What causes the hardship is of no relevance. Humanitarian assistance is a mark of ethical responsibility and international solidarity with people in need.

The Federal Foreign Office's objectives for Germany's humanitarian assistance are as follows:

- to provide assistance swiftly, flexibly and without unnecessary bureaucracy, according to need and in line with international standards
- to boost self-help capabilities, by involving local stakeholders and recipients of aid and transforming into self-help
- to achieve preparedness, improving response capabilities before disaster strikes and strengthening local structures
- to support international coordination, reinforcing the UN-led international humanitarian assistance system constantly and sustainably
- to enable quality management, learning from experience and integrating innovations and quality control into humanitarian
- to make use of humanitarian diplomacy, developing new humanitarian assistance partnerships and intensifying dialogue with regions at risk of crisis and disaster

2. Global challenges

Due to climate change, humanitarian assistance will increasingly need to deal with extreme weather events and their consequences: storms and flooding, tropical hurricanes, extreme weather such as torrential rainfall or heatwaves, also in moderate climates. The annual number of natural disasters has gone up from around 200 to 400 in the last 20 years. In addition to megadisasters, the number of local disasters in areas formerly not affected by such phenomena is increasing. Growing populations intensify the magnitude of disasters. The concentration of cities and settlements in coastal regions is rising and this has led to an accumulation of urban and industrial infrastructure, which are especially vulnerable. Poor population groups in countries affected by disasters are neither in a position to protect themselves adequately nor to lay the foundation for a new life in the aftermath of a disaster.

In addition to natural disasters, violent conflicts are re-emerging or becoming entrenched in an increasing number of countries. The growing number of refugees and internally displaced

persons in the wake of such conflicts has an impact on entire regions. According to figures released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of refugees and internally displaced persons around the world rose to 42.5 million in 2011.

While humanitarian need is rising, the budgetary conditions for humanitarian assistance are difficult to assess. It is therefore essential to increase efficiency and to establish even greater synergies among actors. This includes strengthening response capabilities before a crisis or disaster occurs (preparedness).

Despite increasing humanitarian need, voluntary workers' scope for action is diminishing. This is partly due to the worsening security situation in many crisis and disaster areas. Often governmental agencies or parties to a conflict deny access to those in need. That means that for people to receive the assistance they need additional efforts are necessary to ensure that humanitarian assistance can be provided and that its neutrality and impartial nature is apparent.

During the last few years, there has been a considerable rise in the number of humanitarian players. The large number of actors with different backgrounds, goals and methods demonstrates how important good coordination is. Not all players are familiar with the principles of good humanitarian assistance and the structures of the international humanitarian system. The coordination and quality assurance of humanitarian assistance is thus ever more important. The Federal Foreign Office is working to strengthen the system of international humanitarian assistance led and coordinated by the United Nations. It actively supports the role of the European Union in the international system. The Federal Foreign Office is working to ensure that new global players play a bigger part in international humanitarian assistance. It promotes national and local response capabilities in a dialogue with states regularly affected by disasters.

3. Areas of humanitarian assistance

In practice, there is often no clear distinction between the different stages of humanitarian assistance.

Immediate emergency assistance is provided straight after a natural disaster or sudden political conflict. The priority is to save lives, provide basic aid supplies and alleviate severe hardship.

Ongoing emergency assistance is provided in more protracted crisis situations where there is no sign of short-term improvement, especially in complex crises. It is intended to meet the vital needs of, for example, internally displaced persons and refugees. Humanitarian assistance in this sphere is easier to plan than immediate emergency . Typical measures include emergency medical care, hygiene measures, drinking water supplies, the provision of emergency shelters, food assistance and other relief goods (non-food items) as well as mandate-specific protective measures provided by international organizations.

Transitional humanitarian assistance is an integral part of humanitarian action plans. It provides medium-term assistance. Following the principles of humanitarian assistance, it is granted to continue or complement ongoing and immediate emergency assistance in order to strengthen local capacities and pave the way for development cooperation. Ideally, this form of assistance is linked to German or international development cooperation, although this is not a prerequisite for granting assistance. Transitional humanitarian assistance is aimed in particular at initially stabilizing the living conditions of those affected. In situations where development cooperation measures are not expected, rehabilitation measures are intended to prevent those in need from falling into life-threatening hardship again.

Within the scope of immediate, ongoing and transitional assistance, the Federal Foreign Office promotes integrated disaster reduction measures geared to the special needs of the recipients. Preparedness measures can help minimize the impact of future crises and natural disasters, alleviate human suffering and reduce material damage. These include:

- risk analysis, assessment and management
- early warning
- quick response to early warning through the prompt preparation of humanitarian assistance
- enhanced humanitarian response capabilities at regional, national and local level
- training for humanitarian aid workers
- further development of humanitarian instruments within the Post-Hyogo Framework for Action and the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, on the basis of the Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship
- enhanced international and national platforms
- engagement for preparedness in conjunction with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Secretariat of the International Strategy for

Disaster Reduction (ISDR), humanitarian organizations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, NGOs and civil society

- support for the transformative agenda of the humanitarian organizations working together in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) under the direction of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator

Humanitarian mine and ordnance clearance covers all activities aimed at alleviating the humanitarian, social, economic and ecological impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war. This includes preparedness measures, such as raising awareness of the dangers. The German Government is striving to create a world free of antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions in which accidents with antipersonnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war are prevented.

Focus of humanitarian assistance

- immediate emergency assistance
- ongoing emergency assistance
- transitional assistance
- preparedness
- mine and ordnance clearance

Humanitarian assistance and development cooperation

When and wherever possible, immediate and ongoing emergency assistance, reconstruction and development should be meaningfully and effectively combined in keeping with the international strategy Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD). This includes laying the groundwork for longer-term measures in the early recovery phase following serious disasters and crises.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development has at its disposal the newly developed recovery and rehabilitation instrument, which being part of development cooperation follows the principles of that sphere. Recovery and rehabilitation is aimed at strengthening the resilience of local communities, civil society players and (state) institutions at the dynamic interface between the Federal Foreign Office's humanitarian assistance and long-term development cooperation through recovery and rehabilitation. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development has drawn up a strategy paper on recovery and rehabilitation which outlines working methods in the fields of disaster reduction, medium to

long-term food security, the reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons in developing countries and the reconstruction of basic social and economic infrastructure.

4. Humanitarian principles

The German Government is committed to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Unconditional adherence to these principles is essential if humanitarian players on the ground – who often face a difficult political environment and a poor security situation – are to operate.

According to the principle of humanity, human suffering everywhere must be alleviated, with special attention being paid to population groups most at risk. The dignity of every individual must be preserved and protected.

Neutrality means providing humanitarian assistance without giving preferential treatment to either side in an armed conflict or other controversies. Especially in complex crises, maintaining neutrality is of key importance, for only if relief organizations are perceived as being neutral they will gain access to those in need. Furthermore, the security of those providing could often not be guaranteed if neutrality is not maintained.

Impartiality entails granting humanitarian assistance exclusively on the basis of the level of need and without discrimination between the population groups in question or within them – for example, on the grounds of age, gender, race, skin colour, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, religion, disability, state of health, political or other convictions, national or social origin.

According to the principle of independence, humanitarian objectives must not be subordinate to political, economic, military or other goals and it must be ensured that the only aim of humanitarian assistance remains preventing or alleviating suffering.

Humanitarian principles

- humanity
- neutrality

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- impartiality- independence |
|---|

5. Organizing humanitarian assistance

(a) Needs Assessment

Humanitarian assistance is granted on the basis of the humanitarian needs identified. Recipients of aid are selected on the basis of clear and objective criteria. In this process, special needs should be taken into consideration, such as those of women, children, older people, the sick and people with disabilities.

In order to provide humanitarian assistance geared to need, the Federal Foreign Office is calling for a joint assessment of needs in the United Nations. The Federal Foreign Office supports measures by all partners which improve the assessment of humanitarian needs.

(b) Subsidiarity

Main responsibility for protecting the population from a disaster or emergency lies with the government of the state in question. According to the principle of subsidiarity, the German Government only provides humanitarian assistance where the government of a country hit by disaster is unable or unwilling to do so itself on a sufficient scale.

Where existing structures are inadequate, humanitarian assistance should be provided in a way that strengthens national and local crisis response structures for the future and creates a foundation for longer-term measures. To that extent, humanitarian assistance can boost development cooperation and help ensure that no gap emerges between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. The assistance is thus provided in line with the Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) approach.

Humanitarian assistance should make itself superfluous as quickly as possible. This can, among other things, be achieved through the greatest possible involvement of local players and aid recipients. The people affected and competent local agencies should be involved at the conceptual stage and later in the implementation of the relief measures. The aim is to strengthen the self-help capabilities of the population affected. The Federal Foreign Office

fosters in particular the involvement of women in organizing humanitarian assistance. Women often bear special responsibility for organizing survival measures in difficult situations.

(c) Protection

According to the “do no harm” principle, undesirable negative consequences of humanitarian assistance – for example, for the environment, development or gender equality – should be avoided at all stages. That is why cross-cutting issues such as gender, environmental compatibility or HIV/AIDS should be taken into account when devising humanitarian assistance measures.

Protection is a central component of humanitarian measures. This also includes protection against sexual violence and against human trafficking. Protective measures in connection with the implementation of the Refugee Convention should protect refugees against attacks and guarantee a minimum level of legal certainty, inter alia by registering and issuing refugee documents. Protective measures are also rooted in international humanitarian law; they are implemented in the event of an international or non-international armed conflict or the continuation of a hostile occupation, internal displacement, captivity as prisoners of war or the detention of persons directly involved in hostilities in a non-international armed conflict.

(d) Conflict sensitivity

Humanitarian assistance is not a crisis management instrument. However, more than 50 per cent of people affected by humanitarian crises live in conflict areas. Conflict sensitivity is thus of increasing importance within the scope of humanitarian assistance. Good humanitarian assistance in harmony with humanitarian principles and guidelines can help stabilize and create sustainable conditions for peace. Bad humanitarian assistance can lead to worsening conflicts.

(e) Climate sensitivity

In vulnerable regions affected by climate change, the way in which humanitarian assistance is provided has to be adapted. Climate-sensitive humanitarian assistance must involve measures to foster adaptation to climate change. Due to recurring extreme weather events, individual regions can become chronic disaster regions which require climate-sensitive humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, long-term climate stress makes conflicts worse, especially the conflict for ever-scarce resources such as drinking water. Synergies with climate adaptation measures are of key importance here.

Organizing humanitarian assistance

- needs-oriented
- based on the principle of subsidiarity
- strengthening and protective
- conflict-sensitive
- climate-sensitive

(f) Key documents

The German Government's humanitarian assistance is in accordance with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, which the German Government helped to launch. The European Consensus is based on the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship (GHD), initiated together with other donors and which today are the internationally recognized guidelines for good humanitarian assistance.

At national level, the Twelve Basic Rules of Humanitarian Assistance Abroad adopted by the German Government and in line with international principles remain in force. Further documents of relevance are the Code of Conduct of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, relevant provisions of international humanitarian law, human rights, refugee law and the humanitarian resolutions of the UN General Assembly and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In the sphere of food assistance, the new Food Convention was adopted in April 2012. The central reference point in the sphere of preparedness is Priority Action 5 of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, an action plan adopted in January 2005 at the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

The following conventions are of particular importance in the sphere of humanitarian mine and ordnance clearance: Germany is a party to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons) and its Protocols, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (Oslo Convention). Under Article 6 of the latter two Conventions, under Article 11 of the amended Protocol on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of mines, booby-traps and other devices (Protocol II to the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons) as well as Article 8 of the Protocol on

explosive remnants of war) (Protocol V to the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons), the states parties provide the states affected with to help them fulfil the obligations under the Conventions.

(g) Civilian and military coordination

Military assets and capabilities may only be deployed to support humanitarian measures if this is the last resort, that is to say if civilian assets and capabilities are not a comparable alternative and only the deployment of military assets, which are unique with regard to their capabilities and availability, can ensure that urgently needed humanitarian assistance is provided. In such cases, military assets are deployed in line with the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies (MCDA Guidelines) and the Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (Oslo Guidelines).

6. Working methods of the Federal Foreign Office Task Force for Humanitarian Aid

(a) Coordinated humanitarian assistance

The Federal Foreign Office aspires to supply coordinated humanitarian assistance. Rapid and non-bureaucratic assistance in acute crisis goes hand in hand with transitional assistance, enhanced crisis response capabilities and disaster reduction measures. Through its Crisis Response Centre, the Federal Foreign Office can be contacted around the clock and can, if necessary, get relief measures underway within hours. The network of German missions abroad is crucial to early warning and to quickly establishing contact with those affected and relief organizations on the ground.

(b) Efficiency

Humanitarian assistance measures must be efficient so that the money earmarked provides as much help as possible for people. Purely economic efficiency, that is to say a comparison of costs and results, would not meet humanitarian principles – not least because humanitarian assistance is provided under complex conditions. Poor security situations, a lack of infrastructure, great distances, the demand for very well trained experts and the need to act quickly make humanitarian assistance expensive. Efficiency therefore has to be assessed in

relation to the attainment of objectives and quality. This includes the planned phasing out of humanitarian assistance or the planned transition to development cooperation measures (exit strategies). Larger-scale projects embedded in strategic planning can help increase the efficiency of humanitarian measures. The promotion of such projects is carried out in harmony with the Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship.

(c) Quality management and innovation

With a view to quality management, in addition to proof of employment of funds the Federal Foreign Office carries out regular evaluations to identify potential improvements in the implementation of humanitarian assistance. Quality management also helps organize humanitarian assistance in a way that is accountable to the recipients.

The Federal Foreign Office supports international quality initiatives. Within the framework of the SPHERE project, NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement developed minimum standards based on tried and tested humanitarian assistance procedures.

The Federal Foreign Office is calling in international fora for the further development of the system and working methods of humanitarian assistance at international level. The Federal Foreign Office is supporting pilot measures aimed at developing innovative humanitarian instruments.

(d) Public relations

The public does not know much about the prerequisites for and working methods of professional humanitarian assistance. Media attention on humanitarian assistance mainly focuses on major disasters and serious political crises. Donations are concentrated in spheres of humanitarian assistance which are easy to portray in the media. The Federal Foreign Office is therefore – in collaboration with partners – keen to ensure better public relations for humanitarian assistance issues.

Working methods

- quick and unbureaucratic assistance
- efficiency
- quality management
- innovation

- public relations

7. Partners

NGOs often have a high degree of specialization, considerable know-how and are operationally flexible. They directly reflect the active engagement of civil society in humanitarian assistance. Being part of international and local networks with partner organizations in disaster and crisis zones and integrated in the system of humanitarian assistance coordinated by the United Nations, they meet needs on the ground in a targeted fashion and foster the development of the capabilities of local partners. NGOs are therefore an important partner in humanitarian assistance.

In the Humanitarian Assistance Coordinating Committee, the Federal Foreign Office conducts a regular dialogue with the Association of German Development NGOs (VENRO) and the Committee members¹ on the priorities of humanitarian assistance. The Coordinating Committee strengthens the coherence of German humanitarian assistance and has proven its worth as an information and coordination body in acute emergencies.

The Federal Foreign Office is helping to enhance and professionalize NGOs. This applies in particular to the involvement of NGOs in international coordination, their access to international sources of financing as well as their participation in United Nations consolidated appeals. In view of growing international demands, the Federal Foreign Office is supporting and fostering greater cooperation among NGOs as well as between NGOs and international partners and organizations.

One central element of Federal Foreign Office humanitarian assistance is the cooperation with UN organizations active in international humanitarian assistance and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). By playing an active role in United Nations supervisory and donor support bodies, the Federal Foreign Office is helping to

¹ GIZ, Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW); non-governmental organizations: ADRA Germany, Workers' Samaritan Federation Germany (ASB), Doctors of the World, Médecins Sans Frontières, CARE Germany, Caritas Germany (DCV), German Committee for Disaster Reduction (DKKV), German Red Cross (DRK), German Agro Action / Welthungerhilfe (DWHH), Social Service Agency of the German Protestant Church (EKD), HELP, Johanniter International, Malteser International, Medico International, Plan International Germany, Terre des Hommes Germany, World Vision Germany

further develop and strengthen the structures and operational processes of the individual organizations and the humanitarian system in its entirety. In 2011/12, Germany co-chaired the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHD), which promotes the implementation of the Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship. In 2012/13, Germany is chairing the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG).

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement plays a special role in the international humanitarian system. The national societies united in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) boost response capabilities at local level. As an independent organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has a mandate, anchored in the Geneva Conventions, to protect and assist people in armed conflicts. It promotes adherence to international humanitarian law and coordinates its activities with the United Nations, NGOs and others.

The European Union is an engine for strengthening international humanitarian assistance in all spheres. The European Commission's Humanitarian Assistance Office (ECHO) plays a major role in organizing international humanitarian assistance. The European Union (Commission and member states) provides more than half of the world's funding for humanitarian assistance. Germany's share of the EU budget is around 20%. Alongside concrete humanitarian assistance, ECHO's task is to set standards and strengthen the international structures and implementation of internationally agreed principles of humanitarian assistance as well as of international humanitarian law. The Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA), which meets regularly and on an ad hoc basis, is a key forum for discussion, exchange and coordination in relation to relevant humanitarian issues within the EU framework.

Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW)

Within a few hours THW can deploy search and rescue teams, mobile water purification units and other technical and logistical experts worldwide. The modular concept of its units and teams allows a flexible response to disasters and crises. As Germany's national civil protection and operations organization its statutory tasks include providing technical aid abroad on behalf of the German Government. It often supports NGOs as a "helper of the helpers". It provides expertise advice to the United Nations, for example the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

In accordance with key international documents in this sphere, civil protection organizations step into action internationally in the event of large-scale devastation, for example after earthquakes or floods. Their advantage is that they can send established teams with the necessary technical expertise and equipment quickly to disaster areas. In order to effectively support the international humanitarian aid coordinated at the UN, a number of civil protection organizations have come together to found the International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP), with a secretariat based at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The German member is the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW).

8. Financing instruments

The main humanitarian assistance instrument is the approval of project applications and the resulting funding for NGOs and international organizations. Budgetary funds are set aside every year so that they can be made available immediately if necessary when sudden disasters or crises occur. Where needs are easier to assess, project partners are called upon to submit proposals for projects within the framework of strategic planning. International organizations receive project funding based on regular planning talks. The framework for granting funding to NGOs and international organizations are consolidated appeals by the United Nations and the appeals of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. When projects are being organized, the Federal Foreign Office attaches importance to them being anchored in strategic planning in line with the Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship.

In addition to project financing, the German Government makes voluntary contributions to international organizations and to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to help guarantee its basic funding. Making funding available early on gives international organizations a reliable basis for planning. With a view to strengthening international crisis response capabilities, the Federal Foreign Office makes available money for the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). This enables the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator to react quickly to funding shortfalls. The Common Humanitarian Fund managed by OCHA and special funds for acute emergencies complement the instruments available to the United Nations which enable it to provide flexible funding for relief measures.

When making decisions about financing, the Federal Foreign Office takes into account the fact that the level of donations in the case of forgotten crises is low due to the lack of media attention. The Federal Foreign Office also takes into account underfinanced sectors such as water and basic sanitation when granting funding.

9. Humanitarian diplomacy

Humanitarian diplomacy is gaining importance as a supportive instrument of humanitarian assistance. In complex crises, promoting humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law helps to secure access to those in need and to guarantee the safety of humanitarian workers.

The international humanitarian system is based on financial contributions from traditional Western donors. In view of the growing challenges, building new partnerships for humanitarian assistance is crucial. That is why the Federal Foreign Office is extending the dialogue with new global players to the sphere of humanitarian assistance.

The Federal Foreign Office is engaged in strengthening the international humanitarian system in the EU and the United Nations. The Federal Foreign Office support the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) whose consolidated appeals for assistance and emergency assistance form an important decision-making basis for the organization of humanitarian assistance and funding commitments. As co-chair of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative and chair of the OCHA Donor Support Group, the Federal Foreign Office has placed an initiative on strengthening preparedness on the international humanitarian agenda. Dialogue with states in regions at risk from crises and disasters play an important role in this. The aim is to make strengthening local structures a joint priority in order to be better prepared for crises and disasters on the ground and to be able to react more swiftly and effectively when disaster strikes.

Humanitarian diplomacy

- promotion of humanitarian principles
- dialogue with new global players
- dialogue with states in regions at risk of disasters and crises
- enhanced international humanitarian system