



Final Report

Midterm Review of the Norwegian Humanitarian Strategy and Strategic Partnership Model

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Declaration

This report is the product of its authors, and responsibility for the accuracy of data included in this report rests with the authors. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Evaluation Department”.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AAP	Accountability to affected people
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CBPF	Country-based pooled fund
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
EC	European Commission
ERP	Emergency response preparedness
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GB	Grand Bargain
GBV	Gender-based violence
GHO	Global humanitarian overview
HRP	Humanitarian response plan
HS	Humanitarian strategy
IASC	Inter-agency standing committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDA	International Development Association
IDPs	Internally displaced person
IHL	International humanitarian law
LCRP	Lebanon crisis response plan
IHRL	International human rights law
LHF	Lebanon humanitarian fund
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non-government organisation
NMFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NRX	Norwegian Red Cross
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
POC	Protection of civilians
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for The Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
SC WG CAAC	Security Council Working Group for Children and Armed Conflict
GBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SP	Strategic partner
SPA	Strategic partnership agreement
SPM	Strategic Partnership Model
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

Draft Final Report: Mid-term review of Norway's Humanitarian Strategy Executive Summary

This Midterm Review is about Norway's global humanitarian activities during 2019-2021. It assesses the implementation of Norway's Humanitarian Strategy for 2019-2023 and the Strategic Partnership Model (SPM), an innovative partnership model introduced to support the Strategy. It was conducted during January-April 2022, using a rapid and mixed methods approach.

Norway's humanitarian activities

The Review finds Norway responded well to changing global humanitarian needs during 2019-2021, when needs increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, rose steeply in several protracted crises, and continued to exceed international humanitarian capacities. Norway's humanitarian activities remained broadly aligned with global trends, prioritised large protracted crises and maintained flexible emergency responsiveness. Questions arise about its process for assessing evolving global needs.

Norway's humanitarian policy and funding activities are to a large extent guided by the Strategy. The Strategy is a coherent document that defines policy priorities and guides funding decisions. Humanitarian principles, operational requirements, and capacity constraints also influence Norway's humanitarian activities.

Norway's partnerships are highly compatible with the Strategy's objectives. Norway implements the Strategy through a mixed portfolio of partnerships, relies most on a few multilateral and Norwegian NGO partnerships, and applies a distinct approach to partnership that is highly valued.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) did well at managing the Strategy through follow-up activities. Strategic analysis and learning about progress could be improved.

Norway's humanitarian effectiveness

The Review finds Norway's humanitarian activities made very effective contributions to protection through global policy and partnerships, as well as supporting largescale emergency assistance. Notable achievements include elevating SGBV on the humanitarian agenda, making humanitarian contributions on protection of civilians in the Security Council, and becoming increasingly recognised for a focus on protection in humanitarian action.

Norway struggled to effectively enable 'Nexus' approaches that might help reduce humanitarian needs. While Norway supported coordinated responses and invested a high share of funding in both education and health, partners perceived this goal to remain unclear and difficult to operationalise.

Norway made some effective contributions to humanitarian innovation and reform, most notably through promoting the use of cash and supporting innovation. Questions arise about how Norway should engage with localisation.

Norway made very effective contributions to good donorship. The country appears to be the world's most generous humanitarian donor (in terms of GDP and population size), provided some 40% of the humanitarian budget as multi-year funding and more than 40% of it as unearmarked or softly earmarked funding. Its Strategic Partnership model with Norwegian NGOs is considered a manifestation of good donorship.

The Strategic Partnership Model

The Review finds the SPM offers a promising opportunity to enhance existing partnerships, in a way that can uphold principles, reinforce implementation of the Strategy, and increase partners' reach.

The SPM was developed through a well-managed process which came to an end in 2020, leaving the future direction of this innovation unclear.

The SPM shows good potential for improving implementation of Norway's Strategy. It shows signs of increasing NMFA efficiency and partner dialogue, increasing partner effectiveness, and increasing emergency responsiveness. Possible improvements with regard to localisation, integrated approaches, innovation and donorship require further evidence.

Conclusions

- **Norway's Humanitarian Strategy is being well implemented.** The NMFA's humanitarian activities are helping to save lives, alleviate suffering, and protect human dignity in the world's crises.
- **Norway is strong on protection.** The NMFA is contributing to people in need receiving protection while addressing growing emergency assistance needs.

- **Norway's 'integrated approach' poses a challenge.** The NMFA is struggling to promote holistic humanitarian responses that help to reduce needs.
- **Norway is a good donor and invests in the system.** The NMFA is making system-level contributions to humanitarian donorship, reform and innovation.
- **Norway offers leadership sometimes.** Working with limited management resources, the NMFA combines funding, partnership, and policy activities to exercise leadership in a few areas.
- **Norway's management is getting more strategic.** The NMFA's activities are guided by the Strategy, but efforts to monitor progress and learn lessons could be further strengthened.
- **The Strategic Partnership Model supports the Strategy.** The SPM is being implemented with selected Norwegian NGOs to accelerate the Strategy.
- **The Strategic Partnership Model is adding value.** The SPM appears to be increasing efficiency and effectiveness, but remains a work-in-progress that needs continued development.

Recommendations

- **Sustain the good work.** The NMFA should continue implementing Norway's current humanitarian activities without major change, in line with the Humanitarian Strategy until 2023.
- **Focus leadership efforts.** The NMFA should enhance Norway's humanitarian leadership activity in a limited number of thematic areas.
- **Review Nexus approach.** The NMFA should focus on learning about the 'integrated approach' during 2022-2023, and in preparation for the next humanitarian strategy.
- **Improve evaluability.** The NMFA should strengthen follow-up and learning activities to support management of the Strategy.

Introduction

This review aims to support learning and accountability. It responds to Norway's humanitarian strategy (HS) requirement for a Mid-term Review and is intended to support the HS follow-up and learning functions.¹ Its objectives are to assess the HS's relevance, coherence, and effectiveness; to assess the SPM; and capture lessons learned. It is intended to help NMFA strategic managers reflect on evidence and inform decisions about the HS going forward. Partners and other political and technical stakeholders are expected to use the review to inform their engagement with the NMFA.

Background and object of evaluation

The review is about Norway's global humanitarian activities during 2019-2021. Norway's humanitarian activities include upholding international law and principles, responding to the global humanitarian context, focusing on key priority areas, implementing action points, channelling assistance through selected partnerships, and ongoing learning and follow-up activities.² These activities are carried out by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA)'s Humanitarian Section, embassies, and missions abroad, political leaders, and implementing partners. Most of these activities revolve around managing a large humanitarian funding portfolio (see Annex D: Enhanced portfolio analysis), which was worth NOK 17.2bn during 2019-2021, involved 52 humanitarian partners, required 1280³ partnership agreements, and covered more than 50 countries.⁴

It focuses on the Humanitarian Strategy (HS). In 2018, Norway launched a new Humanitarian Strategy for 2019-2023, stating it will work with other countries and partners to achieve four goals (see below), which are disaggregated into 18 thematic priority areas and a total of 47 actions points:

- i. *Protection and assistance:* ensure that people in need are given the necessary protection and assistance, in line with the humanitarian principles.
- ii. *Integrated approach:* promote an integrated and rights-based approach with a view to preventing humanitarian crises and reducing humanitarian needs
- iii. *Reform and innovation:* push for innovation and reform in the humanitarian sector; promote effective, flexible and predictable funding for humanitarian efforts
- iv. *Partnership and good donorships:* promote effective, flexible and predictable funding for humanitarian efforts

It also focuses on the Strategic Partnership Model (SPM). In 2018, the HS referred to the NMFA's innovative model for cooperation with Norwegian humanitarian organisations, and in April 2020, Norway entered into seven Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPAs) with six Norwegian NGOs, to 'fulfil objectives related to good humanitarian donorship and to contribute to the overall achievement of the strategy'.⁵ The SPAs are funded at a total annual cost of NOK 1.7bn, of which 20% are flexible funds to enable the strategic partners (SPs) to respond swiftly to new needs during the year. The current SPs are:

- Caritas Norway
- NORCAP⁶
- The Norwegian Church Aid
- Norwegian People's Aid
- The Norwegian Red Cross
- The Norwegian Refugee Council
- Save the Children Norway

Literature Review

Norway adopts a strategic approach to humanitarian action. In recent years, the NMFA has used formal frameworks to guide its humanitarian activities, commissioned reviews of progress, and participated in wider evaluations of Norwegian aid. These highlighted key strengths such as Norway's contributions to refugee and

¹ The HS involves 'competency and learning' as an important component, with action points to (Section 8.1) strengthen humanitarian expertise in the foreign service and (8.2) continue to cooperate with humanitarian research and knowledge centres.

² Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018): Norway's Humanitarian Strategy. An effective and integrated approach

³ Agreements are defined here as the total number of individual agreements as per NMFA microdata, and not the number of framework contracts. One framework contract can include numerous agreements to allocate funding by thematic, partner or country. Therefore, the number of the main agreements is much lower.

⁴ According to NMFA data, excluding global unspecified and regional funding

⁵ NMFA (2021): Terms of reference: Midterm review of Norway's humanitarian strategy and Strategic Partnership Model

⁶ Norcap is a part of NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council) organizationally, but has a separate Strategic Partnership Agreement

IDPs (internally displaced person) protection, disarmament, gender equality, and timely emergency responses. They also described gaps in staffing and humanitarian expertise, progress measurement, and the analytical basis for country activities.

- In 2008, Norway developed its first humanitarian policy, setting out a vision of Norway's role in the humanitarian arena and priorities for 2009-2013.⁷
- In 2011, Norad published a mid-term review of Norway's humanitarian policy.⁸
- In 2016, Norway's MFA signed up to the Grand Bargain,⁹ following the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing.¹⁰
- In 2016, Norad published an evaluation of Norway's response to the Syria regional crisis, with a focus on Norway's overall aid management system.¹¹
- In 2018, the NMFA published Norway's humanitarian strategy for 2019-2023
- In 2020, Norad published an evaluation of Norway's efforts to concentrate aid on fewer geographic and thematic areas, and reduce the number of agreements and partners, to ensure effective and efficient delivery of development aid.¹²
- In 2020, Norad published an evaluation of Norway's aid activities in South Sudan.¹³
- In 2021, the NMFA and NORCAP funded an independent review of the Grand Bargain.¹⁴

Context analysis

By 2021, Norway's humanitarian strategy faced massive and growing needs. According to a rapid global context analysis done at inception, global needs remained very largescale and continued to grow, exceeding the capacities of humanitarian assistance. In 2022, 274m people were estimated to be in need humanitarian assistance and protection, rising from 235m in 2021, which was already the highest figure recorded.¹⁵ These needs were driven upwards by complex protracted crises, involving forced displacement and food insecurity, as well as by conflicts and disregard for international humanitarian law. While needs continued to exceed humanitarian funding, humanitarian funding also continued to grow.

Crisis situations were deteriorating. Global needs increased massively in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, public health measures, and various other effects. They rose in specific countries, bringing new countries (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia) to the top of the needs list by end 2021. And they were increasingly understood to be complicated by climate change and environmental factors.

Analytical framework

This review applied a simple logic model to understand implementation of the HS. To generate evidence about causality and support learning it is common to make explicit the logic model behind the object of review. In the absence of a Theory of Change or logic model found for the HS, the evaluation team constructed the following simplified model (see Figure 1).

⁷ NFMA (2009): Norway's Humanitarian Policy

⁸ Norad (2011): Mid-Term Review of Norway's Humanitarian Policy

⁹ The Grand Bargain (2016): A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need

¹⁰ High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing (2016): Report to the Secretary-General. Too important to fail—addressing the humanitarian financing gap

¹¹ Norad (2016): Striking the Balance' Evaluation of the Planning, Organisation and Management of Norwegian Assistance related to the Syria Regional Crisis

¹² Norad (2020): Evaluation of Norway's Aid Concentration

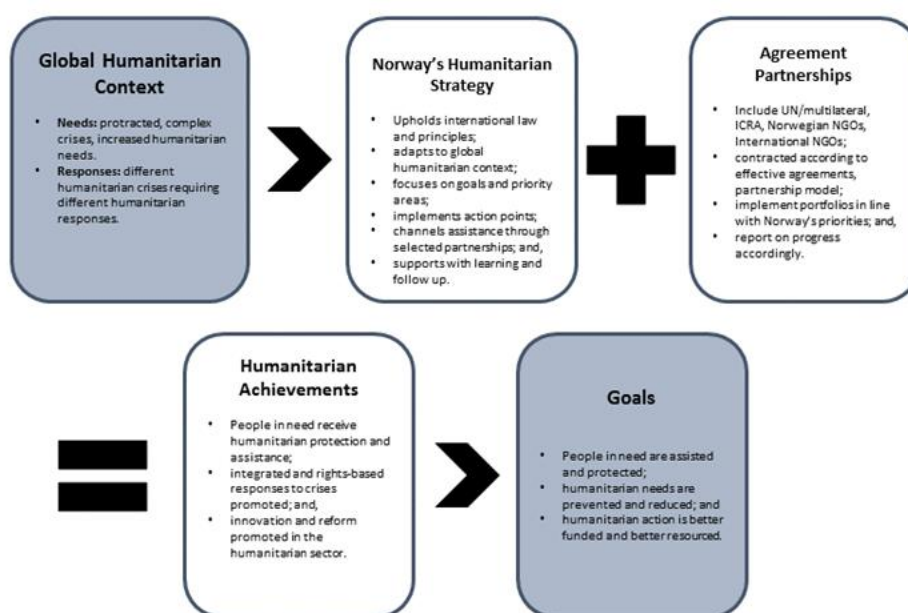
¹³ Norad (2020): Blind Sides and Soft Spots – An Evaluation of Norway's Aid Engagement in South Sudan

¹⁴ Metcalfe-Hough, V., Fenton, W., Willitts-King, B. and Spencer, A. (2021): The Grand Bargain at five years - an independent review. HPG commissioned report. London: ODI

¹⁵ OCHA (2021): Global Humanitarian Overview 2022

Figure 1 Simplified Model of Norway's HS

Norway's Humanitarian Strategy: simplified constructed logic



Evaluation criteria were used to assess the HS and SPM. At a higher level, the review applied recognised evaluation criteria adapted from OECD/DAC¹⁶ and ALNAP¹⁷ to assess: (i) The relevance of the HS to global humanitarian needs and adaptation to changing context; (ii) The internal coherence of the HS and how it fits within the NMFA; (iii) The effectiveness of the HS, and progress made towards achieving the main goals; and (iv) The SPM as a process innovation with the potential to generate comparative improvements in humanitarian action. However, the review did not assess the HS's coverage, appropriateness, efficiency, sustainability, or impact.

Judgment criteria were used to generate evidence. In line with objectives, the team prepared 11 review questions (RQs) and proposed 29 judgment criteria (JCs) at the inception phase (Annex F: Review Framework). It expanded the RQs to ask about 'how' and 'to what extent', with the aim to support evidence generation and allow some exploration of causality. The JCs define 'what good looks like' and are used to generate evidence and support analytical judgements.

Methodology

The review was done rapidly in early 2022. Following an inception phase in late 2021, the team carried out a document review, data analyses, stakeholder consultations, two country-based case studies during January-March 2022 and a synthesis analysis in April 2022. The approach drew primarily on the NMFA's existing data sources and most accessible stakeholders, as appropriate for the relatively broad scope and limited timeframe.

- **Portfolio analysis:** The enhanced portfolio analysis focused on Norway's actual spending on humanitarian activities during 2019-2021 involved analyses of disbursement data published by Norad for 2019 and 2020, complemented by unpublished NMFA data for 2021 as well as spending data shared by the NMFA with OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS)¹⁸.
- **Document review:** The global document review involved reviewing 24 documents in detail, including NMFA annual budget proposals (i.e. reports on past years, 2019 and 2020), NMFA annual HS prioritisation documents and follow-up reports for 2019 and 2020, the NMFA global reserve allocation note for 2021, NMFA annual reporting to the Grand Bargain, NMFA reporting on the Oslo Conference, and a few relevant evaluations.

¹⁶ OECD DAC (2021): Evaluation Criteria

¹⁷ Obrecht, A. with Warner, A. and Dillon, N. (2017): Working paper: Evaluating humanitarian innovation. HIF/ALNAP Working Paper. London: ODI/ALNAP.

¹⁸ It is important to note that all quantitative material in this report has not been quality assured by the Norwegian MFA.

- **Stakeholder consultations:** The stakeholder consultations involved interviews with 60 persons from 18 global stakeholders, including NMFA actors, external policy actors, partners, selected multilateral organisations and all SPs.¹⁹
- **Case studies:** The country-level case studies in Lebanon and Nigeria involved an initial review of data and documents, consultations in-country (over 7 days) with 26 persons from 17 stakeholder organisations in Lebanon and 19 persons from 12 stakeholder organisations in Nigeria, debriefs with embassies, and internal summary reports.
- **Joint analysis:** A structured approach to data analysis, evidence generation, and learning facilitation allowed the engagement of NMFA and SPs in a useful learning session at inception phase. It offered the potential for useful joint reflection of evidence on the submission of this draft.

It sought to generate ‘good enough’ evidence. The approach was rigorous, involved multiple methods, and allowed satisfactory triangulation at various levels: data, methods, and analysts. Whereas the stakeholder consultations and country case studies offered very useful perception-based evidence, the document review and analysis of spending data offered much more limited evidence. Together these offered good enough evidence to answer the mid-term review questions in an analytical manner, but did not offer the same degree of reliability or require the same level of resource investment as a summative evaluation.

It adopted a strategic perspective. Applying a wide-angled lens, the review looked holistically at the Humanitarian Strategy, its implementation and management. It considered how Norway’s humanitarian activities are contributing to the Strategy’s goals. This ‘wide not deep’ approach meant limited focus on any specific thematic area or technical aspect.

It prioritised learning above accountability. A mid-term review serves the purposes of supporting decision-making and generating evidence in a timely manner at mid-way through implementation, so the approach was primarily geared towards this purpose. Since the review is part of the NMFA’s ongoing efforts to follow-up and learn about the Strategy’s implementation, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations are part of an evolving process, and should not be considered an end-point.

It found some evaluability challenges. Evaluability means the ‘extent to which an activity or a program can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion,’²⁰ and implies having clear objectives, producing and information about progress, and dedicating enough resources assessing progress in a useful way. The Strategy’s objectives remain broadly defined (without SMART or verifiable results), information produced about progress is limited to NMFA reporting on activities, and efforts to generate evidence about progress and use it for strategic decision-making appear to be in evolution.

¹⁹ It was also agreed to extend the sample to some Norwegian NGOs who were not selected under the SPM selection process.

²⁰ OECD DAC (2022): Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management

1. Norway's humanitarian activities

This section presents findings about Norway's humanitarian activities, the relevance and internal coherence of the Strategy.

1.1 Relevance to context

RQ 1. To what extent and how does the strategy respond to the global humanitarian needs and continue to be relevant when circumstances change (also in light of Covid)?

Main finding

Norway responded well to changing global humanitarian needs during 2019-2021. Its humanitarian activities remained broadly aligned with global trends, it prioritised large protracted crises and it maintained flexible emergency responsiveness. Some questions arise about its process for assessing evolving global needs.

Relevant to global trends

During 2019-2021, Norway's humanitarian activities remained broadly relevant to global trends in humanitarian needs. In 2018, escalating global needs, increasingly complex and protracted crises, and insufficient international funding were perceived to require an updated strategy, a decade after Norway's Humanitarian Policy white paper was published.²¹ The HS presents an analysis of global needs as a basis for its strategic priorities.²² In late 2021, a context analysis done for this review showed that global humanitarian needs remained very largescale and continued to grow. Needs were still being driven upwards by complex protracted crises, involving forced displacement and food insecurity, conflicts, and disregard for international humanitarian law. They continued to exceed humanitarian funding, which also continued to grow.

Norway's thematic priorities are perceived to remain largely relevant at mid-term. Stakeholders generally agreed the HS's thematic priorities remained relevant during 2019-2022, reflected system-wide priorities in the Grand Bargain, and offered the right degree of policy direction without being too prescriptive. 'The HS is designed to have the flexibility to respond to changes,' said one respondent. 'Anything else would be (...) too detailed and predefined for a strategy.' The thematic priorities remain those established in 2018.

Norway's humanitarian funding grew in correlation with global needs. Policy actors report Norway's successive governments during 2019-2022 maintained commitments to increased humanitarian spending without cutting existing levels or redirecting funds to the Ukraine crisis in 2022.²³ This is confirmed by the portfolio analysis (see Annex D: Enhanced portfolio analysis), which shows Norway's humanitarian aid budget continued on a steady upward trend during 2019-2022, rising from NOK 5.4bn in 2019, to NOK 5.5bn in 2020, and then to 6.3bn in 2021. While these gradual increases corresponded with rising annual needs and requirements presented in the Global Humanitarian Overviews (GHOs), it is worth noting they did not rise in exact proportion with the increases in numbers of people in need and financial requirements – which rose steeply from 93.6m people in need and USD 21bn required in 2019, to 160m people and an appeal for USD 35bn in 2021.

Responsive to protracted crises

The NMFA prioritised responses to large, protracted crises. In 2021, the NMFA recommended prioritising these crises: Syria and neighbouring countries (Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey), Iraq, Yemen, South Sudan (including refugees and host communities in the region), Sudan, the Horn of Africa with an emphasis on Somalia, the Sahel and the Chad region.²⁴ In 2020, the NMFA reported on its humanitarian activities in response to 'priority country situations,' which it listed as the Syria crisis, Yemen, South Sudan, Sudan, Afghanistan, Ethiopia (Tigray), Lake Chad and Sahel regions, and DR Congo.²⁵ The annual report to parliament highlighted responding to the Syria crisis (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey) and the situation in Yemen, with more than NOK 1.3bn and NOK 250m, respectively.²⁶

Norway's humanitarian funding is concentrated in a few major crises. The portfolio analysis finds a large and disproportionate amount of Norway's funding went to the Syria and Yemen crises. During 2019-2021,

²¹ NFMA (2009): Norway's Humanitarian Policy

²² NMFA (2018): Norway's Humanitarian Strategy. An effective and integrated approach

²³ NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

²⁴ NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

²⁵ NMFA (2021): Report on implementation of humanitarian strategy in 2020

²⁶ Government of Norway (2022): Proposition to the Storting (proposal for a Storting resolution), for the budget year 2022. Expenditure Chapters: 100–179 [Machine Translated by Google]

around one-third of Norway's total funding (i.e., NOK 4.6bn) went to these crises, with Syria and refugee crises in neighbouring Lebanon and Jordan accounting for the largest share (NOK 4.1bn or 22.6% of the budget). Beyond these crises, the largest recipient countries for Norwegian humanitarian aid were Iraq, South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which together accounted for 13.3% of the total budget 2019-2021. As FTS data for 2021 shows,²⁷ Norway and other comparable donors concentrated their humanitarian funding in response to crises in Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. However, Norway's largest allocations during 2019-2021 (43%) were not made to specific countries or crises, but labelled as 'multilateral' and 'global unspecified'.²⁸

Responsive to emergencies

Besides responding to protracted crises, Norway maintained flexible emergency responsiveness. According to some NMFA staff, the main priority is responding to emergencies with life-saving assistance (more than solving humanitarian needs worldwide), and allocating funding for immediate action to rapidly increased needs, for example, in Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Ukraine. This no-regrets approach required maximum flexibility and teamwork within the NMFA (Humanitarian Section, HQ, missions, and embassies). Implementing partners highly appreciate such flexible responsiveness, with Norway's 'strong reaction beyond what had been planned' to recent crises seen as 'gold standard.'

The NMFA highlighted Norway's timely responses to acute crises, through the CERF and Strategic Partners. In annual reporting to parliament,²⁹ the NMFA emphasised how its CERF contributions respond to acute emergencies and how its Strategic Partnership Agreements include flexible funds to respond quickly to new or increased humanitarian needs, such as in Nagorno-Karabakh and during Covid-19.³⁰ Specifically, it highlighted allocating almost NOK 27m for the crisis in Ethiopia's Tigray region (and refugees in Sudan), and some NOK 291m over 2019-2020 to the worsening humanitarian situation in the Sahel.

The NMFA used a global reserve facility to address crises arising during the year. In 2021, the NMFA set aside NOK 300m for the Global Humanitarian Reserve.³¹ By December, NOK 248.5m was allocated to various crises, like the Syria regional crisis (NOK 88.5m), Covid-19 response in India (NOK 20m), the Gaza crisis (NOK 20m), the Tigray conflict (NOK 15m), Venezuela (Nok 15m), as well as diverse smaller contributions, such as to the volcanic eruption at St. Vincent (NOK 1.3m). The reserve was planned to support the activities of UN organisations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) since the Norwegian strategic partners have reserve funds embedded in their SP agreements.³²

Norway responded to large acute emergency appeals. According to FTS,³³ Norway provided USD 33.8m to the Covid-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan 2020, representing 0.9% of the total and making Norway the 17th largest donor. It also allocated USD 16.5 to Afghanistan Flash Appeal 2021, representing 1.5% of the total and making Norway the 15th largest donor. It provided USD 15.6m to the Ukraine response in 2022, accounting for 1.9% of the total and ranking Norway as the 14th largest funder.

Norway responded with substantial funding to Covid-19's humanitarian impacts. In March 2020, the NMFA took early steps to respond as effectively and flexibly as possible to the pandemic's humanitarian effects, prioritising support for global appeals by the UN and the Red Cross movement, increasing flexibility in strategic partnerships with Norwegian humanitarian organisations, and increasing humanitarian reserves.³⁴ The NMFA highlighted the Covid crisis in humanitarian budget priorities each year during 2020-2022,³⁵ and appealed to parliament in 2021 for an extra allocation of NOK 1.3bn, pointing out that spending had fallen behind a 40% increase in needs during the pandemic.³⁶ The funding was approved and reallocated from the development assistance budget in 2021,³⁷ while flexible funds for partners were also reduced by NOK 53m from 2020 to 2021 so that core contributions to WFP and UNHCR could be increased for Covid-19 responses.

²⁷ UNOCHA (2021): FTS Data (retrieved 24 April 2022)

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ Government of Norway (2021): NMFA (2021): chapter 150 2021-2022 for the budget year 2021.

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ NMFA (2021): Chapter/item 150.70 Humanitarian assistance and emergency aid: Decision note for the distribution of the humanitarian reserve and remaining funds 2021

³² NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

³³ UNOCHA (2021): FTS Data (retrieved 24 April 2022).

³⁴ NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

³⁵ NMFA (2022): Chapter 150 2021-2022 for the budget year 2022.

³⁶ NMFA (2021): Appeal to the Norwegian Parliament 'Behov for ekstraordinær bevilgning til nødhjelp i 2021: Strotinget må gi et ekstraordinært bidrag på 1.3mrd til humanitær bistand for å møte de humanitære konsekvensene av pandemien'.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

Overall, the portfolio analysis shows Norway funded 203 agreements focused on Covid-19 during 2019-2021, almost half of them yearly agreements with OCHA, and nine of these worth NOK 50m-NOK 100m each.

Norway's funding allowed partners to respond to acute crises in Lebanon. Partners suggested NMFA's flexible funding allowed them to shift programmes in response to the needs of Covid, the Beirut blast, and the growing economic crisis. SPs reported using the SPM 'flexible funds' mechanism to respond to the Beirut blast, with one claiming it 'allowed us to respond quickly without too much back and forth' and 'was a determining factor in being able to deliver within days'.

Midterm adaptations?

Norway's thematic priorities are perceived to remain largely relevant at mid-term. Stakeholders generally agreed the HS's thematic priorities remained relevant during 2019-2022, reflected system-wide priorities in the Grand Bargain, and offered the right degree of policy direction without being too prescriptive. 'The HS is designed to have the flexibility to respond to changes,' said one respondent. 'Anything else would be (...) too detailed and predefined for a strategy.' The thematic priorities remain those established in 2018.

Norway's thematic priorities may be updated at end-of-strategy. While there was no appetite among NMFA actors for changing the priorities at mid-term, it was suggested Norway's next humanitarian strategy should undertake a new analysis and revise global priorities accordingly. The next HS should also reflect further on Norway's added value in the humanitarian system or comparative advantage in relation to other donors, and consider reducing the number of thematic priorities accordingly. Norway is recognised to play a global 'leadership' role in the humanitarian sphere, but it was suggested more could be done to spell out this role in specific areas and in relation to other actors.

Emphasis may shift among Norway's thematic priorities at mid-term. In 2022, the NMFA highlighted nine priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy, with continued efforts on protection of civilians, SGBV, and promoting comprehensive responses.³⁸ and further highlighted the protection of IDPs, and strengthened efforts for refugees and displaced persons, including further development of the Solidarity Pot with a focus on lasting solutions. It also signalled increased attention would be given to strengthening the local humanitarian response, accountability to affected populations and to limiting the humanitarian consequences of climate change.³⁹ Stakeholders noted Norway's new government, in office since October 2021, endorsed the HS and would maintain 'core priorities' such as the protection of civilians and protection against SGBV at mid-term. But the relative policy importance given to each may be further revised, notably with increased priority to supporting refugees in host countries, bridging gaps between their immediate and longer-term needs, and building a "Solidarity Fund" for this purpose.

Process questions

The NMFA presented Norway's annual humanitarian priorities with reference to global needs. A review of annual prioritisation documents indicates the NMFA considers changing global needs each year, along with thematic needs and country needs. It prepares annual prioritisation documents in the early part of the year, usually February or March, recommending priorities for humanitarian policy and funding activities for the Foreign Minister's approval. Documents show Norway's global reserve funds are also allocated with reference to global needs estimates and the needs assessments and appeals of partners, and usually at the end of the year. In general, the NMFA's yearly humanitarian analysis is considered to be needs-based and non-political.

The NMFA's process for addressing evolving global needs involves multiple considerations. According to annual prioritisation documents for 2021 and 2022, Norway's allocations are 'based on a comprehensive assessment of the crises: the number of people in need of protection and assistance, the size of the appeals, the needs of funding and the presence and access of relevant partners.' Policy actors explain the NMFA considers global thematic needs and needs in specific countries, but primarily uses a thematic approach that also takes into account partner capacities. Translating thematic priorities to country situations is considered easier than vice versa. But no 'model' or document was found to describe this process. By contrast, other donors (e.g. Sweden) use models that consider people in need and severity criteria, allocate funding more strictly in line with global needs, and thus spread their funds across more crises.

Norway's funding did not appear to shift proportionately with increased needs in several large crises. The rapid global context analysis suggests a growing divergence between the 10 largest crises and the 10 crises most funded by Norway. A cursory review of data in 2018 suggests Norway's top ten recipient countries largely overlapped with the largest humanitarian crises in terms of people in need of assistance.⁴⁰ In 2019,

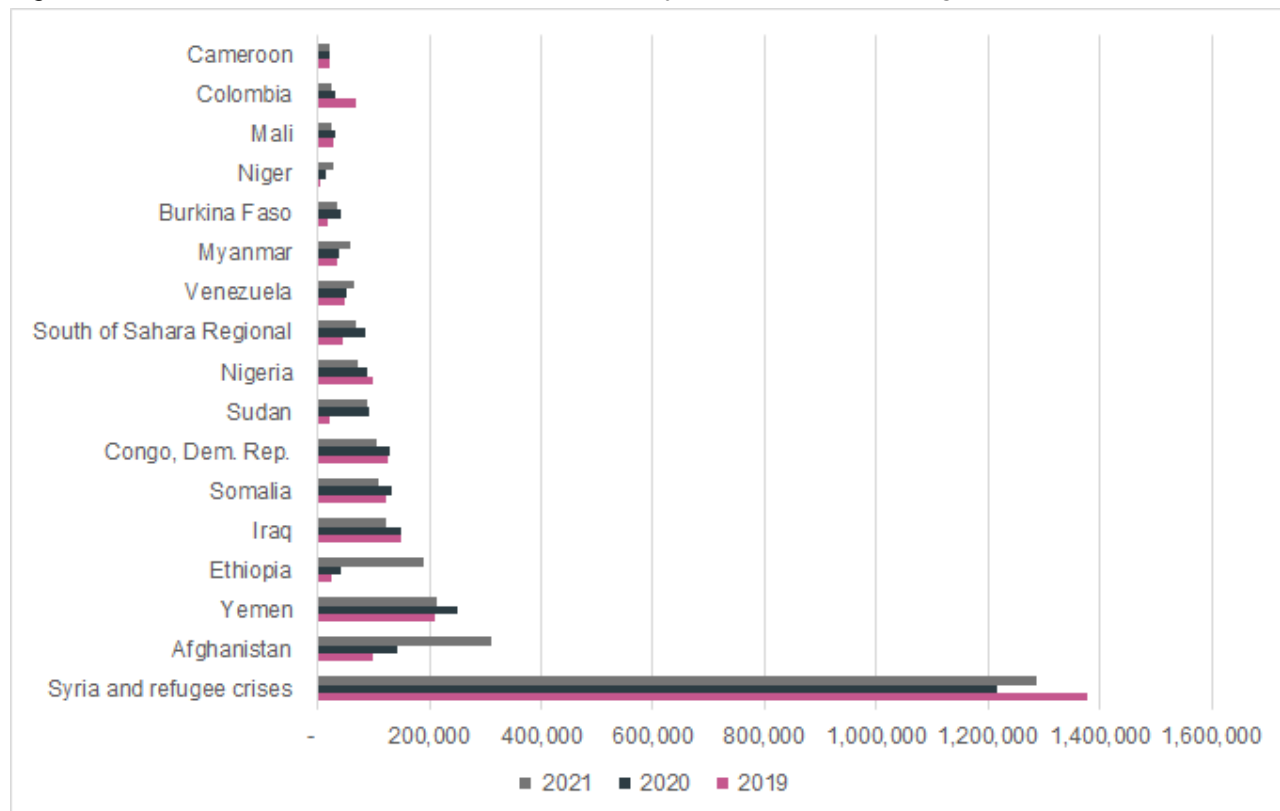
³⁸ NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ Norad (2021): Microdata. Top ten countries: Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan, Iraq, Afghanistan, DRC, South Sudan, Somalia and Palestine.

Norway's top eight recipient countries accounted for 66% all global needs.⁴¹ But by end 2021, Norway's top 10 recipients accounted for just under 50% of all needs. At the same time, countries that experienced rapidly growing needs were not well represented among Norway's largest recipient countries: e.g., Ethiopia (25.9m people in need), Sahel countries (Burkina Faso 3.5m, Cameroon 4m, Chad 5.5m, Mali 6.3m, Niger 3m); Colombia and Venezuela (7.7m+7m); Myanmar (14.4m); Sudan (14.3m).

Figure 2 Countries that received most of Norway's humanitarian funding 2019-2021, in NOK millions



Source: Norad (2021): Microdata; and, Norwegian MFA (2021): disbursement data.

Norway's allocation process may be missing the benefits of improved data about global needs. The context analysis indicated that global needs are better measured, assessed, and analysed using improved data tools and sources compared to 2018. The Global Humanitarian Overview 2019 had a limited section focused on technical improvements to humanitarian needs analysis and response planning, but the Global Humanitarian Overview 2021 was a much more detailed data-intensive analytical report of 299 pages. In recent years, evolving tools such as the INFORM Risk Index and the INFORM Severity Index offer new data-intensive ways to analyse global 'humanitarian risk' and 'crisis severity'.

1.2 The Strategy's usefulness

RQ2. To what extent and how is the strategy used to guide Norway's humanitarian engagement?

Main finding

Norway's humanitarian policy and funding activities are to a large extent guided by the HS. The HS is a coherent document that defines policy priorities and guides funding decisions. Humanitarian principles, operational requirements, and capacity constraints also influence Norway's humanitarian activities.

Coherent document

The HS document is seen as a well-designed tool. Stakeholders consider the HS to be comprehensive in what it covers thematically, operational in the way it is constructed, and broad enough to remain relevant over five years. An intention was to make the HS as functional and specific as possible, with goals and targets to be achieved over time, and allowing for adjustments at mid-term. As a document, it is seen as well-structured, logical, comprehensive, and clear. It allows Norway to adopt systematic approaches to humanitarian activities.

⁴¹ OCHA (2018): Global Humanitarian Overview 2019.

Like-minded donors report having similar strategies, with similar principles and priorities, and also working closely with the NMFA bilaterally and in donor groupings.

The HS helped to streamline aid management. Stakeholders report that the HS required considerable effort by the NMFA to develop, but then helped streamline humanitarian decision-making and prioritisation within the ministry. NMFA actors speak of extensive discussions, a very inclusive process in the section, and the involvement of civil society partners. As a result, the HS (and the SPM) considerably improved streamlined aid management, absorbing less effort on the technical side and allowing more time for higher-value policy work. 'Without the HS, our efforts would be much more thinly spread. We would spend much more time discussing thematic priorities, which partner to support and which not, and which channels to use. It would be more complicated,' explained one NMFA actor.

However, the HS may include too many thematic priorities and coherence could be improved. An intention of the HS was to 'connect the dots,' for example, by bringing together Norway's diverse protection activities, including normative work, and promoting a more holistic approach to protracted crises. But questions arise among stakeholders about the number of thematic priorities in the HS, the temptation to add policy priorities in reaction to media attention or shifting policy agendas, and whether there is enough understanding in practice of how the priorities interrelate ('Is there full understanding of the moving pieces and a capacity to connect the dots?'). The 18 thematic areas could be framed in still more coherent ways, possibly around the central concepts of protection and solutions, applied to both humanitarian and refugee situations.

In Lebanon, for example, more thematic prioritisation could help. Given the scale of Norway's funding and its respected position in Lebanon, it was suggested Norway could do more to leverage its humanitarian policy with donors and with the government. This could be done, it was suggested, by engaging strongly on a few specific technical areas (e.g., protection, protection cash, livelihoods, good humanitarian donorship), convening roundtables on specific protection issues, and combining this with policy engagement at the ambassador level. Norway is clearly well-positioned across numerous humanitarian areas in Lebanon, but it remains unclear where its comparative advantage lies in the country's complex refugee and humanitarian response architecture. In this case, the HS's numerous thematic areas were not always helpful in guiding prioritisation since 'it prioritises everything and therefore maybe nothing.'

Policy priorities

The HS clearly articulates Norway's humanitarian policy priorities. NMFA actors note the HS represents a formal articulation of the government's humanitarian policy priorities, providing a shared direction to all NMFA activities, an 'accountability framework', and a reference for all external stakeholders. The HS reflected the previous government priorities in 2018 and that the new government quickly announced its continued application in 2021 indicates the HS stands above party politics, with roots in a longer-term tradition of Norwegian humanitarian policy. Policy actors observe the government has considerable decision-making authority in humanitarian allocations, without much direct parliamentary debate, and reflecting cross-party consensus on humanitarian funding levels.

The HS guides missions and embassies on humanitarian policy, supporting policy coherence and ongoing reflection. Whereas the NMFA is responsible for overall humanitarian policy, embassies are responsible for dialogue with authorities, local civil society, multilateral organisations in the country, and other international representatives.⁴² NMFA actors report that the HS is the main reference document for humanitarian policy work. It provides essential guidance to Norway's Geneva and New York missions, which are also in close contact with the Humanitarian Section. It is used in annual instructions to all Norwegian missions and embassies, reminding them of humanitarian thematic priorities to report on (along with a link to the document), and by embassies and missions to provide easily accessible talking points for diplomats. It has reportedly greatly impacted strategic thinking and priorities, increased internal coherence, and allowed Norway to promote common messages.

The HS guides Norway's work in the UN Security Council (UNSC). NMFA actors report Norway conducts work in the Council according to the HS, with the protection of civilians (POC) as one of Norway's UNSC priorities and a core objective of the HS. Thus Norway seeks to operationalise the HS protection goal through the UNSC, especially by strengthening the normative system based on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (HRL). 'The HS was excellent because it was so specific on protection being the main objective, and it helped to engage others in the MFA in the normative framework promotion,' explained one NMFA actor. Policy actors observe Norway's UNSC tenure, prepared at the same time as the HS, allowed for successful implementation of HS priorities. Namely through Norway's prioritisation of POC, leading the Security Council Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict (SC WG CAAC), intensified work on the Safe Schools Declaration, focus on SGBV, and role as penholders on cross-border aid to Syria and Afghanistan.

⁴² Norad (2019): Guide to Norwegian Aid Management.

HS priorities are promoted through Norway's humanitarian leadership activities. In 2022, Norway reaffirmed its commitment to being a leading humanitarian policy player and donor, and using its place in the Security Council, in governing bodies at the UN and in other multilateral processes to promote Norwegian humanitarian policy.⁴³ Norway's various international leadership positions (member of CERF advisory board and WFP Board, president of ICRC Donor Support Group, lead role in Call to Actions (CtA), and lead on Gencap and Procap) allowed the promotion of HS priorities.⁴⁴ Norway conducts a range of humanitarian diplomacy activities, alongside humanitarian funding, in priority country situations, including Syria and neighbouring countries, Yemen, South Sudan and others.⁴⁵ Policy actors recognise Norway's humanitarian policy expertise, humanitarian diplomacy skills, and excellent humanitarian aid administration, including adopting progressive donorship positions, increasing flexibility, and reacting faster than others. They also note Norway's role in establishing the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement.⁴⁶

HS priorities could benefit from more humanitarian policy leadership. Policy actors perceive Norway's humanitarian leadership to be effective but too limited, leading to missed opportunities. 'Norway really punches below its weight', observed one policy actor. Norway is perceived to be underperforming in terms of notable humanitarian initiatives, leadership in specific crises and high-level pledging events, and involvement in influential donor groups. In addition, Norway is considered insufficiently involved with the Grand Bargain, which serves as a 'unique forum for collaboration and problem solving among the main international humanitarian aid actors',⁴⁷ and it does not lead on any of the workstreams. Explanatory factors offered included lack of NMFA staff capacity, a thematic prioritisation approach that may obscure its leadership role, insufficient advocacy on thematic issues, insufficient political involvement, and insufficient information flows about upcoming crises, unmet needs, and emerging issues. It is also suggested Norway could more effectively leverage its comparative advantages, including its moral position as the world's 'most generous' donor (see 3.7).

Country application

The HS is translated into workplans at the country level. According to stakeholders, the HS helps NMFA staff adopt strategic approaches to humanitarian action at the country level, distribute funding in a prioritised way 'when needs are often immense,' and then follow up accordingly. Where NMFA embassies and missions operate, the HS is used to prepare annual work plans and manage progress. Following annual instructions to all embassies/missions, each creates their own annual work plan or strategy and deliverables per year. The annual world plan serves as the basis for dialogue with HQs.

In Lebanon, for example, the HS partly shapes Norway's humanitarian activities. The HS is considered very useful for designing and distributing a country portfolio and guiding interactions with partners and donors. In Beirut, it was used to identify new partners in SGBV (where the embassy manages grants directly) and find those best aligned. Generally, the embassy makes use of the HS alongside other policy guidance, to identify linkages with stabilisation and development funding managed at embassy level. The NMFA allocation process for Lebanon also involves continual discussion among key staff at HQ, embassy, and regional levels.

In Nigeria, the HS also guides Norway's humanitarian activities, allowing for iterative adaptation to changing contexts seen from a regional perspective. The embassy's reporting and background memos,⁴⁸ guiding humanitarian allocations, clearly refer to humanitarian principles. Norway is regarded as active in initiatives (such as the Safe Schools Declaration and the Call to Action). The embassy is also seen to be constructively bridging between stakeholders with the aim of improving overall coordination.

The HS is known and appreciated by some partners at the country level. In Lebanon, multiple partners, particularly Norwegian NGOs, seemed quite well aware of the HS. They appreciated its holistic approach, perceiving it to address immediate needs and respond in a more sustainable longer-term manner. The HS also allowed the NMFA to make linkages between humanitarian action and stabilisation and shift the Syria action plan from short-term humanitarian to a slightly longer-term stabilisation to respond to the protracted refugee crises in Lebanon and Jordan. In Nigeria, the HS is used in decision-making and dialogue (framing agendas for meetings, guiding follow-up by NMFA), and SPs also demonstrated widespread awareness of it.

Funding decisions

Norway's annual humanitarian budget is allocated largely according to the HS. The NMFA's annual reporting for 2019 and 2020 stresses the humanitarian aid budget was managed strategically in line with the

⁴³ NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

⁴⁴ NMFA (2021): Report on implementation of humanitarian strategy in 2020

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ NMFA (2020): Submission by Norway to the UN SG's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

⁴⁷ Metcalfe-Hough, V., Fenton, W., Willitts-King, B. and Spencer, A. (2021): The Grand Bargain at five years - an independent review. HPG commissioned report. London: ODI

⁴⁸ Embassy reports and email traffic reviewed.

HS priorities. In 2020, the NMFA recognised this was limited somewhat by measures taken to increase the flexibility of partners, which also increased their responsibility for setting priorities. Likewise, in 2021 some of the annual budget was tied up in various promises and obligations, such as multiyear agreements with multilateral organisations, SPAs with Norwegian NGOs, a multiyear agreement with the Education Cannot Wait initiative, and pre-existing pledges.⁴⁹

Norway's humanitarian funding is managed primarily at NMFA headquarters, according to an annual cycle. The portfolio analysis found that the NMFA in Oslo was the 'extending agency' for almost all humanitarian partnership agreements (681/703), accounting for 99.75% of funding during 2019-2020.⁵⁰ Norway's humanitarian allocations follow an annual decision-making process, involving annual prioritisation, budget allocations, technical prioritisations, and partner agreements. Disbursements follow a similar schedule.

Norway's funding is channelled through multiple bilateral and earmarked agreements. The portfolio analysis of NMFA spending data found Norway provided three types of assistance: A large majority of the 1280⁵¹ agreements (71%) were bilateral, accounting for more than two-fifths of Norway's funding (43%). Nearly a third of agreements (27%) were earmarked to multilaterals, i.e., for specific country responses and/or thematic responses, and accounted for around a third of Norway's humanitarian funding (32.7%). Only a handful of agreements (1%) provided core contributions and only to five multilateral organisations: CERF, UNHCR, WFP and OCHA (plus a fifth one whose name is 'not available'), accounting for less than a quarter of Norway's funding (24.5%).⁵²

The HS guides the Humanitarian Section's aid management work, which needs further prioritisation and capacity. The NMFA Humanitarian Section has an unusually operational role in Norway's international aid architecture, reflecting Norway's positioning of humanitarian action in the NMFA and its foreign policy importance. In many donor governments, humanitarian aid is managed by an international development administration equivalent to Norad. The Humanitarian Section is organised according to the HS, with leads on each of the four goal areas covering protection, integrated approach, reform/innovation, and Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD). It manages a very large budget with limited staff capacity (20 people responsible for NOK 50bn+) and is expected to deliver on all aspects of the HS. Recently staffing levels reportedly dropped to 16. An interest remains in further streamlining aid management, prioritising thematic areas, and engaging other actors to support the Section.

The HS guides NMFA funding decisions, as do humanitarian principles and internal dialogue. NMFA actors report using the HS to prioritise areas of focus with partners, define shared priorities, assess requests and justify funding decisions. The HS is seen as a 'management tool' that supports NMFA's work in approving funding agreements, overseeing partnerships, dialogue with partners, and reflecting on progress. It is useful to help prioritise strategically, instead of providing funding purely on the basis of humanitarian principles. Nonetheless, it is never a straitjacket that stops the NMFA from responding to unforeseen needs on the basis of humanitarian principles e.g., in response to Covid. It is used alongside dialogue. 'The HS is a tool and people use it, but we have very discussion-based approach to everything compared to other parts of MFA,' observed one respondent. Partners confirm NMFA funding is guided by both the HS and by humanitarian principles.

NMFA humanitarian spending data is not aligned with the Strategy. The portfolio analysis found that Norad microdata 2019-2020 and MFA disbursement data for 2021 do not code funding according to the HS's thematic priorities. Instead, 11 categories are used, including 25 'sub-sector' categories and 5 'target areas' that do not explicitly relate to the HS goal areas and thematic areas.

Operational factors

Besides the Strategy, Norway's humanitarian aid is managed according to administrative processes and operational requirements. According to Norad,⁵³ the NMFA's administration of humanitarian aid is governed by specific laws and regulations, such the Public Administration Act (*Forvaltningsloven*) that prescribes general regulations and specific demands to public administration's decision-making processes.

Norway's HS implementation is constrained by limited staff capacities. In 2021, the NMFA identified the Humanitarian Section's capacity and competencies as the greatest risk to achieving HS goals, given its large administrative responsibility and extensive portfolio of country investment and partners resulting from a record

⁴⁹ NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021

⁵⁰ Very few agreements were extended by embassies, mostly by the same embassies (Lebanon 11, DRC 2, South Sudan 2, and Somalia 2), and showing a notable decline compared to 2018 – when 15 or 16 embassies managed 58 agreements directly.

⁵¹ Agreements are defined here as the total number of individual agreements as per NMFA microdata, and not the number of framework contracts. One framework contract can include numerous agreements to allocate funding by thematic, partner or country.

⁵² Norad (2021): Microdata 2018-2020; MFA (2021): disbursement data for 2021.

⁵³ Norad (2019): Guide to Norwegian Aid Management.

humanitarian budget. Capacity was stretched even before Norway's entry into the Security Council, and the section is vulnerable when replacing personnel. The NMFA's relatively low levels of staffing for Norway's humanitarian activities have long been a limitation and highlighted over a decade ago,⁵⁴ and more recently in Syria,⁵⁵ where MFA staff were heavily overstretched, leading to related strategic, operational, financial, and political risks.

Norway's humanitarian allocation decisions may be further streamlined. According to interviews, the new government in Oslo took steps in 2022 that would streamline allocations and the allocation process. First, the government fast-tracked the allocation, approval and disbursement process for Afghanistan and Ukraine. Second, it required the annual prioritisation document to be reduced to four pages (from 27 pages). Third, it decided that allocation decisions would be made within departments (i.e., within the NMFA), not by political leaders.

⁵⁴ Norad (2011): Mid-Term Review of Norway's Humanitarian Policy.

⁵⁵ Norad (2016): Striking the Balance' Evaluation of the Planning, Organisation and Management of Norwegian Assistance related to the Syria Regional Crisis.

1.3 Partnership compatibility

RQ3. To what extent and how are partnerships compatible with objectives of the strategy?

Main finding

Norway's partnerships are highly compatible with the Strategy's objectives. Norway implements the HS through a mixed portfolio of partnerships, relies most on a few multilateral and Norwegian NGO partnerships, and applies a distinct approach to partnership that is highly valued.

Mixed portfolio

Norway relies on a mixed portfolio of partnerships to implement the HS. During 2019-2021, according to the portfolio analysis, the NMFA maintained 52 diverse humanitarian partnerships which translated into a total of 1280 partnership agreements⁵⁶. These partnerships were with multilateral organisations, Norwegian NGOs, the Red Cross, international NGOs, Norwegian government bodies, and some national NGOs. Policy actors observe Norway's portfolio mainly combines longer-term partnerships with UN and multilateral organisations, growing partnerships with Norwegian NGOs, and smaller agreements with specialised actors. It is considered necessary for Norway to have a such mixed portfolio to deliver HS goals, and in particular those with operational presence through broad networks or access to specific populations in need.

Norway's largest partnerships are with multilateral organisations and Norwegian NGOs. All Norway's largest agreements were with Norwegian NGOs and multilateral organisations, such as UNHCR, WFP, and CERF which received core contributions worth NOK 1.64bn, NOK 1.4bn. and NOK 1.35bn respectively over the period. In 2021, the NMFA indicated that around 40% of its annual budget was tied up in multi-year agreements aimed at increasing flexibility for partners, and around 27% of this with Norwegian NGOs.⁵⁷ In annual budget reporting to parliament, the NMFA highlighted these seven strategic partnerships with Norwegian humanitarian organisations⁵⁸ as well as partnerships with WFP, UNICEF UNHCR and ICRC.⁵⁹

Norway has an important partnership with the Red Cross. In 2021, the NMFA recommended increasing the unearmarked support for the ICRC from NOK 90m to NOK 150m during 2021-2023, to give the organisation greater predictability and flexibility to respond to new crises and changing needs. It noted the ICRC often have 'particularly good access to act quickly in armed conflicts and also good contextual understanding as a result of presence over time'.⁶⁰ Stakeholders report Norway played a key role in ICRC/Red Cross development, provides valuable core funding to the ICRC, and shares a focus on protection and IHL. Through partnerships with the Norwegian Red Cross and the ICRC, Norway is also said to reinforce the 'red pillar' in humanitarian responses.

Norway maintains a range of smaller partnerships. In 2021, the NMFA reported on smaller multiyear agreements aimed at strengthening reform, analysis and access to information in the humanitarian system, with organisations such as Ground Truth Solutions, Trust Fund for Children and Armed Conflict, and Geneva Call. These were worth a total of NOK 7.7m.⁶¹ Stakeholders observe that Norway funds a range of 'global good' technical services providers (such as ACAPS, Ground Truth Solutions; the New Humanitarian and ICVA etc), a few national NGOs, and others that can make systemic contributions and helpful interventions. According to the portfolio analysis, more than a third of all agreements were relatively small, work NOK 5m or less. The lowest funding amounts are for global service providers and small specific projects.

Funding concentration

Most of Norway's humanitarian funding goes through just a few partnerships. The portfolio analysis (see Annex D: Enhanced portfolio analysis) finds Norway allocated around two-thirds of the funding (63-65%) to just five partners during 2019-2021: the Norwegian Red Cross, the Norwegian Refugee Council, UNHCR, WFP and CERF, a trend not dissimilar to NMFA contributions in 2017 and 2018. Looking at a selection of 15

⁵⁶ According to the Norad microdata, Norway administered 343 agreements in 2019, 359 in 2020 and 578 in 2021. It shows a reduction in 2019 and 2020 as compared to 2018 when 481 agreements were funded. Yet 2021 shows a significant increase with nearly 100 more agreements funded than in 2018. It is unknown how many are multi-year agreements. For further information, please refer to Annex E: Portfolio Analysis.

⁵⁷ NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

⁵⁸ Caritas Norway, the Norwegian Refugee Council, including NORCAP, Norwegian Church Aid, the Norwegian Red Cross, Norwegian People's Aid and Save the Children

⁵⁹ NMFA (2022): NMFA (2022): Chapter 150 2021-2022 for the budget year 2022

⁶⁰ NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

⁶¹ *ibid*

partner organisations⁶² for the years 2018-2021, they received 73% of the total funding in 2018, which increased to 83-86% 2019-2021. The funding to these partners has been increasing per year,⁶³ much like the humanitarian aid budget overall.

Norway's funding is more concentrated than comparable donors. According to FTS,⁶⁴ in 2021, Norway channelled more than two-thirds of its funding (69.3%) through just five organisations: the Norwegian Refugee Council (21%), the World Food Programme (16.3%), the Norwegian Red Cross (13.4%), UNHCR (12.4%), and the CERF (6.2%). This exceeds Sweden's 53% and Germany's 58% for their top five partners. Unlike Sweden or Germany, Norway also spends relatively large funding through national (Norwegian) NGOs.

Multilateral organisations

Norway relies on multilateral partnerships for efficiency and scale. Stakeholders report Norway provides core funding through multiyear agreements with several large multilateral organisations, in partnerships that are considered efficient for Norway because they represent a 'pooled approach' with other donors and allow large humanitarian reach across many countries. Norway's unearmarked and softly earmarked funding to these organisations is considered particularly valuable because it allows the organisations to function more effectively and plays a 'catalytic role' – for example, enabling them to do assessments and proposals for other donors. However, multilateral funding offers less 'visibility' to Norway, UN agencies are perceived by some to be too big and/or flawed institutions, and their approach to Nexus programming is questioned.

Norway supports coordination mechanisms. Stakeholders report Norway funds OCHA, CERF and country-based pooled funds (CBPFs) and sits on their boards. Norway engages with OCHA in many ways, and its core funding is highly valued (it flows to where it is needed most), while the pooled funds offer Norway needs-based decision-making and risk management services. Norway is not among OCHA's six largest donors overall group, and it is suggested that Norway could do more through CERF/CBPFs.

The NMFA works to constantly align the programmes of multilateral organisations with the HS. NMFA actors speak of constant dialogue with existing partners to ensure compatibility with HS, through participation in governance mechanisms, working groups, and various types of formal and informal dialogue. Since funding is made predictable through core funding agreements and priorities in the HS, the NMFA focuses dialogue with multilateral organisations on Norway's policy priorities. Unearmarked funding, it is suggested, requires more engagement because it is less visible to the donor.

UN organisations work to their own strategic plans, and some stress alignment with Norway's HS and policy priorities. One UN partner explained, they received the HS and analysed it from a normative perspective, examined opportunities for partnership involving funding and policy dialogue, and then reached a partnership agreement with Norway. Dialogue with the NMFA strengthened the organisation's humanitarian accountability framework and allowed both organisations to work together on specific policy priorities. Another UN agency appreciated the HS's 'interlinked protection and multisectoral approach [and a focus on] system transformation and good humanitarian donorship,' which aligned with its own approach. It also noted collaboration with NMFA on policy activities.

Norwegian NGOs

Norway highly values partnerships with Norwegian NGOs. Stakeholders report Norway provides softly earmarked and multiyear funding to Norwegian NGOs, mostly through SPAs. The Norwegian NGO partners are highly valued by the Foreign Minister and NMFA, involve global strategic dialogue and country-level dialogue, and offer the NMFA humanitarian 'eyes and ears on the ground'. Some, such as NRC, also play strong policy roles.

Norwegian NGO partners stress their alignment with the HS, whereas these partnerships are long-standing. NMFA actors report working with organisations mainly through long-term cooperation relationships, and less often entering into new agreements. Some SPs report significant overlap with NMFA priorities in the HS, specifically through more focused humanitarian planning and prioritisation; joint advocacy in some areas; and frank dialogue (in both directions). SPs highlighted being constructively involved in the HS's development, contributing to some thematic priorities, and being made more aware of other SP thematic priorities.

⁶² Caritas Norway, Geneva Call, ICRC, Innovation Norway, NORCAP, Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian People's Aid, Norwegian Red Cross, Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children Norway, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNOCHA, WFP

⁶³ There have been some extraordinary allocations during the pandemic that skews the numbers a little, but overall, the increase in funding seems in line with the increase in the humanitarian budget.

⁶⁴ fts.unocha.org (retrieved 26 April 2022)

Norway has sometimes over-relied on a ‘trust-based’ approach to partner selection. In Syria, an evaluation found Norway adopted a trust-based approach to selecting partners for the response.⁶⁵ This approach prioritised shared values, solidarity and mutual respect; it placed few demands on partners and this was highly valued. But in such a highly politicised conflict, partner capacities were assumed rather than explicitly tested, and allocations tended to prioritise emergency response and humanitarian assistance rather than conflict prevention and resolution. The evaluation recommended increasing the transparency of partner selection by applying clear rationales/criteria for partner selection.

Distinct approach

Norway adopts a light-touch approach to results reporting, and prioritises substantive dialogue. Policy actors observe Norway’s approach to partnership involves close dialogue, clarity about priorities, and predictable funding, without micromanagement. Norway is perceived as one of the best donors for being approachable, willing to listen and adapt, and interested in enabling partners to deliver. It is considered less ‘compliance-crazy, rigid, or bureaucratic’ than many. In general, the NMFA takes a relatively ‘light touch’ approach to partner results reporting, and favours more substantive dialogue. In practice, this means Norway depends on partner reporting about their main successes, challenges, and lessons learned. It accepts annual reporting from multilateral organisations, although the NMFA focal point may request further specific data). These partners appreciate Norway’s acceptance of their annual reports and ongoing dialogue, noting that other donors engage more extensively on granular reporting details (e.g., the nature of KPIs etc). Nonetheless, the NMFA is sometimes asked to give overall results, and struggles to collect, aggregate, and compare results and examples from partners because these all come in different forms and at different levels.

At country level, Norway’s partnerships involve alignment through dialogue. In Lebanon, partners highlighted their alignment with Norway’s priorities, forged through high quality dialogue. Multilateral partners spoke of partnerships that are collegial, frank, open (‘not adversarial like some donors’), and receptive to explanations and flexible use of funding. Norwegian NGOs spoke of how their country programmes were aligned with Norway’s HS and thematic priorities, and a ‘trust-based’ model that allows them to remain agile, efficient, and non-bureaucratic, while providing regular updates about the humanitarian situation in different parts of the country to the embassy. Notably, such dialogues are focused on the evolving humanitarian context, not aid administration. ‘Norway is one of the best practitioners of a true partnership approach, not the donor supplicant approach,’ observed one coordination actor. In Nigeria, partners highlighted how NMFA follow-up is consistent, based on thematic priorities in the HS, focused at policy level and avoids micro-management—even if it does not offer technical support as some donors do.

In Lebanon, for example, partnership with Norway was highly valued. Partners interviewed in Lebanon particularly valued Norway’s flexibility as a donor. Multilaterals stressed flexible funding is extremely limited in the country, but allows them to be more responsive and timely (addressing unexpected needs e.g., Beirut blast, Covid). Specifically, it allows moving Norwegian funding to where it is most needed (‘gap filling’), and thus allows better use of other tightly earmarked funding. Multilaterals also noted that Norway’s funding was relatively stable each year, and in the case of UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) provided emergency funding in response to appeals. Similarly, SPs noted the NMFA’s flexibility allowed agility, gap-filling, and continual strategic relevance, reflecting a ‘Norwegian approach’ that predates the HS and SPM. According to one SP, Norway’s flexible funding under the SP is the most valuable, because it enables responses without multiple layers of approval, and thus enables in-country decision making that draws more on local knowledge and experience. Some NGO partners explained how Norway funding had played a ‘catalytic’ role to strengthen their programmes.

1.4 Strategic management

RQ8. To what extent and how are the strategy action points planned, implemented, and reported on? To what extent and how does this facilitate learning and adaptation to the changing humanitarian landscape?

Main finding

The NMFA did well at managing the Strategy through follow-up activities. But strategic analysis and learning about progress could be improved.

Monitoring

The NMFA established a process for monitoring HS progress. The HS was designed to allow follow up (monitoring) of progress. The document offers a broad framework for managing implementation, including an

⁶⁵ Norad (2016): Striking the Balance’ Evaluation of the Planning, Organisation and Management of Norwegian Assistance related to the Syria Regional Crisis

overall goal, four specific goals, 18 thematic areas, and 47 related 'action points'. The NMFA's Humanitarian Section carried out monitoring of these action points under the HS, using a score card tool (HUM 19-23) known as a 'matrix.' Norway's partners also provide detailed reporting on their results, which are aligned explicitly or closely with Norway's HS and thematic priorities. In addition, the NMFA reports to the Grand Bargain on various elements, and Norwegian embassies and missions report annually on activities, including humanitarian assistance, both of which may be somewhat linked the HS. Further, the NMFA produces humanitarian budget spending data (which is aggregated, reviewed and published annually by Norad), but these data are not aligned with the HS and do not appear to allow easy monitoring of funding invested per strategic goal or by thematic priority.

The NMFA records activities in relation to HS action points. The NMFA introduced the matrix as a score card tool to assess progress towards HS objectives and is reported to provide an 'overview of direction, progression and results.'⁶⁶ It was developed because monitoring systems to report results were lacking, and intended to serve the purposes of progress tracking and light-touch internal reporting on targets. During 2019-2021, the matrix shows the NMFA carried out 317 activities to implement the 47 goal-oriented action points described in the HS. However, the NMFA reported struggling to balance the reporting of ongoing activities and completed outputs in 2020, and revised the tool in 2021. It was decided to focus on reporting NMFA activities, keeping the process short, systematic, and readable. Moreover, questions arise about how well this allows monitoring of direction, progress and results. NMFA actors also suggest the process is considered burdensome, participation is uneven, and involves little debate about the HS. Does the process generate evidence needed about HS progress? Some stakeholders suggested the Matrix could be used more strategically, and better aligned with reporting requirements.

The NMFA generated some, but limited, evidence about HS progress. Based on the matrix reporting, the NMFA provided yearly progress reports for 2019 and 2020 spanning eight pages and 10 pages respectively. The report for 2020 reported on HS implementation, including the number of activities ('measures') carried out in relation to HS action points under the four goal areas. It offers narratives highlighting activities undertaken in these areas, and in relation to some thematic priorities, as well as reporting on Norway's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, humanitarian leadership positions, humanitarian funding, and humanitarian policy (including priority country situations).⁶⁷ However, it is largely limited to a NMFA inputs and offers limited discussion of lessons learned or implications for strategic management.

The NMFA did not publish a report on HS progress in 2022. The NMFA's annual prioritisation document for 2022 includes no HS implementation report for 2021. In comments received, the NMFA stated the report was delayed this year, noting the level of effort required, and will continue to be published. The NMFA also prepares annual reports to the Parliament in the form of budget proposals (Prop. 1 S) and Chapter 150 on emergency aid, humanitarian assistance, WFP and UNHCR; but this report is very brief and does not align directly with Norway's HS goals and priority areas.

Learning

The NMFA carried out some HS-related learning activities, mainly training and research partnerships. In its activities Matrix, the NMFA reports 14 activities were undertaken related to the 'competence and learning' action points in the HS. Most of these involved competence building in the NMFA foreign services, such as mandatory courses on humanitarian issues, deployment training, and information sharing on humanitarian issues—through regional strategy meetings and country teams. Some involved research activities, such as partnerships, dialogue and engagement with humanitarian research partners.

The NMFA reflects on HS progress in biannual retreats. Interviews suggest the NMFA's Humanitarian Section holds two planning retreats per year (one in January and one in September). For each thematic priority, it considers key questions about: (i) Progress: 'where do we stand' and 'what has been achieved'? (ii) Strategy: 'how to follow up' and 'what is to be done'? (iii) Prioritisation: 'What is the priority?' The sessions are understood to be informed by data collected in the Matrix, as well as tacit knowledge of NMFA staff, who are often well informed about humanitarian contexts and thematic policy challenges, through constant dialogue with partners at different levels. These sessions are considered very useful, because they offer a chance to reflect and generate many good ideas, although they are demanding on limited NMFA staff capacities.

Learning about HS progress could be more systematic. The HS designers considered it very important to capture lessons learned to inform the strategy, especially through the MTR to inform implementation at mid-term and a final evaluation to inform design of the next strategy. However, annual prioritisation documents and progress reports covering 2020, 2021, and 2022 make no reference to learning or lessons learned about HS implementation. Interviews suggested NMFA learning in support of the HS could be more systematic, allow

⁶⁶ NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

⁶⁷ *ibid*

more time to reflect on the Matrix reporting, and involve more seminars and learning opportunities for the Humanitarian Section. Specifically, it was suggested lessons should be learned from notable achievements related to the HS, such as Norway's experience in the UNSC, and in relation to specific thematic priorities, by engaging key partners and sharing findings with other donors to promote wider improvements. For example, the NMFA does not capture lessons learned about Norway's good donorship approach to share with other donors, and struggles to assess progress on its support to humanitarian-development Nexus approaches.

2. Norway's humanitarian effectiveness

This section presents findings about Norway's humanitarian activities and their effectiveness compared to intentions outlined in the Strategy.

2.1 Protection

RQ4. To what extent and how has the Norwegian humanitarian engagement contributed towards ensuring that people in need are given the necessary protection and assistance, in line with the humanitarian principles? What potential differences for men, women, and vulnerable groups, and likely positive or negative unintended consequences?

Main finding

Norway's humanitarian activities made very effective contributions to protection through global policy and partnerships, as well as supporting largescale emergency assistance. Notable achievements include becoming increasingly recognised for a focus on protection in humanitarian action, making humanitarian contributions on the protection of civilians in the Security Council, and elevating SGBV on the humanitarian agenda.

NMFA and protection

The NMFA carried out many protection-focused activities, as intended in the HS. During 2019-2021, the NMFA undertook 105 specific activities related to HS action points under the protection goal. The activities were concerned with an increased focus on protection (28), protection of children and young people (22), protection against SGBV (21), protection of civilians against weapons and explosives during and after conflict (13), humanitarian diplomacy (11), protection of refugees and internally displaced people (10). The NMFA completed or reported strong progress on most of them (95/105). In 2022, the NMFA highlighted its commitment, profile and influence in the area of protection of civilians in conflict and protection against violence and abuse in the humanitarian response. It identified areas where Norway can contribute to progress: Protection against sexualised and gender-based violence (SGBV), protection against landmines and other explosives, protection of children and young people, protection of education and health, and protection of refugees and internally displaced persons.⁶⁸

The NMFA's protection activities involved both global policy and partner funding. By our analysis, more than three-quarters of the NMFA's protection activities were policy activities (63/105) or policy and funding (14/105). Most of the NMFA's global policy work involved linkages with partners and funding of humanitarian action. Activities included foreign policy action to promote IHL and protection in multilateral forums, such as the UN Security Council; promoting policy priorities with implementing partners, such as the focus on protection; and a combination of the two, such as Norway's work on SGBV.

The NMFA invested an increasingly large share of funding in protection-related activities. During 2019-2021, Norway's reporting to FTS indicates Norway invested USD 50m (22.2% of total) in protection activities overall, mostly in protection against gender-based violence (9.1%), child protection (5.9%), and protection / mine action (5%).⁶⁹ This marks an overall increase in funding to protection, from 13.5% in 2018 to 20% in 2021, and represents a higher share than comparable donors. In 2021, for example, Norway provided 27.6% of funding to protection services, compared to Sweden's 7.1% and Germany's 4.6%.

Norway maintains important partnerships with protection-oriented organisations. Data analysis shows some of Norway's largest partnerships are with organisations known for their protection mandates or focused on specific protection priorities. The largest channels for Norwegian humanitarian funding include the Norwegian Red Cross, which acts as the guardian of the Geneva Conventions; the Norwegian Refugee Council, which works to protect the rights of displaced and vulnerable persons during crisis; ICRC, which provides humanitarian protection and promotes international humanitarian law; and UNHCR, which has a mandate to ensure the international protection of uprooted people worldwide. Norway also provides important funding to UNRWA, which has a mandate to provide assistance and protection to Palestine refugees; and UN Population Fund (UNFPA), which plays an important role in addressing SGBV and calls for the realisation of reproductive rights for all.

Protection results

Norway's partners reported numerous results related to the HS's protection goal. These included various efforts to deliver protection services, mainstream and strengthen protection, and advocate for protection policy; efforts to address SGBV across humanitarian responses, by providing diverse SGBV

⁶⁸ NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

⁶⁹ UNOCHA (2021): FTS Data (retrieved 24 April 2022)

services; and largescale child-protective and child protection services delivered in humanitarian situations along with global advocacy activities. They also included providing protection and assistance services to large numbers of refugees and displaced people, with UNHCR and NRC also providing technical support services; and efforts to ban landmines, clear them and educate about their risks, as well as policy activities on weapons in populated areas and autonomous weapons.

Protection achievements

The NMFA highlighted key protection achievements during 2019-2020, in reports on HS implementation covering those years. In 2020, it emphasised protection as the main priority of the HS, being central to cooperation with humanitarian partners, both through financial support and on the policy side. It pointed to these key achievements:⁷⁰

- **Protection against land mines and other explosives:** Norway contributed to a significant global mine effort in 2020, when record numbers of mines, cluster bombs and land were cleared. Norway held the presidency of the 2019 Mine Convention, when the five-year 'Oslo Action Plan' was adopted. The plan reflects both Norwegian and international efforts in the work of the Convention.
- **Protection of children and adolescents, including protection of education:** Norway continued efforts to increase support for the Safe Schools Declaration, and 106 states had joined by the end of the year. On the Norwegian initiative, work was initiated to establish a network to contribute to the better implementation of the declaration among the states that have joined, including the identification of measures to prevent attacks against schools
- **Protection of refugees, IDPs and vulnerable migrants:** Norway's focus is reflected in the fact that UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council were the largest humanitarian partners in 2020. The UN delegations and OCHA worked actively throughout the year to follow up the High-Level Panel for Internal Displacement, including with written input and participation in meetings and events.
- **Protection of health:** Through increased support for the WHO's health crisis programme, Norway contributed to the protection of health workers in priority countries such as Syria, Libya and Bangladesh. Norwegian flexible support for the Emergency Fund for Health Crises helped who could respond early to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Protection against Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV):** Norway continued efforts to protect against SGBV and increase access to sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian action, including in the humanitarian response plans globally and at country level, as well as through key mechanisms such as CERF and the humanitarian country-based funds. There was no doubt the topic is now given increased attention and priority.

Some notable protection achievements are recorded for this review. During 2019-2022, Norway became increasingly recognised for a focus on protection in humanitarian action, made a humanitarian contribution in the UN Security Council through its work on the protection of civilians, and elevated SGBV on the humanitarian agenda (see Annex E: Additional evidence).

Emergency activities

Besides protection, the NMFA acted to provide emergency assistance to people in need. During 2019-2021, the NMFA undertook 25/105 activities related to 'a fast, efficient and principled response,' and also categorised under the heading of protection activities. Most of these activities were at the level of partnerships and concerned flexible and multiyear agreements (7/25), promoting gender perspective and PSEA in dialogue with partners (7/25), and other aspects of partnership agreement, such as developing criteria, monitoring visits, and risk management. By 2021, the NMFA had completed or registered good progress on most of these activities (21/25).

The NMFA invested considerable funding in emergency assistance, especially food assistance. In addition to funding protection activities, Norway invested a large portion of its humanitarian funding in three specific sectors: food security, education, and health. In 2021, Norway concentrated USD 81m or 36% of its funding in these three sectors: Education (14.6%), Food security (13.2%), and Health (8.2%). By our analysis of NMFA data 2019-2021, Norway invested NOK 8.1bn in emergency response activities, including emergency food assistance, and material relief assistance and services – of which around two-thirds was spent bilaterally mainly through Strategic Partners. The NMFA data 2019-2021 indicates Norway invested NOK 2.1bn in activities related to Food Security, most of which (95.2%) went through WFP.

The NMFA is a major donor to WFP, the world's largest humanitarian organisation focused on saving lives in emergencies and food assistance. In annual budget reporting, the NMFA highlighted significant funding to WFP. In 2020, Norway was the eighth largest donor to WFP with just over NOK 934 million, almost

⁷⁰ NMFA (2021): Report on implementation of humanitarian strategy in 2020

a third of which was core support. In 2020, 71% of WFP's funding went to 18 countries affected by high-scale crises, including DRC, Yemen, Nigeria, the central Sahel, Syria, and South Sudan. WFP assisted with food assistance to 115.5 million people in 83 crisis-affected countries, of whom 19.5 million were internally displaced persons and 11.1 million were refugees. It also reached a record number of people – 17.3 million – primarily children, pregnant and lactating women and girls, with nutritional-specific activities in 51 countries.⁷¹

Norway's partners reported delivering rapid emergency responses at scale in dozens of countries despite Covid-19 disruptions. Multilateral partners and SPs reported significant assistance activities beyond Norway's thematic priorities, in areas such as food security, WASH, and inclusion. In their annual reports for 2020-2021, multilateral partners reported reaching around 100 million people each with humanitarian assistance. Some SPs highlighted benefiting from the NMFA's Flexible Funding mechanism, for delivering emergency assistance. NCA, for example, reported implementing 23 humanitarian responses in 15 countries through quick impact projects, establishing a head office Emergency Response Team, and using Flexible Funding to respond to 11 crises.⁷²

2.2 Integrated approach

RQ5. To what extent and how has the Norwegian humanitarian engagement contributed towards promoting an integrated and rights-based approach with a view to preventing humanitarian crises and reducing humanitarian needs? What potential differences for men, women, and vulnerable groups, and likely positive or negative unintended consequences?

Main finding

Norway struggled to effectively enable 'Nexus' approaches that might help reduce humanitarian needs. While Norway effectively supported coordinated responses and invested a high share of funding in both education and health, partners perceived this goal to remain unclear and difficult to operationalise.

NMFA and integrated approach

The NMFA carried out various policy and funding activities aimed at supporting more comprehensive humanitarian action. According to its internal monitoring matrix, the NMFA undertook 56 activities related to a 'comprehensive effort', focusing on the interplay between humanitarian efforts, long-term development policy and peacebuilding (21/56); education and health (18/56); a comprehensive refugee response (8/56); and prevention, preparedness, and climate adaptation (9/56). The activities included policy and funding activities, such as engagement, support, and building links with development actors in the UN system, the World Bank, and OECD/DAC; developing holistic thinking in the NMFA and embassies; through Norway's new Sahel strategy 2021-2025; and requiring synergies from humanitarian and development partner organisations. They also included supporting resilience activities to reduce humanitarian needs; longer-term partnership with organisations that have both humanitarian and development mandates; and coordination of NMFA and Norad allocations.

The NMFA reported using a multi-track approach to promoting comprehensive humanitarian action. First, Norway worked globally to promote better interaction between humanitarian efforts, development assistance and peacebuilding, for example, by calling for good and effective coordination between OCHA and WHO, and specifically supported WFP's global logistics and transport function for the entire global response to the Covid-19 pandemic.⁷³ Second, Norway contributed to holistic efforts in operational work at country level, for example, by stressing to partners that humanitarian and development efforts have different purposes, but must work together in a way that ensures that humanitarian efforts are in line with humanitarian principles. Third, Norway sought to contribute to holistic efforts through its own policy instruments, for example, by emphasising good coordination with various sections and embassies, in the work on the Sahel strategy and in the Syria crisis response. In this case, Norway reduced humanitarian support for neighbouring countries, while increasing contribution from the budget post for vulnerable states. In 2022, Norway aimed to promote a comprehensive approach through dialogue with the UN, follow-up of the Grand Bargain Declaration, in the OECD/DAC, in the follow-up to the Global Refugee Forum and the Education Cannot Wait Fund, and as a priority for Norway's board positions in the WFP.⁷⁴ It would also continue efforts to drive forward the High-Level Panel for Internal Displacement through support for the UN Follow-up Plan and efforts at country level, and work on the establishment of the Solidarity Pot for refugees and displaced people that engages the development side to find lasting solutions and funds.

⁷¹ NMFA (2022): Chapter 150 2021-2022 for the budget year 2022

⁷² Norwegian Church Aid (2021): 2020 annual report for Strategic Partnership Agreement QZA-20/0052 (2020-2023)

⁷³ NMFA (2021): Report on implementation of humanitarian strategy in 2020

⁷⁴ NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

The NMFA reported supporting humanitarian-development ‘Nexus’ approaches. According to NMFA reporting to the Grand Bargain,⁷⁵ Norway’s predictable, flexible, multi-year funding supports Nexus approaches. It invested in durable solutions for refugees and IDPs through a combination of humanitarian and development instruments,⁷⁶ and it increased funding for fragile states since 2017. It also supports the International Finance Corporation (WBG) Trust Fund for fragile and conflict-affected states; and supported education in crises and emergencies, with large support to the Education cannot Wait initiative. In addition, the NMFA integrated Nexus commitments in various government policies and strategies; mainstreamed the Nexus in policies and partner dialogues (e.g., the Norway mandate for membership to the WFP Executive Board 2020-2022); and in Norway’s new Sahel Strategy 2021, which makes the Nexus central. However, specific outcome results and achievements arising from Nexus approaches are not reported.

Norway invests a high share of assistance in both education and health, involving opportunities for Nexus approaches. According to FTS,⁷⁷ in 2021, Norway provided 14.1% of its funding to education and 9.1% to health, both sectors that imply more ‘systemic’ engagement with national structures beyond immediate emergency relief. This compares with Sweden (0.5% on education and 8.4% on health) and Germany (1.3% on education, and 21.6% on health). Like others, Norway invests almost nothing in early recovery. According to FTS,⁷⁸ in 2021, Norway provided less than 1% to early recovery (USD 40,014). This compares with Sweden (less than 1% - USD 20,291) and Germany (less than 1% - USD 267,122). In each case, the value for early recovery is given by FTS as 0%.

The NMFA may be making progress on an integrated approach, but assessing it remained difficult. The NMFA reports completion or good progress on a majority of its activities related to a comprehensive humanitarian action (40/56), but little or no progress on around a fifth (16/56). The NMFA assessed achievement on all of these activities, but achievements appeared to remain at the level of NMFA activity, with little reporting on partner results or humanitarian outcomes. In 2020, an evaluation of Norway’s Aid Engagement in South Sudan⁷⁹ found the humanitarian assistance and support to improved food security was mostly effective, and there was a high degree of coherence in the support emphasising the link between humanitarian and development assistance.

Norway’s support to Nexus approaches is complicated by significant wider challenges. In 2022, the NMFA highlighted the crucial importance of ‘good interaction’ between humanitarian efforts, development cooperation and peacebuilding in protracted crises, but recognised that humanitarian actors needed strengthened ability to work more long-term, and development actors needed to invest more in lasting solutions for crisis-affected populations.⁸⁰ Policy actors highlighted the importance of Nexus approaches in principle, and promising results existed, for example, the World Bank’s International Development Association (IDA18) financing model in situations of fragility and conflict.⁸¹ But progress remains limited and Nexus approaches remain too much a matter for discussion, continue to puzzle many stakeholders, and face systemic barriers at donor level (between development, peacebuilding and humanitarian activities). Sufficient development funding, notably from international financial institutions, has yet to be unlocked to address protracted humanitarian crises, sometimes due to risk aversion. And with immediate humanitarian needs so great, there is a risk that humanitarian space for Nexus approaches may be reduced, and funding increasingly limited to emergency responses. In this context, it was suggested the NMFA should work with partners to engage with IFIs through their governance bodies to increase funding to reduced needs in protracted humanitarian crises.

NMFA and coordination

The NMFA highlights its support to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and coordinated action. In annual budget reporting for 2020, Norway reported giving NOK 478m to the CERF, making it the fifth largest contributor.⁸² Norway has a multi-year agreement with CERF and its contribution accounts for about 10% of the CERF’s total budget. In 2019, the NMFA highlighted that support for the UN organisations was provided on the basis of the UN-coordinated humanitarian response plans and seeking to define the

⁷⁵ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021): Grand Bargain in 2020, Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary

⁷⁶ e.g. core support to UNHCR, support for the Global Compact on Refugees, support for the rollout of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, contributions to the Global Concessional Financing Facility, and supported the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

⁷⁷ UNOCHA (2021): FTS Data (retrieved 24 April 2022)

⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹ Norad (2020): Blind Sides and Soft Spots – An Evaluation of Norway’s Aid Engagement in South Sudan

⁸⁰ NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

⁸¹ International Development Association (2021). IDA18 Retrospective: Investing in Growth, Resilience, and Opportunity through Innovation. World Bank, Washington, DC.

⁸² NMFA (2022): Chapter 150 2021-2022 for the budget year 2022

Norwegian share of the response.⁸³ It also highlighted funding to UNHCR, which ‘leads the coordination of the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons in the global humanitarian response.’

Norway invests a high share of funding in ‘multisector’ assistance, ‘coordination and support services’. According to FTS,⁸⁴ in 2021, Norway provided 25.5% of its funding to multi-sector assistance, 4.7% to coordination and support services. This compares with Sweden (13.6% on multisector, 35.8% on coordination and support services) and Germany (0.7% on multisector, 6.3% on coordination and support services).

Norway spends less than half of its funding through coordinated response plans, and 12% in pooled funds. According to FTS,⁸⁵ in 2021, Norway spent 47.7% of funding through appeals / response plans and 12.3% through pooled funds. This compares with Sweden (44.5% and 18.3%) and Germany (64.4% and 17.3%).

Integration results

Norway’s partners reported on numerous coordination activities. These included various global, country-based, and sectoral coordination activities; an increase in joint analysis to support integrated humanitarian action; and some efforts to apply nexus programming, sustain humanitarian impact and increase resilience. OCHA reported global coordination, research, and leadership activities aimed at strengthening humanitarian action. Save the Children reported its contributions to coordination. In 2021, the GHO reported a high-level panel on internal displacement called for a stronger role for UN RC/HCs in driving nexus approaches to advance durable solutions for IDPs.⁸⁶

Norway’s partners reported few solutions for refugees. UNHCR and NRC reported multi-sectoral assistance to refugees and progress in implementing the Global Compact on Refugees, and efforts to support durable solutions through integrated financial inclusion, but declining progress on durable solutions. Partner results were not synthesised for education, health, preparedness, disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation, but OCHA, UNHCR, WFP, and SPs reported a number of results in these areas.

Notable challenges

Some notable challenges were captured during this review. Stakeholders indicated that Norway struggled to effectively support integrated and Nexus approaches, recognising the importance of such approaches and also challenges in how best to support these within Norway’s aid programmes and in the aid system more broadly. In Lebanon, moreover, Norway grappled with how to apply an integrated or Nexus approach when an established refugee protection coordination structure proved unsuited to addressing growing humanitarian needs linked to the country’s socio-economic crisis (see Annex E: Additional evidence).

2.3 Innovation and reform

RQ6. To what extent and how has the Norwegian humanitarian engagement contributed towards pushing for innovation and reform in the humanitarian sector? What potential differences for men, women, and vulnerable groups, and likely positive or negative unintended consequences.

Main finding

Norway made some effective contributions to humanitarian innovation and reform, most notably through promoting the use of cash and supporting innovation. Questions arose about Norway’s engagement on localisation.

NMFA and reform

The NMFA carried out multiple diverse activities focused on system reform and innovation. During 2019-2021, it reported on 99 activities concerned with reform, innovation, and innovative financing. These included effective and comprehensive efforts to require change and reform (38/99); innovation (24/99); cash in humanitarian aid (13/99); innovative financing (10/99); the role of the private sector (7/99); and green response (7/99). Most were completed or showed good progress (77/99), but a relatively large share, more than one fifth, had not started or showed limited progress (22/99). The activities included partnership activities concerned with funding; promoting localisation, innovation, and green response through SPs; and technical standards for reporting innovation. Others were policy activities at the system level, concerned with CERF,

⁸³ NMFA (2021): chapter 150 2021-2022 for the budget year 2021

⁸⁴ UNOCHA (2021): FTS Data (retrieved 24 April 2022)

⁸⁵ UNOCHA (2021): FTS Data (retrieved 24 April 2022)

⁸⁶ OCHA (2022): Global Humanitarian Overview 2022

CBFPs, donor coordination on cash-based assistance, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) reform, Good Humanitarian Donorship and the Grand Bargain, and humanitarian innovation.

Norway's system reform activities aimed to improve operational responses. The NMFA reported Norway being a driving force for initiatives in the humanitarian sector that contribute to better and more efficient operational responses.⁸⁷ In following UN development system reform processes, Norway paid special attention to how reform of the UN development system affects humanitarian efforts at the country level.⁸⁸ As the Grand Bargain moved into a new phase in 2022, Norway funded the preparation of the annual Grand Bargain Report for 2020. This was an important input towards defining the way forward, with the expectation that activities would focus on selected key areas, still with the primary aim of developing 'a more efficient, participatory and qualitatively better humanitarian response'⁸⁹ Policy actors recognised the capacity costs of being involved in system reform, and a lack of coherence among multiple system reform initiatives (e.g. IASC review, high-level panel on internal displacement, ideas proposed by think tanks). But it was suggested that Norway could do more by taking the lead on a specific thematic issue and/or seeking more coherence among reform efforts.

Norway made particular efforts to promote the use of cash in humanitarian action. In 2022, the NMFA highlighted its focus on promoting the use of cash in humanitarian action, in line with Grand Bargain commitments.⁹⁰ In 2020, Norway engaged particularly in efforts to increase and strengthen the coordination of cash-based humanitarian assistance, which it linked to increased localisation, participation, and accountability to affected populations (AAP).⁹¹ During 2018-2021, Norway served as co-chair of the Donor Cash Forum (DCF), required partners to use cash where most effective and efficient, and increased the requirement in the SPAs.⁹² While policy actors stressed the effectiveness of cash-based assistance, which implied greater participation by populations affected, it also entailed greater financial risks that needed to be managed.

Norway actively promoted humanitarian innovation. In 2022, the NMFA stressed the importance of humanitarian innovation and new technology to increase resources for humanitarian action and make better use of them in the context of increasing funding gaps. It is committed to focusing on knowledge and information sharing, and continued implementation of the Humanitarian Innovation Programme (HIP Norway) managed by Innovation Norway.⁹³ In 2021, the NMFA reported Norway playing a driving role in humanitarian innovation, during the HS period, which is recognised by other donor countries and humanitarian organisations. This included dialogue with strategic partners, coordination of the Group of Friends for Humanitarian Innovation in Geneva, and partnerships with organisations such as Elrha (a think tank and advocate for innovation in the humanitarian sector) and UNOSAT (UN satellite image analysis programme). It also expressed clear expectations for partners to commit to innovation in all relevant forums in 2020, not least when entering into SPAs and in annual consultations and board meetings.⁹⁴ This is confirmed in NMFA reporting to the Grand Bargain,⁹⁵ which stressed Norway's support to innovative measures, especially in protection and green humanitarian response.

Partner results

Norway's partners reported various results related to reform and innovation. These included delivering cash assistance to more than 90 million people in need worldwide, while SPs reported increasing the effectiveness of their cash-based approaches. Innovation Norway reported on its portfolio of humanitarian innovations involving the private sector, while SPs reported on their various innovation activities. Partners, mainly SPs, reported generally nascent efforts to make their aid operations and assistance more environmentally sustainable and reduce their carbon emissions.

While localisation is not a thematic priority in the HS, partners reported developments in the area. The NMFA highlighted its funding to UN humanitarian country-based pooled funds, which increased to NOK 400m in 2020, as an important channel for reaching national and local organisations.⁹⁶ Interviews suggest the NMFA is looking for ways to deliver on the Grand Bargain's localisation agenda, recognising its own lack of capacity

⁸⁷ NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

⁸⁸ NMFA (2021): Report on implementation of humanitarian strategy in 2020

⁸⁹ NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

⁹⁰ NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022 NMFA (2022), Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

⁹¹ NMFA (2021): Report on implementation of humanitarian strategy in 2020

⁹² NMFA (2021): Grand Bargain in 2020, Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary

⁹³ NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

⁹⁴ NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

⁹⁵ NMFA Affairs (2020): Grand Bargain in 2019, Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary

⁹⁶ NMFA (2021): Report on implementation of humanitarian strategy in 2020

to work directly through local partnerships. However, partners reported policy development in this area, more flexible funding for local partners, and efforts to increase participation of national and local NGOs – sometimes accelerated by Covid-19 restrictions. During Covid-19, local partners stepped up to help access areas that could not be reached by international responders and deliver critical aid.⁹⁷ The GHO reported that the Grand Bargain (GB) workstream on localisation continued its work. The newly appointed Eminent Person, Jan Egeland, outlined that two of his three priorities concerned localisation: the cascading of funding through better intermediation and quality funding for local and international actors.⁹⁸

Notable achievements

Norway's contribution to humanitarian innovation was noted by the review. Support to the Humanitarian Innovation Programme a grant and support mechanism fully financed by the NMFA is leading to incremental effects in the humanitarian system. The programme began in 2019, and now has a portfolio of 32 projects, many of which have reached proof of concept stage. Nonetheless, it is recognised that system reform cannot be achieved entirely through technical solutions.

2.4 Good donorship

RQ7. To what extent and how has the Norwegian humanitarian engagement contributed towards promoting effective, flexible, and predictable funding for humanitarian efforts? What potential differences for men, women, and vulnerable groups, and likely positive or negative unintended consequences.

Main finding

Norway made very effective contributions to good donorship. The country appears to be the world's most generous humanitarian donor (in terms of GDP and population size). It provided some 40% of its funding as multi-year funding and more than 40% as unearmarked or softly earmarked funding. Its 'Strategic Partnership' model with Norwegian NGOs is considered a reflection of good donorship.

NMFA actions

Norway's donorship emphasises flexibility, predictability, and scale. In 2022, the NMFA highlighted Norway's role as a leading donor, and one recognised as such by partners.⁹⁹ It committed to 'respond quickly with flexible, non-earmarked funds for crises, and a high level of support for priority efforts', as well as 'more predictable funding' and 'unprecedented support'. This also allowed the NMFA time to raise its sights and focus on strategic issues rather than just aid management. However, it recognised the balance needed between ensuring predictability and flexibility for partners and maintaining the NMFA's ability to respond quickly to new and unforeseen crises. Policy actors recognised Norway as one of the most important donors for providing flexible and unearmarked funding.

Norway provided more than 40% of its humanitarian budget as unearmarked or softly earmarked funding, surpassing the Grand Bargain target of 30% in 2016. According to MFA reporting,¹⁰⁰ in 2020, 42% of Norway's humanitarian funding was unearmarked or softly unearmarked (up from 40% in 2019). This included 22% unearmarked (with 11% going as core support to UNHCR and WFP; 8% to CERF; and 3% to ICRC, OCHA and IOM), and approximately 20% softly earmarked funding by thematic or geographic area (mainly going through UNHCR, UNFPA, WHO, WFP, ICRC, OCHA and UNICEF). In addition, Norway increased contributions to the CBPFs to NOK 407m, now constituting 5% of Norway's overall humanitarian budget. It also provides substantial funding through a Programme-based Approach which is not counted as softly earmarked by the Grand Bargain (Norway thinks it should be),¹⁰¹ but involves providing funding earmarked only to country programme level, with the intention of supporting an integrated package of activities and using a partner's existing systems, tools and approaches.¹⁰²

Reflecting a flexible approach, Norway allocates a high share of funding without specifying a recipient country. According to FTS,¹⁰³ in 2021, Norway provided 19.8% of its funding as 'not specified' by country and 21.1% as 'global' (presumably designated to a range of countries, but allowing flexible allocation]. This compares with Sweden (43% not specified, no mention of global) and Germany (18.5% not specified, no mention of 'global'). And with the European Commission, the United States, (none not specified or global), Japan and the UK (14% and 13.3% not specified, none 'global').

⁹⁷ OCHA (2021): Global Humanitarian Overview 2022

⁹⁸ *ibid*

⁹⁹ NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*

¹⁰¹ *ibid*

¹⁰² Norwegian Refugee Council (2020): The Programme Based Approach: 10 lessons

¹⁰³ OCHA (2021): FTS Data (retrieved 24 April 2022)

Norway provided some 40% of its humanitarian budget as multi-year funding. According to NMFA reporting,¹⁰⁴ Norway increased multi-year funding to UN, the Red Cross Movement and NGO partners – while seeking to balance predictability and flexibility for partners with its own ability to respond to new and unforeseen crises. In 2020, it continued multi-year agreements with CERF, OCHA, and ICRC HQ appeal; entered a multi-year agreement with the ICRC for its operational appeals; signed several multi-year agreements with humanitarian think tanks and policy actors; and entered into multi-year strategic partnerships with six Norwegian humanitarian NGOs with an annual contribution of NOK 1.7bn. It also fulfilled its multi-year pledge for the Lake Chad region (2017-2020); continued to deliver on the multi-year pledge from the Oslo Conference to end SGBV (NOK 1bn 2019-2021); and announced a three-year pledge at the Central Sahel Conference. As a result, in 2020, 39% of Norway's overall humanitarian funding was provided through multi-year agreements -- up from 24% in 2019. If indicative multiyear commitments for core support to WFP and UNHCR were included, the figure would increase to 50%.

Norway appears to be the world's most generous humanitarian donor. During 2019-2021 Norway spent some NOK 17.2 billion in total on funding humanitarian aid agreements, making yearly increases from NOK 5.4bn in 2019 to NOK 6.3bn in 2021.¹⁰⁵ According to FTS,¹⁰⁶ Norway's share of global humanitarian contributions increased from 2.3% in 2019 to 3.1% in 2021 (it is 4% so far in 2022), a rise in rankings from the tenth largest donor in 2019 to seventh in 2022. A cursory review of publicly available data suggests Norway clearly leads the top ten humanitarian donors when compared to both GDP and population size.

The NMFA highlighted its promising 'Strategic Partnership' model. In the annual budget reporting to the Parliament,¹⁰⁷ the NMFA reported entering into seven strategic partnerships in 2020 with Norwegian NGOs. These were 'key partners in the implementation of the Government's humanitarian policy, and contributed to an effective operational response in line with the humanitarian principles.' The partnership agreements apply for four years with an annual limit of NOK 1.7 bn. The NMFA noted the partnerships provided predictable and flexible frameworks for the Norwegian organisations and contributed to a better response to the many long-term and complex crises. The agreements include flexible means to be used for new or increased humanitarian needs. Such flexibility allows organisations to respond quickly to acute crises.¹⁰⁸ Several partners and policy actors expressed interest in the SPM and how it works (asking: 'how can parliament allow unearmarked funding can be provided to NGOs?').

Partner results

The NMFA's Programme-Based Approach is also appreciated. NRC reported MFA's support for the programme-based approach provided better quality funding, and the strategic partnership agreement (SPA) reflected good donorship. According to an NRC study, the Programme based approach (PBA) led to more accountability and a more needs-based response; allowed the organisation to quickly adapt activities based on feedback from affected communities, monitoring and learning data; and allows it to design more coherent and integrated responses and respond to overlooked needs. Efficiency gains also resulted from reduced paperwork and bureaucracy, which facilitated more seamless adaptations in response to Covid-19 (compared to other donor partners).¹⁰⁹ NRC also reported on implementation of the SPM, including an agreement to keep the flexibility gained through the PBA and granted to country level.¹¹⁰ According to NRC, a benefit of the PBA is it allows the organisation to use existing (internal) systems for M&E, grant management, and financial controls.

¹⁰⁴ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021): Grand Bargain in 2020, Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary

¹⁰⁵ The numbers presented for the years vary from the state budgets since the microdata includes additional allocations that have occurred during the year. Additionally, the numbers for the 2021 have not been adjusted so they may also vary when the final accounts are presented in the Norad microdata.

¹⁰⁶ UNOCHA (2021): FTS Data (retrieved 24 April 2022)

¹⁰⁷ NMFA (2022): Chapter 150 2021-2022 for the budget year 2022

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*

¹⁰⁹ NRC (2021): Annual Report 2020

¹¹⁰ *ibid*

3. The Strategic Partnership Model

This section presents findings about Norway's Strategic Partnership Model (SPM), assessed as a process innovation.

3.1 Value Proposition

RQ9. To what extent does the SPM offer a logical new solution to a recognised problem? What is the perceived value added and understanding of the SPM compared to previous arrangements?

Main finding

The SPM offers a promising opportunity to enhance existing partnerships, in a way that can uphold principles, reinforce implementation of the Strategy, and increase partners' reach.

Enhanced partnerships

The SPM responds to an opportunity more than a problem. In 2018, the NMFA mandated a project called 'strategic partnerships' in line with intentions described in the HS.¹¹¹ Instead of defining a process problem to address, the mandate defined an opportunity to develop the NMFA's collaborations with Norwegian humanitarian organisations, who have 'contributed to developing both Norwegian and international humanitarian policy and to making Norwegian organizations international leaders in several areas.'

The SPM is seen as evolution more than innovation. Stakeholders report the SPM builds on effective partnerships to support HS goals, given that NMFA and strategic partners had productive and flexible relationships for some time. In this sense, the SPM is therefore not as radical as it may at first seem. But such perceptions vary among key informants, influenced by each organisation's capacity, history and relationship with the NMFA. Some SPs, such as NRC, NRX, NPA and Save the Children Norway had multi-year agreements in thematic or geographic areas prior to negotiating the SPAs. For these organisations, the SPAs imply a broadening of an established working method to their full humanitarian engagement when supported by the MFA. So SPM application, implementation and reporting processes are adjusted, not new, and these organisations do not feel that much has changed.

The SPM involved an open selection process. According to the Mandate,¹¹² the NMFA intended to apply an open selection process with criteria for the allocation of humanitarian funds for the first time. The objective was to establish strategic partnerships with qualified Norwegian humanitarian organisations by January 2020, based on an open and as inclusive process as possible. This was considered 'ground-breaking' as no such open processes had been carried out before.

Multiple expectations

The SPM was designed to improve donorship, administrative efficiency, and HS implementation. According to the Mandate,¹¹³ the SPM's intended outcomes were: (i) More predictable, flexible, and effective humanitarian response; (ii) Reduced administrative burden for both partners and the NMFA; and (iii) SPs contribute to delivering on the priorities of a new humanitarian strategy. Later, the NMFA issued guidance¹¹⁴ describing 10 more intended features of the SPM: predictability and stability of funding; a focus on strategic outcomes; innovation; green response; flexibly enabling responsiveness (20% flexible funds); leveraging external financing; cooperation and complementarity at country level (including the Nexus); implementation capacity; and strengthening the humanitarian response. The key expectation, explained one policy actor, was that predictable and flexible funding through the SPM could increase the ability of partners to deliver effective humanitarian action. Another expectation was that humanitarian funding gaps could be reduced by a model that promoted cooperation among partners and with private sector actors.

SPs appreciate the SPM for predictable and flexible funding, but not predefined funding limitations. There is consensus among the strategic partners that the predictability of the SPAs is positive, as is the flexibility. For SPs such as Caritas, for whom multi-year humanitarian planning and funding is new, the SPA required significant adjustment of annual processes. The most consequential is the ceiling for the flexible component of the budget, also mentioned by for example NCA. Previously, if new needs arose following contextual changes or unexpected events, it was possible for the partner to request an expansion of budget (an 'addendum') during the budget year. In the new system, the strategic partners have much more control

¹¹¹ NMFA (n.d.): Mandate - project «strategic partnerships» for follow-up of new humanitarian strategy (Machine translated by Google)

¹¹² ibid

¹¹³ ibid

¹¹⁴ NMFA (n.d.): Guidance Note. Strategic Partnerships between Norwegian Humanitarian Civil Society Organizations and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Machine translated by Google)

over the 20% described as 'flexible funds' but also no longer have the right to request budget expansions in the form of addendums. The *actual* total annual budget of several of the strategic partners has therefore declined. Some also note the limitations of the flexibility which only applies to pre-agreed technical areas and countries. In comments on the draft report, most SPs questioned the utility of funding ceilings when needs may change drastically during the year, when SPs offer an effective mechanism for rapid responses, when their presence and capacities vary enormously, or when Parliament makes additional allocations (e.g. Ukraine)

Upholding principles

SPs are required to uphold humanitarian principles. Documents show that adhering to humanitarian principles was a precondition for selection among organisations applying for strategic partners agreements. Key informants among the strategic partners attest to humanitarian principles being more consistently followed up by NMFA in connection with SPA reporting. Dialogue around challenges to humanitarian principles is described as a regular part of reporting and both formal and informal contacts with NMFA. External stakeholders note that Norwegian-funded NGOs are active in advocating for humanitarian principles in the context within which they intervene.

SPs may struggle to apply principles or interpret them differently. Stakeholders report contextual factors may nonetheless hinder humanitarian principles from being applied, for example in conflict situations where such principles are not recognised by all the parties to the conflict. There are also contexts where stakeholders differ in their interpretation of consequences of humanitarian principles as applied to the situation at hand. In the Nigerian case study, the state governor initiated a return programme for internally displaced people in Borno state that was regarded as contrary to humanitarian principles by some stakeholders, implemented by other stakeholders and accepted by a third group of stakeholders. Strategic partners, in that context, were active in advocating for a more strict interpretation of humanitarian principles.¹¹⁵

Strategic compatibility

SPs consider the HS to be useful and compatible with their own strategies. The HS is described as well aligned with the partners' own strategies. There is consensus that the humanitarian strategy itself is relevant to multiple system levels: to Norwegian foreign policy, to the vision and mission of the strategic partners, to coordination work through the cluster system, to implementing partners and commonly also to host government authorities (although these may have different priorities in a particular context).

SP portfolios are considered increasingly well-aligned with the HS. Stakeholders perceive the SPM to contribute to the goals of the humanitarian strategy. Some partners note the humanitarian strategy and the way it is operationalised in the SPAs imply changes in NMFA focus and an improvement in terms of clarity of intentions and quality of follow-up. The process of negotiating and monitoring the SPAs is described as constructive and themed around HS priorities.

SP portfolios are not constrained by the HS. SPs report the humanitarian strategy and SPAs have not implied a prioritisation in terms of excluding programming that they wish to implement. Nonetheless, some partners report re-prioritisation and re-focusing in line with the humanitarian strategy's ambitions, for example, NCA cites moving from addressing basic needs towards protection, others highlight increased (internal, organisational) integration of programming, and NRC mentions inclusion/ expansion of SGBV programming and gender mainstreaming, as well as a changed attitude towards cash programming.

Increasing reach

SPs suggest the SPM can help them start up new projects. The SPAs allow organisational structures to be built on the ground before other donors are ready to fund an operation. This allows area-based needs assessments, feasibility studies and proposals to be developed; leveraging of funds from other donors; and shortening reaction time to changes in context, including addressing the needs of displaced populations and shifting spatial conflict patterns.

SPs suggest the SPM can help them reach the most vulnerable. The flexibility of the SPAs allow organisations to adapt more rapidly to contextual change thereby providing services to segments of the population that are vulnerable not only for geographical or logistical reasons but for changing-context reasons. The target population may be difficult to reach due to geographical logistical political or other access issues. It may also be difficult to reach because contextual changes have made a new segment of the population vulnerable, in an acute sense, while other donors and implementation agencies decision-making processes take months to readjust programming. In addition to partner staff members, several key informants highlighted Norwegian agility in both case countries (explosion in Beirut and conflict context in Nigeria).

¹¹⁵ As described both by organisations' staff members and external stakeholders interviewed.

3.2 Managed process

RQ10. To what extent and how is the SPM piloting and development managed as a process?

Main finding

The SPM was developed through a well-managed process which came to an end in 2020, leaving the future direction of this innovation unclear.

SPM project

The SPM was developed as a project by the NMFA with Norad. According to the SPM Mandate,¹¹⁶ the work to develop the SPM was to be organised in a project led by the Deputy Director of Budget and Administration in the Section for Humanitarian Affairs. It would involve four employees from the Section, as well as representatives of the Section for Grant Management and Norad v /SIVSA. The project was to last from 1 October 2018 to 1 February 2020, and to be carried out in phases: planning/design; announcements; applications; and negotiations. An internal review of the project up until the SPAs was signed shows evidence of a project plan, reports successful completion of the project despite a few delays, and identifies learning points.¹¹⁷ However, it was noted that SPs themselves were not much involved in the early conceptualisation process and some raised questions about the consultation process.

The SPM development process resulted in the SPA, which is a standardised agreement that allows for organisation-specific adaptations to an NGO's particular vision, mission and operational capacities. Each agreement is valid for four years. The budget agreed for year one becomes an annual framework (i.e. same budget each of the four years) with annual updates based on pre-agreed countries and technical sectors. Some strategic partners have a so-called programme-based approach in their budget allocation giving them significant control over country-based allocations and context-based adaptations. Others are project-based and less flexible. The 20% of flexible funds reserved to address upcoming needs requires the organisation to propose a particular use in reaction to the new context but also allows a rapid response as the NMFA commits to communicate a decision on approval or not within seven working days.

SP selection

The SPM process resulted in the selection of strategic partners, based on capacity, HS alignment, and being based in Norway. The criteria used to evaluate the proposals sought to capture NGOs' capacity to deliver on the main objectives of the humanitarian strategy: protection, integrated and rights-based approach and innovation and reform included compliance with the humanitarian principles, response capacity, humanitarian access, and integration of the gender perspective into all stages of humanitarian response. The organisational selection criteria were few and general in nature: applicant organisation must be Norwegian legal entity, have an office in Norway with independent governance, have appropriate administrative and technical competence, have well-defined and feasible operational goals, be able to show past operational capacity and have guidelines governing collaboration with implementing partners.¹¹⁸ Norwegian NGOs wishing to participate by concluding a Strategic Partner Agreement (SPA) made proposals and these were assessed based on a series of criteria including: alignment with humanitarian principles and the Norwegian humanitarian strategy, contribution to humanitarian sector reform and innovation, cost efficiency, measurability, how the organisation manages risk, and coherence with overall sector interventions.¹¹⁹

SPs consider the SPM process to be aligned with the HS. According to SPs, the process of negotiating the SPAs is clearly influenced by the humanitarian strategy. All of the organisations see the SPAs as building on previous relationships, and often on previous multi-year agreements. Overall, the strategic partners spoken to are satisfied (or even happy) with the process of developing the humanitarian strategy. Mail traffic between them and the MFA from the period, as well as the conclusions of the evaluation of the process conducted in 2020 confirm this impression.¹²⁰ They feel they have been involved, listen to and respected. They are also pleased with the character of mutual respect that is evident in negotiating SPAs, in regular dialogue, in MFA seeking input to Security Council agenda points, and in how new proposals and suggestions for pilot programming are received.

¹¹⁶ NMFA (n.d.): Mandate - project «strategic partnerships» for follow-up of new humanitarian strategy.

¹¹⁷ NMFA (n.d.): Strategic partnerships in the humanitarian field. Final report. e

¹¹⁸ NMFA (2019): Regulations, Emergency Aid and Humanitarian Assistance, Strategic Partnerships with Norwegian Humanitarian organisations, Saksnr 18/2108, NMFA 26.03.2019, pp2-3.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. P 3.

¹²⁰ MFA (2020): Strategiske partnerskap på det humanitære området, Sluttrapport UD saksnr 18/13049

Partners not selected as SPs appreciated the selection process. Three non-SPs were interviewed to get the additional perspectives on the HS and the selection process.¹²¹ All appreciated the dialogue that accompanied the development of the HS and the selection process for SPs. The SP selection process is seen as a marked improvement in terms of transparency. Nevertheless, feedback on reasons for exclusion from SP status was seen as weak and lacking detail, with Norad's corresponding feedback held up as a positive example.

SPM evolution

The NMFA recognises a need to monitor and adapt the SPM with partners. In 2022, the NMFA reported cooperation with the SPs will continue for several years, including additional funding from Norway's Ukraine budget.¹²² It highlighted the need for good and systematic follow-up of the seven strategic partnerships, including strategic dialogue at the political and official levels.¹²³ In 2020, the NMFA added 20% in flexible funds to the SPM, to enable SPs to respond quickly to new needs throughout the year in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the request of the organisations, it was later decided that flexibility would also be added in 2021.¹²⁴

SPs perceive the SPM to allow for feedback and adaptation. There is a general sense that MFA is open to being criticised and listens to constructive criticism. Some of the organisations are seeing the consequences of their chosen strategies for this round and may want to change things in the future.

SPs provided feedback on the SPM in MTR consultations. There are variations in how well the partners perceive they were informed about the SPA application process and how they participated in it. Some complained that information was unclear in the application process and shared opinions about how the process should proceed. Comments to consider as the model develops:¹²⁵

- *The ceiling on flexible funds raises questions about how to address sudden onset needs in middle-income countries (such as the current situation in Ukraine)*
- *How will the levels of support be decided in possible future SPAs? Are small partners "locked into" a minor role as they cannot prove large-scale capacity?*
- *There is a tension between thematic and geographic focus*
- *The selection process emphasised a power imbalance rather than invite for a mutual and strategic partnership*
- *Why is the percentage of flexible funds the same for all when operational capacity varies?*

Organisations not selected as SPs fear exclusion. Policy actors observe that the SPM's increased flexibility and predictability implied additional responsibilities for organisations, which some were not considered ready to use effectively. But organisations that were not selected as SPs note that it is unclear how they can develop the experience needed to be selected in a later round as no calls for proposals allow them to fund programming that might build their capacity. ATLAS, for example, does not aim for a large operational humanitarian role but rather seeks to position itself as advisor/advocate for the SPs on the inclusion of disabled people in humanitarian programming.

3.3 Comparative improvement

RQ11. To what extent and how is the SPM improving the strategy's ability to achieve objectives?

Main finding

The SPM shows good potential for improving implementation of Norway's Strategy. It shows signs of increasing NMFA efficiency and partner dialogue, increasing partner effectiveness, and increasing emergency responsiveness. Possible improvements with regard to localisation, integrated approaches, innovation and donorship require further evidence.

¹²¹ CARE, ATLAS and MSF were interviewed. MSF has, since 2016, a policy of not applying for Norwegian government funds as a matter of principle.

¹²² NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

¹²³ NMFA (2021): Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

¹²⁴ NMFA (2021): Report on implementation of humanitarian strategy in 2020

¹²⁵ Selected comments from key informant interviews that have been echoed by others, while not expressed by the majority.

Norway objectives

The NMFA perceives the SPM to have increased efficiency in partnerships. Key informants within the NMFA highlight the improvements in aid administration that followed with the introduction of the SPA. The selection of a series of strategic partners allows the NMFA to ‘micromanage’ less. Standardised and streamlined processes and discontinuing previously common budget addendums in the face of upcoming humanitarian needs have lessened the administrative burden on NMFA staff. This allowed them to focus more on dialogue and analysis of strategic issues within the sector. Capacity is thus freed up for strategic initiatives such as the engagement in the ICRC donors working group and an active engagement on humanitarian issues in the Security Council of the UN; both prioritised in the 2020 tasks in the guidelines for the Norwegian Humanitarian budget.¹²⁶ Such efficiencies are also supporting thematic initiatives such as follow-up to the Safe Schools Declaration,¹²⁷ the 2019 Oslo conference on SGBV¹²⁸ and other initiatives such as those linked to the Call to Action.¹²⁹

The SPM engages SPs in common strategic thinking. The NMFA reports the SPM has led to better and closer dialogue with the SPs.¹³⁰ Stakeholders report that the SPAs allow strategic thinking to a greater extent both within the NMFA and in partner organisations. Multi-year advocacy strategies exemplify this based on operational experience, the ability of an organisation such as NORCAP to respond to identified capacity gaps in the overall coordination of an intervention, creative interaction between the Security Council agenda, Norway hosting thematic events and strategic partners contributing both conceptually and operationally to addressing emerging needs. The evaluation period coincided with Norway serving on the UN SC, and strategic partners appreciate that NMFA commonly contacts them to confer regarding thematic and contextual issues in preparation for upcoming agenda points in the SC. Several strategic partners note coherent NMFA initiatives at multiple systems levels, such as funding pilot projects, hosting thematic events, setting agendas, advocating in donors’ groups, and energising cluster subgroups around a prioritised theme. Examples are given related to protection, education, and donor coordination.

The SPM is fostering SP decision-making about priorities. Stakeholders note, that if there is an unexpected request for support early in the year that has not been budgeted for, the SP itself must take responsibility for declining that request, in order to retain capacity for responding to possible events occurring later in the year. While some of the key informants described this as the MFA ‘passing the buck,’ most regarded it as a form of decentralisation that delegated responsibility for allocations closer to managers with operational insight. There are key informants that see this as a process where their organisation is maturing and other respondents that describe internal conflicts based on a ‘fight for resources’, opposing internal prioritisation with the NMFA’s perceived priorities.

Partner effectiveness

The SPM is perceived to enable SPs to more easily start and expand operations. The flexibility and predictability of the SPAs is appreciated by all. It is seen as particularly important in start-up phases, when programming flexibility allows partners to ‘put boots on the ground’ to conduct assessments, feasibility studies and proposals which in turn ‘open up’ for other donors to commit to addressing emerging needs. One SP reported using the SPA as a basis for seven- or eight-times larger operations and leveraging funding from dozens of donors. In Nigeria, the SPM allowed the Red Cross to pilot seconding a full programme, not individual experts, into the ICRC response infrastructure. All partners were able to respond rapidly to increasing protection needs in ways described by external stakeholders as more rapid than other actors. Furthermore, NRC was able to use operations-based research, funded through their SPA, to feed into advocacy in favour of humanitarian principles.

The SPM is perceived to support staff retention, increasing effectiveness and efficiency. Partners see SPAs as contributing to effectiveness and efficiency by lowering staff turnover. This is a consequence of longer-term commitments. Short-term planning leads both implementing partners and own staff to seek other alternatives, causing experience loss and response capacity. SPAs have been particularly useful in addressing

¹²⁶ NMFA (2020): Prioriteringar i oppfølgingen av humanitær strategi [...] dated 06.02.2020

¹²⁷ UN member states (2014): Safe schools declarations. The Safe Schools Declaration is an inter-governmental political commitment that was opened for endorsement by countries at an international conference hosted by Argentina and Norway, held in Oslo, Norway, on 28–29 May 2015. It seeks to protect schools and education in armed conflict contexts. .

¹²⁸ The Governments of Norway, Iraq, Somalia and the UAE, OCHA, UNFPA and ICRC, supported by NCA, hosted the international conference “Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises” in Oslo, Norway in May 2019, aiming to end SGBV in humanitarian crises, in conflict and disaster. CO-HOST OUTCOME STATEMENT, 24 May, 2019

¹²⁹ On 1 October, 2020, Norway became co-chair of the Call to Action States and Donors Working Group together with the UK. Based on Statement by Ambassador Mona, 8 February 2019.

¹³⁰ NMFA (2021): Report on implementation of humanitarian strategy in 2020

the funding gaps between short term contracts when cost efficiencies necessitate staff redundancies if future funding is not assured while programming can be consolidated (tided over) if a future funding stream is known.

The SPM supports rapid adjustments. Partner organisation staff in both case countries refer to adjustments made with greater speed than other intervenors thanks to SPA structure. This is confirmed by non-organisational respondents.

The SPM may also strengthen thematic capacity, increasing effectiveness. Building needed thematic capacity is also referred to as an area where more is possible to do, thanks to SPAs. Such strategic investments in building thematic capacity are described as improving overall intervention effectiveness and efficiency in a way similar to support for overall coordination infrastructure (such as the cluster system).

The SPM may reduce administration and overhead costs. Several partners note that standardised procedures and simplified administration, often associated with absence of addendums, has led to lower overhead costs. Increased clarity, stemming from the humanitarian strategy and the SPA approval negotiations process, is also cited as lowering costs due to better understanding of what will be funded and thus less adjustments and negotiations around proposals and reporting. Partners also report the predictability of NMFA funding and commitment over several years allowed for carry-over of funding from the year's end to the next with minimal approvals.

However, the SPM's flexibility may be limited by the HS. Among the few complaints about SPAs is that they limit organisations to pre-identified competencies and countries (in most cases). The evaluation team notes that while this may be perceived as something negative by implementing managers it can also be regarded as an indication the humanitarian strategy focus is being implemented and its intentions are having operational effects.

The SPM is implemented alongside the programme approach. NRC highlight significant benefits of the programme-based approach (PBA). Other partners refer to the approach as comparatively better than their own, more project-focused, SPA. The PBA approach is described as especially useful when rapid adjustment is needed in the face of new needs emerging from contextual change.

Emergency response

SPs agree the SPM enables rapid emergency response. Partner organisations clearly concur that the SPM contributes to more rapid and more coherent responses thanks to its predictability and flexibility. Respondents at all levels cited improved services delivery, more strategic programming and improved efficiency. The SPM's flexible funding aspect proved useful in Lebanon. Many of the SPs applied for flexible funds to respond to the Beirut explosions in 2020, which allowed them to become operational within days. It allowed SPs to respond much faster than larger organisations.

The SPM flexible funds mechanism is perceived to have enabled more timely emergency responses. In 2021, the NMFA reported the built-in reserve of 20% enabled the SPs to strengthen their responses to the Covid-19 pandemic.¹³¹ As noted above, the NMFA also reported flexible funds allowed partners to respond quickly to acute crises, such as Nagorno-Karabakh. Some SPs reported benefiting from the NMFA's Flexible Funding mechanism for delivering emergency assistance. NCA, for example, reported using Flexible Funding to respond to 11 crises. In Lebanon, SPs reported using SPM 'flexible funds' to respond to the Beirut blast, with one considering it the most valuable part of the SPM, for enabling timely responses without multiple layers of approval and decision making within the country.

Localisation

SPs perceive the SPM offers local partners some administrative savings. The cost implications of simplification and standardisation are cited by some as (i) trickling down to implementing partners; (ii) fostering greater clarity of time horizon and Norwegian priorities, and (iii) give local implementing organisations a better basis for their decisions regarding what proposals to write and how to focus them to increase the likelihood of being funded.

SPs perceive the SPM offers only limited support to localisation. In terms of making multi-year commitments to local partners, the SPM provides local implementing partners with predictability and contributes to their capacity by lowering staff turnover. However, as the SPAs exclude organisational capacity building beyond what is needed for implementation localisation is essentially excluded as local organisations cannot survive *between* crises and therefore need to be rebuilt for each recurrent disaster event. The SPM does not appear to strengthen localisation in Lebanon, although Norway's flexibility in donorship and the SPM allowed more decision-making at national and local levels compared to the rigid earmarking of other donors.

SPs perceive the SPM prioritises scale, not local organisations. One partner highlighted that in striving to streamline aid administration, MFA prioritises operational capacity and scaling up interventions. By doing so,

¹³¹ NMFA (2021): Report on implementation of humanitarian strategy in 2020

small interventions by local implementing partners, necessary for such organisations to build response capacity, is excluded and localisation hampered. This bias against local organisations is mirrored throughout the system: for example partners note that it is difficult for non-UN entities to get access to country humanitarian funds and there is a bias in favour of large, scaled programming – this excludes local organisations learning from starting small and developing experience.

Humanitarian-development bridge

SPs doubt the SPM is enabling a more integrated approach. Partners are clear that integration is an MFA ambition. None of the strategic partners were clear about the definition of the “integrated and rights-based approach” referred to in the humanitarian strategy. Most interpreted it in terms of the organisation’s own internal coherence of programming. Some included contributing to overall coordination through the cluster system. Some strategic partners note that the ambition towards an integrated approach clashes with the pre-agreed sectors and countries that are part of the SPAs.

SPs doubt the SPM is helping to bridge humanitarian-development divides. None articulated clarity about the Norwegian view of Nexus and several noted its absence from the humanitarian strategy. Most also highlight that such ambitions are hampered by systemic differences in MFA/Norad ways of working. Asked what improvements the introduction of the humanitarian strategy and SPAs had led to in terms of their respective relations with MFA and Norad, most responded “Norad are now present in our annual meetings with MFA”. Several key informants noted that this mirrors the difficulties that global systems levels encounters, for example in the relationship between WFP and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Some SPs also note the SPAs explicitly exclude investments in building capacity of local organisations (except for narrowly defined response related capacity). However, Save the children identify the dialogue around the new humanitarian strategy combined with negotiations around the SPA is crucial to their ability to “escape from the education in emergencies box”. This has allowed them to invest in improving their capacity in terms of accountability to communities and localisation. In Lebanon, it was suggested the SPM has the potential to contribute to humanitarian-development Nexus programming because of its multiyear programming timeframe, however, there was no evidence of it happening yet.

Innovation and donorship

The SPM may be fostering innovation. Piloting operational innovation is taking place, systemic innovation is sought and discussed. Partners note the possibility of investing in both research and pilot projects (giving examples ranging from using research to support advocacy¹³² to testing new organisational solutions¹³³). Several note that such research and pilots have allowed them to leverage budgets from other donors. Innovation around integration is called for, including suggesting exploring a third category of funding somewhere between humanitarian and development. Perceptions around integrated approach and localisation diverged according to the history of relations with NMFA and with individual organisational approaches to localisation. A number of the partners question the logic of advocating an integrated approach while simultaneously excluding investment in local partner capacity building from funding. A challenge to the consensus is presented by one stakeholder who highlights that innovation and organisational effectiveness is partly driven by resource (funding) competition. By implication, predictability of funding may lead to complacency and decrease innovation and effectiveness.

The SPM could influence other donors, increasing its effectiveness. Reach in terms of the effects of the humanitarian strategy should also be considered in relation to the degree of leverage that SPA funded experimentation and methodological development influence funding flows from other donors. One centrally placed key informant described the USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) “area programme approach” to funding in the Nigeria context as inspired by the programme approach of the Norwegian SPAs. In addition to the effects of the SPAs, two respondents highlighted that the Norwegian government’s policy of risk-sharing with implementing organisations is crucial. It allows partners to attempt to reach the “hard to reach” even in high-risk environments. In practice, this risk-sharing means that if a programme is not possible to fully implement due to changing context or difficult to reach working conditions, this does not imply that the organisation will have to refund MFA for a program not implemented. Essentially the implementing organisation is “insured” against massive liability by the government carrying a larger proportion of the risk.

¹³² NRC in Nigeria uses operational research to inform about protection consequences of State government actions allowing better placed stakeholders to base advocacy argumentation on evidence.

¹³³ Norwegian Red Cross and ICRC are testing the concept of programme secondment (as opposed to seconding individual experts) in a pilot addressing mandate issues and efficiency ambitions in support to the Nigerian Red Cross.

Conclusions

The conclusions from the MTR present lessons learned, including strengths, weaknesses, and key factors. They reflect on how Norway's humanitarian activities, including the Humanitarian Strategy and Strategic Partnership Model (SPM), are contributing to Norway's humanitarian goals.

1. Norway's Humanitarian Strategy is being well implemented. The NMFA's humanitarian activities are helping to save lives, alleviate suffering, and protect human dignity in the world's crises. During 2019-2022, already high global humanitarian needs continued to increase, reaching a new record of 274 million people in need in 2022, and protracted crises deteriorated further, often aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic and other factors. In response, the NMFA implemented the Humanitarian Strategy, broadly aligning with global needs, implementing government 'action points' in line with thematic priorities and goals, tracking progress, reporting on activities at year's end and prioritising efforts for the year ahead. Accordingly, Norway's mixed portfolio of partnerships, with just a few multilateral organisations and Norwegian NGOs receiving most of Norway's funding, implemented its activities and reported a wide range of results and challenges. In this way, Norway contributed to more than 100m people in need receiving humanitarian protection and assistance in 2021, promoted integrated responses to crises with a view to reducing needs, and promoted innovation, reform and good donorship in the wider humanitarian system. While Norway's Strategy works to translate the humanitarian budget into humanitarian activities, outputs and quantifiable results, its lasting impacts on people's lives, protracted crises, or the system remain unclear.

2. Norway is strong on protection. The NMFA is contributing to people in need receiving protection while addressing growing emergency assistance needs. The NMFA invests around a quarter of the humanitarian budget in protection-related activities (27% in 2021), spends roughly a third of its efforts working to support protection priorities, and maintains strong partnerships with leading protection-mandated agencies, such as UNHCR, the ICRC, and NRC. Norway's main partners report numerous outputs related to the country's protection goal, mainly delivered through protection services, protection mainstreaming, and protection advocacy activities. The NMFA reports achievements across protection priorities—including landmines, children, refugees, IDPs, and SGBV; and it was notable how Norway elevated SGBV on the humanitarian agenda, made a humanitarian contribution in the UN Security Council through work on the protection of civilians, and became increasingly recognised for a focus on protection in humanitarian action. At the same time, the NMFA invested considerable funding in emergency assistance, especially food assistance, and Norway is a major donor to WFP, although food security is not a thematic priority in the HS. Key partners reported delivering rapid emergency responses at scale in dozens of countries and reaching tens of millions of people. As global needs continue to increase massively, food insecurity in particular, and humanitarian funding gaps widen, a challenge will remain to balance Norway's focus on protection priorities with addressing acute needs.

3. Norway's 'integrated approach' poses a challenge. The NMFA is struggling to promote holistic humanitarian responses that help to reduce needs. The NMFA supports comprehensive and holistic approaches to addressing humanitarian needs in protracted crises, recognising that humanitarian action must go beyond immediate emergency relief. Roughly a fifth of NMFA humanitarian efforts are spent promoting integrated approaches – including through the humanitarian-development Nexus at different levels. Norway also invests considerably in multisector assistance (25% funding in 2021) as well as education and health sectors (23%) which imply opportunities for Nexus approaches. Yet partners reported few results (beyond limited efforts to apply nexus programming, sustain humanitarian impact and increase resilience) and assessing progress remained difficult in this goal area. In refugee responses, for example, partners reported efforts to support durable solutions through integrated financial inclusion, but overall solutions for refugees were in decline. In Lebanon, little progress towards solutions for Syrian refugees was notable. One set of challenges to Norway's integrated approach are systemic: barriers between humanitarian and development aid architectures; insufficient financing from development actors, including risk-averse international financial institutions; and lack of clarity about Nexus programming and how it works. Another set are closer to home: a lack of conceptual clarity about coordination and integrated approaches mentioned in the Strategy (the term 'Nexus' is not mentioned); questions from Strategic Partners about how to operationalise the approach and how to measure it; and enduring process differences between NMFA and Norad. The NMFA recognises both sets of challenges, and the risk that limited humanitarian funds could be used to fill development gaps.

4. Norway is a good donor and invests in the system. The NMFA is making system-level contributions to humanitarian donorship, reform and innovation. The NMFA distinguishes itself as a good donor, contributing around 4% of global humanitarian funding to support action by Norway's implementing partners, making it the most generous donor compared to both GDP and population size. It provides a high share of both flexible funding (40%) and multiyear funding (40%), which can help partners start new programmes, fill gaps in the response, or maintain core funding in a way that allows them to gain access to funding from larger donors. The NMFA's distinct donorship approach, which empowers partners to make strategic decisions and

prioritises dialogue above compliance reporting, is highly appreciated by partners and recognised by policy actors. The NMFA also spends roughly a third of its efforts working at system-level on humanitarian reform and innovation, focused on the use of cash, humanitarian innovation, and improving the operational response. As a result, for example, strategic partners are making new efforts to engage in innovation, and the NMFA-funded Humanitarian Innovation Programme is having positive 'ripple effects' in the system. The NMFA could do more to share good donorship practices and lessons learned, but its capacities are limited to be further involved in humanitarian reform processes (e.g. Grand Bargain activities) or play a leading role in organising pledging conferences for specific country responses.

5. Norway offers leadership sometimes. Working with limited management resources, the NMFA combines funding, partnership, and policy activities to exercise leadership in a few areas. In addition to its donorship activities, the NMFA, missions and embassies, promote Norway's humanitarian policy priorities in line with the Strategy, including through the UN Security Council, UN governing bodies and other multilateral processes. Norway also conducts a range of humanitarian diplomacy activities in priority country situations, and its policy expertise and diplomacy skills are recognised. The NMFA's activities in each thematic priority typically involve a combination of funding activities, partnership activities, and policy activities – sometimes at multiple levels: inside the NMFA, in specific partnerships, in crisis responses, and in the international system. In the notable achievements studied for this review, the NMFA combined these approaches in different ways, and further benefitted from small, dedicated project teams within the NMFA and collaboration with other actors, such as Norad or NUPI. Norwegian leadership appears to work best when donorship is combined with policy work and supported by small collaborative teams. Currently, Norway's humanitarian leadership is considered insufficient and missing opportunities to contribute to humanitarian goals, due to limited management resources.

6. Norway's management is getting more strategic. The NMFA's activities are guided by the Strategy, but efforts to monitor progress and learn lessons could be strengthened. The NMFA uses the Strategy as a tool to guide Norway's humanitarian activities, streamline aid management, and support policy coherence across embassies and missions. To support implementation, it also conducts important follow up and learning activities: monitoring implementation of the Strategy's 47 action points using a score card tool ('matrix'), facilitating retreats to reflect on progress, producing annual progress reports and annual prioritisation documents, as well as managing this midterm review and a planned end term evaluation. Such activities can inform implementation of the Strategy and will contribute to the final evaluation and preparation of a new Humanitarian Strategy expected by 2024. But these activities may not yet work together as a streamlined process tailored to the NMFA's limited management resources, the matrix tool does not capture partner results and important achievements in relation to the Strategy, annual reporting requirements from the government may be reduced, and learning activities could be more systematic.

7. The Strategic Partnership Model supports the Strategy. The SPM is being implemented with selected Norwegian NGOs to accelerate the HS. During 2020-2022, the NMFA reached partnership agreements with six Norwegian NGOs based on an innovative Strategic Partnership Model (SPM), involving their selection through an open process based on criteria linked to the HS, and including 20% in unearmarked flexible funding. These SPs account for 12% of the NMFA's partners (or around 60% of Norwegian NGO partners) and represent the most important means for implementing Norway's humanitarian portfolio alongside multilateral partnerships. The SPs implemented their portfolios in line with HS objectives and reported accordingly, noting increasing alignment between their strategies and the HS. However, it was also suggested the SPM's full flexible potential was being somewhat limited by the Strategy and its predefined priorities.

8. The Strategic Partnership Model is adding value. The SPM appears to be increasing efficiency and effectiveness, but remains a work-in-progress that needs continued development. As a process innovation, the SPM shows promising signs. It responded to an opportunity to enhance long-standing partnerships with Norwegian NGOs in line with the HS goals and priorities. It was designed through a project by the NMFA with Norad, resulting in the creation of the SPA template and selection of partners accordingly—a process appreciated even by non-selected partners. The SPM is increasing the NMFA's efficiency in partnership management, engaging SPs in common strategic thinking and fostering prioritisations by SPs. Its predictable funding aspect is enabling more effective humanitarian action by SPs (including more agile, responsive, and efficient operations) and the flexible funding aspect is enabling more rapid emergency responses. But challenges remain: Multiple expectations surround the SPM linked to good donorship, efficiency, HS implementation, and increasing the humanitarian reach of partners. While the development project ended in 2020, the NMFA recognises a need to monitor and adapt the SPM further with partners, who expect to provide feedback and inform adaptations, and lessons learned from the SPM could benefit other donors. It remains unlikely that the SPM is supporting improved results in terms of localisation and the humanitarian-development Nexus.

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on MTR findings and conclusions, discussions with NMFA staff, and consideration of humanitarian priorities for 2022.¹³⁴ They are presented as strategic recommendations, each followed by practical suggestions for the NMFA's consideration. The recommendations are intended to be budget-neutral, but also assume that some management resources may become available as aid management has become more efficient.

1. Sustain the good work. The NMFA should continue implementing Norway's current humanitarian activities without major change, in line with the Humanitarian Strategy (HS) until 2023. This would sustain the overall effectiveness of current contributions to protection, integrated approach, reform and innovation, and good donorship goals. It should be done through continued implementation of the HS with well-combined funding, partnership, and policy activities. This would involve:

- Responding to global trends in humanitarian needs by prioritising responses to large, protracted crises, and responding flexibly to basic needs in emerging acute emergencies;
- Limiting thematic priorities to existing ones, and being cautious about expanding these to additional areas such as food security, localisation, and climate change;
- Managing the risks to implementing the HS posed by, for example, widening humanitarian funding gaps, the Ukraine crisis's impact on humanitarian funding, the continued effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the growing impacts of climate change on crises.

2. Focus leadership efforts. The NMFA should enhance Norway's humanitarian leadership activity in a limited number of thematic areas. This would maximise progress in several core priority areas of the HS to make notable contributions, build on Norway's comparative advantages, and uphold Norway's role as a leading humanitarian policy actor. It should be done by selecting 3-5 thematic priorities, establishing small collaborative teams, using combined strategies, and capturing lessons learned to inform further activities. This could involve:

- Selecting existing core priorities, such as SGBV, POC, GHD, and SPM to build on current achievements until 2023;
- Adding forced displacement and solutions as a core priority, linked to the planned "Solidarity Fund" and recommendations from the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement;
- Avoiding greater leadership roles in areas where Norway lacks a well-defined comparative advantage, for example, the Grand Bargain process, localisation, etc.

3. Review Nexus approach. The NMFA should focus on learning about the 'integrated approach' during 2022-2023, and in preparation for the next humanitarian strategy. This would increase Norway's effectiveness in helping to reduce needs, especially in protracted crises, refine the scope of its humanitarian activities in this area, and provide a solid basis for this approach going forward. It should be done by addressing key questions such as: What works in terms of humanitarian-development (and peacebuilding) Nexus programming for people in large, protracted crises, including IDPs and refugees? What are the main barriers to progress? What value can Norway's humanitarian activities add in this area? It could involve:

- Engaging purposefully in the upcoming Norad review of the Nexus approach, as well as the review of the NMFA's Sahel strategy;
- Consulting a selection of Norway's largest partners, both UN agencies and SPs, for technical inputs on these questions;
- Engaging with Strategic Partners to identify any practical barriers to implementing the integrated approach;
- Preparing a guidance note to clarify key concepts, given that terms such as 'integrated approach', 'coordination', 'Nexus,' and 'durable solutions' carry diverse meanings;
- Engaging with Norad to develop harmonised approaches, including in specific crises such as the Syria refugee crisis and the Sahel;
- Selecting the Nexus approach as a core thematic priority for Norwegian leadership (see recommendation 2).

4. Improve evaluability. The NMFA should strengthen follow-up and learning activities to support management of the Strategy. This would enable more strategic management of current humanitarian activities during 2022-2023, establish conditions for an effective final evaluation (i.e. reinforce 'evaluability'), and kick-start the design of Norway's next humanitarian strategy. It could be done by carrying these specific technical fixes:

- Preparing a streamlined annual plan with dedicated resources for follow-up and learning activities, applying a selective light-touch approach and using existing resources

¹³⁴ NMFA (2022): Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022.

- Revising the matrix tool and related process to capture summarised partner results and main achievements by thematic area;
- Conducting light-touch case studies, when necessary, to explore what works and where in thematic priority areas (see Annex E: Additional evidence for examples);
- Continuing annual reporting on progress in 2022 and 2023 compared to the HS, based on the matrix tool;
- Using annual learning sessions to reflect on the annual progress report and making recommendations for the annual prioritisation document;
- Publishing a simple process document that explains the NMFA's budget allocation process, to clarify how global allocations are informed by global humanitarian needs;
- Harmonising budget expenditure reporting categories with the categories of the HS, if possible, to allow measurement of inputs by thematic priority.

Annex A: Terms of References

Midterm review of Norway's humanitarian strategy and Strategic

Partnership Model

Background

Norway's Humanitarian Strategy was launched in August 2018 and covers the period 2019-2023. According to the strategy, Norway shall play a leading role in global humanitarian efforts both as a donor country and as a humanitarian actor. The overall aim is to save lives, alleviate suffering and protect human dignity in humanitarian crises, in line with the humanitarian imperative. The strategy should be used as the main tool to guide the Norwegian humanitarian engagement. The main goals are to:

1. Ensure that people in need are given the necessary protection and assistance in line with the humanitarian principles (protection);
2. Promote an integrated and rights-based approach with a view to preventing humanitarian crises and reducing humanitarian needs (integrated approach);
3. Push for innovation and reform in the humanitarian sector (innovation and reform);
4. Promote effective, flexible, and predictable funding for humanitarian efforts (good donorship)¹³⁵.

To fulfil objectives related to good humanitarian donorship and to contribute to the overall achievement of the strategy, seven Strategic Partnerships were entered into in April 2020.

According to the humanitarian strategy, a midterm review should be conducted to adjust the course in 2021. A new humanitarian strategy will be developed for the period after 2023 and this midterm review will feed into this process. The Strategic Partnership Model was planned to be reviewed in

2022. It was decided to combine the review of the strategy and the review of the partnership model to see whether the strategic partnerships contribute to implementing the humanitarian strategy in the way it was planned and whether the Strategic Partnership Model is an effective way of managing the humanitarian grants. These terms of references outline the focus of the review, scope, and key research questions to be addressed. They are developed in consultation with the main stakeholders.

Implementation of the strategy

The global humanitarian needs increased with 40% from 2020 to 2021. The level of the UN coordinated global appeal and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals this year is unprecedented. Covid-19 has exacerbated the situation.¹³⁶

In 2021, 6.3 billion NOK are allocated to humanitarian assistance. This is an increase of 14% from 2020. To follow up the four main goals of the humanitarian strategy, Norway has strived to ensure a strategic use of the humanitarian budget, prioritised human resources to follow up the strategy and a high level of financial support to prioritised areas and partners. This is mainstreamed through the four main objectives of the strategy:

1. **Protection** is a main priority in the strategy, and protection of civilians is one of four priorities for Norway's membership of the Security Council. It is central in the collaboration with humanitarian partners, both through financial support and policy work. The Section for Humanitarian Affairs also has a Special Representative for Protection of Civilians to promote areas of importance for the humanitarian strategy.

Norway is an advocate for improved protection against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). SGBV is a widespread problem in humanitarian crises. In many conflicts, sexual violence and abuse are used as tactics of war. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, but men and boys are also affected. Other priorities are protection against landmines and other explosives; protection of children and young people, including protection of education; protection of refugees, internally displaced and vulnerable migrants; and protection of health.

2. Ensuring an **integrated and rights-based approach** between humanitarian response, long-term development, and peacebuilding efforts has become even more relevant due to the increased gap between humanitarian needs and available resources. Norway's humanitarian engagement shall be based on the humanitarian principles and respond to acute humanitarian needs. At the same time, Norway aims to have a long-term perspective and seek to contribute to more sustainable solutions. This should influence the way humanitarian action is carried out, wherever possible. Development and

¹³⁵ NMFA (2018): Norway's humanitarian strategy 2019-2023.

¹³⁶ UNOCHA (2021): The UN Global Humanitarian Overview 2021.

peacebuilding actors are increasingly engaged in protracted crises at an earlier stage, and Norway promotes increased cooperation and complementarity between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts (both globally, with partners and internally).

3. **Innovation and reform:** The humanitarian strategy gives priority to innovation and reform, including Norway's commitments through the Grand Bargain. Of great importance is Norway's aim to contribute to better and more effective results for crises- affected people. The objective is that humanitarian innovation will lead to better and more efficient response to meet the needs of people in crisis. This includes advocating for humanitarian innovation, with particular emphasis on protection and green response. The main initiative is the humanitarian innovation programme, HIP Norway, which is about to complete a three-year pilot phase. The programme is a cooperation with Innovation Norway.
4. To ensure **good donorship**, Norway entered into seven strategic partnerships in April 2020. The Strategic Partnerships are meant to contribute to the implementation and the achievement of the objectives of the humanitarian strategy. The partnerships should also increase predictability for the organisations concerned and provide better opportunities to respond rapidly and flexibly to new and ongoing crises. This includes to respond rapidly and to reach those in greatest need, especially those in hard-to-reach areas. The strategic partners were chosen through an open process, based on how they could deliver on the main objectives of the humanitarian strategy: protection, integrated and rights-based approach and innovation and reform. The criteria included compliance with the humanitarian principles, response capacity, humanitarian access, and integration of the gender perspective into all stages of humanitarian response. The partnerships constitute a platform for experience and information sharing. The strategic partnership agreements amount to a total of 1.7 billion NOK annually, of which 20% of the funds are flexible to enable the organisations to respond swiftly to new need throughout the year. The seven partnerships were entered into with the following six organisations:
 - Caritas Norway
 - NORCAP
 - The Norwegian Church Aid
 - Norwegian People's Aid
 - The Norwegian Red Cross
 - The Norwegian Refugee Council
 - Save the Children Norway

Review's object, scope, purpose, and objectives

The midterm review object is the implementation of the humanitarian strategy, and the Strategic Partnership Model.

The scope of the review is the period from the start of the current Humanitarian Strategy, in 2019, through 2021 for objective 1-2. Partners (the UN, the International Committee of Red Cross, international and Norwegian NGOs) receiving Norwegian humanitarian funding are included in objective 1-2. For objective 3, the review period is from the signing of the strategic partnership agreements in April 2020, until the start of the data collection for the review. Changes and adjustments related to Covid-19 must be taken into consideration, including the fact that almost no travelling has been possible since March 2020.

The purpose of the review is to assess whether Norway is on track in the implementation of the humanitarian strategy, assess the relevance of the strategy to adjust the course and to inform decision-making and strategic direction when formulating a new strategy for Norway's humanitarian engagement after 2023. The review will also provide information on the perceived value added of the Strategic Partnership Model, whether it is a good tool to achieve the main goals of the strategy and how it facilitates predictability and flexibility for the partners.

The specific objectives of the review are to:

1. Assess the relevance and coherence of the strategy and whether it has been used as the main tool to guide the Norwegian humanitarian engagement.
2. Document progress and results in reaching the main goals of the strategy.
3. Assess the Strategic Partnership Model and whether it is an effective tool for grant management, how it facilitates predictability and flexibility for the partners and is likely to provide the best results for people in need in line with the priorities in the humanitarian strategy.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the review should identify lessons learnt and give operational recommendations that are relevant for the continued follow up and necessary adjustments of the strategy, and the Strategic Partnership Model.

The review will have both a learning and accountability purpose and its main users will be stakeholders at the Ministry, Norad and partners.

Research questions

The review will respond to the evaluation criteria of *Relevance, Coherence and Effectiveness*.¹³⁷

1. Relevance and coherence of the strategy
 - o To what extent does the strategy respond to the global humanitarian needs and continue to be relevant when circumstances change (also in light of Covid)?
 - o To what extent is the strategy used as a guiding tool for Norway's humanitarian engagement?
 - o To what extent do the action points ("government will") in the strategy support achievement of the overall objectives of the strategy? To what extent have the action points been implemented?
 - o Are the selected partners relevant for achieving the objectives of the strategy?
2. Results and progress in reaching the main objectives of the strategy
 - o To what degree has the Norwegian humanitarian engagement contributed towards (or is likely to contribute towards) the achievement of the main objectives of the strategy? (including potential differences for men, women, and vulnerable groups, and likely positive or negative unintended consequences)
 - o How are the strategy action points planned, implemented, and reported on? To what extent does this facilitate learning and adaptation to the changing humanitarian landscape?
3. Strategic Partnership Model
 - o To what degree has the Strategic Partnership Model contributed towards, or is likely to contribute to, the achievement of the goals of the strategy in its present form?
 - o To what extent does the Strategic Partnership Model facilitate a predictable, flexible, and rapid response?
 - o To what extent do different funding streams and requirements from MFA and Norad affect organisations' ability to be flexible and to bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development?
 - o What is the perceived value add and understanding of the Strategic Partnership Model vs. previous arrangements?
 - o To what extent are the partners set up to reach those in greatest need, more specifically those in hard-to-reach areas?
 - o Are the partners' portfolios relevant to achieve the main goals of the strategy?
 - o Are the strategic partners working in line with the humanitarian principles?
 - o How is the Strategic Partnership Model facilitating reaching the Grand Bargain commitment of supporting the localisation agenda?

Possible approach and methodology

The consultants will propose an outline of a methodological approach that optimizes the possibility of producing evidence-based assessments. All parts of the review shall adhere to recognised evaluation principles and the OECD DAC's quality standards for development evaluation in addition to their guidelines for evaluations in settings of conflict and fragility.

The methodological approach should rely on a cross-section of data sources and using mixed methods to ensure triangulation of information through a variety of means. The consultants will develop a clear strategy and methodological approach for how to assess each review question.

The review will include the following components:

- **Context analysis:** The consultants should base their work on a clear understanding of the global humanitarian context. This will be included in the inception report.
- **Portfolio analysis:** A portfolio analysis of Norway's financial contribution over the humanitarian budget in the period from the start of the strategy until the start of the data collection (st. prp 1s for 2022 can be included for 2022). The main objective of the portfolio analysis is to map the total amount of and trends in Norwegian humanitarian disbursements in the review period to get a total picture of the humanitarian portfolio. The analysis will be key in selecting countries for field visits, identifying key

¹³⁷ OECD (2022): Evaluation Criteria.

informants and provide information for assessing the relevance of the portfolio in reaching the main goals of the humanitarian strategy. This will be included in the inception report.

- **Documentation of results (or progress on intended results):** The midterm review will assess results of the Norwegian engagement, or the progress towards results, through reporting from all relevant partners. This will also include a mapping of the strategic partner portfolios, how these are aligned with the humanitarian strategy and potential progress towards results.
- To respond to the research questions relating to Norway's overall humanitarian engagement, the consultants will deep dive into the case of how Norway has worked with protection against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. The case is selected based on given importance in the strategy, and the variety of activities at different levels (global, local and within the aid administration itself).
- **Country visits:** The consultants are expected to visit two countries with humanitarian crisis settings. The purpose of the visits is to provide information to respond to the overall evaluation questions. An overall evaluation of Norwegian engagement in those contexts is beyond the scope of this review. The countries for visit will be selected in the inception phase and be based on the portfolio analysis. The budget for the country visits shall be included in the inception report. Countries should be selected based on the volume of Norwegian humanitarian aid, where the majority of strategic partners are present; and that
- the engagement includes several of the main goals of the humanitarian strategy. At least one context should be a protracted crisis. The final selection of countries is to be concluded in dialogue with stakeholders during the finalisation of the inception report. The final decision will be taken by the Section for Humanitarian Affairs.

The midterm review team will:

- Consult all relevant documents (including programme documents and reports, grant scheme rules, budget proposals etc), reviews, evaluations, and research carried out in the review period of Norwegian humanitarian assistance.
- Interview a wide range of stakeholders, partners, and experts in Norway, and in relevant countries, group discussions or stakeholder survey(s) to identify stakeholder perception and analysis, to supplement and qualify other methods and to enable direct inputs from stakeholders to different research questions. It will be important to involve relevant national and local actors in case countries that may contribute to shedding light on the Norwegian humanitarian engagement in the period of the review.

The consultants will synthesise the above in a review matrix in the inception phase. The matrix will include an assessment of the review questions in terms of whether these are realistic to respond to, and, if so, how they will be responded to, in addition to an overview of availability and access to existing data. The matrix will be presented in the inception report and used as the key organizing tool for the review.

The midterm review team may propose an alternative approach that responds to the purpose and objectives in this Terms of Reference in other ways than those laid out above, demonstrating rigor and ability to respond to the research questions. Innovative methods of data collection and use of existing data is encouraged.

Challenges and limitations

In the inception phase, the consultants will identify potential areas where the review process could have a negative effect – on the review process, the evaluand or stakeholders. Based on the potential risks identified, the team will develop mitigation strategies. This will need to be continuously

updated during the review period. Some potential risks may be:

Access to and availability of data: Any limitations to the data as well as to the methods and analysis should be stated clearly in the inception report.

Security: The security situation may affect the review in terms of timing of visiting relevant countries and access to people and areas in case countries. This requires flexibility and will have to be carefully considered during the review.

Ethics

The midterm review process itself should be conflict sensitive. The review process should show sensitivity and respect to all stakeholders. The review shall be undertaken with integrity and honesty and ensure inclusiveness of views. The rights, dignity and security of participants in the review should be protected. Anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants should be protected. An introductory statement to the review report may explain what measures were or were not taken to ensure no harm/conflict sensitivity of the review itself, as well as the security of the interviewees.

Organisation of the review

The consultants will report to the Section for Humanitarian Affairs through the team leader. The team leader shall oversee all deliverables and will report to the Section for Humanitarian Affairs on the team's progress, including any problems that may jeopardise the assignment. The Section for Humanitarian Affairs and the team shall emphasize transparent and open communication with the stakeholders. Regular contact between the Section for Humanitarian Affairs, team and stakeholders will assist in discussing any arising issues and ensuring a participatory process. All decisions concerning the interpretation of this Terms of Reference, and all deliverables are subject to approval by the Section for Humanitarian Affairs. The team should consult widely with stakeholders pertinent to the assignment.

Stakeholders will be asked to comment on the draft inception report and the draft final report. In addition, experts or other relevant parties may be invited to comment on reports or specific issues during the process. The team shall take note of all comments received from stakeholders. Where there are significant divergences of views between the team and stakeholders, this shall be reflected in the final report. Quality assurance shall be provided by the institution delivering the consultancy services prior to submission of all deliverables. Access to archives and statistics will be facilitated by the Ministry and stakeholders. The team is responsible for all data collection, including archival search.

Deliverables

- Inception report not exceeding 20 pages, excluding annexes (draft inception report will be circulated with stakeholders for comments).¹³⁸
- Debrief with stakeholders in countries for visit (embassy, strategic partners, other stakeholders), presenting initial findings and impressions after field visit.
- Draft report, not exceeding 25,000 words (approx. 40 pages). The draft report will include an executive summary not exceeding 4 pages. The Section for Humanitarian Affairs will circulate this to stakeholders for comments.¹³⁹
- Presentation and discussion of draft findings and conclusions to inform recommendations.
- Final report not exceeding 25,000 words excluding summary and annexes.

¹³⁸The inception report shall be written in accordance with the guidelines from the Evaluation Department in Norad.

¹³⁹ The midterm review report shall be written in accordance with the guidelines from the Evaluation Department in Norad.

Annex B: Stakeholders Consulted

The tables below present the list of people consulted during the evaluation.

1.1 Global level interviewees

Name	Organisation	Position/ Role
Government of Norway		
Gunn Jorid Roset	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Director
Mette Tangen	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Deputy Director
Monica Svenskerud	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Deputy Director
Kristin Langsholt	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Advisor Strategic Partnership Agreements
Hilde Salvesen Merete F.Brattested	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Humanitarian Policy Director Director General
Idar Instefjord	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Senior Advisor Humanitarian Affairs (SGVB)
Stine Horn	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Security Council Coordinator
Ingrid Schøyen	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Councillor Humanitarian Affairs /former Humanitarian Section
Christian Rydning	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Embassy Secretary Humanitarian
Sven Skaare	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Senior Advisor
Henrik Thune	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway	Deputy Minister
Ine Eriksen Søreide	Norwegian Parliament	Chair of the Parliamentary standing Committee on Foreign Affairs & Defense and former Minister of Foreign Affairs
External Policy Actors		
Fredrick Lee-Ohlsson	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sweden	Humanitarian Director
Susanne Fries-Gaier	German Federal Foreign Office	Director for Humanitarian Assistance
Jan Egeland	Norwegian Refugee Council	Secretary General
Strategic Partners		
Nina A.Brattvoll Andreas Lid Knut Dag Albert Bårnes	Caritas	Humanitarian Coordinator/Adviser Acting Head of the International Dep. Head of Finance and Control
Renata Marie Ellingsen Silje Heitmann Linda Nordby	Norwegian Church Aid	Operations Team Leader Humanitarian Technical Team Leader Head of Humanitarian Division
Jane Filseth Andersen Gry Ballestad Per H.Bereivik Siân Rowbotham Jannecke Reed	Norwegian Peoples Aid	Head of Section Director, Dev. & Hum. Coop. Director Mine action and Disarm. SR Humanitarian Advisor Finance Control, Mine Action & Disarm.
Hanne M.Mathisen Kaja Sannerud-Andersen Kelly Nicole Arnesen Ivar Stokkreit	Norwegian Red Cross	Institutional Partnerships Sr Advisor Protection Team Leader Protection Sr Advisor Head of Humanitarian Values
Joanna Radziukiewicz	Norwegian Red Cross	Regional Representative, Africa
Cecilia Roselli Hanne Fjeldstad Marit Glad	Norwegian Refugee Council	Director of NRC Geneva Senior Institutional Partnership Adviser Global Programme Director
Kersti Haraldseide Linn Bogsnes Miles	NORCAP	Humanitarian Advisor SGBV Humanitarian Response and Resilience Innovation
Anne Kristin Hoseth Gunvor Knag Fylkesnes Nora Ingdal	Save the Children Norway	Senior Advisor Director Advocacy and Communications Director International Programmes
Agreement Partners		
Jean-Nicolas Paquet-Rouleau	ICRC	Operations Coordinator for Europe and Central Asia
Valentine Honoré Sarah Lotfi Layal Horanieh	ICRC	Country Manager, Donor Relations and Fundraising, Resource Mobilization Div. Performance and Accountability Advisor

Name	Organisation	Position/ Role
Anila Hazizi	Geneva Call	Humanitarian Financing and Partnerships Specialist
Therese Marie Uppstrøm Pankratov	Innovasjon Norge	Director of the Humanitarian Office
Miriam Lange	UNOCHA	Donor Relations Section
Shoko Arakaki	UNFPA	Resource Mobilization Specialist
Said Maalouf	UNFPA	Humanitarian Financing and Partnerships Specialist
Aasa Dahlvik	UNFPA	Director of the Humanitarian Office
Faisal Yousaf Lóa Magnúsdóttir Gill Tash Jones Linda Rosangela Berman Bieber Segolene Adam Kirstin Lange	UNICEF	Senior Advisor – The Nordics, Netherlands, Baltics & Emerging European Partners Public Partnerships Specialist Senior Advisor, Child Protection in Emergencies Senior Advisor Senior Advisor on Children with Disability Global Humanitarian Policy Chief Programme Specialist (Disability Inclusive Humanitarian Action)
Other partners		
Marit Sørheim	ATLAS-Alliansen	Secretary General
Kaj-Martin Georgsen Kerstin Dale	Care	Secretary General Head of International

1.2 Lebanon Case Study Interviewees

Name	Organisation	Position/ Role
Government of Norway		
Mari Grepstad	Embassy of Norway in Lebanon	
Raghda Allouche	Embassy of Norway in Lebanon	Programme Officer - SGBV
External Policy Actors		
Ola Boutros	Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon/MoSA	MoSA /LHCRP Coordinator
Elina Silén	Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon/UNDP	UNDP /LHCRP Coordinator
Camilla Jelbart Moss	Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon/UNHCR	UNHCR /LHCRP Coordinator
Soman Moodley	Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum	Head
Esmée DE JONG	DG ECHO	Head of Office
Maria Rosaria Bruno	UNOCHA	Head of Office
Anderson Craig	UNOCHA	Head, Humanitarian Finance Unit
Strategic Partner		
Benedicte Næss Hafskjold	Norwegian Church Aid	Country Director Lebanon and Syria
Ruba Khoury	Norwegian Church Aid	Head of Mission, Lebanon
Simon Weatherbed Southern Craib Naghham Souki Reema Moukarzel	Norwegian Peoples Aid	Country Director Lebanon and Syria Humanitarian Mine Action Manager Livelihoods Programme Coordinator Lebanon Projects Manager
Wilkes Martha Monica Martinez Rubio Ayman Foutoun	Save the Children Norway	PDQ Director CP technical Advisor Award Manager
Elias Jourd Ali Jammoul	Norwegian Refugee Council	Head of Programmes WASH Specialist
Agreement Partner		
Sylvain Lefort	Mines advisory group (MAG)	Country director
Tracey Maulfair	UNHCR	Deputy Head
Aoife Keniry	UNRWA	Field Programme Support Officer
Nicolas Oberlin	WFP	Deputy Head

Name	Organisation	Position/ Role
Julie Martinez		Government Partnerships Officer
Other partners		
Mohamed Mansour	ABAAD	Deputy Director and Head of Operations
Sara Abu Zaki	Marsa Sexual Health Center	Acting Director

1.3 Nigeria Case Study Interviewees

Name	Organisation	Position/ Role
Government		
Ingrid Skjølaas	Embassy of Norwegian in Nigeria	Deputy Head of Norwegian Mission
Nick Jones	Embassy of the United Kingdom in Nigeria	Humanitarian Advisor
Stef Commers	Embassy of Belgium in Nigeria	Deputy Head of Mission - Director
Renata Pistone	Embassy Canada in Nigeria	First Sec for Development, Humanitarian and Health
External Policy Actors		
Bart Witteveen	DG ECHO	Resident representative
Yann Bonzon	ICRC	Head of Delegation
Strategic Partner		
Nkese Maria Udongwo Gregory Atogbon Adie Michael Agidah Anthonia Mbakwe Falakomi Ogbalsi	Caritas	Director Hum. Services Finance Manager Programme Manager Marketing and Business Adm. Finance Officer
Stefan Jansen	Norwegian Church Aid	Country Director
Ali Zulfiqar Rahinatu Hussaini Antony Nwanze Mela Nebath	Save the Children Norway	Programme director Gender Policy Advisor Child Protection Advisor Project Coordinator
Geoffrey Onyancha	Norwegian Red Cross	Community Health Delegate
Agreement Partner		
Trond Jensen	UNOCHA	Head of Office
Ulla Mueller	UNFPA	Resident Representative

Annex C: Roles and Team Composition

Andrew Lawday. Andrew is the team leader on this evaluation and bring more than 20 years of experience in international assistance for fragile and conflict affected states. His focus includes humanitarian response, protection, conflict prevention and sustainable development. He has extensive experience in leading multidisciplinary teams, designing evaluation frameworks, engaging stakeholders, generating evidence, facilitating learning, delivering presentations, and writing reports for publication.

In this evaluation Andrew acts the technical lead, designing the analytical framework for the evaluation, leading the synthesis process, report writing, and ensuring overall rigour and quality assurance. He is also the lead on the RQs 1-9 focusing on the Humanitarian Strategy and capturing global perspectives. Andrew also led the Lebanon country case study.

Bjorn Ternstrom. Bjorn is the senior expert on this evaluation. He has more than 30 years of experience in humanitarian aid and development cooperation, with a particular focus on evaluations and organisational development. He brings excellent knowledge of evaluation tools and methods for different types of evaluation and outstanding hands-on experience in implementing M&E systems, multiple capacity assessments of CSOs and evaluations of multi-organisational interventions in complex environments, including conflict and post-conflict situations.

In this evaluation Bjorn acted as the analytical lead on the Strategic Partnership Model. He led the data collection, analysis and drafting process for RQs 9-11. He led two missions: one with the SPs in Oslo and the other to Nigeria for the development of the country case study.

Stephanie Disch. Stephanie is the intermediate expert on this evaluation. She has over eight years of experience working on evaluations and reviews of projects with various thematic foci. She has carried out literature mapping and document analyses, conducted interviews, set up surveys, and provided summary studies on core documents, supporting assignments for a variety of stakeholders, among others Norad and the Norwegian MFA.

In this evaluation Stephanie acted as the analytical lead on results and follow up on the Humanitarian Strategy. She led the development of the portfolio analysis and was instrumental in the analysis of RQs pertaining to 'Partner Results' and the 'Effectiveness'.

Mariam Hamad. Mariam is the project manager and researcher on this evaluation. She is a project manager in Particip's evaluation unit. She brings seven years of experience in evaluation, research, and implementation in developing countries and humanitarian contexts.

In this evaluation, Mariam managed the internal and external coordination of the evaluation, including the day to day management. She also lead on evidence generation supporting the analysis of evidence and the Lebanon country case study. Finally oversaw internal analytical process and quality assurance.

Annex D: Enhanced portfolio analysis

Methodology and description of data set

During the inception phase, the team conducted a preliminary portfolio analysis of Norway's humanitarian disbursements to map the total allocation amounts and trends in Norwegian humanitarian disbursements in the review period to get a complete picture of the humanitarian portfolio. It involved two steps: (i) mapping the available data and (ii) conducting an initial qualitative and quantitative (financial) analysis of relevant activities. The mapping revealed four datasets relevant to the MFA's humanitarian portfolio:

Humanitarian aid disbursement data (Norad)

This dataset is publicly available on Norad's website¹⁴⁰, which the team accessed and downloaded for the years 2018, 2019, and 2020. 2018 data is used as a baseline comparator to the time period under investigation this MTR. The disbursement data is a useful tool to get an overview of the funding. Its main strength for reviewing the humanitarian portfolio/strategy and strategic partnerships is how much is actually allocated from any given year to an agreement partner or country. Its main limitation is the time lag between spending and the confirmed and published data for the previous year. However, the team received the 2021 dataset directly from the MFA, though the data has not yet gone through rigorous quality review for publishing, and some information (such as extending agency or target area) was missing.

Humanitarian aid budget data (NMFA)

This dataset is made available in the annual State Budgets published a year in advance. Once the budget is approved, they are made publicly available on the government website, www.regjeringen.no.¹⁴¹ The team downloaded the MFA State Budgets for 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. The State Budgets cover all the funds, both costs and income, estimated for each department's coming year. The team focused on analysing the budget chapter(s) for 'Humanitarian Aid'. Since 2019 the relevant budget chapter has been 150, with the budget posts 70 Emergency Response and Humanitarian Aid, 71 The World Food Program and 72 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This dataset gives us an overview of the total Humanitarian Budget on an annual basis, its main utility will be for reviewing the humanitarian strategy. By comparing how much of the total budget is allocated to the Humanitarian Aid chapter, the team was able to understand whether funding has increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the years since the signature of the Humanitarian Strategy in 2018. Its main limitation is that since it is a budget, it excludes information on disbursements that may change during any given year due to unforeseen circumstances, such as an exacerbated crisis.

Financial Tracking Service (FTS) data (UN OCHA)

The Financial Tracking Services (FTS)¹⁴² present the reported humanitarian funding flows from funding sources, including donor governments, including Norway. The tracking service displays the funding from the donor's perspective and presents it based on the donor's source year rather than the year a recipient organisation uses the funding. Its main strength for reviewing the humanitarian portfolio is that the FTS dataset breaks down the funding by sector. This breakdown provided the team with an overview of the percentage of the funds used for Protection, and in this case, in particular, Gender-Based Violence, which will be part of the team's case study.

Partner Reporting (various)

The annual progress reports from the SP present the previous year's achievements, challenges, and changes to the projects/programmes that they have funded through the SPA with the NMFA. The partner progress reports do not follow a given template which has led to an inconsistent way of reporting results and achievements. Additionally, due to the time lag with the reporting, there was only one year available to the team, progress reports for the year 2020. With only one year available this source of information has not been used for the portfolio analysis, but it has been used for Annex G: Rapid review of NMFA Partner results.

¹⁴⁰ Norad (2021): Microdata. Downloaded on the 2nd of December 2021.

¹⁴¹ Regjeringen (2021): Dokumenter. Downloaded on the 15th of November 2021

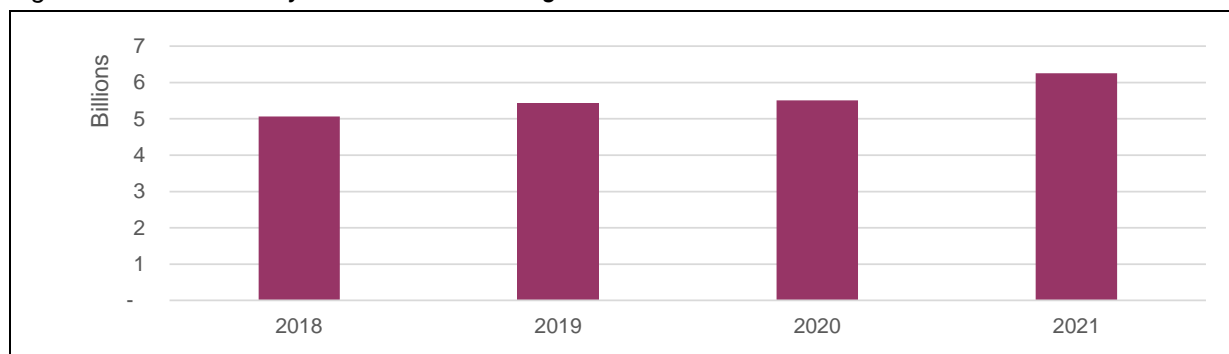
¹⁴² UNOCHA (2021): FTS Norway, Government of 2021. Accessed on the 6th of December 2021

Portfolio analysis

Key features of Norway's humanitarian portfolio

Size of portfolio: Figure 3 shows that for the years 2019-2021 Norway spent roughly, a total of NOK 17.2b on funding humanitarian aid agreements. When broken down by year one can see that the overall humanitarian aid budget has been increasing, NOK 5.4b in 2019 and NOK 5.5b in 2020 and NOK 6.3b¹⁴³ in 2021.¹⁴⁴

Figure 3 Norway's Humanitarian Budget 2018-2021

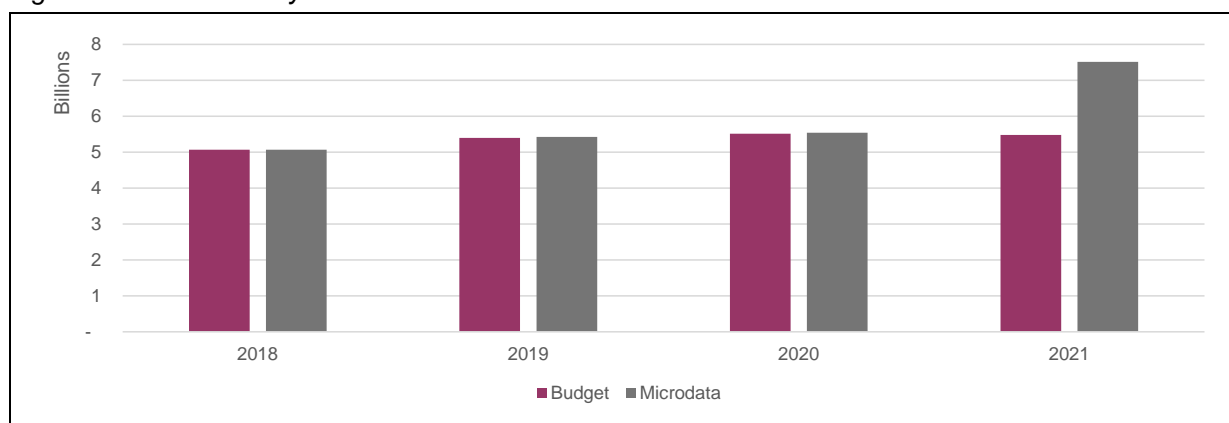


Source: Norwegian MFA (2022): State Budgets 2018-2022.

However, the appeal to parliament for extraordinary allocation for humanitarian aid noted that GoN's increase in spending was not proportional to the 40% increase to people in need due to the pandemic and requested additional funds.¹⁴⁵ The appeal for extraordinary allocation for humanitarian aid requested a total of NOK1.3b, which was approved and reallocated from the cut in the development assistance budget in 2021.¹⁴⁶ Flexible funds were reduced by 53m from 2020 to 2021 due to that amount going directly to core contributions to the WFP and the UNHCR.

Commitments versus disbursements: As shown in Figure 4, MFA disbursements are aligned with its yearly commitments¹⁴⁷, suggesting efficient planning. In 2021, MFA disbursement (NOK6.2b) surpassed its commitments (NOK5.4b) due to the extraordinary allocation for humanitarian aid requested.

Figure 4 Norway's Commitments vs Disbursements 2018-2021



Source: Norad (2021): Microdata; and, Norwegian MFA (2021): disbursement data.

Among the most generous donors (relative to GDP and population): Norway reported total funding in 2021 of USD 802.6m, which represented 3% of global humanitarian funding reported and made Norway the ninth largest donor (after Canada USD 868.7m and Sweden USD 1,021.4m).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ The numbers presented for the years vary from the state budgets since the microdata includes additional allocations that have occurred during the year. Additionally, the numbers for the 2021 have not been adjusted so they may also vary when the final accounts are presented in the Norad microdata.

¹⁴⁴ The balanced amounts from the most recent state budgets have been used for this figure.

¹⁴⁵ NMFA Appeal to the Norwegian Parliament (2021): 'Behov for ekstraordinær bevilgning til nødhjelp i 2021: Strotinget må gi et ekstraordinært bidrag på 1.3mrd til humanitær bistand for å møte de humanitære konsekvensene av pandemien'.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

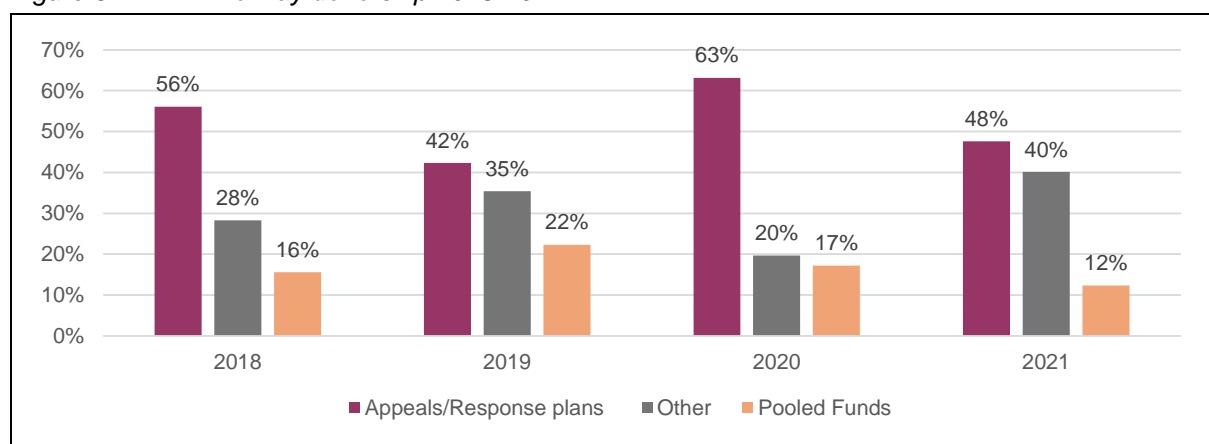
¹⁴⁷ Commitments were taken from the proposed budgets in the State Budgets 2018-2021 whilst disbursements were taken from the Norad microdata 2018-2020 and MFA disbursement data for 2021

¹⁴⁸ UNOCHA (2021): FTS Norway, Government of 2021. Accessed on the 6th of December 2021.

Extending agency: MFA was the extending agency for the vast majority of the funding agreements 96.8% (681/703) which accounted for 99.75% of the funding during the reporting period 2019-2020. Only a few agreements, 2.7% (19/703), were extended by embassies and accounted for 0.25% (NOK277m) of the funding, and most of these were by the same embassies: Lebanon (11), DRC (2), South Sudan (2), Somalia (2).¹⁴⁹ This represents a substantial reduction where in 2020, four embassies managed 7 agreements, as compared to 2018 when embassies 16 countries managed 58 agreements directly

Norway donorship 2018-2021: OCHA FTS data 2018-2021 indicates that Norway reported a majority of the funding (42-63%) to appeals/response plans, in comparison to 13-22% to pooled funds, as shown in Figure 5, the proportion of funding to appeal, pool funds and other fluctuate slightly in the reporting period, with variance in the proportion of the allocations provided to appeals.

Figure 5 Norway donorship 2018-2021

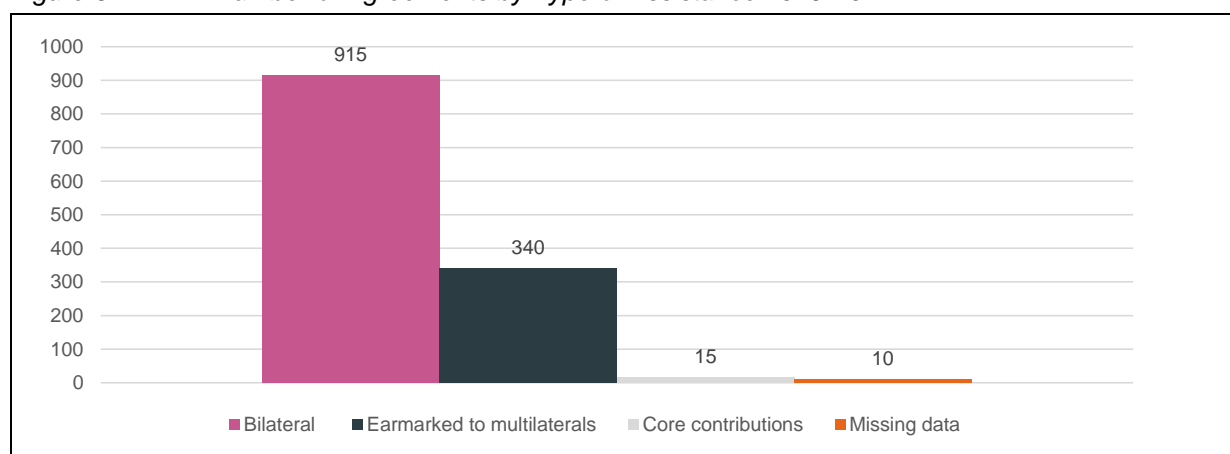


Source: UNOCHA (2021): FTS Norway, Government 2021.

Types of assistance

Norad microdata 2019-2020 and MFA disbursement data for 2021 show Norway provided three types of assistance: bilateral, earmarked to multilaterals, and core contributions to multilaterals (10 of the agreements for 2021 were left blank and have yet to be defined in the raw data received from the MFA database). As Figure 6 shows, a large majority, 71.5%, of the agreements were bilateral (915/1280), and these agreements received the bulk, 42.8% of the humanitarian aid budget. Nearly a third of the agreements, 26.6% (340/1280) were earmarked to multilaterals, i.e., for specific country responses and/or thematic responses and accounted for 32.7% of the humanitarian aid budget. Only a handful of agreements, 1.2% (15/1280) provided core contributions, and to only 4 multilateral organisations: CERF, UNHCR, WFP and OCHA (plus a fifth one whose name is 'not available' – presumably due to the need for official secrecy) but amounted to 24.5% of the total budget.¹⁵⁰

Figure 6 Number of Agreements by Type of Assistance 2019-2021



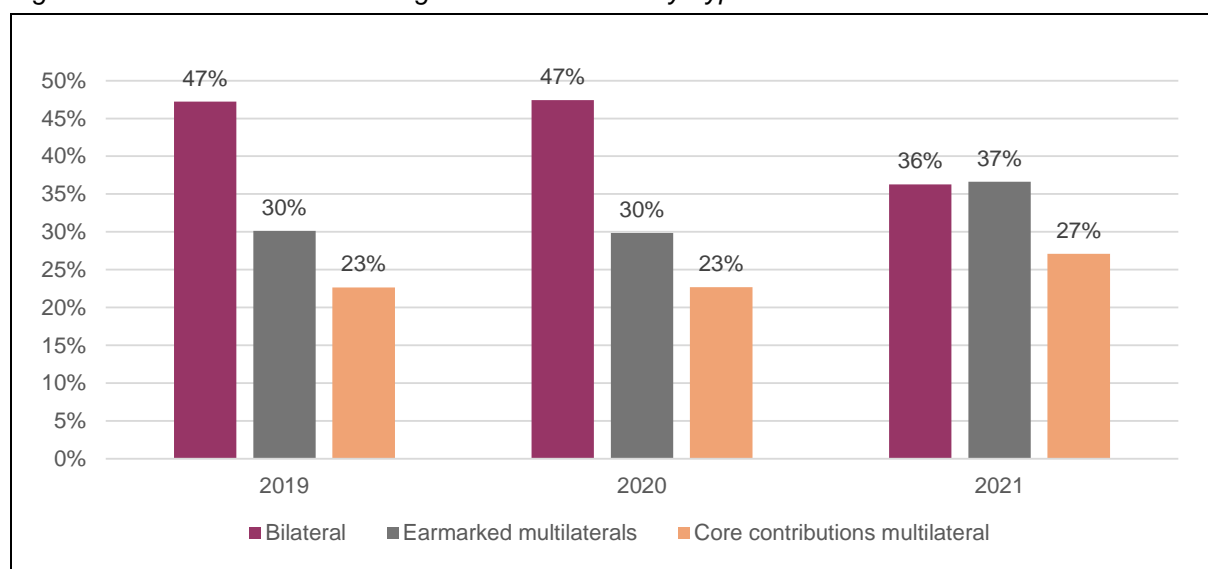
Source: Norad (2021): Microdata; and, Norwegian MFA (2021): disbursement data.

¹⁴⁹ Norad (2021): Microdata 2018-2020. Downloaded on the 2nd of December 2021; the MFA disbursement data for 2021 was not coded by extending agency at the time of writing.

¹⁵⁰ MFA (2021): disbursement data for 2021.

As shown in Figure 7, the proportion of funding disbursed to bilateral, earmarked multilateral and core contributions remained stable for 2019 and 2020, with most of the funding channelled through bilateral agreements. In 2021 there was a slight redistribution in the shares with a decrease in the share going to bilateral agreements (36%), and an increase in earmarked to multilaterals (37%) and core contributions to multilaterals (27%).¹⁵¹ Even with the redistribution, bilateral and earmarked to multilaterals agreements consistently received the lion's share of funding.

Figure 7 Amount of funding Shown in Percent by Type of Assistance 2019-2021

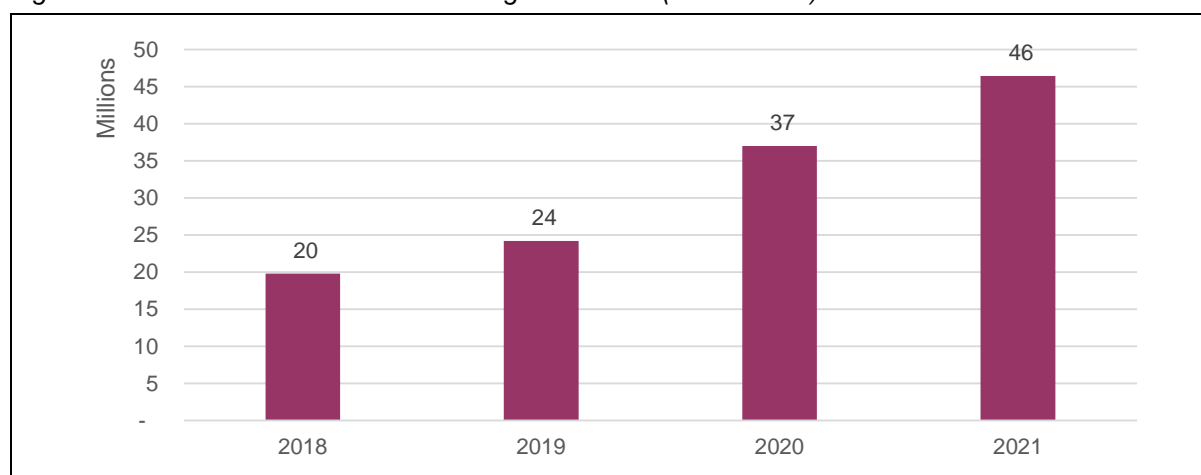


Source: Norad (2021): Microdata; and, Norwegian MFA (2021): disbursement data.

Covid focus: Norway funded 139 agreements with Covid-19 as a focus area, 64 of which were funded in 2021.¹⁵² Of these agreements 28 in 2021, 48 in 2020 and 17 in 2019 – were with OCHA. These included 9 agreements worth between NOK 50m and NOK 100m and 34 agreements worth NOK 5m or more.¹⁵³

SGBV: Overall, Figure 8 shows the funding to the SGBV sector has increased by USD 5m-12m per year, from a reported USD 20m in 2018 to more than double the amount of USD 46m in 2021. Most of the funding was consistently channelled through the Act Alliance/NCA and the UNFPA for the period 2018-2021.

Figure 8 Protection SGBV Funding 2018-2021 (USD million)



Source: UNOCHA (2021): FTS Norway, Government 2021.

Partnerships: Figure 9 shows the top ten partners receiving humanitarian funding in the reporting period. Norway disburses its humanitarian budget through agreements with partners. The humanitarian aid budget was consistently channelled to several large partners and dozens of others during 2019-2021 (and in the two years before that). Of the 52 or so partners, 63-65% of the overall funding during 2019-2021 was allocated to Norway's five largest partners: Norwegian Red Cross, the Norwegian Refugee Council, UNHCR, WFP and

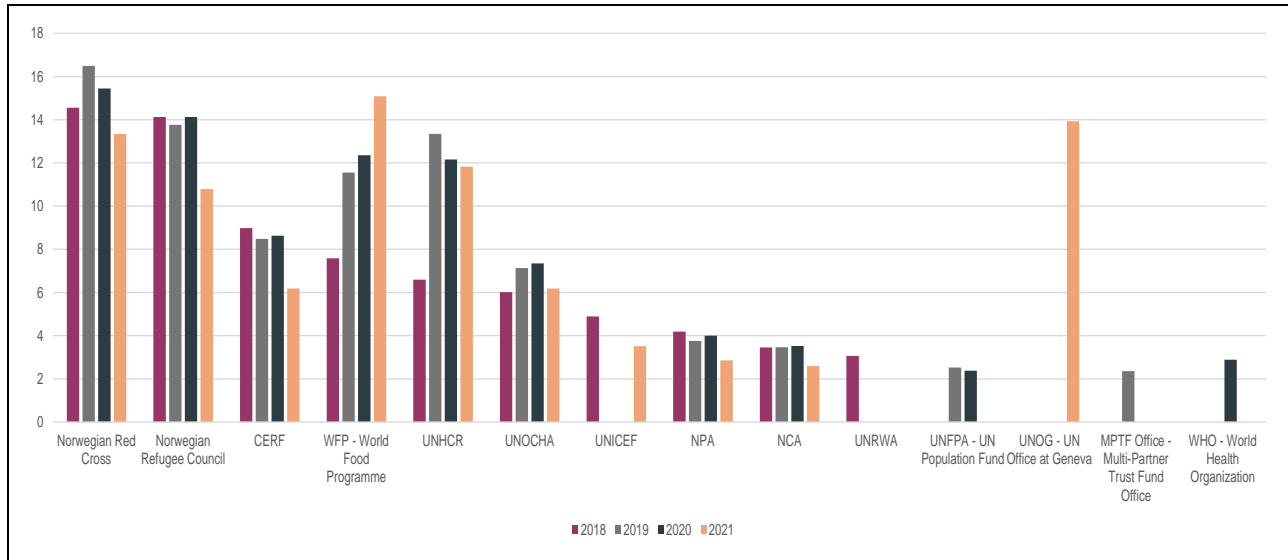
¹⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁵² Norad (2020): microdata 2018-2020. Downloaded on the 2nd of December 2021.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

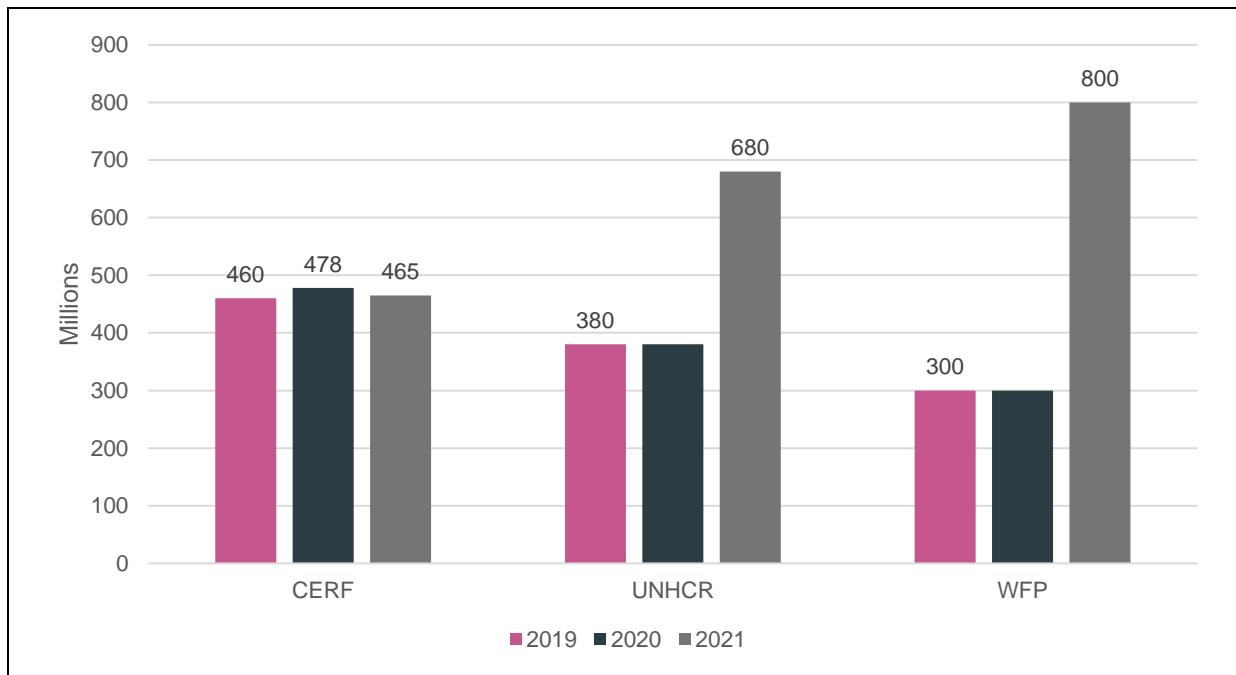
CERF.^{154 155} Figure 10 shows that the largest agreements were channelled through CERF in 2019 -2021 as core contributions worth NOK 460m in 2019, NOK 478m in 2020 and 420m in 2021. UNHCR (NOK 380m in 2019 and 2020 and 889m in 2021) and WFP (NOK 300m for 2019 and 2020, and 800m in 2021)¹⁵⁶ received the second and third largest allocations as core contributions. Meanwhile, more than a third of the total amount of agreements (excluding reimbursements of funds) amounted to NOK 5m or less.

Figure 9 Funding Top Ten Partners Shown in Percent for the years 2018-2021 (NOK million)



Source: Norad (2021): Microdata.

Figure 10 Largest Single Agreements the years 2019-2021 (NOK million)



Source: Norad (2021): Microdata

Agreements: Figure 11 demonstrates that NMFA funded 1280 agreements between 2019-2021 under the 'humanitarian aid' category to around 52 partners. This included 343 agreements in 2019, 359 in 2020 and 578 in 2021. It shows a reduction in 2019 and 2020 compared to 2018 when 481 agreements were funded and an increase in 2021 with nearly 100 more agreements funded than in 2018. It is unknown how many are

¹⁵⁴ From the MFA disbursement data for 2021 UN Office in Geneva received more than CERF, which is illustrated in Figure 10.

¹⁵⁵ Norad (2020): microdata 2018-2020. Downloaded on the 2nd of December 2021.

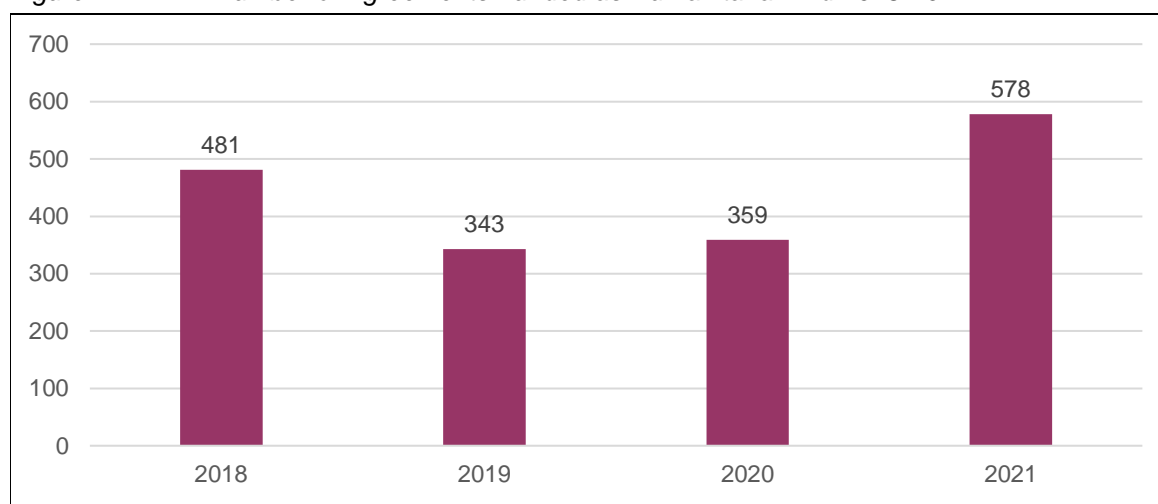
¹⁵⁶ CERF and WFP each had one agreement number that ran through the years 2019-2021 whilst UNHCR has had a new agreement number per year.

multi-year agreements. The lowest funding amounts in the microdata are for global service providers or small specific projects that are run by larger organisations receiving substantial funding such as NRC.

The Mines Advisory Group (in the ‘NGO other donor countries’ category) and Innovasjon Norge (in the ‘Norwegian public sector’ category) received in total NOK 217m and NOK 99m respectively from 2019 to 2021. These amount to the highest funded agreements not channelled through Norwegian NGOs or multilateral organisations. Both organisations also received funding through other agreements over the same period. The next largest amounts for non-Norwegian NGOs go to Land Mine Action (Halo Trust, MAG in specific countries).

Compared to 2018 there is a clear reduction in funding to both International NGOs, from 137.2m in 2018 to 101m in 2021, and Local NGOs going from 39m in 2018 to 7m in 2021.¹⁵⁷ From 2019-2021, only 10 agreements were signed with local NGOs, with just five NGOs in Lebanon (Sexual and Reproductive Health, SGBV), Colombia (mine action) and Laos (People With Disabilities), worth between NOK 5m and NOK 1m each. This signifies a drop from 2018 when 37 agreements with local NGOs were funded in 10 countries.¹⁵⁸

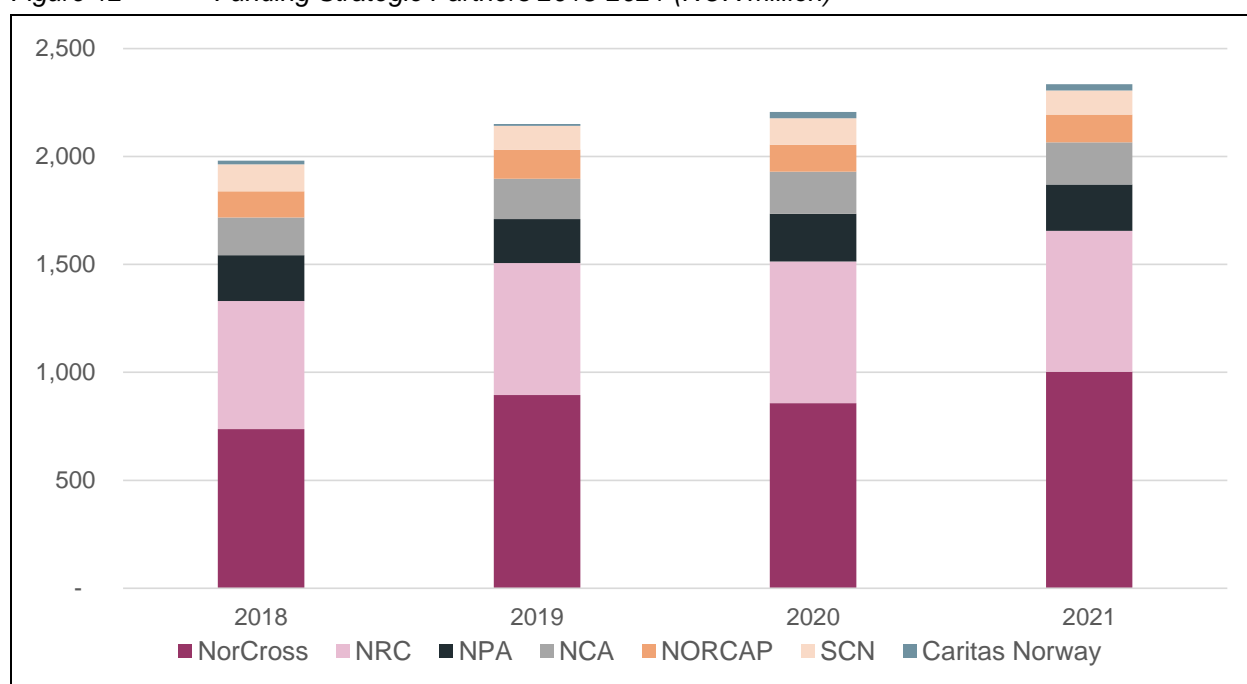
Figure 11 Number of Agreements Funded as Humanitarian Aid 2018-2021



Source: Norad (2021): Microdata; and, Norwegian MFA (2021): disbursement data.

Figure 12 show that seven strategic partners’ funding has remained relatively stable in the reporting period with no significant changes in allocations noted after the signature of the SP agreements in 2019.

Figure 12 Funding Strategic Partners 2018-2021 (NOK million)



¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

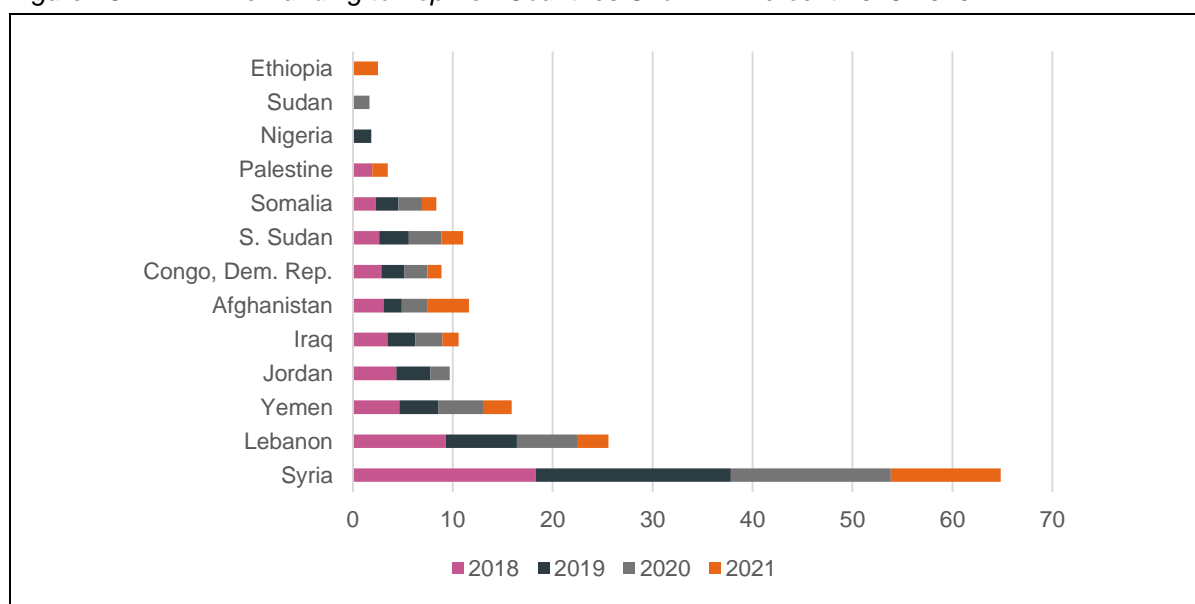
¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Source: Norad (2021): Microdata.

Geographic distribution

Recipient country: Figure 13 illustrates the top ten most funded countries for the years 2018-2021. It demonstrates that Norway's humanitarian aid was consistently channelled to several large crises and a wider range of other smaller crises in 2019-2021 (and in the two years before that). The team looked at the country disbursements, excluding the regional disbursements, which likely include some of the countries listed, but will not be included in the aggregate data on the countries. A large and disproportionate amount went to the two large Middle Eastern crises (around one-third of the total i.e. NOK 1.8b in 2019, NOK 1.5b in 2020 and NOK 1.4b in 2021), with Syria and its refugee crisis in Lebanon and Jordan accounting for the lion's share (NOK1.6b in 2019, NOK1.4b in 2020 and NOK 1.2b in 2021). The following largest recipient countries are Iraq, South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Similar to that of the top recipient partners, when it comes to country allocations, the top ten who have received the most funding were relatively focused.

Figure 13 The Funding to Top Ten Countries Shown in Percent 2018-2020



Source: Norad (2021): Microdata.

Sectoral distribution

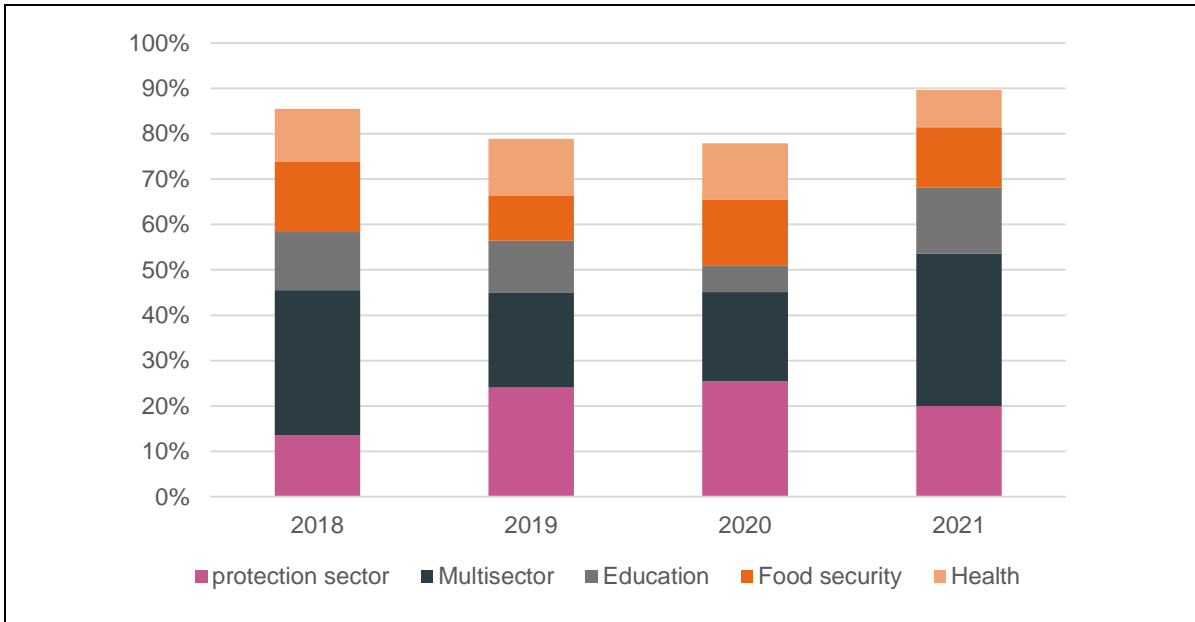
OCHA FTS data 2021 in Figure 1 shows Norway invested most of its funding (89,6%) in two main sectors: multisector action and protection between 2018-2021. There was an overall increase in the by 4.1% compared to 2018.

The protection sector saw an overall increase in funding from 13.5% in 2018 to 20% in 2021, indicating a prioritisation in funding with the new strategy. Within protection, notably, Norway's spending on Child Protection increased from 0.4% in 2018 to 5.9% in 2021, while spending on SGBV increased from 5.3% in 2019 to 9.10% in 2021.¹⁵⁹ Health saw a decline from 11.70% in 2018 to 8% in 2021. In 2020, spending on health was at its highest with 12.4% of the funding. Coordination and Support Services also saw a decrease in funding, dropping from 8.10% in 2018 to 5.7% in 2021. Finally, funding for Emergency Shelter and Non Food Items dropped from 1.7% in 2018 to 0.10% in 2021.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ UNOCHA (2021): FTS Norway, Government of 2021. Accessed on the 6th of December 2021.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Figure 14 Funding by sector shown in percent 2018-2021



Source: UNOCHA (2021): FTS Norway, Government 2021

Annex E: Additional evidence

This annex contains additional evidence prepared about Norway's notable achievements and challenges, as referenced in section 2.

Focus on Protection

During 2019-2022, Norway became increasingly recognised for a focus on protection in humanitarian action. According to interviews, the NMFA purposefully made protection a priority in the HS, recognising it as an area that needed attention in humanitarian action. Adopting a broad and holistic understanding of protection, the NMFA sought to apply this 'protection perspective' to all humanitarian thematic priorities, dedicated a policy lead focused on protection, and has invested considerable efforts in emphasising protection with UN agencies. This includes reviewing country plans for protection focus, dialogue on how protection is addressed and prioritised, and even 'threats' to apply earmarking if protection is not addressed adequately. The NMFA also promotes consistent messages on protection, working with and influencing other donors in this area.

As a result, Norway is widely recognised for its protection focus, and for clearly and consistently promoting protection in funding partnerships and policy work. Norway's protection focus is recognised and appreciated by partners for being 'clear and consistent' and for influencing some of their approaches. Norway's protection focus is 'very unique' for its consistent follow through, observed one partner, and comprises protection of children in armed conflict, protection of displaced people, and other aspects of protection.

While Norway's focus on protection is seen as an important overarching perspective and greatly relevant, some questions arise about how Norway can increase coherence among the many different protection activities. It is suggested that 'joining the dots' among protection activities could maximise the effectiveness of this approach. It is also recognised that protection as a perspective may have its limits, for example, when addressing public health emergencies (e.g., Covid-19) and that the interplay between protection crises and food security needs to be better understood.

Protection of civilians

During 2021-2022, Norway has made a humanitarian contribution in the Security Council. The NMFA reports humanitarian issues have a central place on the Council's agenda, and the Humanitarian Section is responsible for POC as one of four main priorities for Norwegian membership, the leadership of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (SC WG CAAC), as well as the role of the role of the humanitarian Syria resolution.¹⁶¹ The Section follows up the work of the Council in line with the thematic position notes and notes prepared on countries. Humanitarian priorities are often found at the intersection of thematic priorities and countries, and are dealt with under a number of agenda items and forms of meetings, including in the sanctions committees. However, following up on Norwegian ambitions and priorities required the section to set aside considerable resources.¹⁶²

According to interviews, the Humanitarian Section coordinated Norway's inputs to the UNSC on POC, during the country's tenure 2021-2022. Working within an NMFA structure established to support Norway's UN Mission in New York (the Permanent Representative sits on the Security Council), the Section coordinates work on POC and SC WG CAAC among technical leads, within the NMFA, and with country leads. The work involves preparing intervention texts and briefing political leaders on specific country or agenda items; contributing technical inputs to UNSC meeting documents and some draft resolutions; and preparing 'signature arrangements' when Norway holds the UNSC presidency, involving the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to elevate the meeting e.g., on POC/urban warfare (PM). Through this process, Norway has contributed to all UNSC resolutions mentioning POC during its tenure.

While recognizing 'we don't always win,' the NMFA has systematically promoted POC during Norway's tenure, ensuring that POC and SC WG CAAC language is either 'maintained' or 'improved' in every UNSC product, mandate renewal and resolution. For example, Norway improved UNSC Resolution 2601 on the protection of education in conflict and crises in October 2021 and achieved exemptions to sanctions for humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan in December 2021.

Partners also recognise Norway's collaboration over UNSC resolutions on 'healthcare in danger' May 2021 and POC/urban warfare, where Norway made space for ICRC and its president to speak to the Council. By way of challenges, stakeholders note the UNSC lacks an accountability mechanism for holding perpetrators and countries accountable on POC, and likewise more could be done to involve Norway's government sections working on international law, International Criminal Court and related mechanisms.

¹⁶¹ NMFA (2022), Priorities for Norwegian humanitarian policy in 2022

¹⁶² NMFA (2021), Priorities in the follow-up of humanitarian strategy, overall guidelines for the distribution of the humanitarian budget in 2021, and a report on follow-up of humanitarian strategy in 2020

Protection against SGBV

During 2019-2022, Norway elevated SGBV on the humanitarian agenda. According to interviews, the NMFA purposefully raised its level of ambition on SGBV in the HS, under the overall protection goal. In May 2019, Norway initiated and hosted an international pledging conference to strengthen efforts to combat SGBV in humanitarian crises, co-organising the conference with the UN, Iraq, Somalia, the United Arab Emirates, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The conference brought together SGBV survivors and experts, members of 167 national and international civil society organisations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, representatives of 100 countries, global leaders, and regional and international organisations.¹⁶³ The Oslo conference secured increased funding to address SGBV in humanitarian action. States committed to provide a total of over USD 363m to SGBV prevention and response in 2019 and beyond, in addition to unearmarked and core funding to humanitarian partners working to prevent and respond to SGBV, as well as funding to the CERF and country-based pool funds.¹⁶⁴ A progress report found that financial commitments for 2019 amounted to USD 227.45m, and 90% of them were confirmed as disbursed (amounting to USD 204.25m).¹⁶⁵ However, it also found little of the money went directly to new activities and actors working at the local level to prevent and respond to SGBV in humanitarian crises.¹⁶⁶

According to interviews, Norway pledged NOK 1bn at the conference to address SGBV in humanitarian crises over 2019-2021. This had the effect of 'leveraging' other donors to pledge as much or more and increasing funding for SGBV in the system and led to increased programming. The approach involved Norway taking a leadership role on this underfunded area, promoting it among other larger players who can make a difference through financial commitments, having politicians promote consistent policy messages, and having partners delivering results. During this time, Norway's funding to SGBV also increased. According to data reported to the FTS by the Norwegian government, Norway's funding for SGBV rose steadily from USD19.7m in 2018 to USD46.4m in 2021. The NMFA also managed funding for SGBV through the UNFPA core budget, Norwegian NGOs and country envelopes.

In annual reports, multilateral partners reported efforts to strengthen the response to SGBV across humanitarian responses, by providing diverse SGBV services in humanitarian situations. Strategic Partners reported on activities to promote good practices in addressing SGBV and increase access to SGBV services, as well as delivering SGBV services. The GHO reported 89% of HNOs reflected SGBV risks and impact in 2021, a great improvement compared to 2020, and considerable and/or increased funding for GBV responses through CERF and CBPFs. According to partners interviewed, the Oslo conference 'had a significant impact in terms of raising awareness,' and was 'a breakthrough event on how SGBV issues and humanitarian sector can be prioritised, promoted and financed'. Several reported reallocating funds to SGBV, engaging SGBV regional advisers, and being 'spurred to act more' on SGBV. According to one respondent, the funding was critical, 'you can launch any initiative, but no one will follow if there are no resources.'

As a result of these efforts, SGBV is perceived to have been elevated as an issue at the global policy level and in country strategies, so that SGBV is now reportedly covered in 90% of the human response plans (HRP)s compared to almost none before 2019. Partners report 'many partners in the IASC have started talking about SGBV,' and becoming a priority along with PSEA. According to the NMFA, the Oslo conference brought agreement that strengthening SGBV prevention and response must be a humanitarian priority; reenergized the commitment of all participants; gave visibility and recognition to the key role of national and local organizations;¹⁶⁷ raised political awareness and highlighted the importance of placing survivors of SGBV at the centre of the response and ensuring their needs are heard.¹⁶⁸ However, the impact of conference was also limited. According to a review, the conference generated 242 non-financial commitments. A review of the 182 progress updates received, more than half of these commitments (62%) were reaffirmations of commitments previously made elsewhere, such as under the Call to Action.¹⁶⁹ Most of the related activities took place at the global level (65%), i.e., in the sphere of international policy and international organisational headquarters, so the majority of activities were not directly targeted at beneficiaries among crisis-affected populations. However, an online survey shared with individuals working on SGBV, a majority of whom were local actors, found that, on average, most respondents viewed the Oslo SGBV conference positively, both in terms of benefits from attendance and perceived positive impact stemming from the event.

¹⁶³ NMFA (2019): Protection against sexual and gender-based violence. Article 20/11/2019.

¹⁶⁴ NMFA (2019): SGBV: The Oslo hosts' common statement. Article | Last updated: 20/11/2019

¹⁶⁵ Humanitarian Outcomes (n.d.): Oslo commitments on ending sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises. 2020 Collective Progress Report

¹⁶⁶ Humanitarian Outcomes (n.d.): Oslo commitments on ending sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises. 2020 Collective Progress Report

¹⁶⁷ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2020): Grand Bargain in 2019, Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary

¹⁶⁸ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Protection against sexual and gender-based violence. Article 20/11/2019.

¹⁶⁹ Humanitarian Outcomes (n.d.): Oslo commitments on ending sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises. 2020 Collective Progress Report

An integrated approach?

Norway struggled to effectively support integrated and Nexus approaches. According to interviews, the NMFA supports coordinated responses (HRPs and RRP) through funding to the CERF and CBPFs, and OCHA which is rolling out the JIAF, an important tool for intersectional analysis of needs. It also supported integrated responses through dialogue with UN partners, a rights-based approach that can break down programme silos, and establishment of country teams involving the NMFA, Norad, and embassies that bring together humanitarian, development, and stabilisation perspectives.

But the NMFA recognises important challenges in how to support an integrated approach and Nexus approaches within Norway's aid programmes and in the external system. The NMFA has struggled to operationalise integrated and Nexus approaches from the humanitarian side, given humanitarian principles and parameters, and a wider perceived reluctance or 'risk aversion' from development actors. Some conceptual confusion and mystification also surrounds the Nexus and related terminology.

Partners perceive the NMFA began to accept that emergency response is not enough when today's crises are protracted, and began working proactively on the integrated approach and the Nexus, demonstrating a willingness to try new approaches. Partners perceive integrated and Nexus approaches to remain unclear in the HS, suggest the NMFA needs to clarify its operationalisation of the integrated approach, and that more donor engagement on this would be useful.

Strategic Partners agree unresolved differences between NMFA and Norad in terms of work processes, guidelines, financial rules and conceptual approaches are hampering Norway's ability to apply integrated/nexus approaches in protracted crises.

The Nexus and refugees

In Lebanon, Norway struggled to apply an integrated or Nexus approach when an established refugee protection coordination structure proved unsuited to addressing growing humanitarian needs linked to the country's socio-economic crisis. Norway invested strongly in a holistic response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon through the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), emphasizing stabilisation beyond perpetual emergency response. The LCRP provided largescale social protection assistance across sectors for Syrians and Lebanese, but appears to be stuck in emergency response with too little attention to durable solutions. Meanwhile Norway does little to support coordinated humanitarian action in Lebanon. A needs-based humanitarian response is being developed through the Humanitarian Country/Humanitarian Country Team and pooled funds, to fill gaps left by the LCRP refugee response.

Questions arise about the excessively humanitarian character of the LCRP response, government's capacity to play its part in addressing the needs of refugees and its vulnerable citizens, accountability gaps in the absence of a functioning ministry of finance and the IASC coordination architecture, risks about fostering dependency on humanitarian assistance without a functioning 'nexus' approach, the absence of durable solutions for refugees, and falling short of goals outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees.

Some respondents highlighted the LCRP's unsuitability for addressing the needs of 2.2 million vulnerable Lebanese; Lebanon's dysfunctional coordination system, involving the LCRP and emergency response preparedness (ERP), and the need to harmonize them. They also noted a need to provide needs-based assistance in the absence of political and institutional structures able to support Nexus programming; and the opportunity to promote resilience and livelihoods in areas where safety nets do not work; and the opportunity to support Nexus programming (beyond refugee response).

In this context, it was suggested that Norway should maintain funding to the LCRP and a regional perspective while stressing durable solutions; adopt a principled humanitarian approach by responding to needs (not status); push for LCRP-ERP coherence at sector level; fund the LHF to maximise impact of CERF funding (including Norway's); and engage with the LHF advisory board to drive strategic direction and leverage coordination.

Humanitarian innovation

Norway's support to humanitarian innovation is having incremental effects in the humanitarian system. Interviews suggest the NMFA has made its priorities known and achieved concrete results in humanitarian innovation. The Humanitarian Innovation Programme is a grant and support mechanism, fully financed by the NMFA and administered by Innovation Norway.

The programme grants funding and support to develop, test and scale new solutions that can contribute to better and more efficient humanitarian action; supports innovation projects led by humanitarian organisations where the expertise and technical know-how from the private sector is applied; and supports both early-stage innovation (Innovation Lab) and scaling and diffusion of solutions that have proven to be successful at the pilot

stage (Scaling Programme). Its projects are in the areas of protection, green humanitarian response, cash transfer programming, and health and sanitation.

The programme, which began in 2019, now has a portfolio of 32 projects, many of which have reached proof of concept stage, involve a wide range of actors in the humanitarian sector (e.g., UNHCR, WFP, ICRC), and are perceived to be having incremental 'ripple effects' on the system. The programme identifies promising projects in the area of protection, involving community inclusion currencies, dignified identities in cash programming, and tackling improvised explosive devices, and in the area of green response, with multiple projects addressing waste management, and scaling solar energy. Beyond these innovations and an evaluation that found the programme meets a need in the sector, the programme reports success in 'de-risking' private innovation partnerships, getting humanitarians to collaborate in innovation processes, and introducing better tools for sector collaboration with private sector.

While it is recognised that not all system reform can be achieved through technical solutions, challenges remain with regard to incentives for taking up innovations at the programme level, too many humanitarian innovations disappear after proof of concept stage ('death by proof of concept'), and innovation is not always understood as a permanent and necessary part of the sector. Many humanitarian innovation projects, often done by one or few agencies instead of system-wide, also remain too small to attract appropriate larger finance and impact investors capable of taking them to scale. It is suggested that private sector knowhow and finance can be best engaged through 'blended finance' arrangements, with public funding facilitating private sector involvement.

Diffusing Norway's approach

Norway's good donorship approach is a success that could be further shared. Diverse stakeholders perceived the NMFA made good progress towards Grand Bargain commitments in terms of unearmarked funding and multiyear agreements, and the SPM will allow further progress. But NMFA actors stressed that quality donorship goes beyond funding arrangements and see further room for improvement.

Partners consistently highlighted Norway's good donorship practices, especially its principled approach and flexible, predictable, quality funding. 'Norway is a champion and a gold-star donor,' said one partner. 'We absolutely value its good donorship practices and wish to see them replicated across the main donors.'

Different stakeholders concurred that Norway should do more to disseminate its good donorship practices. Partners suggested Norway should do more 'leading by example,' 'sharing experiences of risk-sharing,' and 'scaling up its leadership role'. Policy actors suggested Norway could do more to promote its flexible and unearmarked funding model with other donors, in order to have a more systemic impact. They also suggested the NMFA's excellent donorship practices could be better disseminated (e.g., with regard to GHD, SGBV, POC, SPM), and that Norway could use this position to do more donorship convening for specific purposes.

Annex F: Review Framework

Enquiry 1. Reviewing the Strategy's relevance	
Relevance means the extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. It involves looking at differences and trade-offs between different priorities or needs. It requires analysing any changes in the context to assess the extent to which the intervention can be (or has been) adapted to remain relevant. ¹⁷⁰ The MTR will consider relevance to global humanitarian needs and adaptation to changing context. It will examine this at country level through cases studies. Not relevance to partners and beneficiaries	
RQ 1. Relevance to the context: To what extent and how does the strategy respond to the global humanitarian needs and continue to be relevant when circumstances change (also in light of Covid)?	
JC 1.1 Adaptation	The HS priorities responded to changing global needs in 2019-2022, e.g., the top three identified in context analysis: Covid-19 and public health measures, climate change and environmental factors, and changing crises dynamics (e.g., Ethiopia, Afghanistan)
JC 1.2 Process	The HS has a functional process for responding to changes in global needs, humanitarian responses, and system/policies (reform and innovation)
Enquiry 2. Reviewing the Strategy's coherence	
Coherence is about how well an intervention 'fits' internally and externally. It assesses the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution. ¹⁷¹ The MTR will focus on in the internal coherence of the HS and how it fits within the MFA (i.e., goals, priorities, and action points). It will not assess external coherence within the sector or countries.	
RQ2. Utilisation: To what extent and how is the strategy used to guide Norway's humanitarian engagement?	
JC 2.1 Allocations	Relevant MFA staff use the strategy to guide allocation decisions.
JC 2.2 Policy/advocacy	Relevant MFA staff use the strategy to guide policy and advocacy activities.
JC 2.3 Alignment	Stakeholders perceive alignment/compatibility of action points with overall objectives.
RQ3. Partnerships: To what extent and how are partnerships compatible with objectives of the strategy?	
JC 3.1 Process	The selection process ensures partners are aligned with strategy objectives.
JC 3.2 Programmes	The programmes of partners are aligned and remain aligned with strategy objectives and priorities.
JC 3.3 Agreements	The agreements and partnership model is effective / appropriate to support achievement of strategy objectives and priorities.
JC 3.4 Results	The results of the partners align with strategy objectives and priorities
Enquiry 3. Reviewing the Strategy's effectiveness	
Effectiveness means the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups. It involves taking account of the relative importance of the objectives or results. ¹⁷² Results mean the output, outcome or impact (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) of an intervention. ¹⁷³ The results chain means the causal sequence necessary to achieve desired objectives beginning with inputs, moving through activities and outputs, and culminating in outcomes, impacts, and feedback. ¹⁷⁴ The MTR will assess what progress is being made towards achieving the main goals, by considering MFA activities and outputs (Action Points) and partner activities, outputs, and outcomes. Its ability to capture outcomes and impact will be limited.	
RQ4. Protection: To what extent/degree [and how] has the Norwegian humanitarian engagement contributed towards (or is likely to contribute towards) the achievement of objective 1 of the strategy ('protection'): ensuring that people in need are given the necessary protection and assistance, in line with the humanitarian principles? What potential differences for men, women, and vulnerable groups, and likely positive or negative unintended consequences.	
JC4.1 Action points	The MFA implements relevant action points as intended
JC4.2 Results	Relevant partners conduct activities and deliver results as intended
JC4.3 Achievements	Significant global achievements are discernible
JC4.4 SGBV	Action points, results, and achievements demonstrate SGBV progress
RQ5. Integrated approach: To what extent/degree [and how] has the Norwegian humanitarian engagement contributed towards (or is likely to contribute towards) the achievement of objective 2 of the strategy ('integrated approach'): Promoting an integrated and rights-based approach with a view to preventing humanitarian crises and reducing humanitarian? What potential differences for men, women, and vulnerable groups, and likely positive or negative unintended consequences.	
JC5.1 Action points	The MFA implements relevant action points as intended
JC5.2 Results	Relevant partners conduct activities and deliver results as intended

¹⁷⁰ OECD DAC (2021): Evaluation Criteria

¹⁷¹ ibid

¹⁷² ibid

¹⁷³ OECD DAC (2021): Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management

¹⁷⁴ ibid

JC5.3 Achievements	Significant global achievements are discernible
RQ6. Innovation and reform: To what extent/degree [and how] has the Norwegian humanitarian engagement contributed towards (or is likely to contribute towards) the achievement of objective 3 of the strategy ('innovation and reform'): Pushing for innovation and reform in the humanitarian sector? What potential differences for men, women, and vulnerable groups, and likely positive or negative unintended consequences.	
JC6.1 Action points	The MFA implements relevant action points as intended
JC6.2 Results	Relevant partners conduct activities and deliver results as intended
JC6.3 Achievements	Significant global achievements are discernible
RQ7. Good donorship: To what extent/degree [and how] has the Norwegian humanitarian engagement contributed towards (or is likely to contribute towards) the achievement of objective 4 of the strategy ('good donorship'): Promoting effective, flexible, and predictable funding for humanitarian efforts? What potential differences for men, women, and vulnerable groups, and likely positive or negative unintended consequences.	
JC7.1 Action points	The MFA implements relevant action points as intended
JC7.2 Results	Relevant partners conduct activities and deliver results as intended
JC7.3 Achievements	Significant global achievements are discernible
RQ8. Strategy management: To what extent and how are the strategy action points planned, implemented, and reported on? To what extent and how does this facilitate learning and adaptation to the changing humanitarian landscape?	
JC8.1 Monitoring	The MFA systematically plans, implements, and reports on actions in the humanitarian strategy ('follow up')
JC 8.2 Learning	The MFA systematically generates evidence and timely learning about the strategy's progress, allowing for adaptations or 'adaptive management'
Enquiry 4. Reviewing the Strategic Partnership Model	
A process innovation means changes in the ways services and products are created or delivered. Evaluating innovations against fixed predefined criteria may allow for assessments of processes and outputs, but may not capture the worth of innovations such as iterative learning, impact, being problem-/user-driven, and the promise of a 'step change' or comparative improvement to current practice. ¹⁷⁵ Instead innovations may be better assessed being asking whether they have (i) a value proposition or innovation logic, usually offering a new solution to a recognised problem; (ii) a process for managing the innovation, involving iterative learning about how well it works (and unintended consequences); and (iii) evolving outcomes, including potential for comparative improvements in humanitarian action. The MTR will review the SPM as a process innovation with the potential to generate comparative improvements in humanitarian action at the level of partner programmes, humanitarian responses, and Norway's humanitarian strategy. To better capture the innovative potential of the SPM we have reframed the questions, while keeping the original proposed criteria as judgement criteria.	
RQ9. Value proposition: To what extent does the SPM offer a logical new solution to a recognised problem? What is the perceived value add and understanding of the SPM compared to previous arrangements?	
JC 9.1 Principles:	The SPM partners work in line with the humanitarian principles
JC.9.2 Relevance	The SPM partners' portfolios are relevant to achieve the main goals of the strategy
JC.9.3 Reach	The SPM partners are set up to reach those in greatest need, in hard-to-reach areas
RQ10. Managed process: To what extent and how is the SPM piloting and development managed as a process?	
RQ11. Comparative improvement: TWE is the SPM improving the strategy's ability to achieve objectives?	
JC11.1 Humanitarian-development bridge	The SPM strengthens partners' ability to be flexible and bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development, (i.e., by streamlining different funding streams and requirements from MFA and Norad)
JC11.2 Localisation	The SPM facilitates achieving the Grand Bargain commitment to support the localisation agenda, i.e. increasing multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders, reducing partnership barriers, channelling 25% humanitarian funding to local and national responders 'as directly as possible' ¹⁷⁶
JC11.3 Emergency response	The SPM facilitates a [more] predictable, flexible, and rapid response (i.e., at country level)
JC11.4 Norway objectives	The SPM contributed towards, or is likely to contribute to, the achievement of the goals of the strategy in its present form
Enquiry 5. Capturing learning about the Strategy	
Lessons learned is often used to mean generalisations based on evaluation experiences with projects, programs, or policies that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design, and implementation that affect performance, outcome, and impact. ¹⁷⁷ A good evaluation report correctly identifies lessons that stem logically from the findings, presents an analysis of how they can	

¹⁷⁵ Obrecht, A. with Warner, A. and Dillon, N. (2017): Working paper: Evaluating humanitarian innovation. HIF/ALNAP Working Paper. London: ODI/ALNAP.

¹⁷⁶ See the Grand Bargain workstream 2 commitments 1,2,4; accessed: www.interagencystandingcommittee.org

¹⁷⁷ OECD DAC (2021): Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Managementf

be applied to different contexts and/or different sectors, and takes into account evidential limitations such as generalising from single point observations.¹⁷⁸ Realist approaches in particular assume that nothing works everywhere for everyone and context makes a big difference to programme outcomes. A realist evaluation asks not 'what works?' but 'how or why does this work, for whom, in what circumstances?'¹⁷⁹

Conclusions point out the factors of success and failure of the evaluated intervention, with special attention paid to the intended and unintended results and impacts, and more generally to any other strength or weakness. A conclusion draws on data collection and analyses undertaken, through a transparent chain of arguments.¹⁸⁰ The MTR will develop the conclusions as the lessons learned based on the hypothesis, informed by the findings, and in collaboration with MFA users and/or the reference group.

Recommendations are proposals aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, quality, or efficiency of a development intervention; at redesigning the objectives; and/or at the reallocation of resources. Recommendations should be linked to conclusions.¹⁸¹ Recommendations should be formulated in a clear and concise manner, prioritized to the extent possible, and state responsibilities and the time frame for their implementation to the extent possible.¹⁸² The MTR will develop the recommendations on the basis of the conclusions in collaboration with MFA users and/or the reference group.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations Evaluation Group (2002): Standards for Evaluation in the UN System

¹⁷⁹ Westhorp, G (2014): Realist Impact Evaluation, An Introduction. Methods Lab, Overseas Development Institute

¹⁸⁰ OECD DAC (2021) Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management

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