

Strategy for Sweden's humanitarian aid provided through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) 2017–2020

1. Direction

The purpose of the strategy is to manage Sweden's humanitarian aid via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The overall objective of Sweden's humanitarian aid is to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity for the benefit of people in need who have been, or are at risk of becoming, affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters or other disaster situations. The strategy applies during the period 2017–2020 and covers the funds allocated in the appropriation directions of Sida for each budget year.

To save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity for people affected by crises, Sweden provides support to contributions made up of material aid and protective measures. To achieve the overall objective within the framework of the strategy, Sida is expected to contribute to:

- needs-based, fast and effective humanitarian response;
- increased protection for people affected by crises and increased respect for international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles;
- increased influence for people affected by crises; and
- greater capacity and efficiency in the humanitarian system.

Gender equality, conflict sensitivity and resilience must be systematically mainstreamed in humanitarian aid.

2. Introduction: increased humanitarian needs in a changing humanitarian context

Over the last ten years, global humanitarian needs have increased significantly, above all as a result of conflicts that are difficult to resolve, leading to protracted refugee situations. Environmental and climate-related crises, natural disasters and health threats, such as epidemics, have also added to the increasing needs. Recurrent crises are occurring in the wake of climate change and environmental degradation, which in the long term risks further intensifying the needs. People in already vulnerable situations, such as women and children, are harder hit by humanitarian crises. Violence and abuse against women, men, girls and boys have increased. Women and girls are often subjected to gender-based violence and are at considerable risk of being subjected to human trafficking or forced marriage, for example. The total number of people who are currently fleeing is over 65 million, which is greater than ever before. The trend is for refugee situations to become more protracted; it is estimated that 6.7 million people are living in protracted refugee situations under UNHCR's mandate (and 5.2 million under UNRWA's mandate). On average, a protracted refugee situation lasts for 26 years, according to UNHCR.

Humanitarian aid is conveyed in different contexts; the majority is provided in conflict situations in which offences against international humanitarian law and human rights violations, limited access to people affected by crises and increasing violence against humanitarian staff are common. The costs of meeting the growing humanitarian needs have increased fourfold over the past decade and the humanitarian appeals are underfinanced, despite increased humanitarian financing.

To better help women, men, girls and boys affected by crises, we need a broader and more effective approach at both local and global level, which – in addition to humanitarian financing – focuses on conflict prevention and long-term development cooperation to reduce future humanitarian needs. Development cooperation has an important role to play in addressing the root causes of crises, strengthening preventive measures and strengthening people's and societies' resilience, ability to recover and ability to adapt in the face of crises and disasters. This is why close interaction is needed between humanitarian aid and long-term development cooperation, while the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and the impartial mission and nature of the humanitarian actors must be respected.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the 2030 Agenda and the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 have contributed to a greater insight into the need for a holistic and integrated approach to reduce the risk and impact of humanitarian crises. Both development actors and humanitarian actors should contribute to resilience and disaster risk reduction in accordance with the 2030 Agenda. The promise of the 2030 Agenda to 'leave no one behind' requires that particular attention be given to the poorest and most vulnerable people, which was also an important issue at the World Humanitarian Summit.

The summit resulted in several initiatives and commitments from a large number of actors. In addition to the WHS main commitments, Sweden made 47 specific commitments concerning: 1) humanitarian principles, international humanitarian law, protection and conflict perspectives; 2) effective humanitarian financing; 3) risk, resilience, interaction between humanitarian aid/long-term development cooperation and sustainable solutions; and 4) women and girls.

Sweden also played a major role in drawing up the 'Grand Bargain' agreement, which was negotiated between the world's 15 largest humanitarian donors and the 15 largest organisations, and which was launched at the WHS. Grand Bargain covers 10 areas totalling some 50 commitments aimed at making humanitarian aid more transparent, effective and inclusive. The agreement highlights the importance of partnerships between donors and organisations, between international and local actors, and not least between humanitarian actors and populations affected by crisis. The Grand Bargain commitments are an important framework for humanitarian reform efforts, both for Sweden's own action and for governance of partner organisations.

3. Starting points and activities

The starting point for humanitarian aid is that each state has the primary responsibility for meeting the humanitarian needs that arise within its own borders. In cases where the state or other organisations in the country in question either cannot or do not want to live up to this responsibility, external organisations and states with adequate capability and capacity have a responsibility to provide support to measures to meet these needs, in line with international humanitarian law and established practice within international humanitarian aid. This duty is often called the *humanitarian imperative*.

Humanitarian aid must be based on global humanitarian needs and the humanitarian principles, as well as international humanitarian law, international refugee law, human rights, legal instruments with a bearing on disasters, and accepted international practice in this area. In addition, humanitarian aid is steered by the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD). In accordance with the GHD principles, financial support must be fast, flexible and predictable so that measures can be adapted during implementation and so as to facilitate planning.

Sweden's humanitarian aid must abide by UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 and all of its subsequent resolutions. General Assembly Resolution 46/182 sets out the humanitarian principles and provides the framework for the UN's unique task of leading and coordinating international humanitarian measures.

The Government's policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian aid sets out the starting points and the fundamental principles that can guide the design and implementation of this aid.

Sida's activities are to contribute to the implementation of Sweden's WHS commitments and its commitments in the Grand Bargain agreement. Sida is to contribute to the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, which affects both humanitarian operations and development cooperation.

Area 1: Needs-based, fast and effective humanitarian response. Global humanitarian needs must guide Sweden's humanitarian aid. Fast, flexible and predictable humanitarian financing can be life-saving and contribute to more effective humanitarian aid. Sida is to:

- meet the humanitarian needs of women, men, girls and boys affected by crises by providing fast, effective and flexible support; meet specific humanitarian needs, including among groups in particularly vulnerable situations;
- work towards impartial, intersectoral, coordinated and globally comparable needs assessments;
- support a long-term approach to planning and financing, particularly in protracted or recurrent crises;

- increase flexibility among partner organisations and increase self-determination among people affected by crises, for example by providing support to suitable financing mechanisms; and
- improve the conditions for resilience and risk reduction, and strengthen cooperation with development actors in this area.

Sida is to base its activities on and promote common and cross-sectoral needs assessments and support initiatives that strengthen the capacity of the humanitarian system to plan and allocate on the basis of the most acute needs and the most vulnerable people. Multi-year financing may be appropriate in cases where the needs are predictable, but at the same time there must be scope for dealing with unexpected, aggravated or ‘forgotten’ crises throughout the year. Untied cash-based support combined with other modalities should be considered when relevant and possible, as this can help strengthen people and local markets affected by crises.

Area 2: Increased protection for people affected by crises and increased respect for humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. Increased respect for, and compliance with, humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law are an important prerequisite for being able to effectively reach and protect people affected by crises. In its activities, Sida is to help to:

- reduce the risk and vulnerability of people affected by crises – particularly those who are the most vulnerable – in the face of threats, abuse and violence;
- guarantee the dignity and physical safety of people subjected to violence and abuse;
- reduce the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence and improve opportunities for providing support to those affected by violence;
- improve opportunities for safe and unhindered humanitarian access to people affected by crises; and
- increase knowledge about international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.

Sida is to place protection at the fore and work to integrate protection in the implementation of its humanitarian aid. Women, girls, men and boys are to be involved in efforts to prevent sexual and gender-based violence. The development of methods and tools can be included to increase the impact of activities that contribute to increased compliance with and respect for humanitarian law and principles.

Area 3: Increased influence for people affected by crises. People’s ability to act, their right to be involved in decision-making and ability to design humanitarian activities themselves are important for an effective response. People affected by crises are a resource and must therefore be placed at the centre of humanitarian aid. In its activities, Sida is to help to:

- improve the conditions for people affected by crises, including the most vulnerable people, to exercise influence and accountability in needs assessments, the design of measures and implementation;

- increase the capacity of partner organisations to integrate the needs, conditions, rights and priorities of people affected by crises into the planning, implementation and follow-up of measures;
- improve the conditions for measures to be adapted following feedback from local communities; and
- increase understanding for the needs of people affected by crises and improve opportunities to reach and include people affected by crises, for example through innovative and technical solutions.

Within the framework above, Sida is to support mechanisms for feedback from people affected by crises.

Area 4: Greater capacity and efficiency in the humanitarian system. The humanitarian system is multifaceted and made up of local, national, regional and international humanitarian actors. The system is primarily made up of the UN, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and civil society organisations, but other actors also play an important role, such as government agencies, private actors and development actors. A well-coordinated humanitarian response that utilises the added value of various actors is important to quickly and effectively reach those who are most vulnerable. In its activities, Sida is to help to:

- improve the conditions for effective humanitarian coordination on the ground;
- work to ensure that the UN-led humanitarian response plans are strategic and well-coordinated, have clear priorities and, if possible, run over several years;
- work to ensure that support to the UN and civil society organisations goes to measures within the humanitarian response plans;
- work towards improving UN coordination and increased capacity for joint analysis, planning and long-term objective formulation;
- support the UN's country funds and ensure that national and local response actors receive support and can participate within the framework of these funds;
- improve the possibilities of accountability for humanitarian organisations' collective measures at country level;
- integrate local capacity enhancement into the implementation of humanitarian aid;
- strengthen the UN's and international organisations' cooperation with local actors;
- support and strengthen local and national actors' participation within the framework of cluster and sector cooperation;
- improve the capacity of government agencies and local and national organisations to implement effective humanitarian response; and
- increase synergies by ensuring that the humanitarian response plans take account of overarching national development plans and/or the UN's development plan and vice-versa, on the condition that the humanitarian principles and the impartial mission and distinctive nature of the humanitarian actors are respected.

Activities must help to strengthen the strategic and operational cooperation between complementary humanitarian actors and to strengthen the interplay between humanitarian and development actors. International coordination mechanisms should

strengthen and supplement national coordination mechanisms wherever possible and relevant.

3.1 Perspectives for activities

Gender equality, conflict sensitivity and resilience must be systematically mainstreamed in activities.

A **gender equality perspective** should guarantee that women's, men's, girls' and boys' specific humanitarian needs and opportunities for taking action are met and taken into account in activities. Sida should also take account of various aspects in terms of power structures and diversity (age, disability, etc.) within the framework of the perspective, as these factors can contribute to discrimination and vulnerability. Sida should therefore promote gender equality mainstreaming in needs analyses and the application of a gender equality analysis, including sex-disaggregated statistics, in humanitarian organisations. Sida should only finance measures that are based on an integrated gender equality analysis and support measures that strengthen the humanitarian system's capacity to mainstream gender equality in humanitarian work.

Humanitarian aid should be **conflict-sensitive**, which means that humanitarian aid should not contribute to or consolidate conflict or violence or aggravate tensions between population groups. Humanitarian aid should proceed from the 'do no harm' principle. Humanitarian activities can also help to prevent and combat conflicts and promote peace while maintaining respect for the humanitarian principles of independence and neutrality. Sida should work to ensure that conflict sensitivity is taken into account in needs analyses and planning so as to contribute to increased resilience against conflict.

Resilience should, wherever possible, be mainstreamed in activities to ensure that humanitarian aid helps to strengthen the resilience, recovery and adaptation capacity of populations affected by natural disasters, conflicts or health threats, such as epidemics, without compromising on the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality. It is at this intersection that the interplay between humanitarian support and long-term development cooperation must be strengthened.

By striving to reduce the negative environmental and climate impact of humanitarian activities, Sida should work to ensure that humanitarian aid is conducted in as environmentally sustainable a way as possible, without compromising on the fundamental goal of saving lives and alleviating suffering.

4. Implementation and financing

The Government Offices (Ministry for Foreign Affairs) is responsible for the overall coordination of Sweden's humanitarian aid and for Swedish policy vis-à-vis humanitarian organisations. Sida is to finance international humanitarian measures and help to implement Sweden's humanitarian policy, and in doing so take account of the Government's strategies for Sweden's humanitarian aid to UN organisations. Sida must also promote methods development, provide information about humanitarian aid and support the work of the Government Offices.

4.1 Implementation

Swedish humanitarian aid should be based on global humanitarian needs and implemented in accordance with the humanitarian principles. Implementation must be quality-assured through Sida's presence on the ground, among other things. Sweden must be a clear voice for principles-based humanitarian aid. Sida should work to ensure a clear division of roles between humanitarian actors and other stakeholders active in humanitarian crises, such as military actors and development actors.

Humanitarian aid should be adapted according to lessons learned, innovation and results. Sida should encourage and support qualified research, methodology development and quality assurance in humanitarian aid. As part of its responsibility for providing information, Sida should contribute to reporting and creating an understanding of the reasons for and principles of Swedish humanitarian aid. In helping to enhance Swedish and international humanitarian capacity, Sida should support strategic secondments of qualified Swedish personnel to relevant international actors. To enable more effective and environmentally sustainable aid, Sida must encourage the development of new methods and technical solutions, and in doing so make use of the private sector and academia. Local knowledge should also be utilised where possible. Sida should promote the further development of methods for fund allocation and strive to improve the knowledge base on humanitarian needs. Sida should work to ensure that procurement takes place in line with environmental, social and economic sustainability criteria within humanitarian aid.

Humanitarian crises represent a serious obstacle to long-term development and poverty reduction. Sida should promote a stronger interplay between humanitarian actors and development actors so as to strengthen the capacity of individuals and societies to deal with conflicts, disasters and health threats, such as epidemics, and to support sustainable solutions to protracted crises. Giving refugees opportunities to integrate locally and support themselves requires close cooperation between humanitarian actors and development actors. To do this, Sida must promote a dialogue with development actors and humanitarian actors on the use of flexible, innovative solutions and financing forms that interact with humanitarian measures. Closer operational cooperation should also take place at country level through joint analyses, planning and long-term objective formulation. Sida is to develop working methods for humanitarian aid based on the various context-specific conditions attached to the objective of creating synergies with development actors. Sida should work to ensure that reconstruction is begun in parallel with humanitarian measures. The interplay between humanitarian actors and development actors should be guided by means of a clear division of work and mandates and with respect for the humanitarian actors' impartial mission and distinctive nature.

Sida should share lessons learned and experiences gained from humanitarian efforts with the Government Offices. This includes helping to ensure that EU humanitarian efforts are better coordinated with UN humanitarian efforts.

Sida has an important role to play in strengthening the capacity of national and local organisations, which include authorities, communities, the Red Cross and civil society organisations. National and local organisations are often those that are first on the scene in a humanitarian crisis, work closely with the people affected by a crisis and have local knowledge and a long-term perspective. Sida should ensure that all humanitarian partner organisations base their action on the partnership principles of equality, transparency, results, division of responsibility and complementarity that were adopted by 40 humanitarian organisations at the Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007.

4.2 Financial support

International humanitarian measures conducted by intergovernmental organisations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, civil society organisations and relevant government agencies – primarily the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency – may be eligible for support.

Sida should support organisations and financing mechanisms based on their comparative advantages, relevance, results and effectiveness. Sida should continue to work on strategic partnerships with civil society organisations on financing, cost-effectiveness, advocacy work, methods development and policy work. Non-earmarked contributions within the framework of the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) can be made when relevant and when the organisation has clear added value in rapid measures.

It is important that Sweden's contributions are coordinated with other traditional and non-traditional donors and actors. Good coordination can contribute to experience exchanges, coordination of reporting and reporting requirements, and follow-up. Within this context, Sida should promote the production of overall and comparable joint results, together with other donors.

Sida is to work to ensure increased financial transparency in the humanitarian system by publishing data and supporting initiatives that relate to humanitarian financing.

Support must only be provided to organisations that have signed up to established international codes of conduct in the area of activity, or made similar commitments.

5. Follow-up

Activities within the framework of this strategy are to be followed up on a regular basis, for example at the regular HUMSAM organisation consultations between the Government Offices (Ministry for Foreign Affairs) and Sida. The aim of consultations is to ensure a consensus in Sweden's actions in the humanitarian area, and HUMSAM is the forum for information exchange for this purpose. Planned decisions on the financing of measures must be communicated in writing. Sida must also consult on planned decisions for measures in excess of SEK 200 million and other measures deemed to be sensitive and/or of a principally strategic nature.

Follow-up procedures are outlined in the Government's guidelines for strategies. All measures within the framework of the strategy are to be monitored continuously.

Evaluation is to be seen as an integral part of continual follow-up and is to be conducted when necessary. Various methods of results monitoring are to be applied, using both qualitative and quantitative results information.

Sida is to report on the implementation of the strategy. Sida is to consult with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the frequency and format of the strategy report.