

Finland's Humanitarian Policy



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Foreword

Humanitarian crises are becoming increasingly complex and their scope and impact are growing. Every year, hundreds of millions of people suffer from the consequences of natural disasters, wars and armed conflicts. The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate human suffering and protect human dignity and the rights of civilians during the crises. Annually, as a result of the efforts carried out by the international humanitarian system, millions of lives of malnourished children and other vulnerable people are saved, clean water and emergency shelters are distributed to those who have lost their homes, medical care is provided to the wounded and mothers are helped to deliver babies more safely in the times of war.

Human rights are inalienable even during conflicts and crises. Finland focuses its humanitarian action on the countries where the support is most needed. Finnish humanitarian assistance is based on humanitarian principles and reliable needs assessments. In order to effectively deliver aid to those in need, the United Nations-led international humanitarian system has to be well-prepared and coordinated. Since 2005, the effectiveness of the relief efforts has been improved through the Humanitarian Reform process. Finland has been an active supporter of the reform and will remain as one. In future, more attention should be given to the quality of leadership, partnerships, effectiveness and accountability. Finland will promote these matters through active policy dialogue in the governing bodies of the aid organisations.



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*Minister for
International
Development
Heidi Hautala
Photo: Liisa Takala*

Also donors have to improve the ways they operate. In 2006, the Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) were formally endorsed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members. Finland and the European Union are committed to the implementation of these principles. The GHD-principles emphasise allocating humanitarian assistance solely based on need, not on political motivations. It is important that the international assistance system is perceived as neutral and that humanitarian values are seen as universal. This is also a precondition for expanding the donor base. At present, the total needs for humanitarian assistance outlined in the UN Consolidated Appeal Process are only covered annually about up to 60%. Finland aims to promote cooperation with emerging donor countries and regional organisations.

The focus of the Finnish humanitarian assistance is on the poorest countries and the most vulnerable people. The international community has a duty to respond to the crisis, and receiving assistance must be perceived as a right for those who need it. Beneficiaries must be heard in the planning of relief programmes and in the decision-making concerning the assistance. Furthermore, promoting climate sustainability, gender equality and reduction of inequality must be well-established practices in all humanitarian action supported by Finland.

In recent years, threats to the security of civilians and relief workers and violence against them have severely hampered the provision of humanitarian aid. Maintaining neutrality, impartiality and independence is the best way to protect humanitarian space and ensure the access to aid by beneficiaries. Finland has a strong commitment to humanitarian principles and the protection of civilians, likewise the Finns are committed to providing humanitarian aid. Year after year, surveys on development cooperation indicate that the Finnish people perceive humanitarian assistance as a very important form of aid. It is my hope that this policy will further strengthen the implementation of humanitarian assistance in crises.

Helsinki, October 2012

Heidi Hautala

Minister for International Development

Introduction

This policy defines the key principles, objectives, channels and priorities of Finnish humanitarian assistance with the aim of making relief efforts increasingly effective. This is an update of the humanitarian assistance guidelines published in 2007. Through the new humanitarian policy Finland can more effectively respond to the challenges in the changing operating environment, support the strengthening of the UN-led international humanitarian system, and take into account the reforms made in the EU's humanitarian interventions.

This policy is based on Finland's Development Policy Programme 2012. The recommendations of the performance audit carried out in 2009-2012 by the National Audit Office of Finland have been taken into account in the preparation of this policy. The recommendations indicated that Finland needs to define more clearly the annual level of humanitarian assistance, prepare guidelines for funding allocations, review the level of administrative costs paid to NGOs, further expedite aid payments and strengthen financial reporting.

This policy is in line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and takes into account the UN General Assembly key resolutions regarding the strengthening of the humanitarian response system.

The policy is complemented by guidelines on funding allocations, which provide more detailed guidance on the way Finland puts into practise the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles approved by the OECD Development Assistance Committee.

The policy emphasises Finland's role in exercising influence in the governing bodies of aid organisations and other international fora in order to promote the humanitarian reform and humanitarian principles.



*Not much is spared when the fields are covered by floodwater. The road leading to the village of Sindh is the only place where the villagers are able to stay.
Photo: Pirjo-Liisa Heikkilä.*

1 Challenges in humanitarian assistance

1.1 Growing needs

Every year, hundreds of millions of people suffer from the consequences of natural disasters such as earthquakes, drought and flooding. Climate change is increasing and intensifying extreme weather phenomena, which poses further challenges to the supply of water and food and results in a growing need for humanitarian aid. To ensure that the international community has the capacity to effectively respond to major disasters and humanitarian needs, it is essential to direct resources to the strengthening of the humanitarian system and communities' resilience as well as to minimising the risk of disasters. The building of resilience and disaster risk reduction are best pursued through long-term development cooperation. It is also important to seamlessly link together relief, rehabilitation and development activities.

In addition to natural disasters, the consequences of wars and armed conflicts generate a need for humanitarian assistance. A significant proportion of today's conflicts are internal. In 2012, there are over 43 million people who have been forced to leave their homes. The largest and fastest-growing group is internally displaced persons (IDPs), reaching to 28 million people. The other 15 million comprises refugees and stateless people.

People in refugee camps may live in inadequate and insecure circumstances for decades, relying on international aid. The economic and legal position of internally displaced persons is often even weaker than that of refugees.

During disasters, children need special protection, as they are in danger of being separated from their families and ending up as victims of violence or abuse, or recruited into armed conflict. Another group requiring special support is women and girls, who may become

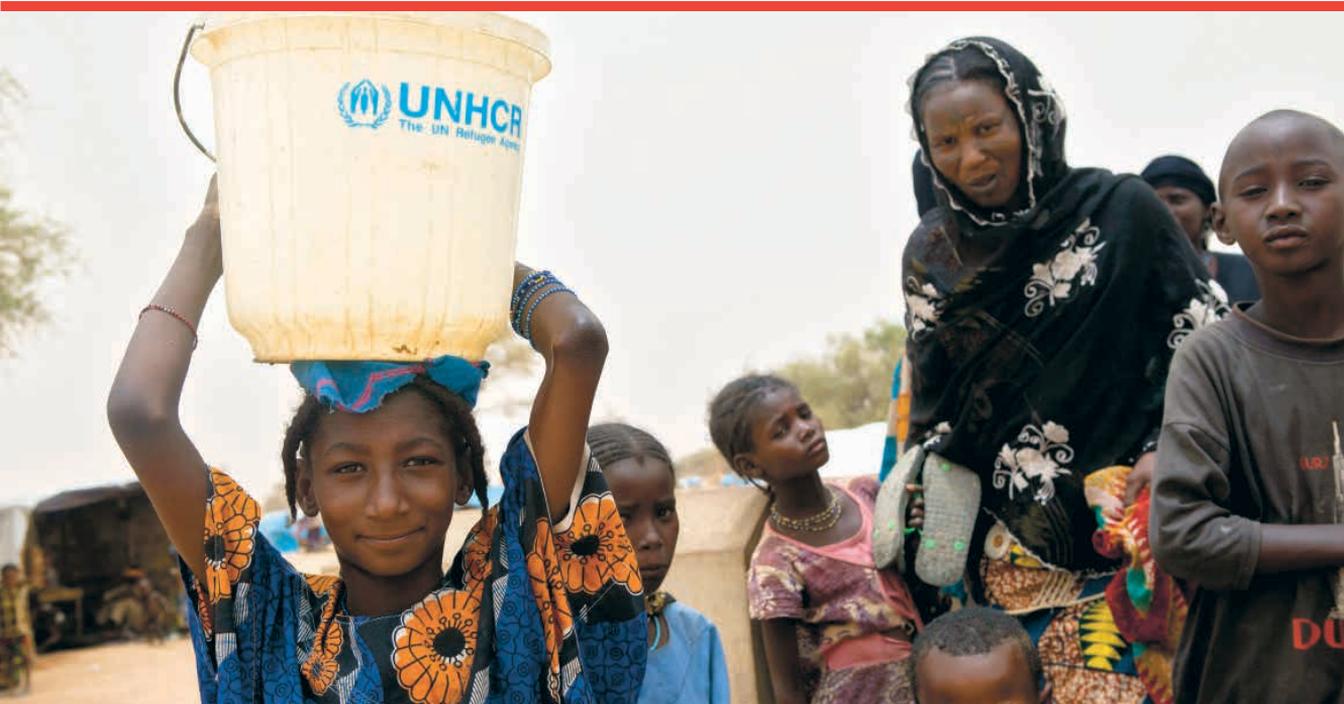
targets for sexual and gender-based violence used as a weapon of war. There are also growing challenges related to reaching people in need of assistance and protecting the security of aid workers.

The impacts of crisis tend to be heaviest on the most vulnerable population groups. Crises also have a long-term negative effect on poverty. The majority of the world's population lives without formal social security against disasters. In addition to climate change, humanitarian needs are increasing due to the population growth, urbanisation, environmental problems, struggles over natural resources, poor governance, political and economic instability and fragility of states. Economic slowdowns and rising food prices also contribute to the increased need for assistance. In the developing world, the poor spend a significant proportion of their income on food. Therefore, even relatively minor increases in food prices have a considerable negative effect on their subsistence and survival. Humanitarian assistance must be complemented by development cooperation that supports the building of national social protection systems.

1.2 Strengthening the international humanitarian system

Finland emphasises the UN's leading role in coordinating humanitarian assistance and supports the humanitarian reform process. The humanitarian reform, initiated in 2005, has significantly strengthened the international humanitarian system. The four pillars of humanitarian reform are adequate and timely financing, effective cluster coordination, strategic leadership and partnerships between UN organisations and NGOs.

Under the cluster model, each cluster is led by a UN organisation, in some cases jointly with another UN agency or an NGO. The cluster leads are responsible for coordinating assistance both globally and at the country level. The significance of effective coordination has increased as the number of humanitarian field organisations has grown. It is important to ensure that the clusters focus on strategic planning rather than just information exchange. The clusters must work in cooperation with the national administration of the affected country and make use of local expertise. Inter-cluster coordination must be further strengthened.



The UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has been successful in supporting the international community to initiate humanitarian relief efforts faster than before. CERF has also improved the balance between different countries and sectors by allocating funds to underfunded operations. Moreover, it has broadened the relatively narrow donor base for humanitarian assistance. Two thirds of the UN members provide funding to CERF and it also receives support from the beneficiary countries and private donors. In addition to CERF, country-specific humanitarian pool funds have also been established. Leadership in humanitarian assistance has been improved through training initiatives and by establishing a pool of humanitarian coordinators. Partnerships have been strengthened through the work of humanitarian country teams involving members both from UN organisations and NGOs.

Despite these positive developments, many challenges remain. In spring 2011, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) reached a decision on the implementation of a new operating model. Its key elements include further strengthening of leadership and response capacity, improving the accountability of aid organisations regarding the collective results of their work and from the perspective of beneficiaries, and achieving greater consistency in advocating and communicating humanitarian principles.

▲
Children need special protection during the times of crisis.
Photo: UNHCR/H. Caux, Niger 2012

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

The human and economic losses caused by natural disasters form a major obstacle to development. Appropriate preparedness can save human lives and significantly reduce the extent of economic losses. One of the key challenges lies in strengthening the capacity of partner countries' national administrations and local communities to prepare for natural disasters and invest in risk reduction. Short-term humanitarian assistance is rarely the best way to achieve this. Instead, long-term development efforts are needed.

Finland has actively supported the Hyogo Framework for Action approved by the UN General Assembly in 2006. The HFA is an international strategy for reducing disaster risks, and its implementation is led by the Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in Geneva.

In 2011, Finland launched its own national Hyogo Action Plan, which also indicates how to promote DRR through development cooperation. Under the plan, Finland will mainstream disaster risk reduction into development policy and cooperation and civilian crisis management programmes supported by Finnish development cooperation funds. The plan also includes investments in special projects, active communication and policy dialogue with the partner countries and other actors.

The section on climate sustainability in Finland's Development Policy Programme emphasises the importance of disaster preparedness in Finland's development cooperation programmes and projects. Finland is also committed to supporting the EU strategy and action plan on disaster risk reduction in developing countries. ■

2 Humanitarian principles and objectives

2.1 Saving lives and alleviating human suffering

Humanitarian assistance is allocated to emergencies, caused by armed conflicts, natural disasters or other catastrophes, which are declared as humanitarian emergencies by the Government of the affected country, the UN system or the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The objectives of the Finnish humanitarian assistance are to save lives, alleviate human suffering and maintain human dignity during times of crisis and in their immediate aftermath. The ethical basis is the humanitarian imperative, which states that humanitarian aid must be provided wherever it is needed. In addition to life-saving action, support is given for protection and recovery of livelihoods. Humanitarian action also involves early recovery, which refers to development-oriented measures initiated during the humanitarian phase to facilitate the transition from crisis to recovery. In addition to humanitarian assistance, the initial stages of a crisis often involve emergency rescue operations, which in Finland are coordinated and funded by the Ministry of the Interior.

The provision of assistance is based on the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Finland provides humanitarian assistance solely on the basis of need, not on political, military or economic motivations. Independence, impartiality and neutrality are basic pre-conditions for humanitarian agencies to reach the people who need assistance and for the safety of aid workers. Humanitarian assistance is not a crisis management tool and it is not intended to resolve crises.

Internationally accepted humanitarian principles

Humanity: To save lives and alleviate human suffering wherever it is found and respecting the dignity of those affected.

Impartiality: Humanitarian action is based solely on need, without discrimination between or within affected populations.

Neutrality: Humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute.

Independence: Humanitarian action is autonomous of political, economic, military or other objectives. ■

Finland conducts humanitarian action in accordance with International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Instruments and International Refugee Law. Finland supports the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and the implementation of the UN resolution 46/182, approved by the UN General Assembly in 1991, which confirms the UN's leading role in coordinating humanitarian assistance.

Finland's humanitarian assistance is provided in accordance with the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles approved by the OECD Development Assistance Committee and endorsed by the EU. The European Union's commitment to the humanitarian principles is confirmed in the Lisbon Treaty.

2.2 Cross-cutting principles

In its humanitarian assistance Finland concentrates on the poorest developing countries and directs its assistance to the most vulnerable people. Finland emphasises the importance of beneficiary participation in planning and decision-making on aid and compliance with internationally accepted humanitarian aid standards, including the Sphere and INEE standards¹ and the Do No Harm principle. Humanitarian assistance must not be used to spread an ideology or

religion. Aid workers are required to adhere to a code of conduct designed to prevent misconduct in the field.

Finland requires that the supported organisations incorporate climate sustainability, gender equality and the reduction of inequality into their policies and operations and pay particular attention to the rights and needs of vulnerable groups, such as children and the disabled. Finland emphasises the importance of implementing the

¹ Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education on Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction.



UN Security Council resolutions² “Women, Peace and Security” and “Children and Armed Conflict” and the “EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict”.

Humanitarian action often takes place in countries where corruption is a widespread problem and the implementation and regular monitoring of relief efforts may be difficult due to security concerns. Finland requires that aid organisations pay attention to risk management and the prevention of corruption, and conduct open dialogue on the challenges associated with their operations, particularly in complex emergencies. The safety of both beneficiaries and humanitarian personnel must also be given due attention.

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The provision of food is a key aspect in relief efforts during humanitarian crises.
Photo: WFP/Greg Kinch.

² Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 1882 ja 1998.



The promotion of gender equality must be a well-established practice in humanitarian programs supported by Finland. The photograph shows women participating in a UNHCR income-generation project in Darfur.

Photo: Satu Lassila.

3 Criteria, channels and priority areas of humanitarian assistance

3.1 UN consolidated appeals as the basis for country selection

Humanitarian action covers protection and material assistance. Support is channelled to countries that have submitted a formal request to the UN, on the basis of reliable needs assessments and a system-wide appeal. Every year, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) carries out a consolidated appeal process in cooperation with UN organisations and NGO partners to determine the priority humanitarian funding needs of different countries and sectors. The UN also launches flash appeals in response to sudden-onset crises. These and other appeals form the basis of Finland's prioritisation of target countries.

Funding allocations for humanitarian assistance are made twice per year. The first instalment represents approximately 70% of the total humanitarian budget for the year, with the remaining funds allocated in the autumn. Funding decisions concerning sudden-onset crises are made throughout the year as necessary. In addition to earmarked support allocated for specific countries and regions, the Ministry grants core funding to several aid organisations.

Humanitarian assistance funded from development cooperation funds is targeted at countries and territories eligible to receive official development assistance (ODA). Finland emphasises the needs of African countries and the poorest nations of the world. The analyses of target countries take into consideration for example the geographical and demographic scale of the crisis; the

severity of it measured by the mortality rate, the number of people in need of assistance and the percentage of children suffering from acute malnutrition; the duration, complexity and impact of crisis, situation of the vulnerable groups, and the possible regional dimensions of the crisis, including refugee flows to other countries. The target country's national capacity and resources for crisis management are also taken into account.

3.2 Support channelled through experienced, principled organisations

In order to ensure the effectiveness of its humanitarian action, Finland channels its funding through UN organisations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and those Finnish NGOs that have the partner status of the European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO). The selection of organisations is based on their sector, capacity, ability to access the people in need and reliability as an independent and neutral humanitarian partner. Funding is channelled to responsible organisations whose operations are effective, efficient and transparent.

Support is focused on sectors with the greatest impact on saving lives and protecting livelihoods. The key sectors funded by Finland include food assistance, nutrition for malnourished children and adults, water and sanitation, health, protection, emergency shelters, the distribution of non-food-items, education for children, agriculture and the recovery of livelihoods. Finland also channels funds into support functions, such as coordination of aid.

The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) is a humanitarian donor with no bilateral assistance programmes or materials purchasing of its own. The commodities used in aid operations are purchased by relief organisations themselves, preferably in the affected country or as close to it as possible. When appropriate, Finland promotes the use of cash and voucher-based assistance given to beneficiaries instead of in-kind aid. Cash and vouchers can support the recovery of the local economy and give more choice to beneficiaries.

3.3 Support for EU humanitarian action

In addition to allocating appropriations from the national budget, Finland participates in the funding of EU humanitarian assistance through the Community budget and contributes to the development

Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO)

In the European Union, the humanitarian assistance measures taken by the Commission and the member states complement and reinforce each other. Assistance funded by the EU Community budget is administered by the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection which channels funds through European NGOs, the UN system and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The European Commission, the Council and the Parliament have summarised their common vision and humanitarian principles in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. Humanitarian aid and food aid have a dedicated EU Council working party, COHAFA³. Finland is an active participant in the working party. Ms Kristalina Georgieva has been the EU Commissioner for humanitarian aid and crisis response since 2010.

The legal basis for humanitarian aid is laid out in Article 214 of the Lisbon Treaty. The EU recognises the special character of humanitarian aid as part of its external operations and emphasises the importance of providing humanitarian assistance in accordance with international law and the principles of neutrality, impartiality and non-discrimination. In the interest of ensuring the independence and neutrality of humanitarian action, humanitarian aid is administered by the European Commission rather than making ECHO part of the European External Action Service.

The ECHO operating strategy pays a special attention to forgotten crisis. ECHO's humanitarian relief plans and decisions are approved by the Humanitarian Assistance Committee (HAC). ■

³ The Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid.

of EU humanitarian assistance through active participation and involvement in Council working parties. Collectively with its member states, the European Union is the world's largest donor for humanitarian relief.

3.4 Protection is an integral part of humanitarian assistance

In times of armed conflict, international humanitarian law protects persons who do not participate in hostilities, including the civilian population, the ill and the wounded, and the prisoners of war. International humanitarian law also places restrictions on weapons and methods of war. The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their three Additional Protocols⁴ constitute the backbone of international humanitarian law.

Sovereign states hold primary responsibility for protecting their citizens. In refugee related crises, the responsibility to lead and coordinate the response among UN agencies lies with the UNHCR⁵, which also chairs the Global Protection Cluster. In any crises, the UNICEF⁶ is responsible for protecting children, while UNFPA⁷ is charged with the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and the provision of support to the victims. At country level, the protection cluster is led by the UNHCR, UNICEF or OHCHR⁸, depending on the situation and the decision of the humanitarian coordinator. The International Committee of the Red Cross⁹ has a special mandate to monitor compliance with the Geneva Conventions and to launch initiatives to develop the Conventions. The Committee also monitors the treatment of the prisoners of war.

Humanitarian space refers to the operating environment required by relief providers to help and protect people whose human rights are threatened, without compromising the safety of aid workers. Finland emphasises the importance of humanitarian space and

⁴ Ratified in 1977 and 2005.

⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

⁶ United Nations Children Fund.

⁷ United Nations Population Fund.

⁸ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

⁹ International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC.



*Finland supports humanitarian mine action in countries with serious landmine problems. The photograph shows a female minesweeper in Cambodia.
Photo: Satu Lassila.*

the protection of civilian populations, and promotes dialogue on ways to more effectively improve the safety of people in the crises. Finland supports the ratification and implementation of international agreements concerning the position of internally displaced persons and refugees, such as the Kampala Convention of the African Union.

The 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document included the principle of the responsibility to protect. The responsibility to protect applies specifically to cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing. If a state is unable or unwilling to prevent such crimes, the international community may, as a last resort, employ coercive measures as specified in Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, including the use of armed force. In such cases, coercive measures are employed to prevent or stop cross violations of human rights in a state without its permission. Coercive measures may only be used under the authorisation of the UN Security Council.

Where force is used, it is important to ensure that humanitarian assistance is not subordinated to political-military objectives. For this reason, military and humanitarian action must always be clearly separated. The impartiality and neutrality of humanitarian action must also be upheld under the United Nations Integrated Missions framework.

3.5 Humanitarian mine action

Humanitarian mine action is based on the Ottawa Convention to Ban Anti-Personnel Landmines and the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Finland supports humanitarian mine action through UN organisations and international and Finnish NGOs in countries that have significant landmine problems and require assistance in resolving them. Humanitarian mine action promotes post-conflict reconstruction and development by facilitating refugees' and IDPs' repatriation and their access to arable land. Finland aims to employ a comprehensive approach that covers mine clearing, victim assistance, developing national operating capacity and risk prevention. Humanitarian mine action is primarily categorised as development cooperation and therefore funded separately from the humanitarian assistance budget.

Transition from War to Peace and Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)

In transition situations, Finland aims to effective linking of peace building, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development cooperation. Implementing this linkage is challenging as the international aid architecture and organisations are often divided into the separate sectors of humanitarian assistance and development cooperation, with different objectives, principles, legislation and timetables guiding their functioning and funding. In post-conflict situations, development cooperation often starts slowly in hazardous environments, leaving a gap between humanitarian assistance and development aid.

The OECD-DAC and the UN have worked on developing more effective approaches towards transition. Finland has actively participated in the development of these approaches, including the New Deal approved in the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, and is committed to their implementation.

Effective transition requires a common plan with commitment from the national administration of the partner country and the entire donor community. The plan should include clear priorities and its implementation has to involve flexible use of all aid instruments.

Expediting the initiation of development cooperation requires a realistic understanding of the risks involved as well as effective collective risk management mechanisms. As during the transition phase the responsibility for development is increasingly shifted from international actors to the national administration, special attention should be given on strengthening the national capacity. Managing transition requires donors to adopt a flexible approach. In addition to post-conflict transition, it is important to ensure effective linking of relief to rehabilitation and development also when it comes to situation of post-natural disasters.

In Finland's development cooperation, transition and LRRD-approach are mostly supported and implemented through multilateral collaboration, NGO activities and EU operations. Finland promotes their implementation by influencing the policies of the multilateral organisations, developing flexible operating mechanisms and aiming to ensure adequate funding for the transition. ■



A year after the earthquake in Haiti, most of the ruins have yet to be cleaned up. 2010. Photo: Rauli Virtanen.

4 Goals for improving the effectiveness of Finnish humanitarian assistance

In addition to the key principles and approaches already described, Finland promotes the following goals aimed at improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action.

Goal 1: Finland is a responsible, timely and predictable donor

Predictable and timely funding is a basic requirement for effective humanitarian response. Finland will maintain the predictability of funding by avoiding significant fluctuations to agencies' annual allocations unless there are justified reasons for making such changes. Finland aims to be a flexible and timely donor and further expedite the funding process.

Finland is committed to allocating approximately 10% of the annual development cooperation budget to humanitarian assistance. This limit may be exceeded if doing so is justified.

Finland focuses its assistance on the sectors that are key to saving lives and livelihoods. In the selection of partners Finland prioritises experienced agencies with a proven track record of effectiveness. As before, part of Finland's humanitarian support for UN organisations will be non-earmarked core support, and the rest earmarked for a specific country or region. Finland signs multi-

year commitments with key organisations with regard to non-ear-marked core support.

Finland has provided funding for the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund since its inception in 2006 and has been an active member of the CERF Advisory Group. This support will continue in the future.

Finland makes budgetary allocations on a case-by-case basis to country-specific humanitarian pool funds in countries where the Finnish Embassy can actively participate in the policy dialogue and monitoring of the fund.

Finland is committed to:

- channelling approximately 10% of the annual development co-operation budget to humanitarian assistance, and allocating funds to the poorest developing countries, based on need.
- being a predictable, flexible and timely donor, and to further expediting the funding process.
- channeling the majority of the humanitarian funding at the beginning of the year, based on the Consolidated Appeal Process.
- concluding the main funding allocation process and the related payments within the first quarter of the year, and in the case of sudden-onset emergencies, making the required funding decisions within three days of receiving the appeal.

Goal 2: An effective, well-led and coordinated international humanitarian assistance system

Finland supports the implementation of a system-wide humanitarian reform process in the UN organisations. This goal is pursued through active policy dialogue to promote the reform in the governing bodies of aid organizations, EU and other donor fora. Finland's goal is an effective, well-led and coordinated international humanitarian system and Finland requires organisations to work in a transparent and accountable manner.

Needs assessment methods have been significantly improved in recent years. Finland emphasises the importance of joint needs assessments and their use to make emergency appeals more strategic and better prioritised. System-wide leadership must be strengthened by empowering the humanitarian coordinators. Accountabil-



ity has to be reinforced by having organisations collectively responsible for results at the country level. Special attention will be paid to monitoring and impact assessment.

Finland is committed to:

- taking an active part in the donor dialogue and coordination and advocating for the broadening of the donor base.
- promoting harmonised reporting, monitoring and evaluation practices and agencies' active reporting on the implementation of the humanitarian reform.
- strengthening the position of humanitarian coordinators and improving system-wide accountability.
- advocating for agencies' joint needs assessments.
- promoting the effectiveness of the cluster approach and inter-cluster coordination among agencies.
- preparing an annual plan to determine the key humanitarian reform related objectives and messages to be promoted in the governing bodies of aid organisations and other fora.

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A Red Cross volunteer weighs a malnourished child at a Red Cross health centre in the town of Sebba, in the Yagha region of Burkina Faso. Photo: Olivier Girard/International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Goal 3: Support is channelled through capable and experienced non-governmental organisations

NGOs play a key role in international humanitarian action. They distribute a significant portion of humanitarian aid in the field, and they also have considerable know-how and technical expertise in various related sectors. Finland recognises the special status of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the international humanitarian system.

The number of humanitarian actors has increased in recent years, which poses considerable challenges to cluster coordination. Finland emphasises the professional nature of humanitarian action and the specialised capabilities it requires. Organisations must have trained aid personnel who are familiar with the humanitarian principles and procedures for effective and timely response. Finland channels funds through experienced Finnish NGOs that have DG/ECHO partner status.

Finland is committed to:

- advocating Finnish NGOs with significant experience of humanitarian assistance to gain ECHO's partnership status.
- making participation in UN coordination and - in the case of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement - exchange of information as a precondition of support.
- enhancing exchange of information between the Ministry and NGOs through regular dialogue.
- supporting genuine partnerships between the UN organisations and NGOs and the expedient transfer of funds from UN organisations to NGOs.

Goal 4: Humanitarian principles are known and adhered to

Compliance with the humanitarian principles aims to ensure an unimpeded access for the humanitarian agencies to deliver assistance and reach the beneficiaries in politically charged and tense situations. In order for aid workers to conduct needs assessments, distribute aid and monitor its impacts, they must have unimpeded access to conflict areas and the ability to engage in dialogue with all parties of the conflict.

In the interest of protecting the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian assistance and ensuring the safety of aid workers, it is important that the roles of military and humanitarian actors are clearly defined and well distinguished. Finland actively promotes the creation of enabling environment for the humanitarian efforts and reaching those who need assistance.

Finland emphasises the importance of a clear division of responsibilities between civilian and military actors, and is committed to applying the UN Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to support humanitarian operations.¹⁰ According to the guidelines, military and civil defence assets should only be used as a last resort, when the corresponding civilian assets are not available. The use of the military assets must be of a limited duration and the objectives of the employment should be clearly determined. Humanitarian actors must always have a leading role in relief efforts, even when military support is used.

Finland is committed to:

- actively promoting the principles of international humanitarian law, humanitarian space and the protection of civilians.
- supporting the ratification and implementation of international agreements concerning the position of internally displaced persons and refugees, such as the Kampala Convention of the African Union.
- adhering to the UN guidelines on the use of military and civil defence assets in humanitarian aid operations and promoting greater awareness of them.
- strengthening awareness of international humanitarian law through training and communication.

¹⁰ Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief – “Oslo Guidelines”, revised in October 2006, and Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies, March 2003.

Developing Finnish business and expertise related to natural disasters

In addition to the goals related to humanitarian action, Finland aims to promote the development of Finnish business and expertise related to natural disasters.

Every year, more than USD 15 billion is spent on international humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian relief supplies are not necessarily available in the local markets, which is why they often have to be procured on the international markets. Natural disasters are challenging operating environments for Finnish businesses due to the long distances, the high level of competitiveness required and the special nature of the products and services needed. Nevertheless, in humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, and disaster risk reduction, there is demand for innovative and technology-oriented solutions that could be developed through Finnish enterprises' particular strengths and expertise.

The MFA does not provide direct financial support from the humanitarian budget to the development of disaster-related Finnish business, nor does the Ministry purchase relief items itself. The Ministry promotes greater opportunities for Finnish businesses in disaster areas by disseminating information on Finnish and international humanitarian assistance policies and operating procedures, as well as communicating on commercial opportunities and helping Finnish businesses to establish connections with humanitarian agencies. The MFA, in cooperation with other government entities (including the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, and the Finpro), investigates ways for Finnish businesses to improve their capacity and preparedness for pursuing business opportunities and promotes mutual cooperation between Finnish enterprises to this end.

5 Monitoring and evaluating the humanitarian aid effectiveness and communication

Monitoring and evaluation are integral elements of successful humanitarian action. For this purpose, Finland takes part in field visits arranged by international organisations and visits their headquarters in order to gain information and maintain active policy dialogue. Finland promotes the assessment of aid performance by financing joint evaluations together with other donors and by participating in MOPAN¹¹ cooperation and Peer Reviews carried out by the OECD Development Assistance Committee.

Close cooperation between the Humanitarian Aid Unit, the different departments of the MFA, Finnish embassies and diplomatic missions abroad, other Ministries and NGOs is essential for the effective monitoring of humanitarian assistance. Finland aims to increasingly make use of the views and opinions of Embassies near crisis areas concerning the delivery of aid and reaching the intended beneficiaries. Finland actively communicates and shares information regarding its humanitarian action and announces its funding decisions on the ECHO Edris platform and in the OCHA Financial Tracking System. Public Information and media contacts are strengthened by providing journalists with opportunities to familiarise themselves with humanitarian relief operations out in the field.

¹¹ Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network.



*With the funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finn Church Aid has supported children in Haiti to return to school by supplying school tents and building schools that are designed to withstand earthquakes and hurricanes.
Photo: Matti Ridanpää/Finn Church Aid.*

Finland is committed to:

- preparing an annual plan for monitoring humanitarian assistance, focused on the countries and agencies with the most significant funding allocations, but also taking forgotten crises into consideration.
- commissioning an external evaluation of the effectiveness of this policy and the related funding guidelines by 2015.

Annex 1. Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles

Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles

Objectives and definition of humanitarian action

1. The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations.
2. Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; impartiality, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; neutrality, meaning that humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and independence, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.
3. Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods.

General principles

4. Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.
5. While reaffirming the primary responsibility of states for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders, strive to ensure flexible and timely funding, on the basis of the collective obligation of striving to meet humanitarian needs.
6. Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.
7. Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.
8. Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and coordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.
9. Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.
10. Support and promote the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and coordination of international humanitarian action, the special role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the vital role of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organisations in implementing humanitarian action.

Good practices in donor financing, management and accountability

a) Funding

11. Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises.
12. Recognising the necessity of dynamic and flexible response to changing needs in humanitarian crises, strive to ensure predictability and flexibility in funding to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and to other key humanitarian organisations.
13. While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organisations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.
14. Contribute responsibly, and on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals, and actively support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritisation and coordination in complex emergencies.

b) Promoting standards and enhancing implementation

15. Request that implementing humanitarian organisations fully adhere to good practice and are committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action.
16. Promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.
17. Maintain readiness to offer support for the implementation of humanitarian action, including the facilitation of safe humanitarian access.
18. Support mechanisms for contingency planning by humanitarian organisations, including, as appropriate, allocation of funding, to strengthen capacities for response.
19. Affirm the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict. In situations where military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian action, ensure that such use is in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and recognises the leading role of humanitarian organisations.
20. Support the implementation of the 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies.

c) Learning and accountability

21. Support learning and accountability initiatives for the effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian action.
22. Encourage regular evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance.
23. Ensure a high degree of accuracy, timeliness, and transparency in donor reporting on official humanitarian assistance spending, and encourage the development of standardised formats for such reporting.

<http://www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org/>

Annex 2. Abbreviations used in the Guidelines

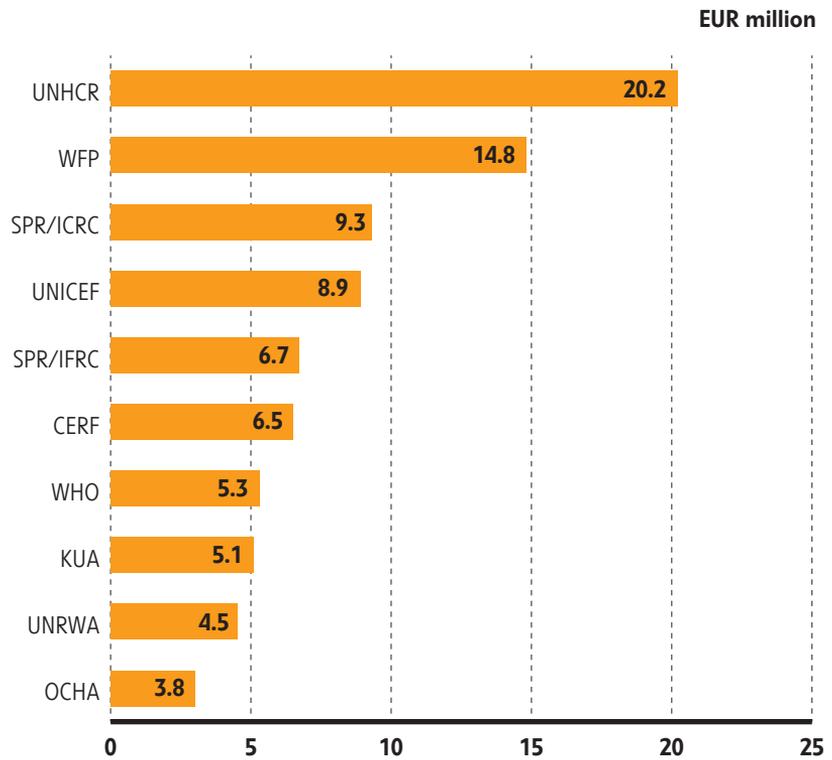
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
COHAFA	Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DG	DG/ECHO Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship, principles agreed on by donor countries in Stockholm in 2003 and endorsed by development cooperation ministers for OECD/DAC countries in April 2006
HAC	EU Humanitarian Assistance Committee
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
MEE	Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMAS	UN Mine Action Service
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WFP	World Food Programme
NAO	National Audit Office of Finland
UN	United Nations

Annex 3. Statistics

Humanitarian assistance by organisation in 2011

The top ten organisations receiving funding under the Humanitarian Assistance Unit's total budget, which had a total volume of EUR 91.4 million in 2011.





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