



Norwegian People's Aid

HUMANITARIAN POLICY





*NPA has conducted mine clearance in towns outside Mosul in Iraq. This school has been declared safe from landmines and other explosives.
Photo: Julie Strand Offerdal*

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Cover: Distribution of Relief Aid in South Sudan. Photo: Norwegian People's Aid
Back page: Children near a mine field in Cambodia. Photo: Norwegian People's Aid
Design: Oktan Oslo

INTRODUCTION

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is the Labour Movement's Humanitarian Organisation. The organisation was founded in 1939, responding to humanitarian needs in Spain and Finland. Ever since, humanitarian work has been one of the pillars of NPA's international engagement. NPA's vision is 'Solidarity in Action'. We strive to promote human dignity and equal rights for all, focusing on the just distribution of power and resources, and the protection of life and health.

Armed conflict, climate change, growing inequality and persistent poverty are creating complex crises that last longer and affect more people than before. There is an increasing gap between needs and the resources available to respond to those needs, and humanitarian organisations and donors are challenged to become more effective, efficient and accountable in our responses.

NPA recognises that humanitarian needs can only be effectively addressed through a comprehensive approach involving humanitarian and development work, and that such integration is necessary to successfully achieve both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agenda for Humanity.

This document is NPA's policy for humanitarian response. The humanitarian policy derives from and complements NPA's international strategy. The policy is also informed by NPA's partnership policy and gender equality policy. It outlines the challenges we address, defines the goals and objectives we aim to achieve, and provides an overview of responses and working methods employed in order to attain these objectives.

In North East Syria, NPA and partner organisations are working to strengthen the livelihoods of families affected by the war. Beneficiaries receive livestock and fodder for their cows. The milk and meat is used to feed the family, and some is sold in markets to generate income. Photo: NPA/Sara Hamdy





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OUR MISSION IN HUMANITARIAN WORK

In our humanitarian work, NPA aspires to be recognised as a trusted organisation that, together with local partners and communities, contributes towards building capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from crises and natural disasters. A key outcome of our work is increased resilience and protection within the communities we work with (see point 6 for NPA's definition of resilience). NPA works with local partner organisations in humanitarian response and also uses its own operational capacity as a leading mine action operator to provide protection against explosive weapons. NPA may exceptionally use its capacity to provide other direct humanitarian assistance when there are few other viable alternatives for urgent delivery.

NPA is a multi-mandated organisation with three focus areas in our international work:

- ***Democratisation and just distribution of power and resources***
- ***Humanitarian response***
- ***Mine action and humanitarian disarmament***

NPA also engages in peacebuilding activities, supporting grassroots participation in peace processes, building the capacity of local organisations to address root causes of conflict and mediating disputes at both local and national levels.

*Yeszidi refugees in Shilkhan refugee camp in Iraq are collecting relief aid consisting of food and non food items.
Photo: Norwegian People's Aid*

NPA'S APPROACH TO HUMANITARIAN WORK

NPA's humanitarian interventions will be rights-based and needs-driven, based on thorough gender-sensitive analysis and an understanding of the political, social and economic context. NPA will strive to ensure that accountability to affected populations underpins our programming in all humanitarian responses. The integration of our approaches to development and humanitarian work is essential in this regard. Recognising and building on the capacity that exists within local communities and partner organisations, NPA will support their efforts to reduce vulnerability, self-manage and mitigate the impact of crises, and ensure ownership at the community level.

By establishing humanitarian partnerships with agencies who can also play a role in larger social and political processes, NPA seeks to link humanitarian response to the longer term development perspectives of democratisation and equitable distribution of power and resources. NPA firmly believes that better organised people can better contain crises; furthermore, better organisational capacity can, in the long run, enable people to influence distribution of power and resources.

At the same time, NPA recognises that there can be tension between our long-term development agenda, our role in

humanitarian mine action and our role as a humanitarian actor, especially in fragile and conflict-affected political environments. When such tensions arise, NPA will make choices based on thorough analysis and judgement, striking the right balance between our different mandates, informed by what is in the best interests of the people and communities affected by a humanitarian crisis.

In many humanitarian contexts, mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war kill, maim and in other ways threaten people or hinder humanitarian response and safe returns for displaced people. One of the core objectives of NPA in humanitarian contexts is protection of civilians from indiscriminate weapons and weapons used indiscriminately. We carry out operations and advocacy aiming to reduce and prevent harm to civilians from the impacts of weapons and ammunition.

NPA strives to ensure humanitarian programmes are developed and implemented in line with internationally recognised principles and standards. NPA adheres in its humanitarian work to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross Movement and Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief (1994). Additionally, NPA aims to uphold the Sphere Humanitarian Standards and the

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS), which was developed to ensure greater effectiveness, impact, accountability and quality in humanitarian response. Not only will NPA's humanitarian work be based on the four humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality, it will also be rights-based, participatory and reflect the principles of partnership that inform the entire organisation.

a. The humanitarian principles

Humanity: Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, and civilians affected by conflict or disaster have a right to protection and assistance, which alleviate suffering and protect their human dignity. This overarching principle guides all of NPA's humanitarian work.

Impartiality: Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions. NPA remains aware that our role in long-term development, peace building or humanitarian disarmament may impact on how NPA is perceived in the local context and our humanitarian access. NPA will, however, always strive to prioritise those in most need. Our solidarity lies with the civilian population and our assistance will be non-discriminatory in the areas we work.

Neutrality: Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. NPA's humanitarian work aims to relieve the suffering of those in need without favouring any side of the conflict or dispute. We will, however, take a stand on the causes of suffering; and we will speak out against injustice, in line with our experience, values and principles. As NPA's organisational work includes political and rights-based work, balancing our mandates is critical. NPA assesses

humanitarian and non-humanitarian priorities in our overall portfolio on a case by case basis.

Independence: Humanitarian action must be independent of the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented. NPA is independent, speaks for itself in all matters and chooses its own priorities of work.

b. Do no harm

All aid programmes involve the transfer of resources (food, shelter, water, health care, training, etc.) into a resource-scarce environment. Such resources often represent power and wealth and they can become an element of conflict or affect local power dynamics. 'Doing no harm' in humanitarian settings requires careful analysis of the context and how aid programmes affect that context. NPA will examine how aid interacts with a conflict, the power structures, gender relations or other aspects of the local environment, and ensure that our programmes, as well as staff and partner conduct, strengthen local capacities and 'do no harm'.

c. Rights-based approach

The promotion of universal human rights and equal rights for all is at the centre of what NPA does and who we are. In particular, NPA will strive to ensure that the human rights principles of non-discrimination, equality, accountability and participation are addressed in all our humanitarian responses. NPA sees it as our humanitarian duty to protect, promote and uphold the rights of people in crisis.

NPA's commitment to protection is an integral part of our humanitarian policy and will be granted due focus as a core element in our humanitarian work. Gender-based violence, even used as a weapon of war, is prevalent in most humanitarian crises and oppression and exploitation mechanisms already existing in the community tend to be exacerbated

during crisis.

In line with this approach, we seek to identify aspects underlying humanitarian crises and how they affect the rights of crisis-affected individuals and communities.

d. Partnership and localisation

As a partnership-centred organisation, NPA's humanitarian policy will complement our international strategy aimed at supporting partner organisations to mobilise for social and political change, building alliances with likeminded organisations, and building capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from crises and disasters affecting their communities. This includes awareness building in relation to the humanitarian principles and the integration of gender perspectives and safeguarding mechanisms.

Civil society organisations and local communities are vital in building resilience to withstand the impact of crises and will be the first to respond in an emergency. NPA is a signatory to the Charter 4 Change and committed to work in a way that recognises locally-based actors and gives them an increased and more dominant role in humanitarian responses. This will, inter alia, include more direct funding to local actors in humanitarian action, a strong emphasis on the principles of partnership (equality, transparency, results-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity), robust organisational support and a capacity-strengthening focus (Charter 4 Change Commitments attached).

e. Coordination, clusters etc.

NPA will engage with relevant coordination mechanisms and clusters. Coordination of humanitarian action is vital to enhance quality, address identified gaps and ensure greater predictability and accountability. At the same time, it serves to strengthen partnerships between national and international NGOs, international organisations, the International

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, UN agencies and the government in a country. NPA will advocate and ensure, where possible, strengthened participation of national NGOs and local partners in coordination mechanisms.

f. Risk profile: security policy

NPA is involved in humanitarian responses in many volatile and insecure environments. NPA will avoid exposure to direct/targeted security risks, where the organisation, its staff or partners are explicit targets of threats to life and health from actors with the assessed capability to execute such threats.

NPA will accept a relatively high degree of indirect/non-targeted risk as long as it can be satisfactorily managed and mitigated through the implementation of security management procedures. NPA will accept a moderate degree of residual risk. The degree to which residual risk is acceptable will depend on the critical nature of a programmatic response (i.e. the urgency or potential impact of the programme in terms of saving lives and relieving suffering), as well as the informed consent of staff.

During the conflict in Syria, NPA has offered risk education through our Conflict Preparedness and Protection programme for different age groups in Northern Syria. The training is aimed at empowering civilians with tools and knowledge in order to increase their chances of survival in a conflict zone. Photo: Norwegian People's Aid



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ADVOCACY

Advocacy is an integral and critical part of NPA's humanitarian response work in order to amplify people's own voices, ensuring that humanitarian responses reflect the different needs, the rights and participation of those affected by a crisis. We speak out against the violation of rights and, where appropriate, advocate and mobilise support for better protection of the most vulnerable groups. We hold duty bearers to account and use our influence to shape the policies and decisions of leaders.

NPA engages in humanitarian diplomacy as part of our advocacy efforts. Protecting, maintaining and strengthening international laws and norms are vital components in protecting civilians. NPA works alone and in coalition with civil society partners and humanitarian actors, national and international, to achieve these goals.



*NPA works in partnership with local organisations to amplify the voices of people like this farmer in Cambodia.
Photo: Norwegian People's Aid*

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GENDER

Armed conflict and humanitarian crises affect and involve women and men, girls and boys differently. Addressing gender equality during a humanitarian crisis means planning and implementing protection and assistance in relation to the needs of the different groups in a community. Humanitarian response work must therefore be tailored to the different needs of women and men, taking a broader gender equality agenda into consideration.

The prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence often increases during armed conflict and it may be used as a weapon of war. NPA sees it as an obligation to highlight this as a serious, life-threatening problem and to focus on how, in its different forms, it affects the population.

NPA will hold itself accountable to persons and communities concerned for our organisational decisions and the actions of our personnel. Protection and safeguarding against sexual exploitation and abuse shall also be mainstreamed and integrated into all NPA's humanitarian programming. This implies ensuring appropriate accountability mechanisms and working with the affected persons, communities and groups to support their self-protection capacities.

*Women who fled armed conflict in South Sudan.
Photo: Christina Johnsen*



BUILDING RESILIENCE – LINKING HUMANITARIAN WORK WITH LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

NPA defines resilience as the capacity to withstand shocks and stresses connected to natural disasters, conflict or other crises and having strategies in place to recover as quickly as possible. NPA's approach to resilience links our humanitarian assistance and long-term development efforts, including our peace-building activities. By working with partners, NPA is committed to strengthening local actors and supporting communities to self-organise and build resilience.

More effective responses will hinge on ensuring that local communities are involved, not only in the response, but also in the preparedness and the recovery processes. Given their presence in communities, local organisations are often best positioned to respond to humanitarian needs. NPA will therefore, to the degree possible, involve local partner organisations in a dialogue on how to build better preparedness and reduce the vulnerability of local communities.



*"Omnia" and her family received cow fodder from one of NPA's partner organisations. Her cow has now delivered a calf, and Omnia uses some of the milk to make butter which she plans to sell in the market.
Photo: NPA/Sara Hamdy*

OUR NICHES IN HUMANITARIAN WORK

NPA's activities in humanitarian crises should be a reflection of identified needs and our own or partner's capacities and expertise to respond to those needs in a timely, coordinated and efficient fashion. Based on NPA's flexibility, contextual knowledge and strong local partnerships, NPA shall have the ability to respond in hard-to-reach areas and complex contexts.

The following areas constitute NPA's main niches in humanitarian work. In these areas we commit to possess and provide technical expertise and operational capacity, as well as to provide or facilitate access to training and professional support for our partners when needed and requested. NPA can also support partners' activities in other humanitarian sectors, provided the organisations will not need technical support from NPA.

Mine action and humanitarian disarmament

NPA works both operationally and through advocacy with the aim of reducing and preventing harm to civilians from the impacts of weapons and ammunition. In many humanitarian contexts, mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war kill, maim and in other ways threaten people. Furthermore, after a conflict, the presence of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war can block or reduce access to vital infra-

structure or other humanitarian assistance as well as endanger safe return or access to livelihoods for the civilian population. The lack of clear information can additionally result in a sense of fear which further hinders access to services or infrastructure. Rapid mapping and clearance of roads, routes, and other key areas in coordination with other humanitarian actors can, in given circumstances, be a vital humanitarian response.

In humanitarian contexts, NPA's humanitarian disarmament activities, including mine action, risk education and advocacy, are guided by NPA's humanitarian policy and gender equality policy. In all NPA's humanitarian disarmament initiatives, the fulfilment of obligations under international law, in particular the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), provides the framework of our work.

Conflict preparedness and protection

Conflict Preparedness and Protection (CPP) is an initiative started by NPA in order to assist people to better protect themselves against conflict-related threats, such as the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA). The humanitarian value of CPP initiatives derives from preparedness and enhanced protection obtained through skills, knowledge and equipment given to the civilian population.

Partnership and localisation

Partnership is a key working modality for NPA and we see it as a two-way cooperative relationship, based on active dialogue and mutual trust and accountability. NPA is focused on having strategic partnerships with actors that have compatible visions and values. We have endorsed the Global Humanitarian Platform's Principles of Partnership: Equality, Transparency, Results-Oriented Approach, Responsibility and Complementarity. Whilst the focus of our partners will differ, they often constitute an important resource in mobilising support for local communities in humanitarian response. As a signatory to the Charter for Change, NPA has committed to strengthen our efforts to ensure that national actors can play an increased and more prominent role in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from humanitarian crisis affecting their communities. This includes, inter-alia, supporting local actors to become robust organisations that continuously improve their ability to take a leading role in humanitarian responses.

Food security and livelihood

Access to food and the maintenance of an adequate nutritional status are critical determinants of people's survival in a disaster. Everyone has the right to adequate food and food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The food security and livelihood (FSL) sector is one of the main focus areas in NPA's humanitarian work. NPA takes a people-centred and gender-sensitive approach to FSL, aiming to meet short-term needs, 'do no harm', reduce the need for the affected population to adopt potentially damaging coping strategies and contribute to restoring longer-term food security. When appropriate, NPA will prioritise cash transfers in our FSL programmes,



Ahmad Al Akhdar, dog handler for NPA in Lebanon, using the long-line search technique with Explosive Detection dog Brick.
Photo: Hala Amhaz:

alongside in-kind and voucher transfers.

Livelihood is the means of making a living and securing the necessities of life. For NPA, it entails both protecting existing livelihoods and promoting the conditions necessary to establish livelihood activities during crises. Livelihood support is a complex area where cultural norms, socio-economic conditions, gender relations and a myriad of other factors influence both the process and the outcome of any activities related to livelihood protection. To provide adequate livelihood support, we need to understand which assets people draw upon and which strategies they develop to make a living. This requires a thorough contextual understanding, including an understanding of which factors can make a livelihood more or less viable in a given environment. Establishing livelihood opportunities is a major recovery priority for affected populations. NPA's livelihood programmes should serve to bridge the transition from recovery efforts towards longer-term development, and tie in with NPA's focus on equality and control of and access to resources.

Protection

Protection in humanitarian crises refers to those activities which aim to obtain full respect of the rights of all persons in accordance with human rights law as well as international humanitarian law.

Working with partners, NPA will ensure that survivors of conflict- or crisis-related sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), their families and communities access comprehensive protection support to contribute to their rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities. Most survivors of SGBV will be women but men, young adults and children may also be involved and affected. This is a reflection of NPA's mandate and gender equality policy and, in particular, of our long-term support to organisations which work to

prevent and respond to gender-based violence and the effects of violence on individuals and communities.

Protection and safeguarding against sexual exploitation and abuse shall also be mainstreamed and integrated into all NPA's humanitarian programming, thereby ensuring appropriate accountability mechanisms and working with the affected persons, communities and groups to support their self-protection capacities.

Furthermore, NPA's mission in humanitarian disarmament is to protect civilians against explosive weapons and ammunition.

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WHEN AND WHERE WILL NPA RESPOND TO HUMANITARIAN CRISES?

NPA's decision whether or not to respond to a crisis, and the scale of our response, will be based on a consideration of the following factors:

Context and scale of the crisis

- The nature and scale of the humanitarian crisis, including potential loss of life, levels of human rights violations and the local coping capacity;

- NPA's ability to respond in line with the humanitarian principles without conflicting with the other mandates of the organisation.

Location of crisis

- NPA's presence in or accessibility to a country/location, as well as our historical partnerships in the country/location.

The response from partners

- Local partners' capacity, capability and resources to respond and NPA's added value in supporting their response.

The response to the crisis

- The capacity and willingness of the national government to respond;

- The presence and capacity of other humanitarian actors (both national and international).

Access to resources to respond

- Requests and funding levels from NPA's members, the public, the government of Norway and other stakeholders.

Capability and capacity to respond

- NPA's and partners' specific added value in terms of technical expertise/advocacy opportunities and the availability of appropriate human and financial resources;

- NPA's set-up or network and capacity for rapid mobilisation in support of local humanitarian responses.

Safety and Security

- The possibility for NPA and/or partners to operate within an acceptable level of risk.



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