



Sida CONFLICT, JULY 2009

Sida's Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance 2008–2010

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Printed by: Edita 2009

Art.no.: SIDA52416en

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1. Summary

The objective of Sida's humanitarian assistance is to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during or in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The Government's Humanitarian Aid Policy, skr 2004/05:52, is the basic policy instrument for this strategy.

Sida's humanitarian work shall be controlled by international law, in particular, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the associated humanitarian principles. The Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) shall guide the work. This means that Sida's humanitarian assistance shall be timely, predictable, flexible and needs-based.

Sida shall support the central and unique role of the United Nations in leading and coordinating humanitarian contributions and shall support the International Committee of the Red Cross in its unique role. Sida shall implement effective humanitarian assistance by funding humanitarian contributions through United Nations agencies, the Red Cross Movement, Swedish and international NGOs and relevant authorities. As far as possible, the assistance shall be measurable, cost-effective and monitored regularly. The humanitarian assistance shall support the use of and strengthen local capacity wherever possible.

Sida shall promote respect for IHL through inter alia support to organisations that are active within the field of humanitarian law.

Sida's humanitarian assistance can be used to reduce the risks and vulnerability of people during natural disasters. Sida's handling of the appropriation shall be flexible and support the transition to recovery and long-term development cooperation.

Sida shall support the international humanitarian system by contributing to research and methods development. Sida shall also strengthen Swedish humanitarian competence through capacity development.

Sida shall follow international humanitarian policy development and assist the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in advancing humanitarian policy. Consultation between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida in the humanitarian field takes place through the Humanitarian Consultative Group (HUMSAM).

2. Definitions

The collective Swedish humanitarian assistance policy is guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence¹. The needs of the affected person are decisive to whether interventions are implemented.

According to the Government², Sida's humanitarian work shall be based on the Geneva Conventions from 1949 and the three Additional Protocols from 1977 and 2005, and other instruments of International Humanitarian Law, on Refugee Law, Human Rights Law, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, legal instruments with a bearing on natural disasters, and established international practice in the field.³

Humanity refers to alleviating suffering wherever it is found. Humanitarian assistance is often given under very difficult circumstances and in inaccessible areas. Humanitarian organisations often have to negotiate with different parties to be allowed access to civil groups in need of help, particularly in areas of conflict. It is therefore important to support the work of humanitarian actors on security and access in order to make it easier for them to gain unhindered access to non-combatants. Neutrality (not favouring any side in a conflict) is a guiding principle in these situations and often serves as protection against attacks, and may sometimes be a condition for conflicting parties before accepting assistance.

Effective humanitarian assistance promotes long-term and locally supported solutions to the immediate needs of the affected

1 See Government communication 2004/05:52, p 8 for a more detailed discussion.

2 See Government communication Skr 2004/05:52.

3 For displaced persons who are not covered by international conventions, the United Nations has put together special principles for work with displaced persons "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement". These guidelines contain references to different United Nations conventions that stress the importance of protection for displaced persons.

people. Support can be given to cover physical needs such as food and clothing, social needs such as safety and security (e.g. psychosocial support), and to safeguard the rights of affected persons, including physical safety and dignity. Humanitarian assistance can also be used for other kinds of contributions such as e.g. conflict management, certain disaster risk reduction, and contribute to creating conditions for reconstruction and long-term development.

Sweden supports the 23 Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship⁴. This means that donors like Sida shall support needs-based, flexible and predictable funding and, as far as possible, involve the affected population in the formulation, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of activities⁵. The Sphere project's minimum standards for the way humanitarian assistance should be implemented and the principles of humanitarian assistance developed by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership – International (HAP-I), are examples of the development of a more rights-based humanitarian assistance in recent years and they also form an area of work that Sweden supports⁶.

4 Principles and Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship – adopted in Stockholm on 17 June 2003 after a process initiated and run by Sweden and others. In April 2006, these principles were confirmed by the OECD/DAC. The GHD principles are included as part of an appendix to the Government's Humanitarian Aid Policy, Skr 2004/05:52. More information is available at www.goodhumanitarian donorship.org

5 As part of this work, Sida shall contribute to the common humanitarian funds that have been set up in some big complex crises (Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan) and which will probably be replicated in other places in the future.

6 Sida is also a member of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Learning in Humanitarian Action (Alnap), a network for evaluation and learning within humanitarian assistance. Networks and organisations such as Alnap, Sphere and HAP-I are acting to raise the quality of humanitarian assistance and improve the taking of responsibility by humanitarian actors towards donors and recipients. The initiative came about after a highly critical evaluation of humanitarian assistance following the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

3. Strategic points of departure

The point of departure for all humanitarian assistance is that every state has primary responsibility for meeting humanitarian needs that arise within its borders.⁷ In the event that the central government or other institutions of a country are unwilling or unable to meet this responsibility, external organisations and states that have the necessary capacity have a duty, in accordance with international law and established practice in international aid operations to provide support for action to meet these needs⁸. This duty is often called the “humanitarian imperative”. The work to support the protection of and contribute to assisting civilians and non-combatants shall where possible be with the consent of the state in which the needs exist.

Humanitarian assistance differs from long-term development cooperation, primarily, in two ways. Firstly, its principles are, to a large extent, explicitly enshrined in international law. Secondly, humanitarian assistance has no expressed poverty goal. The aim of humanitarian assistance is primarily to act to save lives, alleviate acute suffering and maintain human dignity for the most vulnerable groups, during an emergency. In practice, however, the most vulnerable are often also the poorest.

The United Nations has a basic and unique role to direct and coordinate international humanitarian assistance as is stated in the General Assembly Resolution 46/182 from 1991. It is therefore important to give high priority to promoting strategic and operative coordination between humanitarian actors and to defend and support the multilateral mechanisms that are often led, primarily, by the United Nations.

⁷ Compare GHD, Article 5.

⁸ The Government's Humanitarian Aid Policy, Skr 2004/05:52, page 8

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement holds a special position in humanitarian work. This applies particularly to the International Committee of the Red Cross, through the task assigned to the organisation by the Geneva Conventions with regard to humanitarian assistance and protection, and as regards monitoring and promoting International Humanitarian Law.⁹

NGOs play a vital role in implementing humanitarian assistance. Their roots in civil society, in countries affected by humanitarian situations, give them a unique role to reach out quickly to those affected.

The creation and development of the European Union's Humanitarian Aid Policy is an important issue for the Swedish Government. Sida shall assist the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in this work and, in particular, act to strengthen coordination and agreement between the humanitarian work of the European Union and the United Nations. Sida shall also assist the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the ongoing consultation between the European Commission and the European Union member states on the Union's operations providing humanitarian assistance.¹⁰ The implementation of the European Union's common humanitarian policy (European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid)¹¹ will probably increase the need for this support.

⁹ Compare GHD, Article 10.

¹⁰ See DG ECHO, Council Regulation No 1257/96.

¹¹ Document 2008/C 25/01, English text at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:2008:025:0001:0012:EN:PDF>

4. Goals, priorities and focus

4.1 Overall goals of Sida's humanitarian work

According to the Government's Humanitarian Aid Policy (Skr 2004/05:52), the goal of Sida's work on humanitarian assistance is to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity for the benefit of people in need who are, or are at risk of becoming, affected by armed conflicts¹², natural disasters¹³ or other disaster situations¹⁴.

4.2 Guiding principles for Sida's humanitarian work

Sida shall fund humanitarian assistance operated by *professional actors*. These may be United Nations agencies, belong to the Red Cross Movement or be NGOs. The Government can also task Sida to fund humanitarian assistance implemented by relevant Swedish authorities. To obtain humanitarian funding from Sida, the organisation must have signed the IASC Code of Conduct^{15 16}.

As far as possible, Sida shall actively *counteract dependence on or undermining of local markets*. Where possible, Sida shall support activi-

12 As well as armed conflict, these can be destructive economic policy, expulsion, discrimination, etc. Conflict management issues within Sida are controlled by a separate strategy and will not be discussed further within the framework of this humanitarian strategy.

13 The European Union's definition of natural events that can have disastrous consequences are avalanches, storms and tornados, forest fires, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and landslides, burst dams, floods and tidal waves, drought and heat waves. A natural event is not a "disaster" until, for example, an earthquake or hurricane has such far-reaching consequences that these exceed the ability of those affected to cope with the human, economic and environmental strains.

14 Compare with the overall goal of the GHD, Article 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" [GHD Objectives and definitions of humanitarian action, Stockholm 17 June 2003].

15 The Code of Conduct was defined in 1994 by the Red Cross and the most prominent NGOs. It is owned by the signatory organisations and is supported by the Standing Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

16 Compare the GHD principles, Articles 10 and 15.

ties that encourage food security and strengthen local agriculture. If large quantities of food and other goods have to be procured, such procurement shall be made locally, as far as possible. At the same time, large purchases on the local market can drive up prices and reduce the local population's access to goods. Therefore, all large-scale procurement must be preceded by an accurate risk analysis. Sida shall investigate the possibility of alternative support, for example, through cash contributions where possible¹⁷.

Sida's humanitarian assistance shall be implemented, as far as possible, to support the *transition to recovery* and long-term development cooperation.¹⁸

Sida's humanitarian assistance shall, as far as possible, *consider environmental and climate aspects*. In the assessment of humanitarian assistance, Sida shall consider its policy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

In many humanitarian crises around the world, military and civil actors work side by side. It is important to find forms for civil and military actors and resources to coordinate their activities while maintaining respect for humanitarian principles. A guiding principle should be to work for optimal coordination, provided this coordination does not have a negative impact on the perception of the neutrality and impartiality of the humanitarian activity. Leaving the neutrality of humanitarian actors open to dispute risks leading to limited access to civilians in need, resulting in the undermining of the emergency and lifesaving work. It can also negatively affect the humanitarian actors' own safety. In this area, Swedish humanitarian work shall have as its point of departure accepted international standards and agreements, primarily the MCDA Guidelines, the Oslo Guidelines and IASC's reference paper Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies.

Sida shall aim to maintain a clear distinction between *humanitarian* and *military activity*, thereby strengthening conditions for humanitarian organisations to win the confidence of fighting parties and the local population. Therefore, when preparing decisions concerning humanitarian crises in areas where there is armed conflict, Sida shall prepare such decisions in accordance with the United Nations Guidelines on the use of military assets in humanitarian

¹⁷ Compare the GHD principles, Articles 7 and 9.

¹⁸ Compare the GHD principles, Article 9.

activities¹⁹, also in cases that do not refer to specific interventions by the United Nations²⁰. Any military resources shall be used for indirect support rather than for direct implementation. On an overall level, any such intervention must maintain its civilian character and be led by civil humanitarian actors, especially if the United Nations is present. In a humanitarian crisis, any military resources shall be used as a last resource when no comparable civil resources are available²¹.

4.3 Subgoals of the humanitarian work

The overall goal of Sida's humanitarian work has been broken down into subgoals, with consideration for the guiding principles under 4.2, to allow the Government and Sida to assess the results and effects of Sida's humanitarian work in the short and medium term. The eight subgoals reported on below contribute to meeting the overall strategy goal under point 4.1. Each subgoal contains one or more distinct components (total 14). The components have been given a quantitative indicator (see Appendix 1). For reporting, the indicators shall be supplemented with a qualitative analysis.

19 MCDA (Military and Civil Defence Assets) Guidelines, Guidelines on the use of military and civil defence assets to support United Nations humanitarian activities in complex emergencies. OCHA, 2003, <http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docid=1004858>

20 See also IASC's reference paper Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies, from 2004 <http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docid=1001219>.

21 Compare also GHD, Articles 19 and 20. See also Guidelines on the use of military and civil defence assets in disaster relief (the Oslo Guidelines), <http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docid=1005247>

4.3.1 Sub-goal 1: Promoting the principles of good humanitarian donorship

1. Sida's humanitarian assistance shall be characterised by *timeliness*, *predictability* and *flexibility*. Partner organisations should know early on in the financial year and/or in connection with an ongoing or planned activity during the year what funding levels they may expect from Sida. The joint efforts by all donors should contribute to a well-adjusted total funding of any humanitarian programme, thereby responding to the humanitarian needs in the best possible way.²² Sida shall therefore prioritise active donor coordination primarily in the field but also at headquarters level.

2. Swedish and international organisations that meet Sida's basic requirements for delivering humanitarian assistance may apply for funding. Sida shall only support organisations that work with a high level of competence and quality and comply with established codes of conduct. Organisations judged by Sida to be particularly suitable can obtain special *unallocated funds*, which, in accordance with existing Guidelines and Sida's approval in each individual case, may be used for limited and quick response to rapid onset disasters.²³ After assessing an organisation's capacity and policy, Sida may, following consultations in HUMSAM, approve humanitarian framework agreements to established partners. Sida may also consider other agreement forms with humanitarian actors with the aim of finding mechanisms to meet humanitarian needs quickly and effectively.

3. Sida shall encourage and support a *long-term perspective* in its partner organisations' programming. Where justified with regard to probable continued humanitarian needs and when reconstruction contributions cannot be carried out for the intended target groups²⁴, Sida shall be able to fund multiannual humanitarian contributions. Experts in reconstruction and conflict resolution should be brought in at the beginning of a humanitarian response.

4.3.2 Sub-goal 2: Promoting needs-based humanitarian assistance

4. Sida shall ensure that the humanitarian assistance is based on needs and well-founded needs analyses. Special importance shall

22 Compare the GHD principles, Article 5.

23 Compare the GHD principles, Article 10.

24 Compare the GHD principles, Article 9.

be attached to support for “*Forgotten Crises*”, which receive relatively little assistance in relation to their needs.²⁵

4.3.3 Sub-goal 3: Strengthening humanitarian coordination

5. Sida shall support existing *multilateral mechanisms* for coordination and implementation of international humanitarian assistance, with the aim of strengthening the effectiveness of the collective international response to humanitarian crises. In this respect, Sida shall fund humanitarian activities by responding to appeals from United Nations humanitarian organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The latter shall take place in close cooperation with the Swedish Red Cross.

6. The humanitarian activity shall strive to, as far as possible, respond to threats against life, health and human dignity, with a balance between different kinds of needs, avoiding duplication or omission. Sida shall therefore give high priority to promoting *strategic and operative coordination* between the different humanitarian actors, i.e., national authorities, humanitarian organisations and donor countries, with each one contributing according to its special roles, mandates and conditions. Coordination must not compromise the impartial and independent nature of humanitarian action.²⁶

4.3.4 Sub-goal 4: Strengthening local capacity

7. In order to improve the capability for a country to meet its own humanitarian needs, it is of great importance to *support local structures* in the form of local authorities and local humanitarian organisations. Where consistent with the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality, and where reasonable with regard to the urgency of a contribution, Sida shall therefore prioritise financial support to organisations with local partners and which support the use of the country’s available local structures and resources to handle crisis situations. In this way, the humanitarian contributions that Sida funds will have a more long-term effect²⁷.

²⁵ Compare the ECHO statistics on Forgotten Crises.

²⁶ Compare the GHD principles, Articles 2 and 8.

²⁷ Compare the GHD principles, Articles 8 and 9.

8. In its decisions on assistance to humanitarian response, Sida shall consider the increased vulnerability of and any other special conditions for women, children, the elderly, and sick and disabled people in a humanitarian crisis. *Extremely vulnerable groups* shall be given special priority by Sida based on the principle of support for the most vulnerable in humanitarian crises. It is also vital that these target groups as far as possible participate in formulating and influencing the expected support.²⁸

4.3.5 Sub-goal 5: Supporting the link between humanitarian contributions and prevention

9. International contributions to *build preparedness for natural disasters and reduce risk and vulnerability* require coordination between different sectors of society, authorities and other actors. The Swedish Government has adopted a separate strategy for Sida's work with these issues. In accordance with Sida's Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction, such activities should primarily be financed from the development appropriation, but a smaller portion of the humanitarian appropriation may be used to build international emergency preparedness, especially through the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, within the framework of the United Nations' humanitarian agencies and through the Swedish Rescue Services Agency. Likewise, Sida shall continue to contribute to the methods development and cooperation to benefit the work to reduce the risks of primarily natural disasters with far-reaching humanitarian consequences.

4.3.6 Sub-goal 6: Reducing the gap between humanitarian support and recovery contributions

10. Sida shall maintain a preparedness to finance early recovery and other activities in the *transition between disaster conditions and long-term development*. Where possible, given the Government's geographic priorities, such interventions shall primarily be financed from the development appropriation. However, to ensure flexibility, such activities may also partly be financed from the humanitarian appropriation.

²⁸ Compare the GHD principles, Articles 6 and 7.

4.3.7 Sub-goal 7: Strengthening the humanitarian system

11. Sida shall encourage and support *qualified research and methods development* in the humanitarian field. Sida shall also support networks and organisations that work with quality assurance of humanitarian response, and research institutes that work with applied research. Sida may use a portion of the humanitarian allocation for quality assurance of humanitarian action, including evaluations, seminars, etc.

12. Sida shall contribute to strengthening the Swedish and international humanitarian capacity through strategic *secondments* of qualified Swedish humanitarian staff to important international humanitarian actors.

4.3.8 Sub-goal 8: Strengthening the humanitarian principles

13. In accordance with the Common Article 1 of the Geneva Conventions, Sida shall participate in and support interventions to disseminate knowledge and deepen insight into the rights of civilians and the duties and responsibilities of conflicting and occupying parties according to International Humanitarian Law²⁹. Sida shall both finance the work of relevant organisations and take part in this work as a governmental Agency.

14. As part of its *information responsibility*, Sida shall account for and promote an understanding of the reasons for and principles of Swedish support for international humanitarian action to the Swedish general public. Sida shall also continue strengthening the Swedish humanitarian resource base, primarily NGOs, around issues of humanitarian interventions or policy.³⁰

²⁹ According to the Common Article 1 of the Geneva Conventions, all states undertake to be responsible for, respect and promote respect for International Humanitarian Law.

³⁰ Compare the GHD principles, Article 21.

5. Organisation, implementation and volume

Sida shall carry out its humanitarian assistance through financial support to external organisations (these may be United Nations agencies, belong to the Red Cross Movement, NGOs or relevant authorities) for preparation and implementation of humanitarian response as well as through information work and methods development within the humanitarian field. For this task, Sida shall maintain a suitable internal organisation that allows the Government's humanitarian policy to be implemented and that creates conditions for good control and follow-up of the considerable funds channelled through humanitarian assistance.

The planned humanitarian assistance³¹ via Sida for the coming strategy period 2008-2010 is expected to total approx 6.5 billion SEK. In accordance with the GHD principles (Article 11), Sida shall actively work for greater transparency and dialogue related to decisions, with the aim of avoiding under-funding of the international response between and within humanitarian crises and funding of interventions on grounds other than humanitarian needs.

Sida shall fund international humanitarian action implemented by the *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*. In recent years (since 2005), this support has amounted to just under 20% of Sida's annual humanitarian budget and this proportion is not expected to change significantly during the strategy period. The magnitude of the support is decided annually after consultation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs within the frame of HUM-SAM.

Sida shall fund international humanitarian action implemented in cooperation with the *Swedish Red Cross* and its international partner *the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*

³¹ Including so-called transition assistance and preventive contributions to the extent that they will be funded under the humanitarian appropriation item.

(IFRC). In recent years (since 2005), this support has amounted to just under 10% of Sida's annual budget, and this proportion is not expected to change significantly during the strategy period. The amount of the support is decided after consultation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs within the frame of HUMSAM.

Sida shall fund international humanitarian action implemented by the *Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA)*. It concerns primarily interventions requested by the United Nations humanitarian agencies, but also other activities where the SRSA has a unique competence and where its work is in demand internationally. In 2007, the support amounted to approximately 8% of the humanitarian budget. Henceforth, the support will also be based on assessed humanitarian needs, demand and the comparative advantages, competence and capacity of the SRSA. Sida shall continuously consult with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs regarding the support to the SRSA International Department within the frame of HUMSAM.

Within the framework provided by this strategy, Sida shall be able to fund *urgent, extensive and protracted humanitarian crises* where requirements exceed 50 million SEK. This applies primarily to consolidated appeals by United Nations agencies or the Red Cross and support to common humanitarian funds, but also to other contributions for which an organisation has unique competence and for which its work is in demand. These may be short-term or multi-annual contributions. Before Sida decides on the amount of these contributions, it shall consult with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs within the frame of HUMSAM.

The goals and sub-goals of this strategy shall be expressed in a results matrix specifying the relevant "outputs"/results as well as quantitative and, if possible, qualitative indicators to allow results monitoring.

6. Results monitoring and evaluation of achievement of goals

In addition to the indicators in the results matrix, Sida shall submit a narrative and a financial report on the use of funds as well as disbursements per geographic area and agreement partner in accordance with the results appendix.

Sida shall report on the fulfilment of the sub-goals above by applying the indicators in the results matrix every year, within the frame of the Annual Report. For the Report, the indicators shall be supplemented by a qualitative analysis to allow for interpretation and evaluation of the outcome.

For the continuous monitoring of results and dialogue on goal and sub-goal fulfilment, Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs shall exchange information on a regular basis within the framework of HUMSAM.

Sida shall regularly follow up and audit its contributions, and annually evaluate selected parts of the humanitarian assistance through effect and results evaluations and, where applicable, more comprehensive capacity and system audits of activities and partners. These annual follow-ups shall be reported to the Government Offices in Sida's appendix to the Annual Report on the results of the assistance.³²

Sida shall also carry out monitoring and evaluation activities with regard to contributions to the United Nations, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement and NGOs, taking into consideration the different organisations' own control and management systems. At the end of the strategy period (2010), an in-depth results analysis of Sida's humanitarian assistance shall be conducted. This more comprehensive results analysis shall also cover a review of the channels of Swedish humanitarian assistance and will, in its entirety, form the basis for a new humanitarian strategy.

³² Compare the GHD principles, Articles 21, 22 and 23.

Sida works according to directives of the Swedish Parliament and Government to reduce poverty in the world, a task that requires cooperation and persistence. Through development cooperation, Sweden assists countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Each country is responsible for its own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge, skills and expertise. This increases the world's prosperity.

Sida's Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance 2008–2010

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