



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
MANATŪ AORERE

New Zealand's Humanitarian Action Policy

2019

*Te Kaupapa
Atawhai Tangata*



New Zealand's Humanitarian Action Policy



Summary

New Zealanders believe in supporting people in need, especially those facing life threatening situations and who are suffering. These values underpin our long tradition as a committed humanitarian actor and as a country that adds our voice on key international humanitarian issues.

This policy outlines the rationale and high level priorities for New Zealand's international humanitarian action, including our responses to international humanitarian crises, our support for improved disaster risk management (including disaster preparedness, response, early recovery and integrating disaster risk reduction measures into humanitarian action), and our international humanitarian advocacy.

New Zealand will focus on continuing to be a close and trusted partner for responding to humanitarian emergencies in the Pacific, and will support our Pacific partners to be well prepared to respond to disasters. We will also focus on being an effective supporting partner in responding to significant humanitarian crises in South East Asia that stretch national and regional capacity, and will actively engage in Asia Pacific regional disaster management and humanitarian dialogue and mechanisms, including supporting regional disaster preparedness efforts.

New Zealand also plays our part in responding to the world's major humanitarian crises where the scale of human suffering and humanitarian need is greatest, primarily through our advocacy and influence, and by contributing funding towards the coordinated efforts of the international humanitarian community.

New Zealand will work to ensure respect for, and to strengthen, international humanitarian law and practice. We will speak up on humanitarian issues that matter to us. On prevention of humanitarian crises, we will be a leader on climate change action and continue to be a leader on disarmament.

We will be a fast, nimble humanitarian responder and work to strengthen the quality, effectiveness and inclusiveness of humanitarian action.

This policy reinforces and complements New Zealand's wider international engagement on issues as diverse as climate change, inclusive economic development, promotion of international rules and human rights, refugee protection, and security and disarmament.

Context

In 2019 there are more than 130 million people across the world that require humanitarian assistance, including protection, and the international community is struggling to respond to the unprecedented magnitude and severity of these needs.

Armed conflict is the main driver of humanitarian needs, and disregard for international rules and principles are often at the root cause of human suffering in crises. Conflicts are increasingly being fought in towns and cities with devastating impacts for civilians, who suffer the consequences of having their livelihoods and essential public infrastructure destroyed, particularly water supply, sanitation systems, and hospitals. The direct impacts of war such as death, injury, disability and displacement are frequently compounded by the indirect costs of protracted armed conflict and crisis, such as food insecurity, famine and large-scale disease outbreaks such as cholera. This prolongs human suffering and deepens poverty and under-development.

Long-term trends such as climate change, resource scarcity, population growth and widening inequality, combined with other issues such as transnational crime and migration, are further compounding the impacts of conflict and leading to sustained states of fragility and instability in some regions, with global security implications.

Climate change poses an existential threat, particularly for low-lying nations, as sea-levels rise and extreme weather events such as cyclones, flooding and drought increase in intensity and frequency. The Pacific is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters and some countries are experiencing the impacts of climate change right now.

Pacific Island countries and territories are exposed to the full range of natural hazards – cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanos and public health risks – that can lead to disasters and humanitarian need. In recent years, the Pacific region has experienced an average of three significant disasters each year. Ten of the top 30 countries in the world with the highest average annual disaster losses in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are Pacific Islands.

While large events such as Tropical Cyclone Pam (Vanuatu, 2015) and Tropical Cyclone Winston (Fiji, 2016) gain international attention, it is also the accumulated impacts of small and medium-sized events such as flooding, high waves and localised drought that undermine Pacific Island countries' resilience, and place past, present and future development gains at risk.

In some instances whole communities and islands are at risk, generating complex questions about how best to prevent and manage displacement, including preserving cultural ties and connection to ancestral land. At the same time, Pacific people are resilient and Pacific governments are taking a leading role in developing fit-for-purpose responses for the region.

South East Asia is also highly vulnerable to natural disasters and, periodically, experiences pockets of conflict and associated displacement. While national and regional response capacity is strong, from time to time events occur that exceed national and regional response capacity.

While women, girls, boys and men all suffer in a crisis, structural gender inequalities mean that women and girls are disproportionately affected by conflict and disaster, and face greater obstacles accessing protection and assistance, and participating in humanitarian planning and decision-making processes. These barriers are exacerbated for people with disabilities.

To meet the complex challenges of the day, humanitarian actors are increasingly taking a more holistic and integrated approach that addresses the critical linkages between humanitarian action, development, human rights, peace and stability. International humanitarian actors, including New Zealand, have committed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action, including through commitments under the "Grand Bargain."

Principles

New Zealand's humanitarian action is built on the fundamental principle that people who are affected by disaster or conflict have a right to life with dignity and, therefore, are entitled to protection and assistance. Our conviction that action should be taken to prevent and alleviate human suffering is rooted in the rights and protections enshrined in international humanitarian law, international human rights law and refugee law.

New Zealand's humanitarian action is underpinned by the humanitarian principles of humanity (the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering); impartiality (actions are needs-based, without discrimination between or within affected populations); neutrality (action does not favour any side in an armed conflict); and independence (autonomy of humanitarian objectives from political, economic, military or other objectives).

New Zealand supports the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles and good practices, which emphasise that, donors, by working together, can more effectively encourage principled donor engagement and, by extension, improve humanitarian action.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is a core value underpinning New Zealand's humanitarian action. New Zealand is also committed to inclusive humanitarian action more broadly, including improving collection, analysis and use of disaggregated data (by sex, age and disability status), and taking into account the diverse needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of different people and groups.

Action is required to reduce the risks that natural hazards become disasters and improve preparedness for adverse events. New Zealand supports integrating disaster risk reduction measures in humanitarian action where relevant.

We prioritise our contributions and engagement where there is need, tailored to where we have relevant relationships and capability and are best placed to make a fast and effective contribution.

We emphasise partnership and coordination internally and with affected governments, the international community and with other donors.

New Zealand's Humanitarian Priorities





1 Pacific disaster preparedness and rapid response

In the Pacific region, New Zealand is known as a rapid responder and a trusted partner and friend in times of crisis. We provide assistance that is both financial and practical, that leverages our experience and expertise, and that meets identified needs and priorities. We promote and support Pacific leadership and coordination in disaster preparedness and response, and coordinate closely with other international actors.

New Zealand's primary focus will continue to be our engagement in the Pacific and on humanitarian issues that matter to Pacific people and governments. This is the region that we are a part of, where we have geographic proximity, deep relationships and the diplomatic footprint to deploy our widest range of humanitarian capabilities, and where we can make the biggest difference.

We will:

- Promote and support Pacific leadership and coordination in disaster preparedness and response;
- Progressively increase our support for nationally-led disaster preparedness activities;
- Maintain and enhance the New Zealand Government's offshore humanitarian capabilities for providing practical assistance;
- Respond quickly to requests for assistance;
- Incorporate early recovery, disaster risk reduction and resilience measures into planning and response.

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) leads New Zealand's official offshore humanitarian responses under the National Security System. MFAT coordinates closely with New Zealand Government response partners, affected governments, Australia and France through the FRANZ mechanism, regional arrangements such as the Pacific Humanitarian Team, and other donors and international actors.



2 Fast, effective and targeted contributions to emergencies outside the Pacific

Beyond the Pacific region, New Zealand plays our part in responding to the world's major humanitarian situations arising from conflict and violence, and natural hazards.

Countries in South East Asia are part of our wider region, and our secondary geographic priority. We are an effective supporting partner in South East Asia where requested, supported by strong bilateral and regional relationships and networks. We provide rapid financial assistance to effective international humanitarian partners, and, where we can make an impact, deploy targeted offshore humanitarian deployment capabilities to large-scale emergencies in South East Asia.

We engage in key risk management fora and dialogue with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and are active members of Asia Pacific regional response mechanisms for International Search and Rescue and Emergency Medical Teams.

When allocating funding to emergencies outside the Pacific and South East Asia regions, we firstly consider the scale and severity of humanitarian needs, prioritising large-scale events (in terms of numbers of people and proportion of the population impacted or at risk) and where it is beyond national and immediate regional capacity to meet needs.

Due to the scale and severity of the world's largest humanitarian crises, a greater proportion of New Zealand's humanitarian funding is allocated to global emergencies. However, we will continue to prioritise the Pacific and South East Asia over other emergencies when necessary.

We will also consider:

- Whether significant protection threats exist, including an imminent and significant threat to the life, safety, security, health and dignity of civilians; actual or probable human rights violations and/or serious violations of international humanitarian law; denial of liberty of movement, or where groups are targeted or marginalised owing to the dynamics of armed conflict or pre-existing discrimination;

- The extent to which crises are impacting geopolitical stability;
- Whether New Zealand has development interests at risk;
- The opportunity to leverage our influence or presence to advance humanitarian objectives; and
- The level of New Zealand public interest.

Annex 1 sets out in more detail the considerations when prioritising where we may respond outside of the Pacific and South East Asia.

By acting quickly to allocate humanitarian funding to major new emergencies and evolving major threats (e.g. slow onset disasters) on the ground, New Zealand can draw attention to a situation, encouraging other, larger, donors to respond.

We will engage with humanitarian partners that:

- Have systems, processes and a track record that we can be confident in;
- Are well placed to meet priority needs, and have a credible humanitarian footprint, evidenced by proximity and access to affected populations;
- In situations of armed conflict and insecurity demonstrate the necessary experience and expertise to operate effectively in insecure settings.

We maintain support for flexible, predictable humanitarian financing including anticipatory pooled financing mechanisms.





3 Humanitarian action that is inclusive for all

People impacted by humanitarian crises experience different levels of vulnerability and need. Some people are disproportionately affected, face multiple barriers in accessing information, protection and assistance, and are particularly exposed to violence, exploitation and abuse. Many people experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that further exacerbate exclusion. Intentional steps need to be taken to ensure humanitarian action is inclusive for all. We recognise the important role that local and national civil society organisations, NGOs and multilateral partners play in advancing inclusive humanitarian action.

We will work through both advocacy and investments to:

- Support humanitarian action that provides a platform for decision-making and leadership by women, youth, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups.
- Support humanitarian action that recognises and addresses the particular needs of women and girls, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Strengthen understanding of the needs of different groups through collection and analysis of data that is disaggregated by sex, age and disability status.
- Support disability-inclusive humanitarian action in line with our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and our commitment to the Charter for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.
- Promote inclusion and protection of people with diverse gender identity, expression and sexual orientation.



4 Multilateral diplomacy to achieve better humanitarian outcomes

Globally, New Zealand is committed to respecting and strengthening international rules, particularly international humanitarian law. We speak up on issues that matter to us, including:

- Compliance with international humanitarian law by parties to armed conflict;
- Protection of civilians and humanitarian workers, including medical workers;
- Preserving rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access;
- Promoting human rights; and
- Promoting humanitarian action that is inclusive of all.

On prevention, we are a leader on disarmament and a champion for action on issues that matter to the Pacific region and other Small Island Developing States (SIDS), especially climate change.

New Zealand actively engages in multilateral humanitarian diplomacy at an international level, and regionally in the Pacific and South East Asia. We leverage the convening power of international organisations and institutions to advance New Zealand's interests and to encourage multilateral agencies to deliver better outcomes, especially in the Pacific. We actively encourage innovation and changes in policy and practice that will strengthen humanitarian coordination and increase collaboration, efficiency and effectiveness to achieve better humanitarian outcomes.

New Zealand is a strong supporter of multilateralism, working collaboratively with other states and international institutions to prevent and respond to common challenges such as maintaining international peace and security, resolving humanitarian crises, addressing global refugee situations including through annual resettlement quotas, promoting human rights and addressing the impacts of climate change. We engage in multilateralism to address major challenges and risks that we are not able

to address directly or fully on our own, because it amplifies our voice and because there is a global public good from which we all benefit when global rules and norms are respected.

- Multilateral agencies must adapt and reform to maintain relevance and effectiveness in a rapidly changing world. New Zealand is a strong supporter of UN reform and changes to improve the efficiency of the international humanitarian system that will result in more aid going to the people who need it most. We:
- Advocate for effective, efficient humanitarian action that saves lives, alleviates suffering and maintains human dignity.
- Advocate for international humanitarian action that is fit for purpose and relevant to context, and that is accountable and adaptive to changing circumstances.
- Support the United Nations and wider multilateral system to respond in places where New Zealand does not have access.
- Underpin our support for effective and efficient humanitarian action by providing predictable, multi-year funding, including earmarked core funding.
- Advocate for more inclusive humanitarian action, including with a particular focus on disability inclusion and sexual and reproductive health and rights in humanitarian negotiations, with multilateral agencies, and in global humanitarian policy platforms.
- Continue to be a leading advocate for adherence to international humanitarian law, disarmament, and measures to minimise the humanitarian impacts of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA).



Accountability, Learning and Improvement

New Zealand aims to continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of our humanitarian action, including through post-event debriefs and drawing on lessons learned to improve procedures and practice, and monitors our contributions to partners.

We require our partners to monitor, evaluate, learn from and improve their work and participate, where feasible, in governance or donor support mechanisms for key humanitarian multilateral agencies.

Annex



Annex 1:

Considerations when recommending a humanitarian contribution outside the Pacific or South East Asia

1 An Appeal for International Assistance

- E.g. A national government request for or acceptance of international assistance.
- UN Humanitarian Response Plan or Regional Refugee Response Plan is in place.
- Existing or new ICRC or IFRC appeals and/or UN Flash Appeal launched and/or UN Central Emergency Response Fund allocation.

and

2 Severity and scale of humanitarian impact

- E.g. A large-scale rapid onset emergency, a spike in need in a large-scale crisis, or particularly large-scale protracted emergencies
- High immediate or projected death rates according to international emergency thresholds
- Large-scale rapid onset people displacement (internally or outflow or influx of refugees).
- Elevated IASC classification of a crisis and/or UN Call to Action or special appeal by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

and one or more of the following:

3a Significant protection threats

- An imminent and significant threat to the life, safety, security, health and dignity of civilians.
- Actual or probable grave human rights violations and/or serious violations of International Humanitarian Law.
- Widespread sexual violence.
- Denial of liberty of movement, particularly the right to move freely in and out of camps or other settlements.
- Groups are targeted or marginalised owing to the dynamics of armed conflict or pre-existing discrimination (e.g. political beliefs).
- Elevated IASC classification of a crisis and/or UN Call to Action or special appeal by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

3b New Zealand presence and engagement

- New Zealand has a diplomatic presence or engagement, New Zealand-funded development activities and/or other presence such as contribution to a UN mission including peacekeeping that can be leveraged to advance humanitarian objectives.
- By acting quickly, we can influence larger donors to respond.

3c Significant and sustained New Zealand public interest

- Media interest >48 hours.
- Actual or predicted significant NZ public donations.



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