

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

- FRANCE -

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

1. Humanitarian action aims to come to the aid of vulnerable people where lives are threatened, where vital needs are not satisfied, and where the most basic rights are trampled upon.

2. The international humanitarian system today brings together a great variety of actors, including non-governmental organizations, international organizations, private institutions with permanent international mandates, economic operators and States. All these actors often assume multiform responsibilities in organizing assistance for populations which are victims of armed conflict or natural disasters on the international humanitarian scene. Whilst they often have specific rules of engagement or differing practices, they may also have to work in concert within complex operational configurations, and thus coordinate their efforts with the aim of achieving greater effectiveness.

3. France considers humanitarian action to be primarily the expression of vital solidarity with victims of disasters and armed conflicts. However, State intervention in the area of international humanitarian action is also justified from an operational point of view, particularly in situations of extreme urgency where non-State actors rarely have the capacity to act immediately with the necessary resources. Lastly, humanitarian action is one dimension of France's

diplomatic action, supporting democracy, advocating the application of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), campaigning in international forums in support of economic and social development of the least developed countries (LDCs), and calling for greater equity and solidarity in relations between the North and the South.

4. France's humanitarian action is part of the comprehensive framework of development assistance in the largest sense. Over the years, France has thus reaffirmed its commitment to respect the Paris Principles for Aid Effectiveness, taken into account the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Fragile States Principles (FSPs) and relentlessly supported the efforts of the United Nations to make humanitarian aid more effective and better coordinate. France's action in the humanitarian sphere is also closely tied to its Policy Paper on Fragile States and Situations of Fragility (2007), to its declared policy in terms of food security (2010) and to its cooperation and development strategy (2011).

5. France intends to draw up a national humanitarian strategy organized around three focuses:

- meet the needs of populations wherever they are, focusing always on countries or groups of countries in situations of critical urgency;
- make humanitarian action part of a comprehensive framework, linking it both to a development strategy aimed at building local capacities and to actions of prevention and enhancement of population resilience;
- periodically reassess the relevance of choices which are made through exchanges between State humanitarian policy officials and civil society representatives, with this assessment taking into account not only implemented

humanitarian operations but also observed legal developments, in addition to anticipating needs insofar as is possible.

Drawn up in liaison with representatives of the third sector and partner administrations of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French humanitarian strategy will be implemented from 2012-2017. A mid-term review will take place in 2014.

I. THE NEW DETERMINERS OF FRANCE'S HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

I. 1. Strategic analysis

Whilst the current strategy largely draws on the principles and practices which have long structured France's humanitarian action, it also aims to learn lessons from the consequences of developments underway in a now globalized world where crises follow one another and coincide.

The geography of humanitarian actions

At global scale, the distribution by major geographical area of populations' humanitarian needs varies little and does not seem to need major change in the short term. Humanitarian crises, whether they are initially completely random or are on the contrary part of a cycle of recurrent crises, almost always demonstrate the persistence of deep imbalances in the economic and social development of the countries they strike. Thus in geographical terms, French humanitarian aid is generally focused for about 50% on the African continent, the rest being equally shared between Asia, which is regularly struck by natural disasters, and the Middle East, where political and security crises have further worsened in recent times.

A changing context

The context in which humanitarian action is delivered has changed considerably since the end of the cold war, and humanitarian crises are now centred on new issues.

Identity, interethnic and interreligious tensions are multiplying and can provoke conflicts within a single territory or in border regions with potentially devastating consequences for civilians. Organized criminal groups or fundamentalist ideological groups are in certain "fragile" countries now capable of threatening State institutions directly. The very nature of armed conflicts also seems to have seen major change: non-State organizations now choose to engage resolutely in asymmetrical conflicts with an adversary considered to be "strong", using in particular the weapon of terrorism and taking civilian populations hostage. Other phenomena, such as persistent rapid demographic growth in some countries and accelerated urban development worsen by nature the impact of technological accidents and natural disasters, which have themselves become more frequent because of climate change according to certain specialists.

New issues

Humanitarian action itself must address new challenges in its implementation as and when new State and non-State actors emerge. As the network approach is increasingly challenging purely territorial approaches, the international system and its regulation mechanisms are restructuring. In an ever more complex environment, civilian and State humanitarian actors are confronted by growing difficulties in carrying out their missions. It is not unusual, during armed conflicts and long-term crises, for humanitarian staff to be unable to access threatened people safely and over time. Generalized insecurity and the brazen determination of certain armed organizations to "target" humanitarian actors can now be a long-term obstacle to deploying assistance and effectively taking care of victims. In addition, the great number of actors working in the theatre of operations and the coordination difficulties

which this engenders, the scale of the needs of affected populations and also financial constraints in a context which is marked by the economic crisis are all obstacles to relevant planning and efficient implementation of assistance.

I. 2. The multilateral and European framework

A French humanitarian strategy cannot today be designed without taking into account the corresponding strategies of the United Nations and the European Union.

United Nations humanitarian reform

Humanitarian reform of the United Nations was launched following the December 2004 tsunami. This reform was made up of three pillars: sector-specific coordination ("clusters"), improved financing (founding of the Central Emergency Response Fund, or CERF) and the creation of a network of humanitarian action coordinators. France contributes to these developments and integrates them into its own strategy.

The crises in Haiti and Pakistan demonstrated the limitations of the measures decided in 2005, in particular the need to create more solid coordination mechanisms. A reflection conducted by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator is underway, aimed at improving the current system by giving a greater role to humanitarian coordinators ("agenda for change"). France strongly supports strengthening the coordination of international humanitarian assistance (Resolution 46/182) and particularly the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). With this in mind, France will soon sign a joint partnership declaration with the OCHA.

France is very active within the managing bodies of the major multilateral humanitarian agencies, including WFP, WHO, HCR, UNICEF, IOM and UNRWA. It maintains regular dialogue with the major international humanitarian actors, such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and in particular the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). More generally, France supports a set of principles in all international forums, which allow UN agencies and other humanitarian actors (NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement) to work in difficult areas: humanitarian principles, international humanitarian law, defence of humanitarian access and the security of humanitarian personnel, protection of civilians and particularly displaced persons, and the Oslo Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets In Disaster Relief. Multilateral dialogue is a source of renewal for the French humanitarian strategy.

Synergy with the European Union

France, which is very active within the major EU bodies (Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid, and Humanitarian Aid Committee), resolutely supports the development of the EU strategy for cooperation in Disaster Management with non-EU Countries, International and Regional Organisations. For example, it supports the execution of new prevention and disaster preparedness actions and the creation of a European mechanism for emergency response (European Emergency Response Centre) at the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO). The French humanitarian strategy is today inseparable from the European humanitarian strategy in political, legal, technical and financial terms.

I. 3. Reform of the administrative framework

Lastly, France's humanitarian strategy includes the consequences of the major reform of the administrative framework of France's humanitarian policy which has taken place in recent years.

In strictly organizational terms, three distinct directorates of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) participate in various capacities to the preparation and implementation of humanitarian action. These are the Crisis Centre (CDC), the Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships (DGM), and the Directorate for the United Nations, International Organizations, Human Rights and Francophonie (NUOI).

- The Crisis Centre is responsible, in accordance with the Decree of 16 March 2009, for monitoring, anticipating, alerting and managing crises which take place abroad and which require emergency humanitarian action. The Crisis Centre works on the ground in case of humanitarian disasters and emergencies and when an appeal for international solidarity has been made by the affected country. The Crisis Centre has a fund which is primarily dedicated to bilateral emergency assistance (Humanitarian Emergency Fund, FUH). It mostly finances projects which are presented and implemented by NGOs as well as assistance in kind provided directly by France in case of crisis. It finances multilateral action on an exceptional basis.

- The Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships (DGM) implements programmed food aid (AAP) mobilized by the MAE to address the most serious situations. Its action, which is complementary to that of the Crisis Centre, contributes to achieving two goals of the sector-specific strategy of the

interministerial Cooperation and Development Committee (CICID) for agriculture and food security: prevention and management of food crises (including post-crisis rehabilitation) and nutrition support for vulnerable populations. It fits into the framework of the conclusions of the Council of the European Union of 10 May 2010 on humanitarian food aid, the main aim of which is to save lives, protect means of subsistence and build the resistance of populations facing food crises or which are recovering from such crises.

- The Directorate for the United Nations, International Organizations, Human Rights and Francophonie (NUOI) is responsible for defining, implementing and following up France's policy in the area of humanitarian affairs conducted by the United Nations and the institutions and organizations attached to it, in addition to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The NUOI also manages the contributions allotted to these actors by France.

II. THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF FRANCE'S HUMANITARIAN ACTION

The government's humanitarian policy is implemented in a specific legal framework and thus complies with a certain number of guiding principles.

II. 1. International humanitarian law

France respects and strives to ensure respect of international humanitarian law (IHL) during all international or non-international armed conflicts in accordance with the common Article 1 of the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

The nature of certain contemporary armed conflicts sometimes makes the application of IHL more difficult. France campaigns for respect of this branch of international law by all parties in conflicts, including both States and non-State actors. France advocates for all violations of international humanitarian law to be duly sanctioned.

Despite the tensions periodically endured by "the Geneva law", France consistently highlights the relevance of international humanitarian law and the need to protect it from being directly or indirectly undermined. For this to be possible, it is important to contribute to seeking a uniform and ambitious interpretation of this law and to support its application in good faith by all concerned actors.

II. 2. International human rights law

As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, France promotes universal application of international human rights law, one of the issues of humanitarian action being not merely organization of needs-based assistance, but also restoring to people their most basic rights. France participates actively in promoting the concept of "protection of civilian populations".

France attaches particular importance to the "responsibility to protect" (R2P) principle, which was endorsed by the international community during the World Summit of September 2005 (Paragraphs 138-140 of the Outcome document) and taken up by the Security Council (particularly in Resolution 1674 of 28 April 2006 on "Protection of civilians in armed conflict"). Under this principle, every State is bound by a duty to protect its own population. In case of failure to do so, the international community has the responsibility to take diplomatic and humanitarian steps and, if peaceful means prove inadequate, the coercive measures provided for by the UN Charter in order to come to the assistance of populations which are victims of acts of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or other crimes against humanity.

II.3. Humanitarian principles

The action of France, as a European Union Member State, is conducted in the framework of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and particularly Article 214(2), which stipulates that "Humanitarian aid operations shall be conducted in compliance with the principles of international law and with the principles of impartiality, neutrality and non-discrimination." France attentively ensures the implementation of the Guidelines on the

Promotion of Compliance with International Humanitarian Law, which the EU adopted in 2005.

Through its bilateral and multilateral action, France campaigns for “humanitarian access”, a prerequisite of any effective action. Affected populations must be able to receive all the assistance they need in good time and with no obstacle of any sort. For their part, humanitarian actors must be able to access affected populations safely.

France attaches particular importance to taking into account the situation of women and female minors in crisis situations under United Nations Resolution 2000/1325 on “Women and peace and security”.

France’s commitment in support of food security, in the framework of the Global Partnership for Food Security, is a major dimension of French humanitarian aid. In addition to the funds mobilized in partnership with international organizations and NGOs, France brings this issue to European and international forums.

II. 4. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid

The “European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid” was adopted by the European Council, Commission and Parliament in December 2007. This text reaffirms the European Union’s determination – to which France adheres fully – to defend and promote the basic principles of humanitarian action: “neutrality, impartiality, humanity and independence”.

II. 5. The Stockholm Principles

France adheres to the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship, which were approved in Stockholm on 17 June 2003, and reaffirms its commitment to apply these principles in the framework of the “Good Humanitarian Donorship” initiative. It has also integrated the Oslo Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief.

III. WORKING METHODS AND OPERATIONAL RESOURCES

III. 1. Needs assessment

Ahead of any humanitarian intervention, the State services in charge of humanitarian assistance work on a rigorous needs assessment. For this purpose, they rely on various resources:

French diplomatic resources

In order to assess the needs of populations affected by a crisis and to optimize the humanitarian response, France relies on its diplomatic network. Under the supervision of the ambassador, who ensures the coherence of all actions conducted, a humanitarian correspondent is appointed in each diplomatic mission to monitor the humanitarian situation in their country of residence and to transmit collected information to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Central Administration regularly. During crises, humanitarian correspondents monitor the needs of affected populations and report on the response put in place by the local authorities, as well as actions which are envisaged by actors in the field. In Paris, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Crisis Centre acts as an interface between embassies and the different State services which cover humanitarian issues, particularly those responsible for monitoring fragile and crisis countries and which could have to propose their own assessment of the humanitarian needs of affected populations.

Sharing knowledge between different ministerial actors

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly ensures the coordination of partner administrations and works particularly in liaison with the French Development Agency (AFD), which has a strategy and department dedicated to crisis management as well as a specific instrument for financing NGOs. In particular, it ensures that the work of the Ministries of Defence, the Interior and Health are involved, each of them having significant operational and analytical resources.

Coordination with European and multilateral mechanisms

In order to achieve better global understanding of the humanitarian needs of populations in distress, and in order to coordinate its response with that of other donors where necessary, France works in close liaison with the European Union on the one hand and the United Nations on the other, particularly with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which ensures the coherence of the international response to humanitarian crises.

Special partnership with non-governmental organizations

The Crisis Centre has established a close partnership with French NGOs which have a wide range of skills and renowned expertise. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in particular the Crisis Centre, regularly organizes meetings with these NGOs for discussion and reflection, especially in the needs assessment area. In the framework of its security role, the Crisis Centre keeps these organizations informed regularly on the risks their expatriate personnel may run in particularly sensitive areas.

The academic world and think tanks

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has approached the academic world and think tanks to ensure that its officials are capable of better understanding local contexts where humanitarian interventions take place and better assessing the needs of populations. Generally, the optimization of the technical knowledge of Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials responsible for humanitarian affairs is such that it allows them to best address the needs of populations. These needs are sometimes linked to unprecedented phenomena which it is essential to understand (climate change, increasing vulnerability of populations exposed to climatic disasters, multiplication of armed internal conflicts, apparition of grey areas, increasing role of non-State actors in the framework of armed conflicts).

III. 2. Coordination in times of crisis

Disaster prevention and preparedness

Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the steering of natural disaster response strategies is the responsibility of the Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships. The operational implementation of strategies aimed at enhancing the resilience of both rural and urban societies in the countries concerned is, for its part, primarily the preserve of the French Development Agency. The management of disaster prevention and preparedness, reducing risks that crop up in the "continuum" of a crisis fits in ahead of the crisis and is particularly integral to development strategies. The General Directorate for Civil Protection and Crisis Management of the Ministry of the Interior also plays a major role in these matters.

Coordination between emergency humanitarian aid and development

Emergency humanitarian aid aims to respond to crisis situations. The management of crisis exit and reconstruction work call for gradual and concerted recovery strategies. As stated by the French Framework Document for Development Cooperation, "the essential role of cooperation, in the framework of crises and their immediate aftermath, is to coordinate interventions coming under humanitarian assistance and the development support reconstruction and recovery programmes to avoid hiatuses in the process of assisting fragile institutions and populations".

More specifically in the post-crisis phase, a dedicated task force has been created at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the joint supervision of the Directorate-General for Political and Security Affairs and the Crisis Centre in order to bring together the expertise and resources of the different State services as well as the French Development Agency (AFD), which has put in place a "crisis prevention and exit" network.

III. 3. Periodical reassessment of the relevance of choices

This is done through assessments in hindsight of actions conducted, often in the framework of field missions, and by pursuing regular dialogue with the different actors who participated in needs assessments, including diplomatic posts, multilateral agencies and European representations, NGOs and think tanks. These lessons learned make it possible to capitalize on experience and help better adjust the humanitarian response to crises and developing situations.

Assessment of actions and actors should be envisaged in the framework of public policy evaluation procedures.

III. 4. Financial instruments and courses of action

France has two major categories of humanitarian intervention resources.

- **On the one hand, a series of financial tools which make it possible to subsidize international organizations, NGOs and local structure** via various budget lines: The Crisis Centre's Humanitarian Emergency Fund (FUH), the resources of the Interministerial Committee for Food Aid (CIAA) under the supervision of the Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships, voluntary contributions to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and to UN humanitarian agencies (HCR, UNICEF) and to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, paid by the Directorate for the United Nations, International Organizations and Francophonie or by the Crisis Centre. The Humanitarian Emergency Fund is the primary financial instrument for crisis and emergency response and is characterised by great flexibility which allows it to react quickly and effectively in the face of new emerging priorities whilst maintaining financing capacity for conventional actions.

- **On the other, personnel and material resources from other Ministerial departments make it possible to conduct State humanitarian operations.** The Crisis Centre ensures the coordination and steering of the different stages of operations, from design to projection of resources, in liaison with the EU Civil Protection

Mechanism or in coordination with UN mechanisms such as the UNDAC (United Nations Disaster Assessment Coordination). These emergency operations may potentially be launched with the support of the French Republic's armed forces, who operate on the ground in accordance with existing legal and regulatory provisions and in strict compliance with the Oslo Guidelines and the guidelines for the use of military assets drawn up by OCHA and the Consultative Group on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets.

In addition to the State's resources, the resources of local and regional authorities and private foundations, as well as donations from the public received by NGOs may be mobilized. Businesses may also play a significant role in these humanitarian operations, both in terms of expertise and of resources.

IV. SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM GOALS

In accordance with the guiding principles and the major strategic focuses of its humanitarian policy, France has decided to set itself a certain number of operational goals, part of which should be implemented internally whilst others are externally focused.

IV.1. Internal action: administrative and financial efficiency

Allocate a basic percentage of the Humanitarian Emergency Fund (FUH) to disaster prevention and preparedness activities. The projects supported in this framework could be subject to multi-year programming organized according to geographical priorities.

Ring fence specific financing for the security dimension in the budgets of NGO projects supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The issue of the safety of humanitarian personnel is raised with increased acuteness in intervention zones. It is vital for humanitarian actors to step up their vigilance in sensitive areas and that they optimize their security plans. The planned budget will have to include a fraction allowing increased security of civilian interventions. This part will not be included in the administrative budget.

Improve aid quality and effectiveness by developing the training of personnel, capitalizing on experience and assessing actions undertaken, and research.

The partnerships that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has formed with the academic world and French think tanks must be developed firstly in the framework of thematic meetings which already take place in crisis periods but also in the framework of regular dialogue. When a large-scale humanitarian crisis breaks, France must thus be in a position to mobilize the specialists capable of informing it on the local humanitarian context very quickly and of participating effectively in drawing up the response. Efforts undertaken in recent years to enhance the skills of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' personnel will be pursued, regarding the training of humanitarian correspondents working in embassies of those of staff affected to Central Administration (needs assessment, project evaluation, lessons learned, and the link between emergencies and development).

The research sector will also require further support in the field of humanitarian doctrine (commissioning of studies and allocation of grants), always prioritizing multidisciplinary approaches and cross-cutting themes.

Strengthen the link between emergency humanitarian response and development actions.

With this in mind, all the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' administrative structures responsible for humanitarian policy will organize joint expert missions on the ground, similar to the first mission organized in winter 2012 by the Crisis Centre, the Directorate for the United Nations, International Organizations and Francophonie, and the AFD in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This will involve consolidating joint analysis resources to then develop concrete actions supported by joint financing.

IV.2. External action: building national and international partnerships

Set up a regular meeting based on the model of the National Humanitarian Conference (CNH).

This meeting would bring together the major actor of French humanitarian work, as well as other international actors, and will aim to debate the challenges of humanitarian actions, its methods and its priorities.

Set up a Dialogue Group for humanitarian issues.

This group, whose secretariat will be provided by the Crisis Centre, will bring together actors including Ministry of Foreign Affairs partner administrations and institutions as well as humanitarian NGOs, journalists, researchers and local authority representatives interested in humanitarian action, in addition to businesses and their foundations. Participation may be widened depending on the current context and emergency, and the Group's work will help deepen dialogue between the administration and civil society representatives and work jointly on strategic issues. Its analysis and recommendations will be intended for submission to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and will serve as fuel for the debates of the periodical humanitarian conference, whose agenda they will define. One of the first subjects will concern enhancing communication with the public and the media in the field of humanitarian assistance.

Create a database of French and international experts who are competent in fields of interest to humanitarian action: water, food security, agricultural science, climate, seismology, health, architecture, security, law, conflict analysis and mediation.

Promote the French international solidarity volunteering system and, similarly, continue to support the recent European Union action to increase the number of European volunteers present in countries benefiting from aid by involving the private sector.

Develop initiatives to ensure full compliance with International Humanitarian Law (DIH) in partnership in particular with the Red Cross Movement, particularly through action within international forums and in a bilateral framework so that all actors involved in a given conflict accord their practices to the principles laid down in the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and the additional texts.

Glossary

AFD: French Development Agency

OCHA: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

CDC: Crisis Centre

CERF: Central Emergency Relief Fund

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

CNH: National Humanitarian Conference

IHL: International Humanitarian Law

DGM: Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships

FUH: Fonds d'Urgence Humanitaire (Emergency Humanitarian Fund)

NUOI: Directorate for the United Nations, International Organizations, Human Rights and Francophonie

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

IOM: International Organization for Migration

NGO: Non Governmental Organization

WFP: World Food Programme

EU: European Union

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNHCR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

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