

MFAT HUMANITARIAN POLICY

OXFAM NZ SUBMISSION

SUMMARY

This submission outlines Oxfam New Zealand's recommendations in response to the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) invitation for submissions on its new humanitarian policy. It aims to provide an Oxfam perspective on the central policy questions presented by MFAT:

- What do you see as the most critical humanitarian challenges that New Zealand should be responding to in the Pacific, in South East Asia, and globally?
- What particular contribution should New Zealand make to address these challenges? How can we be most effective? What do we want to be known for?

Since 1991, Oxfam New Zealand has worked in partnership with the Government of New Zealand in crisis-affected countries worldwide, drawing on Oxfam's global network of offices and programmes. At any given time, Oxfam is responding to over 30 emergency situations, giving life-saving support to those most in need. Oxfam New Zealand has been at the forefront of these efforts, notably in the Pacific region, where we are currently supporting or leading Oxfam disaster relief and preparedness efforts in seven countries.

Drawing on Oxfam's extensive humanitarian experience in the region and beyond, and reflecting on the many policy and programmatic initiatives we have undertaken in partnership with the Government of New Zealand, Oxfam offers the following recommendations to MFAT in the development of its new humanitarian policy:

- New Zealand already makes a unique contribution in the humanitarian space, both for its tailored natural disaster expertise that responds to the geographic particularities of the Pacific region, and for its laudable commitment to good practice approaches, notably in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). **Oxfam recommends that the government of New Zealand continues to build on these areas of existing value added, by maintaining a core focus on humanitarian action in the Pacific, and maintaining funding channels that allow support for DRR. Disaster Risk Reduction should also be included as part of the government's developing climate change-related displacement and migration action plan and related adaptation programming.**
- Noting the unparalleled scale of humanitarian challenges worldwide, New Zealand support is more important than ever in crisis contexts around the world where the need is greatest. This is particularly true in countries facing protracted crises owing to armed conflict – such as in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, Myanmar, Central African Republic, Lake Chad basin, and elsewhere. **Oxfam recommends the government develop a strategic policy framework for how it will respond to protracted crises outside of the Pacific. This should include long-**

term funding commitments and modalities, with a focus on ‘forgotten crises.’

- There is space for the Government of New Zealand to do more to support those in greatest need, by augmenting the humanitarian budget to at least 10% of ODA for humanitarian assistance – a level consistent with other OECD donors. **Oxfam recommends that new resources be allotted to the humanitarian budget to reach this funding floor, and that these new resources should be directed to protracted crises, where humanitarian needs are greatest, and where funding shortfalls are most pronounced.**
- Finally Oxfam urges the Government of New Zealand to adopt a single, whole-of-government policy that ensures all government actors involved in humanitarian action – civilian and military – are bound by a single, shared, civilian-led humanitarian approach, with clearly-articulated guidelines around humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law. **Oxfam recommends that the Government ensures there is a single whole-of-government humanitarian policy and approach, ensuring all government actors possess a high level of understanding and commitment to humanitarian principles and good practice standards. This requires the development of new policies and guidelines, including civilian-military guidelines, safeguarding tools and procedures, training programmes, as well as monitoring and quality improvement mechanisms. The whole-of-government policy should also encompass government ministries, policies and programmes (MBIE, Pacific Peoples, Crown Research Institutes) that can be leveraged to deliver DRR and community resilience outcomes in the Pacific.**

CRITICAL HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES

Climate Change

Climate change is the greatest humanitarian threat in the Pacific – a region of particular geographic, cultural, political and economic connection to New Zealand. More than any other region of the world, the natural hazard profile of the Pacific is worsening as a result of climate change. Sea level rise, combined with the increasing severity of cyclical events such as drought, flooding and storms elevates the risk of natural disaster, heightening the urgency for renewed global attention and investment in mitigation and adaptation in these increasingly vulnerable communities. The Pacific continues to be one of the world’s most vulnerable to natural disasters. Five of the 15 most at-risk countries to natural disaster are located in the Pacific (Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands, PNG and Fiji).¹

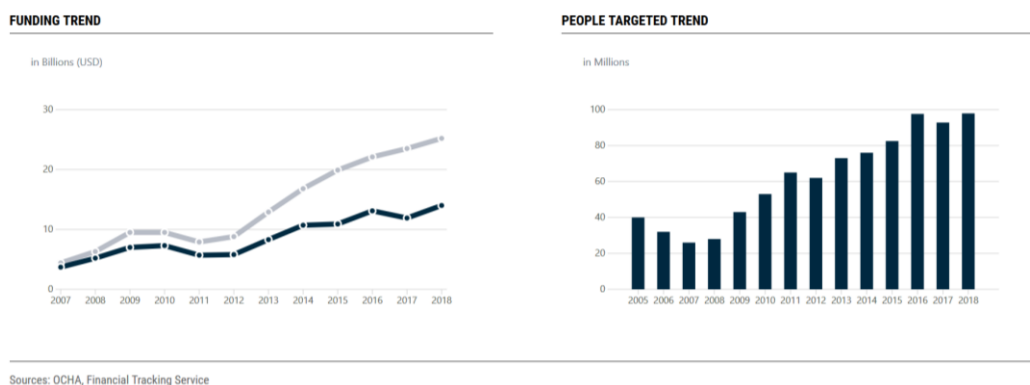
There is much to commend in the government of New Zealand’s efforts, alongside its Pacific partners, to plan ahead for the changing risk scape posed by climate change. Oxfam makes particular note in this respect of the government’s current initiative to devise a strategic response to the challenge of climate change-induced displacement in the Pacific, in part through new programmes and funding for adaptation in climate-affected communities. Given the role of climate change as a force magnifier for many natural disasters in the Pacific, New Zealand’s climate displacement and adaptation programming should integrate resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction considerations. The Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific commits Pacific Island Forum governments (including New Zealand’s) to just such an approach,

¹ SPC, *Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific: An integrated approach to address climate change and disaster risk management (FDRP) 2017-2030*. From SPC website. Accessed November 21, 2018: http://gsd.spc.int/frdp/assets/FRDP_2016_Resilient_Dev_pacific.pdf

and provides good practice guidance as to how adaptation initiatives can be tailored to the needs of communities at risk of climate displacement.²

Protracted Armed Conflict

While the Pacific is of particular importance to New Zealand, as citizens of the wider world, New Zealand cannot retreat from those places where the scale of human suffering and humanitarian need is greatest and getting worse - protracted, conflict-driven crises. As stated by the OCHA's Global Humanitarian Overview for 2018, more than 134 million people across the world need humanitarian assistance and protection - and more funding than ever before - USD \$25 billion this year alone - is required to help them.³ Conflict remains the main driver of global humanitarian needs - accounting for 97% of all crisis-affected people worldwide.⁴ While humanitarian actors collectively are reaching more people in need than ever before, these efforts are unable to keep pace with the scale of humanitarian needs across a growing number of new and ongoing crises.



Most notably in this respect, there are a number of protracted conflict-driven crises across Africa, the Middle East and Asia, where humanitarian needs are compounded each year that conflict continues, and new conflicts emerge. While some crises continue to garner attention and periodic New Zealand - such as the ongoing conflicts in Syria, Myanmar and South Sudan - many of these crises are forgotten altogether by New Zealand and other donors. In Burundi for example, a political crisis began in April 2015, and averse security and humanitarian conditions have led to the outflow of more than 400,000 refugees to Tanzania, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. Despite the scale of the tragedy, the UN response plan for this crisis has only received 12.1% of the donor funds required to meet the basic needs of those worst-affected.⁵

Despite the significant increase in need over the past decade, New Zealand government spending on humanitarian assistance has remained inadequate over this period,

² *Ibid*, p. 23.

³ From UNOCHA 2018 World Humanitarian Data and Trends. Accessed November 15, 2018: <https://interactive.unocha.org/publication/globalhumanitarianoverview/>

⁴ From UNOCHA 2017 World Humanitarian Data and Trends. Accessed November 21, 2018: <http://interactive.unocha.org/publication/datatrends2017/>

⁵ From UNOCHA 2018 World Humanitarian Data and Trends. Accessed November 15, 2018: <https://interactive.unocha.org/publication/globalhumanitarianoverview/>

incommensurate with rapidly rising need.⁶ In 2015, the OECD DAC challenged New Zealand's under-performance, noting:

The peer review team heard strong political support for humanitarian programming in New Zealand. Despite this backing, the humanitarian budget remains quite modest, standing at USD 29.19 million in 2013. The percentage of ODA allocated to humanitarian assistance for that year was also modest, at 7.9%; 14 DAC members allocate more than 8% for humanitarian programming, with 8 of these allocating more than 10% of their total ODA. This clearly leaves scope for further budgetary effort, especially if New Zealand moves to increase its overall ODA envelope.⁷

With the coalition government's announced increase in aid spending this past year, New Zealand has the resources available to redress this significant funding shortfall. Any increases in the humanitarian budget should be directed in particular to those global humanitarian efforts aimed at assisting those in greatest peril and need – in the world's worst – and forgotten – conflict-driven protracted crises. Such an approach would improve New Zealand's compliance with the Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship.⁸

Increased funding must also be complemented by an appropriate strategic approach. While MFAT has made significant effort to renew its development and humanitarian approach in the Pacific under the 'Pacific Reset,' there must be a coherent policy approach for MFAT's ongoing engagement in the rest of the world, including within its humanitarian policy. In this respect, good donor practice should also inform funding for humanitarian action in protracted crises, in particular through multi-year funding mechanisms in protracted crises, consistent with New Zealand's commitments at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS).

THE NEW ZEALAND CONTRIBUTION

Whole-of-Government Approach

Any new humanitarian policy must also encompass all Government of New Zealand assets and actors engaged in the humanitarian space. The Government of New Zealand has many assets and stakeholders across many different ministries and agencies that are increasingly engaged in New Zealand humanitarian response efforts, especially in the Pacific. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations have been included as a key component within the 2018 Strategic Defence Policy Statement. In recent years following significant events in Fiji, Tonga, Indonesia and elsewhere, New Zealand Defence Forces (NZDF) have provided valuable logistics, aerial assessment, equipment and communications support to government, UN, Red Cross and NGO relief efforts. In addition to this critical support role, the

⁶⁶ See: OECD statistics for humanitarian disbursements, from OECD DAC website. Accessed November 16, 2018:

<https://stats.oecd.org/qwids/#?x=1&y=6&f=2:262,4:1,7:2,9:85,3:286,5:3,8:85&q=2:262+4:1+7:2+9:85+3:250,17,18,251,252,21,22,23,24,276,191,286,287,227,228,229,288,231,289,233,G36,G37,G38,G39,G62+5:3+8:85+1:3,4,5,6,58,7,8,9,10,11,60,12,13,14,61,15,16,17,18,62,19,63,75,20,21,22,23,24,36+6:2005,2006,2007,2008,2009,2010,2011,2012,2013,2014,2015,2016>

⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/overallhumanitarianbudgetandtrends.htm>

⁸ Notably Principle 6, which commits donors to 'Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.' From GHD website, Accessed November 21, 2018:

<https://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/principles-good-practice-of-ghd/principles-good-practice-ghd.html>

government has developed and supported the deployment of technical specialists as part of response and other humanitarian initiatives, such as Medical Assistance Teams from the Ministry of Health (MAT), scientists and surge staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management (MCDEM).

A whole-of-government approach can bring unique and valuable additional resources to humanitarian efforts in the region. However, past deployments and joint-training efforts suggest that not all government personnel engaged in humanitarian operations share a common level of understanding as to principles and good practice standards applied within the sector. All actors aiming to operate within the humanitarian space must be familiar with and committed to the fundamental principles and good practice standards that govern the humanitarian space. Towards this end, any new humanitarian policy must apply to all government actors engaged in the government's humanitarian activities. As part of this whole-of-government strategic coherence, the government must develop clear guidelines and standards of conduct to ensure that all government actors are committed and able to effectively adhere to the humanitarian principles and good practice standards within the sector. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Principles, Sphere and Core Humanitarian Standard, UN cluster system approach, as well as civilian-military guidelines such as the Oslo Guidelines and UN CMCoord Field Handbook should become a component of standard pre-deployment training for all overseas deployments by government personnel, military and civilian.

Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the Pacific

Consistent with commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit to localize humanitarian response, particularly for the purposes of disaster risk reduction, PICs and their regional partners, including New Zealand government and NGOs, have been at the forefront of efforts to strengthen and empower disaster-affected communities for more effective disaster risk management. This has included investment in community DRR through preparedness, planning, early warning, response management, public education and response training.

To its credit, the Government of New Zealand has prioritized investment in DRR as a core component of its humanitarian assistance in the Pacific region. The Government of New Zealand has adopted a flexible humanitarian approach that facilitates programmes and partnerships for disaster preparedness and prevention, rather than a strict focus on response. The established partnerships between New Zealand civil society and local Pacific partners have been an essential enabler of this approach. Within the OECD group of donor states, New Zealand provides the highest percentage of humanitarian aid to DRR programming. New Zealand can and should stand as a champion for stronger funding for DRR within humanitarian and development programmes amongst its donor peers.⁹

Of course, there is always room for improvement, even in areas of relative strength. Funding for DRR in the Pacific continues to lag investment in response, especially for the most vulnerable groups – such as women, children, youth, older persons and people with disabilities. Effective disaster risk reduction approaches must adequately incorporate, identify and address the particular risks faced by these groups. At the same time, there are many forms of New Zealand government engagement in the Pacific that do not fall within ODA. As part of a whole-of-government humanitarian policy, the government could also consider how other aspects of

⁹ From Rescue Aid website. Accessed November 16, 2018: <https://medium.com/rescue-aid/the-humanitarian-commitment-scorecard1c65a813d61c>

government engagement in the Pacific can be leveraged to deliver improved resilience and DRR results – such as through immigration policies, seasonal employment schemes, engagement with Pacific diaspora communities, crown research institutes, and other avenues.