Saving lives, relieving suffering, protecting dignity:
DFID’s Humanitarian Policy
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Contents

Foreword 02
Executive Summary 04
Humanitarian action: principles, challenges, and opportunities 09
Policy Goal 1: Improve the effectiveness of humanitarian responses 13
Policy Goal 2: Be a better donor 17
Policy Goal 3: Reduce risk and extreme vulnerability 21
Annex 1: Principles and good practice of Humanitarian Donorship 25
Annex 2: Acronyms 26
Every year 250 million people are affected by natural disasters and a further 45 million people by the devastating effects of war. In the Democratic Republic of Congo alone, 4 million people have lost their lives over the past eight years. My visits to Darfur, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia and Sri Lanka over the past two years have brought home to me the individual tragedies that lie behind these figures; the loss of loved ones, homes and livelihoods.

Every day, a range of UN, Red Cross and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are working to assist the most vulnerable people on our planet. They try to reduce death and suffering and to maintain human dignity when it is threatened by war, extreme poverty, or the vagaries of the weather and earthquakes. At the heart of their work is a shared concern for humanity – a belief that, in times of distress we must help each other. As Henri Dunant, founder of the Red Cross, put it, when catastrophe strikes, we are all brothers.

While we know that humanitarian action makes an enormous contribution to helping people around the world, we know too that it is not perfect. There is currently unprecedented momentum for reform of the international humanitarian system. We need to seize this chance and make sure that we develop a system that does its vital job, able to meet the demands of a changing world, and able to reach those in greatest need.

We know too that aid alone is not enough. Bitter experience from Rwanda to Kosovo to Darfur has taught us that aid is no substitute for political action. We need to work together to prevent war and when this isn’t possible, to protect civilians from the worst excesses of violence.

Poor people are particularly vulnerable to the effects of natural and man-made catastrophes. Reducing poverty is one of the single most important things we can do to reduce the impact of disasters. This is therefore, a challenge not just for the humanitarian community, but for development.
The UK is at the forefront of efforts to make improvements to the international humanitarian system and to ensure that we address the political, economic and environmental factors that make people vulnerable to catastrophe. We provide a lot of support to the humanitarian system and as this document sets out, DFID aims to support communities and help them to address extreme threats to their lives, livelihoods and dignity.

Hilary Benn
Secretary of State for International Development
Executive summary

1. Every year, some 300 million people are affected by natural and man-made calamities, jeopardising their lives and livelihoods. New challenges arising from climate change, rapid urbanisation, pandemics and state fragility will continue to emerge, threatening populations still further, and compromising achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

2. Humanitarian assistance remains the primary tool available to the international community to support individuals, communities and governments when disaster strikes, and when people’s lives are threatened by conflict. Every day it helps to save lives and reduce suffering around the world.

3. The Department for International Development (DFID) leads the UK’s response to humanitarian crises. Its humanitarian work aims to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity in the face of man-made crises and natural disasters. DFID is a major donor to the international humanitarian system, and a strong advocate for humanitarian reform. This policy statement details how DFID plans to prioritise and deliver its humanitarian work in the future, focusing on the poorest countries:

4. DFID recognises the many achievements of humanitarian action, but also the depth of the challenges facing the international humanitarian system. Humanitarian operations remain characterised by a weak evidence base, poor coordination, and limited capacity. The financing of humanitarian action by official donors and others has evolved in a fragmented and uncoordinated way. The linkages between humanitarian, developmental and political action remain weak and poorly understood, limiting efforts to address the root causes of vulnerability and prevent future crises.
5. As well as challenges, there are opportunities. Major donors have agreed the principles and goals that must inform their humanitarian assistance. There is renewed consensus around the importance of needs-based, independent humanitarian action, and agreement surrounding the international responsibility to protect people from the worst kinds of violence and abuse.

6. DFID has three main goals for its humanitarian work:

7. **Improve the effectiveness of humanitarian responses.**

   We will increase the quality of humanitarian response so that when a disaster happens we can respond in the right way, at the right time, with the right kind of help.

8. DFID will work with other government departments to reinforce the pre-eminent importance of respect for international humanitarian and refugee law and by the UK government and internationally. Its humanitarian work is designed according to need, and is unconditional.

9. DFID values the unique and indispensable roles of the Red Cross Movement and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in the humanitarian system. DFID recognises the legitimacy of the UN in leading humanitarian work globally and at country level, but also the challenges it faces delivering on that role. We will continue to emphasise the strengthening of UN humanitarian agencies, while sustaining our financial commitment to the Red Cross and NGO community.
10. The military and those involved in civil protection are playing an increased and valuable role in many natural disasters and conflict-affected crises. DFID will look at the case for the deployment of military capabilities in different contexts, considering the implications for the protection of civilians, security of aid workers and the cost-effectiveness of using military rather than civilian assets. DFID will support the deployment of military resources where there is no viable civilian option, or where the scale or urgency of the needs cannot be met by civilian agencies alone.

11. Be a better donor. We will follow Good Humanitarian Donorship principles and deliver adequate, predictable and flexible finance where it is most needed, and encourage other donors to do likewise.

12. By 2010, we should not be speaking of ‘forgotten emergencies’ as we are today. As the UK aid programme increases, as long as there remains proven need, so will the volume of DFID’s humanitarian assistance. DFID will also work to increase the predictability of humanitarian funding through improved budgeting, early pledging, and support for the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Common Funds.

13. We want to promote strong and effective partnerships with the agencies responsible for delivering aid on the ground. In return for agencies’ commitment to high levels of performance and improved accountability, including to intended beneficiaries, we will avoid unduly burdensome procedures.
14. **Reduce risk and extreme vulnerability.**

We will engage earlier and more effectively to reduce risk, and to provide political and economic security.

15. Humanitarian crises are not isolated, exceptional events. In many ways, they are symptomatic of the failure of development and of politics. For those living in extreme poverty, it is a particularly small step from daily deprivation to life-threatening crisis. Long-term investment is needed to enable individuals, communities and governments to resist and cope with threats to their wellbeing.

16. Rather than relying exclusively on emergency relief, where possible, DFID will seek to assist governments to put in place effective risk management strategies. These should include national systems of social security to improve the well-being of the most vulnerable, and to provide a safety net in times of crisis. Where governments are not willing to back a pro-poor agenda, other options for delivering social welfare and basic services will be explored.

17. Poverty alone does not define people’s vulnerability. Some people are vulnerable by virtue of their ethnicity, gender, age, race or religion. In these environments of political violence and mass violations of human rights, even the most effective relief programme will not stop people from dying. Averting humanitarian crises is also, therefore, unavoidably a question of political action. We will work across the UK government, with international agencies, and in the international arena at large to secure humanitarian outcomes and uphold respect for international law.

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Box 1: Humanitarian Principles

There are four core humanitarian principles

Humanity: To bring assistance to people in distress without discrimination.

Impartiality: Action is based solely on need.

Neutrality: Humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict.

Independence: Humanitarian action must be kept separate from political, economic, military or other objectives.
Humanitarian action: principles, challenges and opportunities

Humanitarian principles

18. Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians, those displaced from their homes, and those no longer taking part in hostilities, such as prisoners of war or wounded soldiers. Humanitarian action also includes the provision of assistance. This assistance takes many forms. Typically it includes food, water and sanitation, shelter, access to health services and measures to help people to get back to normal life.

19. Humanitarian action is underpinned by special principles (see Box 1). Initially developed by the Red Cross movement, these principles guide the work of the majority of those responsible for responding to crises, including donors. These principles are now well understood and widely endorsed. Securing practical adherence to these principles is now the critical task.

Responding to changing need: making sure that we have the right tools

20. The diversity of humanitarian need should not be underestimated. An orphaned, malnourished child in Malawi obviously needs a different type of help from an elderly refugee in Chechnya. Over the coming decades, the diversity of humanitarian need is likely to become even more apparent. Pandemic disease, climate change, environmental degradation and major demographic changes, including urbanisation, are all likely to present new threats. Flexible organisations are required that are capable of accurately assessing and responding to diverse needs and able to make linkages to other forms of intervention, including development.

21. Natural disasters are becoming more common and more widespread. While there has been progress in strengthening disaster prevention and preparedness in some environments, those living in the poorest

countries are increasingly vulnerable to natural hazards. Comparing the two periods from 1995–1999 and 2000–2004, it is striking that, globally, the number of people reportedly affected by disasters increased by a third. In Africa, it nearly doubled. At present there is insufficient capacity to prepare for and respond to these hazards properly, as well as to the effects of political instability.

Navigating a changing political landscape: how to maintain principled aid?

22. The context within which humanitarian aid is delivered remains politically very difficult and has arguably become more dangerous. Between 2000 and 2005, 271 international relief workers were killed. In parts of Sudan, Russia, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo the actual and perceived threats to aid workers have been such as to force their withdrawal, sometimes for long periods. In other countries, governments and armed groups have refused to let agencies undertake independent assessments and to travel freely. The Secretary General of the United Nations estimated that in 2004, governments and armed groups worldwide denied humanitarian access to some 10 million people.

23. New dilemmas have emerged in crises such as Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, where third-party military intervention has taken place, and military forces have been involved also in relief and reconstruction work. It is undisputed that such forces have obligations to protect civilians and to establish a secure environment. In some situations, they also have obligations to ensure that the basic material needs of populations are met. However, the role of the military in delivering humanitarian assistance remains controversial in these situations. The distinction between political or military objectives on the one hand and impartial humanitarian aid on the other can become confused. This in turn can compromise the security of civilians and aid workers alike if they are linked to military activities, although in some cases those who attack humanitarian workers aren’t interested in the difference.

24. Rather different issues have emerged with regard to the use of the military in natural disasters. National and international military forces have proven uniquely able to fill gaps in response capacity in many recent crises. However, the costs of using these assets can be high, and securing effective coordination between civilian and military actors can prove challenging.
25. Existing UN guidance\(^3\) makes clear that drawing on military capabilities for tasks with humanitarian objectives should be a strategy of ‘last resort’, in other words, for use when there is no viable civilian alternative, when the scale or urgency of the needs have overwhelmed the civilian efforts, or when the military option is judged to be of greatest humanitarian effect. Decisions to use the military should be conditional on receiving a request from the relevant civilian authorities, and civilian authorities should resume primacy for the delivery of humanitarian assistance as quickly as possible.

**Strengthening the humanitarian system: DFID’s roles and responsibilities**

26. The 2002 International Development Act authorises DFID to provide humanitarian assistance to alleviate the effects of natural or man-made disasters or other emergencies. Our humanitarian work aims to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity. More broadly, DFID is committed to the prevention of conflict and to reducing the impact of natural disasters.

27. In 2003, for the first time, major donors agreed the principles that would inform their humanitarian work, and a framework within which progress could be monitored. In April 2006, these principles were endorsed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as the reference point for their humanitarian work. DFID’s humanitarian work aims to comply with this framework.

28. DFID’s humanitarian assistance will be targeted where the threat to life is most severe, where the extent and depth of suffering is greatest, and the response capacities of communities and authorities are most limited. In the majority of cases, this will mean targeting our efforts in the poorest countries.

29. The following goals set out how DFID will contribute to humanitarian action in the coming years.

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Box 2: Humanitarian Reform

Hilary Benn, UK Secretary of State for International Development, launched a humanitarian reform initiative in December 2004. This included a number of proposals which subsequently became the basis for much international debate and action. Specifically:

**A new humanitarian fund**, to make sure that money was available when new emergencies hit, and for forgotten crises. In December 2005, the UN General Assembly agreed to create the Central Emergency Response Fund. By April 1 2006, $254 million had been pledged by 39 donors.

**A strengthening of the role of UN Humanitarian Coordinators.** The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have led a series of measures to strengthen the recruitment, training and retention of these key actors. The establishment of pooled funds behind UN Humanitarian Coordinators to enable them to meet the most urgent unmet needs will further strengthen their role. In 2006, over $200 million was pledged by 9 donors to pilot this approach in Sudan and DRC.

Agreement of benchmarks to monitor delivery of humanitarian assistance DFID has supported efforts by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to make sure that the most basic indicators of need and of outcome – mortality and malnutrition – are robustly and routinely available in major crises.

**A greater emphasis on disaster risk reduction (DRR).** In January 2005, Jan Egeland (UN Emergency Relief Coordinator) launched a process of reform of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. In March 2006, DFID published its new DRR policy paper.
Policy Goal 1: Improving the effectiveness of humanitarian response

30. To be effective, international humanitarian response needs to be principled, informed, coordinated, appropriate and accountable.

A principled response

31. Humanitarian principles remain highly relevant in helping to make difficult decisions in difficult environments, and to maintain secure access to those we are trying to assist. DFID’s support for humanitarian action is based on an assessment of need, without regard to political or other considerations. In other words, our humanitarian aid is impartial and unconditional. We will promote understanding of these principles and their continued significance within DFID, across the UK government and more broadly.

32. The UK government is not, and cannot be, neutral in world affairs. In line with our commitments in international humanitarian law, we recognise our responsibility not to compromise the neutrality and independence of our humanitarian partners. We therefore respect their working practices and their interpretations of core humanitarian principles.

33. With humanitarian principles as a point of continuity, there are also many changes underway in the humanitarian system. Driven by a recognition of the need to enhance coordination, increase capacity and streamline the financing of the system, working with others, the UK has been a leading advocate for reform.

An informed response

34. The lack of robust evidence continues to hamper decision-making at all stages of humanitarian response, including financing. DFID will continue to emphasise the importance of improving the quality of needs assessment and of strengthening approaches to monitoring progress in meeting those needs. We will emphasise securing
improvements in the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), including flash appeals. Working where possible with others, DFID will also maintain and strengthen its own capacity to make informed judgements regarding the scale, severity and nature of need. We will maintain humanitarian advisory capacity at country and regional level where appropriate, supplemented, when needed, by our Operations Team.

A coordinated response

35. Coordination of humanitarian response is crucial to ensure that people receive what they need when they need it, to avoid duplication, to improve cost-effectiveness and to encourage adherence to agreed standards.

36. The Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary forum in which there is dialogue and coordination between the UN and representatives of the Red Cross Movement and NGOs at a global level. DFID would like to see this forum strengthened, in particular at country level. It would encourage more proportionate representation from the NGO community, and their greater participation in joint planning exercises, most notably the Common Humanitarian Action Plans, as well as subsequent appeals. In the spirit of transparency, we encourage agencies not participating in the CAP process to inform the Humanitarian Coordinator and the OCHA Financial Tracking System of the size and content of their programming.

37. DFID recognises the particular leadership role of OCHA in humanitarian affairs, both within the UN architecture and as Chair of the IASC. Enabling OCHA to fulfil its demanding mandate will remain a priority for DFID.

38. At field level, the role of Humanitarian Coordinators remains crucial to effective response. We will continue to support measures to strengthen this function, and to enable Humanitarian Coordinators to act independently and robustly in support of humanitarian objectives, including through innovative financing arrangements. We will also support the development of credible, accountable leadership of the core sectors involved in humanitarian response.
39. National civil society groups and local institutions provide the first line of response, and the last. Yet their contribution is often overlooked. Working through its international NGO, Red Cross and UN partners, DFID will support efforts to build the prevention and response capacity of these local organisations.

An appropriate response

40. Humanitarian action must reflect the needs of the population it is designed to serve, not just the mandates and resources of agencies.

41. We recognise that, in order to be effective, humanitarian assistance must be balanced, and needs to address the variety of people’s basic requirements, and be appropriate to their context. Saving people from starvation isn’t enough if they then die of waterborne disease. We will therefore provide a balanced programme of assistance, which gives due attention to the special needs of women, children, the elderly and disabled.

42. We will continue to encourage innovation and research in the humanitarian arena, where this has a good chance of improving humanitarian response. For example, we will review the potential of using private insurance, as well as new ways of delivering public services, to protect countries and communities at risk.

43. We will examine on a case-by-case basis the arguments in favour of food aid, and promote, where appropriate, other forms of social welfare support, including cash, where we think these will be more effective. We support efforts by the European Union and others to untie food aid contributions, believing that this will provide more appropriate and sustainable approaches to food and livelihood security.

44. DFID’s selection of implementing partners at country level will be informed by our analysis of their respective performance and capacities. We will seek to maintain a balanced selection of partners between the UN, NGO and Red Cross agencies, based on their competence and capacity. We recognise the leading role of the UN agencies in humanitarian action, particularly in the light of the new approaches to sector coordination. We recognise also the particular challenges
facing a number of UN agencies in delivering on their demanding mandates. We will continue to emphasise capacity-building within the UN. We also recognise the unique and indispensable contribution of the Red Cross Movement and NGOs and will sustain our commitment to them.

45. Decisions by DFID and other government departments regarding whether, where and when to deploy UK military capabilities to tasks with humanitarian objectives will be taken on a case by case basis. These decisions will be taken recognising the significant differences between deploying military personnel to support humanitarian operations in natural disasters and those circumstances where UK forces are also actively deployed militarily. DFID’s priority will be to secure the most effective response to humanitarian needs, while protecting the importance of humanitarian principles. It will be necessary to consider factors such as the implications for the protection of civilians, local perceptions affecting the security of aid workers and other civilians, as well as the cost-effectiveness of using military rather than civilian resources. DFID will work to promote compliance with existing guidelines by the UK military and others.

An accountable response

46. The late 1990s saw the beginnings of a revolution in the accountability of humanitarian action. NGOs in particular led the way in developing a stronger framework to define the ethical and professional standards for their humanitarian work⁴. However, in practice there is uneven adherence to these principles. There is a need to find ways of applying existing standards and of monitoring adherence to them, and of better measuring the impact of humanitarian action in order to strengthen performance and accountability. We will seek to promote a stronger voice for the beneficiaries of humanitarian work. Through our partnerships with multilateral organisations and NGOs, our support to the new sectoral coordination arrangements (so called ‘clusters’), and through continuing dialogue with other donors, we will work to further strengthen accountability in the sector.

⁴ See, for example, The Sphere Project, People in Aid, the Humanitarian Accountability Project and the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative.
Policy Goal 2: Be a better donor

DFID recognises the critical role of the donor community in delivering effective humanitarian response. The UK government is committed to the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship, and to their implementation in its own work and more broadly. Specifically, DFID will:

**Promote predictable, adequate and flexible financing**

48. We want to make sure that by 2010 there are no ‘forgotten emergencies’ – crises where, because of lack of funds or political will, the most basic standards of humanitarian action are denied to the majority of the affected population.

49. One way of achieving this is to make sure that global resources are allocated where there is most need, not concentrated in the most high profile crises. DFID will work with others to identify better ways of allocating humanitarian resources where they are most needed. In our own work, we will prioritise responding to the most serious threats to life.

50. This alone will not be sufficient, however. There is a significant humanitarian deficit. This is reflected in the persistent under-funding of many severe, protracted and large scale emergencies. It is also clear that, if the quality of humanitarian action is to be improved, there will be a need for sustained investment.

51. As UK aid budgets rise, so DFID’s humanitarian aid spending will increase, so long as there is proven need. Through the European Union, we will seek to ensure that humanitarian concerns are also reflected in the scaling up of European aid. We will also support efforts to widen the donor base internationally.

52. It is not possible to predict precisely how much humanitarian aid will be needed in any one year, nor where it will be required. No one expected the tsunami in December 2004. However, a significant part
In June 2003, 17 donor governments met in Stockholm, and endorsed 23 principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship. These principles stated that their humanitarian work would be:

- guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence;
- promote adherence to international humanitarian, refugee and human rights law;
- ensure flexible, timely and predictable funding and reduce earmarking;
- allocate funding in proportion to needs;
- involve beneficiaries in the design and evaluation of humanitarian response;
- strengthen local capacity to prevent, prepare for and mitigate crises;
- support the UN, the Red Cross and NGOs; and affirm the primary position of civilian organisations in humanitarian action;
- support learning and accountability initiatives; and encourage regular evaluation.

In April 2006, these principles were endorsed by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD as the standard for its Members’ humanitarian work.
of the humanitarian caseload is predictable, either because of climatic or socio-economic factors, or because of protracted instability. We will aim to commit resources early in the year for these crises.

53. We recognise the importance of not walking away when the television cameras leave. The media has an important role to play in raising awareness of crises, but it does not always get it right. Simply responding to media preoccupations risks missing other less visually powerful, but often more critical, situations. Working closely with our partners, we will aim to ensure that levels of humanitarian aid are reduced only when there is tangible evidence of a sustained and sustainable improvement in the welfare of the community.

54. We will continue to support the development of new instruments, such as the CERF and Common Funds, which enable the UN and others to access early and flexible contributions to new and existing crises.

55. We recognise that, in addition to the volume of funds we provide, we exert influence on the system through the way in which we conduct our partnerships. In managing our relationships with key partners we have to strike a balance between the need to ensure accountability to UK taxpayers, and the need to avoid overburdening our partners and encroaching on their independence. In consultation with partners, we will review our procedures to better achieve this balance. We will also work to harmonise our management and reporting procedures with those of other donors, where possible.

56. We will continue to develop our systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of our humanitarian work, including participation in joint evaluations.

57. DFID accounts for nearly 20% of the European Commission’s humanitarian aid budget. DFID is committed to ensuring that European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) remains the primary vehicle for the EU’s humanitarian assistance, and to protecting the independence of its mandate. Working with our European partners and the Commission, we will promote coherence and consistency across the EC on humanitarian affairs.
Box 4: Responsibility to protect

In 1999, the UN Secretary-General posed the following question: ‘if humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica – to gross and systematic violations of human rights that affect every precept of our common humanity?’.

At the UN Millennium Review Summit in 2005, the international community gave its answer to that question. 191 world leaders agreed that the primary responsibility for the protection of vulnerable populations lies with their respective governments. They agreed also that the international community has a duty to support national governments to protect their civilians. The agreement went on to say, that in exceptional circumstances, and when all other options had been tried, the international community, through the UN, would be ‘prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner ... should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/60/1, para. 139)

The agreement acknowledged that the international community can and should do more to support national protection efforts through diplomatic and development actions to identify risks, and to assist states which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out.
Policy Goal 3: Reduce risk and extreme vulnerability

58. Strengthening the capacity of the international humanitarian system to respond to crises is critical. But it is not enough. In the context of a complex political emergency, the Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Genocide in Rwanda famously concluded that aid cannot act as a substitute for political action\(^5\). Too often humanitarian actors are virtually alone in trying to compensate for the failures of governments and others to provide basic social and legal protection.

59. While responding to these failures is a job for humanitarian organisations, prevention, recovery and protection require a wider effort. Developmental and political actors need to engage earlier and more effectively to reduce risk, to help to build a framework of political and social protection, and to maintain the security of civilians.

**Strengthening the legal and political protection of civilians**

60. We will continue to provide financial support to the mandated protection agencies. DFID will place particular emphasis on supporting efforts to strengthen the protection of internally displaced people, who are one of the groups least well-served by today’s humanitarian system.

61. DFID will continue to work with other UK government departments, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office, to promote compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement globally and at country level. DFID will contribute to government-wide efforts to ensure that humanitarian concerns are appropriately and strongly reflected in the mandates of peacekeeping and peace-building missions.

62. We will also contribute to efforts to translate agreement at the Millennium Review Summit on the principle of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ into specific measures. We will encourage a wider debate among member states and civil society to identify the options available to the international community to support states in protecting their populations. The use of force must remain the option of last resort.

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Many emergencies are symptomatic of long term chronic poverty. It is often possible to predict when the chronically poor are at risk of ‘tipping’ into extreme suffering. While important in helping people to meet their immediate needs, relief aid is not designed to build communities’ resilience in the medium term.

Social security systems and safety net programmes aim to provide regular, predictable and long-term transfers of cash or food to the vulnerable. By doing this, governments can help their poorest citizens to meet their basic needs and improve access to key services. Such transfers help people retain their productive assets and build them so that they are better able to bounce back when conditions improve.

Establishing comprehensive social security in very poor countries is a long-term agenda. Therefore, as a more immediate response, DFID is working with partners to develop multi-year safety nets for the chronically food insecure. In the future, this type of approach could be integrated within broader social security systems. In Ethiopia, for example, DFID has provided £52 million of the pledged £70m to the Productive Safety Nets programme, which provides transfers to over five million food insecure households.

Where governments are unwilling or unable to put in place social security for all, DFID will explore alternatives, including through the UN system, NGOs or private contractors.
63. Where relevant, we will make clear to prospective and existing partner governments the vital importance we attach to adherence to international humanitarian and refugee law, and to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. DFID sees adherence to international law as a condition for effective development and partnership.

64. In promoting the protection of civilians, including refugees, we recognise the importance of addressing the underlying causes of conflict. DFID’s forthcoming conflict policy will detail our approach to this issue. DFID will work with the UN Peace-building Commission and other stakeholders to strengthen international support for country-led peace-building efforts.

Strengthening social protection for populations facing chronic risk

65. The poorest people are the most vulnerable to disasters. Between 1975 and 2005, 90% of those killed and injured by natural disasters around the world lived in Africa and Asia\(^6\). The poor live in sub-standard housing, and suffer relatively poor health. They find it more difficult to escape when hazard strikes. They cannot afford the basic goods and services they need to survive, let alone to invest in recovery. DFID’s policy statement on Disaster Risk Reduction charts how DFID will invest in long term measures to reduce vulnerability and risk. It commits DFID to investing up to 10% of its total response to major natural disasters in risk reduction measures, where suitable interventions can be identified.

66. In the majority of poor countries, there has been a failure by governments and the international community to invest in providing social security for the most vulnerable, despite increasing evidence that a basic package of social security is affordable. Where there is a genuine and demonstrable commitment by governments to addressing the most extreme poverty and hunger, and where needs and vulnerability can reasonably be projected over a multi-year timeframe, DFID will consider providing budget support to support national systems of social security, rather than just relying primarily on emergency aid. The Millennium Review Summit and the G8 have provided new momentum to this approach, in particular greater investment in safety nets.

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\(^6\) For a more detailed discussion, see the DFID Practice Paper “Social Transfers and chronic poverty: emerging evidence and the challenge ahead” available on the DFID website at: www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/social-transfers.pdf
67. As DFID and others increase their engagement in fragile states, and develop longer term approaches to addressing extreme, chronic vulnerability, so it will be important to clarify the distinctive purpose and comparative advantage of humanitarian approaches. We know that putting social safety nets in place and ensuring access to basic services will be a significant challenge in fragile states where governments are unwilling or unable to invest in meeting the most basic needs of their populations. There will not be a simple or quick substitution of humanitarian solutions by developmental ones. In the foreseeable future, both forms of aid are likely to be required in many circumstances.

68. DFID, working in partnership with others, is determined to find ways of meeting the basic needs of the very poorest, even when they live in countries whose governments do not support a pro-poor agenda. We recognise the need to identify new aid instruments to provide support for people living in such difficult environments. At present, humanitarian assistance remains one of the primary tools that we use to provide such basic support. We will explore the scope for others. We recognise the need for caution with respect to efforts to link the provision of social protection and basic services with state-building in these difficult environments. This risks compromising the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian assistance, and access. Equally, we will be sensitive to the risk that poorly planned assistance, including humanitarian aid, can undermine the formation of effective states. Balancing these risks requires careful analysis at the country level.

69. Through the actions described above, DFID hopes to make a contribution towards reducing the devastating impact of crises on the lives, livelihoods and well-being of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world.
Objectives and definition of humanitarian action

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.

2. Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; impartiality, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; neutrality, meaning that humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and independence, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

3. Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods.

General principles

4. Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.

5. While reaffirming the primary responsibility of states for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders, strive to ensure flexible and timely funding, on the basis of the collective obligation of striving to meet humanitarian needs.

6. Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.

7. Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.

8. Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.

9. Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.

10. Support and promote the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and co-ordination of international humanitarian action, the special role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the vital role of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organisations in implementing humanitarian action.

Good practices in donor financing, management and accountability

(a) Funding

11. Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises.

12. Recognising the necessity of dynamic and flexible response to changing needs in humanitarian crises, strive to ensure predictability and flexibility in funding to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and to other key humanitarian organisations.

13. While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organisations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.

14. Contribute responsibly, and on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals, and actively support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritisation and co-ordination in complex emergencies.

(b) Promoting standards and enhancing implementation

15. Request that implementing humanitarian organisations fully adhere to good practice and are committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action.

16. Promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.

17. Maintain readiness to offer support to the implementation of humanitarian action, including the facilitation of safe humanitarian access.

18. Support mechanisms for contingency planning by humanitarian organisations, including, as appropriate, allocation of funding, to strengthen capacities for response.

19. Affirm the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict. In situations where military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian action, ensure that such use is in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and recognises the leading role of humanitarian organisations.


(c) Learning and accountability

21. Support learning and accountability initiatives for the effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian action.

22. Encourage regular evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance.

23. Ensure a high degree of accuracy, timeliness, and transparency in donor reporting on official humanitarian assistance spending, and encourage the development of standardised formats for such reporting.
Annex 2: Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Consolidated Appeals Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAP</td>
<td>Common Humanitarian Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRED</td>
<td>Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Natural Disasters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CERF</td>
<td>Central Emergency Response Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECHO</td>
<td>European Commission Humanitarian Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCHA</td>
<td>Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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Department for International Development
DFID, the Department for International Development: leading the British government’s fight against world poverty.

One in five people in the world today, over 1 billion people, live in poverty on less than one dollar a day. In an increasingly interdependent world, many problems – like conflict, crime, pollution and diseases such as HIV and AIDS – are caused or made worse by poverty.

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- promote sexual equality and give women a stronger voice
- reduce child death rates
- improve the health of mothers
- combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- make sure the environment is protected
- build a global partnership for those working in development.

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