

# OCHA

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

## 1. Facts and figures

**Type of organisation:** Office of the UN Secretariat

**Established in:** 1991

**Headquarters:** New York and Geneva

**Number of country offices:** 25, plus 5 regional offices

**Head of organisation:** UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos (United Kingdom)

### Dates of Board meetings in 2013:

OCHA does not have its own Board. The ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (15–17 July 2013) and the OCHA Donor Support Group High-Level Meeting (11–12 June 2013) have certain governance functions.

### Norway's representation on Board:

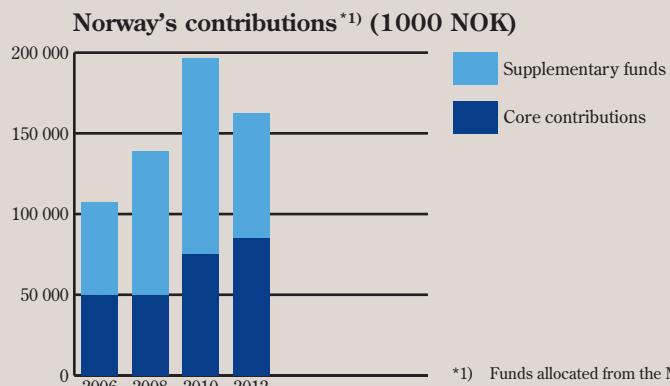
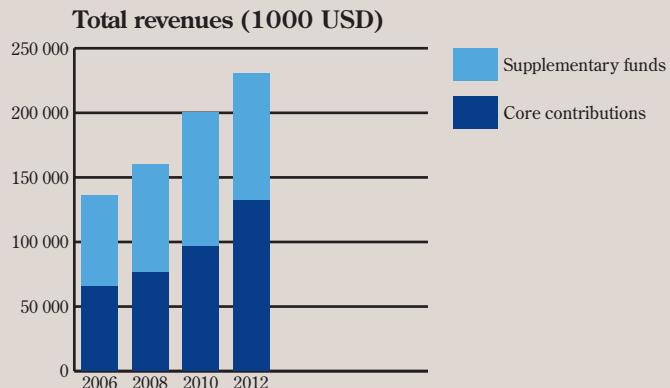
Norway was a member of the leadership troika in the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG) until July 2013

### Number of Norwegian staff:

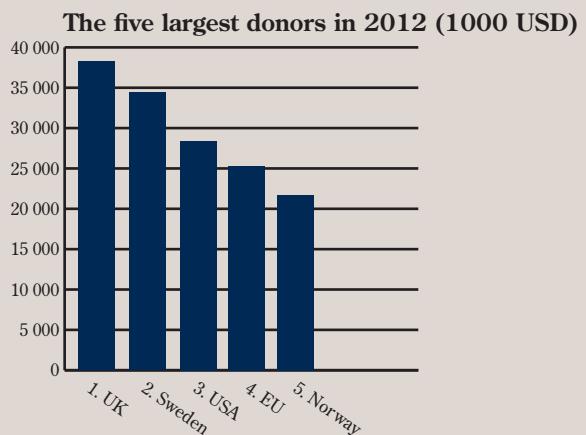
6 employees, in addition to 1 seconded expert and 5 junior professional officers (JPO)

**Competent ministry:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

**Website:** [www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org)



<sup>\*)</sup> Funds allocated from the MFA's budget



## Mandate and areas of activity

In 1991, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to strengthen the UN's response to natural disasters and complex emergencies and improve the effectiveness of humanitarian operations, and established the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA's mandate is defined in Resolution 46/182 and covers both natural disasters and conflict areas where UN humanitarian organisations, other international and non-governmental humanitarian organisations and national authorities are involved in relief efforts. OCHA is headed by an Under-Secretary-General, who also serves in the capacity of Emergency Relief Coordinator. Under the mandate, in addition to heading OCHA, the Emergency Relief Coordinator is charged with leading and coordinating humanitarian responses within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). The IASC comprises umbrella organisations for non-governmental relief organisations and the Red Cross, in addition to the UN agencies with a humanitarian mandate.

Key tasks for OCHA and the Emergency Relief Coordinator are to coordinate international humanitarian efforts at country level to ensure the rapid, effective delivery of emergency relief and humanitarian response and to act as a spokesman for victims of humanitarian crises. The Emergency Relief Coordinator attends meetings of the UN Security Council to report on humanitarian issues relating to peace and security. OCHA has five main functions: (i) coordinating and supporting national and international humanitarian efforts, (ii) mobilising resources to save lives and reduce vulnerability in humanitarian situations, (iii) developing humanitarian policy in collaboration with partners, (iv) acting as a spokesman for people in distress, and (v) providing information on and analysing humanitarian challenges and needs.

OCHA plays a pivotal role in coordinating needs assessments, planning and financing of humanitarian response, and making humanitarian appeals more realistic, common for all actors and better adapted to local contexts. The humanitarian coordinators, supported by OCHA, are responsible for the organisation of the clusters and the inter-cluster coordination.

## Results achieved in 2012

OCHA is generally considered to have strengthened the UN's ability to deliver effective humanitarian assistance and enabled the UN to better ensure the effective coordination of international humanitarian efforts.

- In 2012, OCHA was instrumental in coordinating a total of USD 8.78 billion in emergency relief and providing assistance for around 54 million people. OCHA's share of this work cost USD 246.5 million.
- OCHA deployed 250 persons from internal and external crisis-response pools to assignments in new or escalating crises.
- The number of vacant field positions was reduced to 7.3 per cent (from 9.1 per cent in 2011). The time it takes to employ persons at field offices declined to an average of 100 days (from 130 days in 2011).
- In the past few years, OCHA has offered ad hoc assistance to humanitarian coordinators (HCs), but in 2012 high priority was given to providing comprehensive support to all HCs.
- At the end of 2012, the HC pool had expanded from 39 to 62 qualified professionals, including several women and leaders from the global South.
- OCHA established a pool of 18 experienced leaders who can be deployed to deal with serious crises in the course of 72 hours.
- OCHA established a number of training and mentoring programmes to strengthen the HCs' capabilities. For example, all the HCs were given training in the practical application of international humanitarian law.
- In 2012, almost all of the 32 HCs (97 per cent) completed a formal performance review (up from 17 per cent in 2011).
- OCHA has developed its support for non-governmental organisations in countries such as Pakistan, Ethiopia, DR Congo, Afghanistan and Chad, by assisting with administrative and logistical obstacles, including visa delays, customs clearance and taxes.
- OCHA further developed a methodology for coordinating needs assessments in the field. The new Multi-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) method helps humanitarian country teams (HCTs) to assess and analyse needs in the first two weeks of a crisis. In 2012, OCHA trained over 500 humanitarian workers in 12 countries and four regions to use this methodology, thereby promoting a common understanding of humanitarian needs and the development of adequate response strategies.
- OCHA administers a number of funding mechanisms (CERF, CHF, ERF), which, based on donor contributions, rapidly help to make funding available in response to crises. OCHA manages 18 country-based funds. In total, these funds contributed USD 920 million in emergency relief in 2012.
- OCHA trained local partners in 29 disaster-prone countries in the use of Minimum Preparedness Packages (MPP), to promote a more coherent approach to preparedness and support for national disaster management.
- An independent evaluation concluded that OCHA's DRR systems work had facilitated faster, better-coordinated emergency response. The evaluation report also showed that OCHA has increasingly become the partner to contact in connection with disaster risk reduction (DRR) and preparedness.
- OCHA's web platform ReliefWeb had over 9.5 million users in 2012.
- OCHA's awareness-raising campaign, featuring international star Beyoncé, reached over 1 billion people in connection with World Humanitarian Day.
- OCHA improved its internal gender balance, increasing the number of women in field positions from 30 to 33 per cent.

OCHA has made serious efforts to mainstream women's and gender-equality considerations into humanitarian response, and in 2011/2012 incorporated requirements for the use of gender and gender-equality markers in humanitarian appeals. Substantial improvements can already be seen in that women's and gender-equality issues are better reflected in the appeal projects. It is assumed that more clearly formulated gender-equality indicators will result in better-designed projects on the ground, thereby generating a long-term positive impact on humanitarian response.

## 2. Assessments: Results, effectiveness and monitoring

### The organisation's results-based work

Every year, OCHA produces an annual report on its activities that gives an account of the organisation's results in respect of the objectives in its strategic framework. OCHA has faced challenges in identifying clear objectives, establishing the basis for these objectives and reporting on them. This is due to the difficulties inherent in determining objectives in a field in a constant state of flux, the fact that OCHA's primary mandate is coordination, and the structural constraints within which the organisation, as part of the UN Secretariat, operates.

In a humanitarian context, the number of victims who have received assistance is a key category for measuring success. OCHA has taken important steps to report on the additional value created by the organisation's activities, but it has not made sufficient progress towards providing a systematic account of the way OCHA actually contributes towards saving lives. Under its new Strategy Framework for 2014–2017, OCHA will seek to resolve these challenges. Norway has focused on strengthening OCHA's performance management, and seeks to facilitate the implementation of a mid-term review of the strategic framework by 2016.

### Planning and budgeting systems

OCHA's total budget was NOK 1.6 billion (USD 268 million) in 2012, of which NOK 1.3 million (USD 211 million) was spent on programme activities, while NOK 216 million (USD 36 million) was spent on administration.

OCHA's work is chiefly financed by voluntary contributions from a group of 24 donor countries. Only 4 per cent of OCHA's activities were funded from the UN's regular budget in 2012. Establishing a better burden-sharing system for OCHA and the humanitarian system will be crucial to improving response to future humanitarian challenges.

OCHA's strategic framework is supplemented by more detailed annual plans for OCHA's budget and activities.

### Oversight systems and anti-corruption

The ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs segment and the UN General Assembly are formal decision-making bodies for OCHA. Apart from that, OCHA has no executive board of its own, but donors have formed a group to provide support for

OCHA's operations. While the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG) has no formal control functions, it can agree on measures that have a significant impact on OCHA. As an active participant in the ODSG, and as one of the largest contributors of funding over time, Norway maintains close contact with and has opportunities to influence OCHA.

As part of the UN Secretariat, OCHA is subject to external auditing by the UN Board of Auditors and internal reviews by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). OCHA must comply with the anti-corruption and whistle-blower rules adopted by the UN Secretariat. OCHA has strengthened its engagement with the UN's oversight bodies, particularly the OIOS, and made use of the oversight processes to certify the organisation's accountability and effectiveness. OCHA's internal audit system has been substantially improved in the past few years, in part by the introduction of an electronic monitoring system, as a result of which the implementation rate for audit recommendations increased from 37 per cent in 2009 to 78 per cent in 2010. Audit reports from the Board of Auditors and OIOS are not readily available, but may be obtained by direct enquiry. The reports are also posted on the website of the US delegation to the UN in New York.

### Institution-building and national ownership

OCHA has taken the initiative to strengthen countries' efforts to draw up coordinated early-warning and preparedness plans. Collaboration with national actors on improving the international system's capability of supporting national authorities' disaster response preparedness and resilience to natural hazards at the local level, and on designing systems for integrating affected population groups into the planning of humanitarian operations, will be key challenges for both humanitarian and development actors.

Strengthening national capacity to prevent and respond to humanitarian disasters will be essential to ensuring effective response in the future. The UN Emergency Relief Coordinator has initiated important reforms that will improve the humanitarian response system. At OCHA, the focus is on enhancing the organisation's ability to provide effective leadership and coordination in the field, which includes meeting the need for greater mobility and ability to rapidly deploy highly qualified personnel in the field in response to disasters.

## Willingness to learn and change

OCHA has initiated evaluations in close cooperation with the evaluation offices of the other UN agencies involved. OCHA's ability to learn from and systematically follow up on evaluation recommendations has been good, but not systematic enough.

OCHA has drawn up a new evaluation strategy and a four-year plan for assessing performance and results, which will probably help to remedy this weakness. Norway will continue to contribute towards increasing the organisation's learning ability and focus on results through our collaboration with the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG).

## 3. Norway's policy towards OCHA

OCHA is a key player and partner for Norway in the humanitarian sphere, particularly in connection with efforts to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian work in the field.

Addressing the need for better-coordinated, more effective emergency relief has high priority in Norwegian humanitarian policy. Norway seeks to contribute to the improved organisation and coordination of our humanitarian efforts, and will continue to play a leading role in the international debate on increased knowledge of DRR and climate-change adaptation, while promoting a more proactive DRR culture. OCHA and the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator play a pivotal role in this work.

Until July 2013 Norway was a member of the leadership troika for the OCHA Donor Support Group. Norway wishes to continue to contribute to strengthening OCHA's ability to deliver more effective coordination of humanitarian assistance in the field. We will also work actively to expand ownership of the UN's humanitarian efforts and responsibility for coordinating humanitarian response. In the work on OCHA's new strategic framework, it will be important to intensify the focus on achieving and reporting on results, also as a basis for better communicating the added value of OCHA's services.

OCHA and the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator have been key partners for Norway in terms of promoting humanitarian principles and the protection of civilians, particularly with regard to the initiative "Reclaiming the protection of civilians under the International Humanitarian Law". OCHA has also played a central role in establishing a working group on the protection of civilians under the UN Security Council, which has sought to incorporate humanitarian principles in Council discussions and the UN peacekeeping operations, a sphere of operations which is actively supported by Norway and which we will continue to follow up on within the framework of the process of preparing for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) scheduled for 2015/2106.

Strengthening the integration of women's and gender issues will help to ensure that humanitarian assistance more effectively reaches crisis-affected, vulnerable population groups. Norway is among the countries that have most actively urged humanitarian organisations to use gender- and age-sensitive needs assessments in the field. Norway has provided substantial support for OCHA's gender-sensitive approach, both through its headquarters and in the field, as well as through the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP). It has also been a key contributor to the IASC Gender Standby Capacity (Gen-Cap) project (OCHA/Norwegian Refugee Council), which is a standby pool of qualified personnel in the field of gender-sensitive needs assessment and field operations.

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