



Norwegian People's Aid

Political positions

Selected political positions of
Norwegian People's Aid
(28.11.2022)



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Introduction

This position document entitled “Selected political positions of Norwegian People’s Aid” is intended to identify, highlight and underpin the positions of Norwegian People’s Aid with regard to political lobbying work in Norway.

Norwegian People’s Aid is a politically independent organisation, but it is not politically neutral. It is an important principle for Norwegian People’s Aid that our opinions and positions are based on direct experience in areas decided by the membership organisation. We are the labour movement’s humanitarian solidarity organisation and we represent the labour movement’s core values: unity, solidarity and human dignity.

Our political positions are tied to the various areas of activity of Norwegian People’s Aid. “Selected political positions for Norwegian People’s Aid, national activities” is divided into two parts: “Sociopolitical positions” and “First aid and rescue services”. “Selected political positions for Norwegian People’s Aid, international activities” is in turn sectioned into “Selected political positions DHC”, covering the organisation’s Development and Humanitarian Cooperation (DHC) and “Selected political positions DMAD”, covering Department for Mine Action and Disarmament (DMAD).

Selected political positions for Norwegian People’s Aid, national activities

Frameworks for our political work

Our political positions for national activities should strengthen our political work locally and nationally. The position document should identify, highlight and underpin Norwegian People’s Aid’s positions in the work we do in Norway when it comes to sociopolitical activity and rescue services. We have around 100 local teams working in these areas. Our members are engaged, and our local teams work actively to lobby and promote our political cases locally.

The Principles Programme (2019-2023) states, among other things:

Norwegian People’s Aid works actively and purposefully to ensure the inclusion of asylum seekers and people with an immigrant background, and to ensure that these people are given the opportunity to use their resources and contribute to society. Norwegian People’s Aid should combat discrimination and contribute to the creation of an inclusive labour market and society for all. The prevention of exclusion will be important when it comes to creating tomorrow’s society.

Volunteer organisations play an important role in the creation of an inclusive society. Norwegian People’s Aid is an important contributor when it comes to promoting participation in local communities and organisations and works to ensure that more people can establish strong networks and become active citizens of society.

A country-wide first aid and rescue service is a prerequisite if we are to be able to live and be active across the entire country. In Norway, resources must be available locally in order to be able to provide support in the event of accidents, crises or terror attacks. We must therefore build competent rescue resources across the entire country to make sure that Norway is a safe place to live.



Sociopolitical positions

Work to combat racism

Racism is a social problem that must be fought. Our society as a whole, as well as every one of its individual members, have a responsibility to combat racism. Racism is pervasive in all walks of life - in the workplace, in the rental market, in nightlife, and in everyday life. It can be difficult for people who have not themselves been exposed to racism to detect it in its subtle, structural and institutionalised forms. We must therefore listen to, and learn from, those who have experience in this field so that together we can prevent structural circumstances from leading to the systematic disadvantage of minorities compared to other parts of the population. To overcome racism, it must be treated as an independent problem.

1. Early, systematic and broad efforts to combat racism

We need greater awareness and increased knowledge about racism and its consequences. Racism has consequences for the individual, for a vulnerable group, and for society. Everything from outright to subtle racism can be very harmful to the health of the person exposed to it. People who are subjected to racism and discrimination report more mental health problems than those who do not. This can also have consequences for physical health, and trust in the majority society can be weakened when one experiences racism and hatred on the basis of who one is. Exclusion can both stunt development in education and working life and become a gateway to seeking out alternative and extremist environments. We must therefore be able to react to racism, grapple with its consequences, and take measures to prevent it.

The initiative relating to preventative work must be prioritised. Early intervention focusing on knowledge, facts, awareness-raising and structural challenges is essential here. There must be investment into school/local community projects managed by civil society organisations that have local expertise and experience of inclusion and anti-racism work. Nursery-age children and pupils need to learn about the topic. It is also equally important that staff receive the training necessary to understand the issue. Numerous minority organisations have expertise in this area and can contribute to the work. Combatting

racism is challenging work, both because efforts to change people's mindsets are slow to bear fruit, and because it demands a lot for those of us who know racism first-hand.

Experiencing racism when one is out socialising in a bar or club can result in strong feelings of exclusion. When racism and discrimination are uncovered, a functioning system and effective sanctions must be put in place to combat them. Equally important is the contribution towards preventive work that actors in the nightlife industry can undertake. The municipalities must prepare guidance on regulations, support and follow-up, as well as information about actors that offer competence-enhancing courses in this field. Thereafter, they must monitor the efficacy and implementation of such guidance.

The public sector has a special responsibility in anti-racism work. The municipal government sector is a large and central employer. Equally important is the role of municipalities as providers of various services.

Far too few municipalities state that they have plans for, or are working on, action plans for combating racism. In collaboration with relevant actors, the municipalities must create good local communities where everyone is included and seen. The aim here is to prevent discriminatory attitudes and racist actions, rather than to implement anti-racist measures in their aftermath.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government/local authorities must:

- Support organisations that work with measures to prevent racism and discrimination
- Strengthen research on racism in Norway
- Strengthen prevention efforts targeting racism in preschools, kindergartens and schools
- Strengthen efforts to establish rules that clarify the responsibility of bars, restaurants and nightclubs to prevent and crack down on racism
- Develop action plans and measures for combating racism, together with relevant organisations



2. Free and accessible legal aid in connection with racism and discrimination cases

A zero-tolerance policy on hatred and racism comes with obligations, not least when it comes to holding those who behave irresponsibly accountable. There are a range of reasons why people who are victims of racism do not have real access to the courts, mediation or the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Tribunal.

Free legal aid must be provided in cases involving racism. The law can be difficult to understand, as legal information is rarely adapted to its target group. In addition, legal counsel is expensive. A lack of trust in the authorities and the police may dissuade those exposed to racism from choosing to immediately report it. Even if one does file a report, cases are often dismissed due to the status of the evidence and/or because of a lack of knowledge about racism, hate speech and hate crime in the local police district concerned. Nevertheless, the aggrieved party may well have experienced racism.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Tribunal requires case filings to be done “by the book” and has a high threshold for correctly submitting a case to the court. Low-threshold legal aid measures which, in addition to case processing, can also handle investigative work and offer target group-oriented legal information and legal guidance, are therefore often the only real alternative for people who have been subjected to racism and discrimination.

The fact that racism is difficult to document, prove, or geographically locate should not be decisive for whether the authorities choose to follow up one's case regarding racism or hate crime.

All police districts must have rock-solid knowledge regarding racism, hate speech and hate crime. And we must have a good, nationwide, and free service that helps people who fall through the cracks in the established system when they experience racism and discrimination. This service must treat those of us who are subjected to racism and discrimination with respect, offer us the opportunity to apply for and receive free legal advice and assistance, and leave us feeling like someone is “doing something” with the enquiry into our case and picking up on aspects that might otherwise have been overlooked. Such a service

offering will be of great importance for ensuring that vulnerable people do not feel excluded from society, for creating a sense of legal protection, and for empowering the individual to protest against racism and discrimination.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government/local authorities must:

- Introduce free legal aid in cases involving racism
- Strengthen free, low-threshold legal aid measures that work with racism and discrimination cases
- Reinforce all police districts' knowledge regarding racism, hate speech and hate crime
- Strengthen target group-adapted efforts to inform people about racism and anti-discrimination regulations

Refugees and inclusion

There are currently over 100 million refugees in the world. Over the past decade, war, persecution, gross human rights violations, and climate and environmental degradation have led to a significant increase in the number of people forced to flee their homes. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the ongoing war in Europe has led millions to flee to neighbouring countries or become internally displaced. Anyone who is forced to flee has the right to seek protection and be treated with dignity. Norway must shoulder its share of the responsibility in this area, both via the UN's systems and by applying a humane asylum and immigration policy, and collaborating with other European countries.

1. Resettlement refugees

In the five years leading up to the outbreak of the war in Europe, the number of people seeking protection in Norway hit a record low. A primary reason for this were Europe's closed borders. In response to the high number of displaced people in the world, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees requested in 2017 that Norway gradually increase the number of resettlement refugees it receives per year from 3,000 to 5,000. The time has come for Norway to acquiesce to the High Commissioner's request. The municipalities have the capacity to receive the resettlement refugees. In fact, they have stated that they need a steady influx of new



participants to the introduction programme in order for it to be financially sustainable.

The UN quota scheme for resettlement refugees is a secure, regulated and permanent way of assisting displaced people. Norway must not allow the arrival of large numbers of refugees from Ukraine to compromise our responsibility to receive the most vulnerable people who come to our country via the UN quota refugee scheme. Norwegian People's Aid believes that Norway must assist in efforts to relieve the areas outside Europe and relocate refugees throughout Europe, rather than focussing only on helping those from certain nearby areas.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that:

- Norway must comply with the request of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and increase the country's annual quota to 5,000 resettlement refugees.
- Norway must assist in efforts to relieve the areas outside Europe and relocate refugees throughout Europe, rather than focussing only on those from certain nearby areas.

2. A fair division of responsibility

Neighbouring countries and the countries along Europe's borders cannot bear the sole responsibility for the refugees, yet Norway seems reluctant to commit to a division of responsibility. Aid agencies on the ground report that since the "EU-Turkey Agreement" came into force in 2016, migrants and refugees have been forced to remain on Greek islands indefinitely, where they face a severe lack of health care and appalling conditions. There are reports that the humanitarian situation is becoming worse by the year.

Norway assists Greece through EEA funds. This is necessary but not enough in itself. We must relieve the pressure on Greece by accepting a larger number of refugees. We have a humanitarian duty to do more and to do it better, in order to offer a larger number of people protection in Norway. Displaced people stranded in Greece need our assistance now. Norway can no longer sit on the fence and wait for other countries to contribute. The effort to help Greece must continue, regardless of the ongoing war in Europe.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that:

- Norway must relocate refugees throughout Europe, and not just refugees from certain nearby areas

3. Real access to family reunification

The right to family life is crucial for people's ability to live good, dignified lives. The UNHCR has previously stated that there are "insurmountable obstacles and barriers that a refugee encounters in an application process for family reunification in Norway". Obstacles in the application process and labour market discrimination prevent many prospective applicants from earning enough money to meet the requirements for family reunification. There are reports that family members face major challenges in getting to the embassy, which is often located in a neighbouring country, as well as in scraping together sufficient funds to cover each family member's application fee. One hears stories about a reference person (the person living in Norway) starting to work in the informal sector to raise enough money to cover expenses related to travel, accommodation and the application fee when registering at the embassy, and travel to Norway. The process of gaining real access to family reunification, as well as the self-sufficiency requirements, must be simplified.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Provide real access to family reunification by making the application process easier and reducing the application fee

4. Statute of limitations for the revocation of citizenship

A time limit must be set for when the state can revoke a person's Norwegian citizenship. On 7 April 2022, the Norwegian parliament voted down a proposal to introduce a statute of limitations in cases concerning the revocation of citizenship. Since 2019, it has been stipulated by law that in cases involving the possible revocation of citizenship, a proportionality assessment must be made. In a proportionality assessment, the seriousness of the relationship is weighed against the consequences the loss of



citizenship will entail for the individual and their family. The intention of introducing a proportionality assessment was to strengthen the legal security of persons who are at risk of having their citizenship revoked. Citizenship in a country provides specific rights and contributes to social security. When a person has been granted citizenship, lived in the country for a long time, and complied with current legislation, this must be ascribed great significance based on the proportionality assessment.

A deadline will set a limit for how long after one has been granted Norwegian citizenship the state can no longer take it away, even if the citizen provided incorrect information when they applied for a residence permit in Norway.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Introduce a statute of limitations for the revocation of citizenship

5. Reintroduce the “reasonableness criterion” in connection with repatriation to internal displacement

After a temporary halt to forced repatriation to Afghanistan, the Norwegian authorities have now reinstated the possibility for Afghans residing in Norway to be expelled from the country. The Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) writes that the situation in Afghanistan is no longer as unpredictable as it once was. Meanwhile, the security situation in Afghanistan appears to remain highly unstable, and this may be critical for those who are repatriated. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees called on all countries to halt repatriations to Afghanistan, and this recommendation has not been amended. Moreover, Norway has eliminated the reasonableness criterion for repatriation to internal displacement in Afghanistan. The reasonableness criterion states that no one should be sent back to their home country only to face internal displacement if it becomes difficult for them to cope with the situation there. The UNHCR holds that repatriation to internal displacement is a violation of the Refugee Convention. Norway should therefore comply with the UNHCR's recommendation and reinstate the reasonableness criterion.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Reintroduce the reasonableness criterion in connection with repatriation to internal displacement

Inclusion of women with an immigrant background

Women with an immigrant background are a diverse group with different stories and different connections to the labour market. The diversity of these women must be reflected in varying levels of ambition and individually adapted measures. Targeted measures and activities that promote good inclusion demand a good dialogue, and we must listen to both new arrivals and women with immigrant backgrounds who have been in Norway for some time. The exchange of experiences and co-determination is important in order to secure new measures that can help women with an immigrant background to increase their participation in working life and society.

A significant proportion of women who immigrate to Norway have a low level of education or education from abroad that is not approved or in demand in Norway. This makes it difficult for them to enter the labour market. Investment in targeted upskilling is therefore crucial in order to increase participation in both working life and in society at large. Norwegian language teaching and qualification measures must be adapted so that women can more rapidly acquire the knowledge and skills they need to put their potential to use in the labour market.

Once women enter the labour market, they face other barriers. Research based on official registers shows that women with an immigrant background perform worse in the labour market than similarly-aged women from majority groups with the same education and work experience. However, the literature fails to distinguish discrimination from other factors. One important finding is that discrimination can be multifaceted and subtle. In order to obtain a larger base for knowledge, more studies must be conducted that look at how various groups of women with an immigrant background and descendants of immigrants experience discrimination in the labour market.



In order for women with an immigrant background to gain more equal opportunities for participation, it is important to listen to these women's experiences and respond with adapted measures to provide Norwegian language training, upskilling, and genuine access to the labour market, without the obstacle of discrimination in the labour market and in the workplace.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Eliminate the five-year limit for free Norwegian language classes
- Emphasise flexibility, the exchange of experiences, and co-determination in the design of measures and the orientation of grant schemes
- Initiate research on the scope and nature of discrimination against women with an immigrant background in the workplace.

Voluntary sector policy with regard to inclusion work

The voluntary sector plays a crucial role in inclusion work and is mindful of its responsibility as a stakeholder in community efforts when challenges and crises arise, most recently during the pandemic and the mass exodus from Ukraine. The voluntary sector welcomes everyone and has good experience in facilitating targeted activities to create meeting places, ensure participation and prevent exclusion. Knowledge is needed to fulfil the purpose of facilitating activities that contribute to lasting connection and good conditions for participating in various arenas of society. This, in turn, necessitates coordination and the quality assurance of local activity and volunteerism. Volunteer efforts must be organised in a safe manner based on good training and procedures for how this should be done. Employees and volunteers should also be required to provide police certificates attesting to their good conduct and/or lack of a criminal record.

Inclusion and integration work requires high-quality initiatives with sound methodologies. Inclusion takes place in the local community. It is thus important to have formalised cooperation and good coordination between the municipality/county council and the voluntary sector. To ensure inclusion and increased

participation of people with refugee and immigrant backgrounds in society, greater predictability and better framework conditions for volunteering must be facilitated. We need grant schemes that are adapted to the relevant social challenges at all times. Short term support schemes are therefore not fit for purpose. To be able to offer targeted measures, we must also take the principle of co-determination seriously by listening to feedback, both from new arrivals as well as from people who have been in Norway for years.

In order for the grant schemes for voluntary organisations to function better, it is important to ensure the possibility of multi-year grants and that the grant year starts when the money is actually disbursed, rather than following the calendar year. There is also a need for more opportunities to be awarded salary funds that facilitate coordination and training in connection with voluntary activities. For the voluntary sector to achieve its full potential and fulfil its important role as a driver of inclusion, decision-makers must take the measures proposed by the voluntary sector seriously.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that:

- The Government must ensure better and more flexible framework conditions for the voluntary sector, with predictable general terms and through multi-year schemes
- The grant year must start when the money is actually disbursed and not follow the calendar year
- The grant schemes must provide more opportunities for being awarded salary funds that facilitate coordination and training in connection with voluntary activities
- The design of the grant schemes must take the principle of co-determination seriously by listening to feedback, both from new arrivals and from people who have been in Norway for a few years
- Local authorities must have formalised cooperation and good coordination with voluntary actors



First aid and rescue services

One of the overarching goals of our political work is to ensure better conditions for the voluntary rescue services. For our local chapters that work with search and rescue, political advocacy work is part of efforts to ensure better framework conditions for a good, efficient and accessible rescue service throughout the country. The number of missions we carry out has increased considerably in the last few years and this trend is expected to continue in the years ahead. We are currently faced with increased levels of conflict, war and nuclear threats, as well as climate change that leads to more frequent extreme weather. Through all the major crises in recent years – the mudslide in Gjerdrum, the Viking Sky incident and the pandemic – volunteer rescue teams have played a key role in crisis management. We are ready to take on new challenges, but are calling for more public support.

1. Ensuring a dialogue between the authorities and the voluntary sector – increased state subsidies

The costs of running a preparedness organisation are much higher than the subsidy amount that we receive from the state each year. The voluntary sector is also participating in more and more rescue missions in Norway. At present, volunteers are involved in one in four rescue missions nationally. The pandemic has also shown us that voluntary health preparedness constitutes a significant contribution to public services in times of crisis. Our ability to continue to increase this type of preparedness depends on long-term support from the state. When it comes to rescue services and voluntary health preparedness, our ability to increase preparedness and meet growing needs is entirely reliant on public support.

Our demands are in line with the measures recommended in the 2018 report titled “The role of voluntary rescue and preparedness organisations in today’s society”. Norwegian People’s Aid receives approximately NOK 5 million out of the state budget from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security each year. This money is to be used to facilitate, stimulate development and assist more than 70 local rescue groups staffed by some 2,000 volunteers.

The organisation’s administration costs alone far exceed these 5 million. Norwegian People’s Aid participates in more than 400 missions annually. This represents a significant increase compared to just five years ago, when the average was around 300. There is nothing to indicate that this development will stop.

Increased state subsidies would give us greater predictability and the ability to provide the voluntary rescue services with a necessary and long-awaited boost to their ability to handle the increasing number of missions.

Norwegian People’s Aid believes that the Government must:

- Increase the current funding for volunteer rescue services, excluding emergency networks to NOK 75 million.
- Commit to further gradual increases.
- Include the voluntary sector in decisions about the allocation of these funds.

2. Formalise the allocation of funds for voluntary health preparedness

Norwegian People’s Aid provides important support to the healthcare services in connection with major incidents and disasters. The voluntary sector supports both the municipal and the specialist healthcare services. At the same time, there is no central funding for maintaining and developing this task.

Volunteers are a cornerstone of local preparedness and contribute expertise, equipment and crews that the public sector is unable to mobilise itself. The coronavirus pandemic also demonstrated that voluntary health preparedness is crucial to supporting the public health service. This is also underlined by the Coronavirus Commission, which recommends increasing voluntary health preparedness. To be ready when the next crisis strikes, we need predictability that allows us to increase our preparedness in this field as well.

A fixed allocation for voluntary health preparedness is crucial for further efforts. Norwegian People’s Aid therefore believes that funds must be allocated through the state budget to ensure this.



Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Allocate NOK 30 million beyond the budget of the Ministry of Health and Care Services to key emergency preparedness actors in the voluntary field (Norwegian People's Aid, the Norwegian Red Cross and the Norwegian Women's Public Health Association)
- Authorise funds, through the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services' budget, for central preparedness stakeholders in the voluntary sector.

3. Offer exemption from the one-off registration tax for vehicles

In many rescue operations, time is the decisive factor when it comes to saving lives. We are working to cut out time-consuming elements and improve our equipment in all areas. Exemption from the one-off registration tax for vehicles would contribute considerably to strengthening preparedness in local communities across the country. Moreover, it would also improve the safety of volunteer crews.

The rescue services need to use the most heavily taxed type of vehicle. When society asks for help saving lives, the crews sometimes get to the site of an incident before the snowplough in areas that are hard to reach. If a rescue vehicle is unable to reach a site, the mission may be delayed as a result. All rescue vehicles should have four-wheel drive, space for crews and the engine power needed to pull trailers with equipment, snowmobiles or boats. These requirements render the base price more expensive and also result in maximum taxes.

Example: When Norwegian People's Aid Strand and Forsand bought a new rescue vehicle in 2017, they had to pay NOK 460,000 in taxes to the state (VAT and a one-time registration tax). The local team had to work to raise this money.

It is paradoxical that voluntary rescue groups must pay the state for vehicles they use to perform voluntary work for the same state.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Guarantee exemption from the one-off registration tax for rescue vehicles.

4. More emergency network subscriptions

It is broadly agreed that voluntary resources need to have access to the emergency services radio network in order to be able to communicate directly with the police and the ambulance service. This has been something of a revolution for the rescue services and has resulted in more efficient search operations. There are no state-funded schemes for covering the cost of purchasing new radios and network subscription fees. This means that newly established groups end up outside of the emergency network and unable to communicate effectively with partners.

We are prepared to cover the cost of the emergency radios ourselves, but we cannot cover the running network subscription fees for these. If a new rescue group purchases ten radios it will cost approximately NOK 50,000 a year to use them. These funds must be raised through the work of the local team.

We are doing our best to reallocate terminals within the organisation when new needs arise but this compromises the readiness of those who must surrender their radios.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Makes it possible to purchase new radios and cover the cost of network subscription fees for these.
- Include voluntary rescue organisations in the processes surrounding the next generation emergency network (NGN), and ensure coverage of subscription costs for this as well.

5. Guarantee full VAT reimbursement for the voluntary sector

It is crucial that the Norwegian Parliament puts in place a rule-based scheme for full VAT compensation, in line with the government declaration.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Guarantee full VAT reimbursement for the voluntary sector and that this entitlement be laid down in law.



Selected political positions of Norwegian People's Aid, national activities

Norwegian People's Aid has two departments with international activity, Development and humanitarian cooperation (DHC) and Humanitarian mine and explosives clearance (DMAD). Both departments have developed selected political positions for their respective fields.

Selected political positions DHC

Frameworks for our political work

Norwegian People's Aid takes a political approach to development. Development is not just about economic growth, knowledge or the right technical solutions. The central issue is the way in which resources are controlled and distributed. In order to achieve fair development, it is essential that oppressed groups are able to strengthen their power, participate and influence those in power and decision-makers. That is why we apply a partnership approach based on solidarity and long-term relationships to our development and humanitarian work, which emphasises support that allows people to organise themselves and respect for the partner's own agenda and strategy for achieving social justice.

We emphasise contextual understanding and local anchoring in all our international work. Change demands solid insight both from relevant stakeholders and where the problem really lies. Norwegian People's Aid stands with those affected by crises and injustices and contributes technical and political expertise and global experience-based spokesperson work for lasting change and local resilience.

Among other things, the Principles Programme (2019-2023) states the following about our development and humanitarian work:

Norwegian People's Aid wants:

- To work with popular organisations and civil society to promote democratisation and contribute to a more just distribution of power and resources.
- To promote democracy, human rights, equality and a fair distribution of power and resources between men and women.
- To promote the role of local organisations when it comes to responding to humanitarian crises and strengthen their ability to assume this role.
- To contribute to increased involvement and understanding of development issues within our local teams, among members and among the population at large.
- To strengthen the collaboration with the trade union movement on the development of democracy and international solidarity.

1. Inequality

The differences between the poor and the rich have increased dramatically in recent decades and continue to increase. Inequality has increased both between and within countries and a small number of people control much of the world's wealth. Some argue that it is not that bad if someone becomes very rich, as long as we manage to reduce poverty. This is not true. When a few control large parts of the resources, they also gain disproportionate political influence and hinder equalisation. It is the interests of the community that suffer as a result.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that low levels of inequality between people has inherent value in itself. At the same time, low inequality is also important in order to build trust, community and good societies. The inequalities between the rich and the poor must be reduced, as must those between men and women and between different groups in society. We can see that countries with a high degree of financial, social and political inequality are also characterised by significant social division and injustice.

There are several reasons why inequality is on the rise. The neoliberal economic policy that has dominated in the last decades has contributed to a concentration of income and wealth. The highest salaries have grown significantly in many countries



while downward pressure on normal salaries, unstable working conditions and social dumping is widespread. The pressure against unionisation has been so great that the organisations are unable to defend the rights of workers. In many countries, most people work in the informal sector, for example as street vendors, and a large proportion of these informal workers are women. An uneven distribution of land represents a historical challenge. Today, private businesses investing in natural resources such as land, mines and hydropower results in many small-scale farmers being driven off the land. Environmental destruction and climate change also hits those who have the least the hardest. In recent years, the pandemic has hit poor and marginalised communities especially hard and there is a strong consensus that it will contribute to further inequality.

Most people in the world lack social security and in the last decades we have seen an extensive privatisation of existing welfare and social security systems. This affects the large number of people who depend on collective solutions. Many countries tax people on ordinary salaries the hardest while the richest avoid paying huge tax bills. Many multinational companies engage in aggressive tax planning and hide assets in tax havens. The policy of limiting the role of the state and having low tax revenues combined with widespread corruption often results in the state being unable to provide welfare services.

We need an all-out effort on a wide front to reduce inequality. Political willingness is needed in order to achieve the UN's sustainable development goal of reducing inequality. Popular organisations and mobilisation are crucial in order to bring about a change.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Support free, public, universal and inclusive health and education services, not privatisation.
- Contribute to the creation of universal systems for social security for the entire population.
- Promote workers' and collective rights and support those who fight for a decent working life.
- Support the development of progressive tax systems and increase taxes on the wealthy.
- Fight tax havens, promote openness and demand that taxes are paid where values are created.
- Create a Norwegian development policy strategy that ensures that the policy contributes to reducing inequality in all areas.

2. Democratisation and the right to organise

Recent decades have seen a decline in democracy. Democracy is about more than voting in elections every four or six years. It is about people having the opportunity and the right to set the political agenda, influence political decisions, put forward demands and solutions and express and organise themselves without fear of repercussions. In the past year in particular, respect for political and civil rights has weakened, according to The Economist's Democracy Index. Simultaneously, governments are less and less democratic. Important decisions are not discussed in democratic spaces, but are instead defined by expert and elite groups, supranational bodies or privatised organisations. Norwegian People's Aid finds that power is concentrated to economically powerful groups, to those highly educated, to urban areas and, still, to men.

Legislation is limiting the activities of organisations in many of the countries where Norwegian People's Aid works. Anti-terrorism laws are used to stifle peaceful opposition. Harassment and killings of organisations and social leaders with impunity are not uncommon. The authorities always bear some of the responsibility, but it is often non-state stakeholders, armed groups or private corporations that are behind this. Recognition of rights is not enough. The rights must be respected in practice.



Although civil society's room to manoeuvre has been restricted, there has been an increase in political involvement. Recent years have been marked by massive protests in several countries with people calling for openness and influence, denouncing inequality, political elites, corruption, economic policy and violence against women. The increase in turnout at such protests may point towards increased democratisation.

A strong civil society is essential for promoting democracy and a fair distribution of resources. Civil society also performs an important function when it comes to holding the authorities accountable, and not least with regard to lobbying and agenda-setting. That is why access to channels of expression is so important.

Norwegian People's Aid has extensive experience of working with organisations in many countries in the global south and emphasises the development of partnerships based on solidarity and equality. There is a need for organisations that are capable of promoting social change over time, and of defending the interests of marginalised groups under changing political, social and economic circumstances. These organisations can, when well-functioning, act as democracy schools and contribute to the promotion of equality and diversity.

Civil society consists of many different stakeholders and organisations. Norwegian People's Aid believes that it is especially important to help marginalised and oppressed groups organise themselves. This type of broad, popular organisation can have a significant impact on social development. Representativeness and legitimacy are essential if civil society organisations are to be able to empower people and give them influence, promote more political equality and stronger democracies.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Double its budget for supporting civil society organisations during the current government period.
- Limit the purpose of the civil society funding to the strengthening of civil society, the organisations and their influence in society and over those in power.
- Ensure that the funding reaches representative and legitimate organisations for marginalised groups.
- Ensure that Norway assumes global leadership for increasing civil society's room to manoeuvre, respect for the right to organisation, protection against violations and harassment and justice when such violations occur.
- Reinforce international efforts aimed at putting the UN resolutions concerning the protection of human rights defenders into practice.
- Ensure that Norway consults with and promotes civil society participation in its work in its diplomatic relations.
- Ensure that Norway makes binding demands with regard to respect for human rights and due diligence for Norwegian companies.

3. Gender and equality

In recent years, the struggle for equality and women's rights has increasingly taken centre stage in large protest movements in many parts of the world. In Latin America, the fight against violence and for abortion rights has been some of the most important underlying causes for popular mobilisation, while in countries such as Lebanon and Sudan, women have been at the forefront of the fight against repressive and corrupt regimes. At the same time, the resistance towards the liberation of women and people outside of the norms for gender and sexuality has become clearer. Reactionary and conservative forces, where religious and economic interests intersect, are increasingly well organised and funded. Both national and international laws and conventions are under threat and we are at risk of losing much of what we have fought for in recent decades.



Norwegian People's Aid works with partners that work towards a fairer distribution of power and resources. Nowhere in the world are these independent of gender, and men and women are still treated differently, given different tasks, opportunities, responsibilities and privileges, to varying degrees. Many of our partners are women's and feminist organisations and equality is at the heart of the work that we do.

The unpaid work that women perform in the home and poorer conditions generally in formal and informal employment results in major differences and in the inability of women to decide over their own lives. Financial interests also benefit from maintaining such unjust systems while society suffers when everyone does not have access to organised and paid work. Violence against women and persons outside of gender and sexuality norms has immense consequences for the individuals in question and their families, societies and nations. The inability to decide over one's own body represents a serious human rights violation and limits the affected person's ability to participate fully in society or take up leadership positions.

Different forms of oppression are connected. In order to achieve true equality and justice for women, persons outside of gender and sexuality norms, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and other marginalised individuals, we need to fight for economic rights and opportunities, freedom from violence, the ability to decide over our own bodies and full access to participation and leadership within organisations, local communities, politics and other forms of governance.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Support programmes to combat violence against women run by women, as well as the meaningful inclusion of men in this work.
- Ensure that women truly participate in and lead Norwegian-funded development programmes and processes, and work actively to promote the inclusion of marginalised groups.
- Assess and take into consideration how all projects funded by Norway affect equality and women's rights, both through ordinary aid and through Norfund.
- Work to improve public welfare systems and safety nets in all countries.
- Stand firm on and fight for the right to free abortion and access to birth control.
- Be a clear voice for the rest of the world in the struggle to defend previous gender equality gains.

4. Strengthen local stakeholders engaged in humanitarian work

Never before have so many people been in need of humanitarian assistance. To ensure more efficient humanitarian work and more robust local communities, local stakeholders must be strengthened and recognised in the humanitarian work. Local forces are often the first to respond when a crisis strikes. They are already present, capable of mobilising and organising people locally and can potentially ensure that those affected become active participants with influence over the assistance they receive.

With its travel restrictions, the coronavirus crisis has further highlighted the need for local response capacity. Local organisations only have access to a very small share of global humanitarian funding and are rarely able to utilise their full potential. Norwegian People's Aid should work to break down the barriers that limit local stakeholder influence over humanitarian responses and access to global humanitarian funding.



Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Take the lead internationally to ensure that local and national stakeholders get access to a larger share of both Norwegian and international humanitarian funding.
- Work to revise requirements and structures for the funding of local and national stakeholders and ensure real participation of these in global and national/local coordination forums.
- Ensure a long term and broadened perspective on partnership and capacity building for local and national humanitarian stakeholders by co-ordinating long term and humanitarian funding.
- Strengthen crisis coordination, reinforce local crisis coordination where available and connect local stakeholders with international crisis coordination systems. Ensure training and upskilling for local stakeholders.
- Work to split the risk involved in all work so that it is not all borne by local partners.
- Ensure that local stakeholders and their work are presented and highlighted in all official communications.

5. Responsible business

There is a great need for job creation and business development in the world. This is one of the focus areas of today's development policy, together with stronger involvement of Norwegian businesses. There are too many examples of foreign investment in business activities where a few earn while others lose or earn very little. Similarly, there are many examples of business activities resulting in human rights violations or gross exploitation of labour. A very large number of jobs are created locally and in informal structures, under precarious conditions, and women perform a large number of these jobs.

While simultaneously emphasising the framework conditions for business in development policy, we need to enable business development to contribute to poverty mitigation and an improved distribution of resources. This is largely taken for granted in politics today. In order to qualify for business support, companies should be required to prove a positive social impact through contribution to a fairer distribution, decent workplaces and more robust support for small businesses. The Norwegian authorities must demand more clearly that

the business community prevent human rights violations through due diligence assessments, broad consultation and pre-informed consent in indigenous territories.

Norwegian People's Aid works with organisations and communities that experience the negative consequences of investment into natural resources and companies' lack of respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and workers. We support their ability to organize and believe that we have a responsibility to help them raise this issue nationally and internationally.

In our advocacy work in relation to Norwegian economic interests abroad, Norwegian People's Aid focusses

its efforts on issues that build on the initiatives of popular organisations in our partner countries. In our work to promote this issue to Norwegian stakeholders, Norwegian People's Aid tends to work in partnership with the Norwegian trade union movement.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Ensure that all job creation support is in line with the ILO agenda for decent work.
- Prioritise aid budget funds for the development of local employment instead of promoting the establishment of Norwegian companies abroad.
- Put in place binding guidelines, such as a human rights act for business, that require companies to conduct due diligence assessments of what human rights violations their activities may entail and make these assessments available to the public.
- Ensure that populations affected by corporate investment, trade agreements and development projects can make their voices heard.
- Consider Norfund's further growth and the suitability of the mandate in terms of who benefits from the development effect of the investments and how a broader consultation can be ensured ahead of investments.
- Call for an assessment of the effect of commercial investments on inequality.
- Strengthen support for corporate taxation, the principle that taxes should be paid where the business activities take place, and the creation of progressive tax systems.



6. Climate and the environment – international solidarity in climate policy

Climate and environmental crises represent the biggest threats of our time. Climate change and the degradation of nature and natural resources affect those who have the least and are therefore strongly linked to differences between those who have resources and those who do not. Inequality and poor governance are therefore underlying explanations for who is affected and how. Climate and environmental crises amplify the inequality that vulnerable and marginalised groups are often most exposed to and least able to deal with, in many cases exacerbating their situation. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, local pollution and the degradation of nature and natural resources is therefore a prerequisite for maintaining the livelihoods of those potentially most at risk.

Moreover, effective prevention of environmental degradation and climate adaptation must be based on solid local knowledge. It is particularly important to ensure that any measures introduced do not exacerbate inequalities and conflicts or lead to a further deterioration of people's living situations. It is therefore crucial that the green shift is fair and rights-based. A humanitarian response, investment into the physical prevention of environmental destruction and climate change adaptation is not enough. Both prevention and response must be more closely linked to long-term development work that strengthens people's ability to challenge structural inequality locally and nationally, so that they too can lead the fight against the degradation of their own lands and climate change.

Norwegian People's Aid works with organisations trying to protect their lands, local communities, rivers and woods against environmental destruction. They are working to combat deforestation, pollution and the destruction of biodiversity and for increased awareness of environmental destruction, climate change and climate-friendly development. They influence both society and those in power. Many of these environmental activists live under threat and face harassment and some even risk their lives for this work.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Ensure a sharp increase in Norwegian climate funding so that developing countries can cut their own emissions and adapt to the harmful consequences of climate change. This increase must be in addition to traditional assistance.
- Work to ensure that international climate funding does not give rise to unmanageable debt in developing countries.
- Take a rights-based approach to climate adaptation and the prevention of environmental degradation and make sure that all Norwegian climate and environmental initiatives ensure local involvement and competence building.
- Ensure that all climate and environmental initiatives are based on an analysis to determine how the climate and environmental challenges affect and are affected by inequality and underlying forces that create vulnerability and conflict.
- Support environmental activists who put themselves at risk to care for the environment and manage their natural resources in a sustainable way.



Selected political positions DMAD

Frameworks for our political work

Humanitarian mine clearance and disarmament has a proud history in the world and within Norwegian People's Aid. For decades, we have worked to advance the protection of people, establishing and strengthening conventions, carrying out mine clearance on the ground, and constantly developing the sector to work more efficiently and systematically.

The Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions have saved countless lives and limbs. Tens of millions of landmines and cluster munitions have been cleared or destroyed in storage and the conventions have established a strong international norm against the use of these weapons. Norwegian People's Aid has been involved from the start and is today one of the world's three largest and leading humanitarian stakeholders in the field.

The Principles Programme (2019-2023) states the following about mine and explosives clearance, among other things:

Norwegian People's Aid wants:

- To work operationally and politically for increased civilian protection before, during and after conflicts, and to strengthen international rules and norms with regard to humanitarian disarmament.
- To work to ensure that more states join the ban on nuclear weapons and increase knowledge of the humanitarian consequences of these.
- To work to stop the use of explosive weapons in inhabited areas and contribute to civilian readiness and protection from explosive weapons.
- To contribute to increased involvement and activity in the local teams, and increased understanding among the population when it comes to humanitarian disarmament.

1. Mine and explosives clearance

Millions of people live in areas where there are land mines and cluster bombs. In some of the worst affected places, children have to cross mine fields to get to school. A single misstep can be fatal. A large number of victims of explosive weapons are civilians and around half of them are children.

Norwegian People's Aid has been protecting civilians from explosive weapons since 1992. We have cleared more than one billion square metres of land and removed more than two million landmines and explosives in more than 40 countries. Still, millions of mines and cluster bombs remain in the ground. Landmines, cluster bombs and explosive remnants of war represent a serious and constant threat to civilians.

Landmines can either be anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines or so-called improvised explosive devices. These are placed on or in the ground and made from plastic, metal or other materials and contain explosives and shrapnel. They are activated when someone steps on or drives across them, for example. The Mine Ban Convention which came into force in 1999 prohibits the use and production of mines built to explode as a result of human presence, proximity or physical contact. Many countries have already managed to clear all their mined areas. But with new wars, such as the one in Ukraine, the threat of landmines, cluster bombs and other explosives is unfortunately increasing again, causing terrible suffering for civilians. Antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions are illegal under the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and all use should therefore cease immediately. Humanitarian mine clearance must be prioritised to ensure a safe and sustainable return for people who were forced to flee their homes.

Norwegian People's Aid works to map and clear mines, cluster bombs and other explosive remnants of war. Norwegian People's Aid also works to ensure that demining work is inclusive, that no one is discriminated against on the basis of who they are or where they come from. We also believe it is important to pay more attention to climate and environmental issues before, during and after wars and conflicts.



Toxic chemicals, polluted soil and water, asbestos from damaged buildings, fires, and the destruction of critical infrastructure are just a few examples of how war harms the environment in which the people we help will live (and with which they must grapple) in the post-conflict era. We also believe that it is important to strengthen national expertise. The threat and the problem are local and national, which is why the expertise must be generated nationally and locally in line with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). We believe that this is a sustainable approach that helps increase respect for local ownership, ensure that it works, and boost the capacity of such businesses.

In 2019, the fourth Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) review conference was held in Oslo with Norway hosting. In 2020, the second review conference on the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) was held virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic. The conference in Oslo resulted in an action plan for the fulfilment of the Mine Ban Treaty, the Oslo Action Plan, while for the Convention on Cluster Munitions we now have an action plan called the Lausanne Action Plan. These plans are important markers of ambition and contain indicators for measuring progress.

Norwegian People's Aid works actively to monitor progress in relation to these plans.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Increase its financial and diplomatic support for humanitarian disarmament and strengthen its commitment to the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.
- Work with other active states to fulfil the ambitions of the Oslo Action Plan (OAP) and the Lausanne Action Plan (LAP).
- Contribute to setting realistic goals for the fulfilment of the obligations under both the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions as soon as possible.
- Assist in the full implementation of the OAP and LAP and ensure that the protection of civilians and development is central in this context. This must happen in consultation with, and with the full participation of, the affected communities, including women, men, girls and boys.
- Together with Norwegian People's Aid and other stakeholders, continue the important work of strengthening national expertise.
- Support work to strengthen international standards for mine clearance.
- Contribute to work for equality, diversity, and gender integration in all aspects of the fulfilment of the MBT and the CCM. It is not just about fulfilling the obligations, but also about how we fulfil them. We wish to see an equality pledge and for all stakeholders to contribute to the meaningful participation of women and diversity within the delegations, on panels and in all convention-relevant forums.
- Continue and strengthen our focus on the establishment of a solid international regulatory framework for the protection of the environment in war and conflict.



2. Civilian preparedness and protection

Armed conflict increasingly takes place in cities and areas where civilians live, and using weapons intended for open battlefields. This makes it difficult to ensure the protection of civilians in connection with armed conflicts today.

Tens of thousands of women, men and children are killed, injured and traumatised every year due to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) where they reside, work, go to school and live their lives. When used in cities, explosive weapons account for more than 90 per cent of all civilian injuries and fatalities. A record number of people are currently on the run in search of safety. Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine has shown us once again what an enormous threat explosive weapons pose to civilians. Vital infrastructure is destroyed, schools and hospitals are damaged or destroyed, access to food is hampered and communities and areas are contaminated by unexploded bombs that injure and kill people and hinder their return to their homes even after the fighting is over.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Ensure that Norway works actively to ensure that more countries join and comply with the political declaration against the use of EWIPA.
- Take the lead when it comes to funding and developing a humanitarian response that contributes to civilian preparedness and protection in connection with war and conflict.

3. Nuclear weapons

Norway has historically been an important advocate for disarmament, for example through its contributions to very important disarmament agreements such as the MBT and the CCM. But recently, both ambitions and contributions in this field have deteriorated. This is particularly evident in Norway's rejection of the ban on nuclear weapons. It is good that Norway participated as an observer at the first meeting of states parties to the nuclear weapons ban, and we expect Norway to play a constructive role in the future. Only a minority of

states continue to cling to the notion that nuclear weapons are necessary and legitimate. Norway's long-term goal should therefore be to endorse the ban and convince other countries to do the same. Nuclear weapons have already nearly been used several times due to misunderstandings, technical errors or accidents. In a multipolar world with cyber warfare, hybrid warfare, terrorism, extremism and irrational leaders, we simply cannot continue to put nuclear weapons at the centre of our safety. The disarmament work will not progress unless we recognise that the risks associated with nuclear deterrents far outweigh the benefits.

Norwegian peace and disarmament work needs increased focus, funding and knowledge. Norwegian politicians cannot continue to under-communicate the risks that nuclear weapons pose to Norwegians and the world. They must also recognise that Norway is part of the problem since our current security policy is based on allied nuclear weapons states continuing to possess, and potentially use, nuclear weapons on our behalf. While Norway remains a loyal NATO ally, we must now distance ourselves from nuclear deterrence and increase our efforts for nuclear disarmament. In addition to continued verification work, the knowledge-based humanitarian initiative on nuclear weapons must be re-established.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Expressly state Norway's goal to sign the UN treaty that bans nuclear weapons and actively work to put in place the conditions that would allow this to happen.
- Initiate a broad and balanced reality assessment of the risks that nuclear weapons and our continued commitment to nuclear deterrence pose to Norway and the world.
- Re-establish the knowledge-based humanitarian initiative on nuclear weapons and fund research, the generation of new knowledge and civil society engagement on nuclear weapons-related risks and the humanitarian, health, developmental and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons.



4. Stop Killer Robots

Artificial intelligence is quickly gaining ground within the defence industry. We are now facing a dramatic shift where technological development can enable weapons systems that have autonomy in critical functions and can select and attack targets without meaningful human control.

The development has been dubbed the third revolution in warfare, after gunpowder and the nuclear bomb, and both experts in artificial intelligence and the UN Secretary General are asking the countries of the world to ban such weapons before they come into use. The International Committee of the Red Cross states that we must urgently set limits on autonomy in weapons systems if we are to ensure compliance with international law and make sure that we do not cross an ethical line.

Norwegian People's Aid is a member of the Stop Killer Robots campaign and is striving to ensure that Norway takes a leading role in efforts to ban certain autonomous weapons systems and develop the necessary regulations.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Agree that Norway should support the international work for a treaty prohibiting the development, transfer and use of lethal autonomous weapons.
- Agree that Norway should assume a leading role in the work to bring about such an instrument.

5. Climate and environment issues related to war and conflict

War and conflict have a negative impact on the environment, while climate change and environmental challenges can increase the risk of conflict and of people becoming refugees. It is the most vulnerable people in a society who are worst affected by climate change, war and conflict.

Humanitarian responses can also have a negative environmental impact by putting pressure on the environment and the natural resource basis. Humanitarian stakeholders must do their bit to avoid unintended damage as a result of humanitarian intervention.

Norwegian People's Aid believes that the Government must:

- Support and be a driving force for a legally binding agreement that protects the environment in times of war.
- Contribute to ensuring that more countries comply with and respect international laws on the protection of the environment in connection with armed conflict.
- Be at the forefront of funding a green humanitarian response.
- Work to ensure that other states map and share information about military emissions, as Norway already does.