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## ■ Foreword

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Human rights lie at the heart of Norway's international efforts. The basic underlying principle is that human rights are universal – they apply to everyone, regardless of gender, social and ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation or disability. It is therefore important to work together with other countries and organisations to ensure respect for the human rights of all persons, including persons with disabilities.

The UN estimates that approximately a billion persons – or some 15 % of the world's population – live with some form of disability. This makes persons with disabilities the world's largest minority group. Persons with disabilities are over-represented among the world's poor and in countries affected by conflict, and are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion. For this reason the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities highlights the importance of the principles of non-discrimination and participation. Under the Convention, states are obliged to take measures to eliminate discrimination and to work to build an inclusive society at both national and international level. It is important to view issues relating to disability as an integral part of sustainable development strategies.

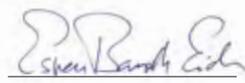
It is the responsibility of each country to protect the rights of its citizens. Norway's foreign and development policy gives priority to supporting human rights work in both international and national dialogue forums. Norway supports efforts to promote the rights of persons with disabilities directly, for example by providing funding to disability organisations. The recent white paper *Sharing for prosperity: Promoting democracy, fair distribution and growth in development policy* states that particular priority will be given to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in areas such as education, humanitarian efforts, health and gender equality. This publication and the concrete steps that are being taken to follow up the evaluation of Norwegian support in this field, carried out by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), will form the basis for Norway's further efforts in this area.

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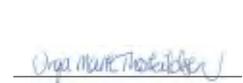
We are pleased that Norway has now ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is positive that this issue is increasingly placed on the agenda in the UN and in other international forums. Norway will continue to work to ensure the participation of all persons in society and respect for the human rights of all persons – regardless of their disability.



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## ■ **Background: the importance of human rights in development policy**

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The overall objective of Norway's development policy is to fight poverty and achieve a fairer distribution of resources and opportunities.

Norway's development policy is guided by international human rights principles. It is designed to strengthen both the ability of states to fulfil their human rights obligations and the ability of individuals to exercise and claim their rights. Active use of human rights as a framework for development cooperation helps to raise awareness of human rights issues among both governments and the general population. The result is stronger local ownership and greater sustainability. The implementation of the human rights conventions is therefore an objective in itself, as well as an important tool that should be integrated into all development cooperation.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a key instrument in this context. The Convention entered into force in 2008 and was ratified by Norway in June 2013. As well as promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, the Convention sets out the importance of integrating the needs of persons with disabilities in development cooperation. It emphasises the importance of ensuring that efforts to promote sustainable development are inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities. The Convention can thus be seen as an instrument for both development policy and human rights work.

It is the responsibility of each country to protect the rights of its citizens. Norway's development policy gives priority to supporting human rights work. Our development cooperation is to be a tool for ensuring the inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities in society. The extent to which this can be achieved will, however, vary between the various fields of development cooperation we are engaged in. Certain fields will be given priority: education, humanitarian efforts, health and gender equality.

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## ■ Priority areas in development cooperation

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Norway fully supports the work that is being done to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which are an important guide for Norwegian development policy. Promoting the inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities in society is an obligation from a human rights perspective. It is also essential for achieving a number of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as MDG 2 on universal primary education.

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## ■ Education

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The right to education is a fundamental human right. Education is essential for ensuring that children are able to become independent and find work as adults. Education is a priority sector in Norwegian development cooperation, and one where much can be done to improve the situation of vulnerable and excluded groups.

Norway gives particular priority to ensuring access to primary and lower secondary education for children in conflict and crisis-hit areas, where the proportion of children with disabilities is higher than in other places. Of the 70 million children in the world who do not attend school, an estimated total of 23 million are children with disabilities. Calculations indicate that only 2–3 % of children with disabilities in low-income countries have access to primary and lower secondary education. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities sets out that children with disabilities have the right to education on an equal basis with other children, and that the education they receive should accommodate their individual requirements.

A large proportion of the support provided by Norway for education is channelled through major multinational organisations.

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As a donor, Norway participates in political discussions with these organisations about the strategies and plans for their educational programmes. This applies for example to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO). Greater focus has been given to children with disabilities in the dialogue with UNICEF and GPE, and in its Strategic Plan 2012–15,



GPE has included disability factors as a separate performance indicator. Norway supports the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), which has published the *INEE Pocket Guide to Inclusive Education in Emergencies* and the *INEE Pocket Guide to Supporting Learners with Disabilities*. These are useful tools for organisations working on educational programmes in the field.

Norway supports NGOs working in the field of education in parts of the world where states are particularly poorly equipped to provide adequate access to education for children with disabilities, i.e. areas of war and conflict. In its dialogue with

the organisations receiving support from Norway, Norway encourages these organisations to make use of their networks to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and to be open-minded when choosing partners, as persons with disabilities and their respective interest organisations are a very heterogeneous group.

In countries such as Nepal, Burundi, Madagascar and Palestine, where Norway supports educational programmes in direct cooperation with the national authorities, the issue of access to education for children with disabilities is given priority in Norway's dialogue with the authorities. The embassies in these countries are encouraged to make use of the expertise of NGOs, such as the Atlas Alliance, which has particular expertise and a consistent focus on the rights of persons with disabilities, and Plan, which works to promote the rights and interests of all children, both with and without disabilities.

### **Norway will:**

- Strengthen efforts to ensure that children with disabilities are given priority in the work of the multilateral organisations. This issue will be raised in discussions on educational programmes' priorities and focus areas. Embassies are to include this issue in their bilateral dialogue on education with the authorities in the country concerned.
  - Promote and facilitate cooperation between the authorities and relevant NGOs so that the NGOs' special expertise and experience is exploited to the full.
  - Raise the issue of access to education for children with disabilities in its dialogue with NGOs working in the field of education, and require them to report on this issue.
  - Provide guidance, through Norad, to grant recipients as regards reporting on the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in the projects supported.
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## ■ Gender equality

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Gender equality is a key area in Norway's development efforts, and work to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities is important in this area too. Women with disabilities often experience double discrimination, and we know that women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to various forms of abuse and violence. In addition, women and girls with disabilities experience greater obstacles in terms of access to health services and education, and are particularly vulnerable in times of emergency or conflict.



In Norway's gender equality work it is therefore essential to work to protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities and to ensure that their rights are recognised and safeguarded. This applies particularly to the fields of education,

health and humanitarian relief. Through its development cooperation with UN organisations, the authorities in other countries and civil society actors, Norway seeks to raise awareness of the situation and rights of women with disabilities.

The UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health is consistent with Norway's efforts in the area of women's and children's health, and Norway's priorities in the time ahead will be guided by the strategy. There will be a particular focus on the most vulnerable individuals, including women and children with disabilities, who are often marginalised in global health efforts.

### **Norway will:**

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- Work to ensure that the situation of women and girls with disabilities is recognised as an integral part of gender equality work in development policy.
  - Work to ensure that some of the funding allocated to women's NGOs goes to organisations that work to protect and promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities.
  - In dialogue with relevant grant recipients, seek to raise awareness of and enhance reporting on efforts to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.
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## ■ Health

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The World Health Organization (WHO) is a key partner in Norway's health efforts, and a large part of the normative framework for health-related efforts targeting persons with disabilities is developed by the WHO. Norway is one of the largest donors of voluntary contributions to the WHO and maintains an ongoing dialogue with the WHO on its efforts to improve health care for persons with disabilities.

One of the WHO's 13 strategic objectives is "to prevent and reduce disease, disability and premature death from chronic non-communicable diseases, mental disorders, violence and injuries and visual impairment". A large part of this work takes place in developing countries. During the course of 2013, the World Health Assembly is expected to adopt an action plan to ensure better health care for persons with disabilities, as a follow-up to the *World report on disability* launched by the WHO and the World Bank in 2011. Norway will follow this up in cooperation with the WHO.

Ensuring access to health services is also an important topic in Norway's cooperation with UNICEF. Norway is the third largest donor to UNICEF and the organisation is a key partner for Norway in its efforts to achieve the MDGs. This applies in particular to MDG 2 and 3 (achieving universal primary education and promoting gender equality and empowering women) and MDGs 4 and 5 (reducing child mortality and improving maternal health). UNICEF works systematically to promote a rights-based approach and works in particular to mainstream the rights of children with disabilities in its programmes. In its dialogue with UNICEF, Norway will support efforts to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, as part of its general focus on human rights and vulnerable groups. UNICEF has established four task forces with the aim to mainstream disability rights in key child-focused agendas, namely in nutrition, education, humanitarian action and assistive technology. Norway will follow the work of these task forces closely.

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### **Norway will:**

- Ensure that the need to improve access to health services for persons with disabilities is raised in discussions with relevant multilateral actors.
- Work to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are addressed in global health efforts.
- In dialogue with relevant grant recipients and partner organisations, seek to raise awareness of and enhance reporting on efforts to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

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## ■ Humanitarian efforts

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Alongside its efforts to strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities – both directly and indirectly – in the fields of gender equality, health and education, Norway’s focus on persons with disabilities in its humanitarian disarmament efforts is also important. Article 11 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities sets out that the states parties are to take “all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters”.

Norway plays an active role in international efforts to implement the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions and thus plays a part in reducing the number of persons affected by landmines and cluster munitions. Under Article 6 of the Mine Ban Convention, states parties are obliged to “provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims”. Norway held the presidency of the Mine Ban Convention in 2010 and gave priority to ensuring that the states parties fulfilled their obligations under the Convention as regards mine clearance and assistance to victims. The Convention on Cluster Munitions sets out even stronger legal obligations, requiring all countries to provide adequate assistance to victims. Norway holds the presidency of the Convention for the period 2012–13 and in this capacity is seeking to promote discussions on assistance to victims in relevant human rights, health and social forums, to ensure that the needs of victims of mines, cluster munitions and other explosives are addressed in general efforts to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities. The principle of non-discrimination lies at the core of efforts to provide assistance to victims of landmines and cluster munitions and means that all persons are entitled to receive treatment based on their individual needs and irrespective of the cause of their disability.

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Norway provides funding for assistance to victims of armed violence, including victims of landmines and cluster munitions and others with similar needs, through its humanitarian aid budget. Norway supports the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) mine appeal and the ICRC Special Fund for the Disabled, which provides physical rehabilitation to victims of landmines and other persons with disabilities, and works to reduce the physical, social and economic consequences of mines and other explosives.

As well as participating actively in relevant international processes in this field, Norway has highlighted the need to safeguard the human rights of victims of armed violence as an important component of humanitarian action in two recent white papers: *Norwegian policy on the prevention of humanitarian crises* (Report No. 9 (2007–2008) to the Storting) and *Norway's humanitarian policy* (Report No. 40 (2008–2009) to the Storting). The principles of participation, non-discrimination and accountability lie at the heart of Norway's policy in this area.

### **Norway will:**

- Seek to raise awareness of the need for humanitarian work to include consideration of the rights of persons with disabilities.
  - Continue its international engagement to support the victims of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosives, and help to ensure that the issue of their rights is placed firmly on the agenda in relevant forums.
  - Work to ensure that preventing casualties from landmines and rehabilitating victims and other persons with disabilities are recognised to a greater extent as human rights issues.
  - In dialogue with relevant grant recipients and partner organisations, seek to raise awareness of and enhance reporting on efforts to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.
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## ■ International cooperation

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The white paper *Norway and the United Nations: Common Future, Common Solutions* (Meld. St. 33 (2011–2012)) emphasises that the protection and promotion of human rights is a cornerstone of Norway's multilateral efforts. It also emphasises the fact that, where relevant, Norway will seek to draw attention to the situation of persons with disabilities. Norway works to strengthen the normative basis for safeguarding the rights of persons with disabilities at various levels – national, bilateral and multilateral.

A significant proportion of Norwegian aid is channelled through Norad's grants to civil society organisations working to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and improve their living conditions. On the whole, this funding is channelled through the umbrella organisation the Atlas Alliance. Health and education are the main sectors that receive support, in addition to organisation building. The member organisations of the Atlas Alliance are active in Africa, Asia and Russia. Norad also supports other projects, for example those carried out under the auspices of Digni, Norwegian Church Aid, Plan Norge (Plan Norway), and Save the Children Norway. As part of its funding to human rights defenders in various parts of the world, Norway will increase its support to individuals and organisations campaigning for the human rights of persons with disabilities with a view to strengthening the capacity and ability of disability organisations to influence national authorities.

At the international level, Norway participates in processes that address the issue of the rights of persons with disabilities, and cooperates with like-minded partners on efforts to promote a rights-based approach. In the UN General Assembly in New York in autumn 2012, Norway played an active role in negotiations on a resolution (A/RES/67/140) on the rights and needs of persons with disabilities in development work. Norway will continue to follow this process in the run-up to the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on Disability and Development, which is due to take place in New York on 23 September 2013.

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In this connection, Norway will emphasise the importance of broad participation by civil society actors, including individuals and organisations that work to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities.

Norway's efforts are consistent with Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which highlights the importance of international cooperation in supporting national efforts to realise the purpose and objectives of the Convention. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process is a useful mechanism for following up the extent to which national authorities are fulfilling their international obligations in this area. In countries where particular attention has been directed towards improving the situation of persons with disabilities, and where the national authorities have accepted UPR recommendations concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, the UPR process is an effective tool for following up efforts at country level.

### **Norway will:**

- Work to strengthen the normative basis for safeguarding the rights of persons with disabilities, and seek to ensure that the human rights dimension is integrated into work on disability issues.
  - Contribute to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund established under the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD). The UNDRPD Fund coordinates efforts by a number of UN bodies to assist countries in implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
  - Help strengthen the capacity and ability of disability organisations to influence national authorities.
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- Maintain dialogue with and continue to provide support to the Atlas Alliance and other relevant civil society actors.
  - In our dialogue with relevant Norwegian NGOs, continue to work to ensure that the needs of all persons are addressed in development cooperation, including persons with disabilities.
  - Provide guidance, through Norad, to grant recipients as regards reporting on the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in the projects supported.
  - Take part in the High Level Meeting on Disability and Development and work to ensure that the outcome document clearly supports a rights-based approach.
  - Work to ensure that embassies and relevant parts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs use the UPR process to draw attention to violations of the rights of persons with disabilities.
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## ■ Knowledge and research

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Ensuring the use of standardised data and statistics is an international aim, and is essential for improving understanding of the challenges involved in including persons with disabilities in development work. In this connection, it will be important to assess which sectors need to increase reporting on the inclusion of persons with disabilities and which forms of development cooperation could benefit from the introduction of specific guidelines in this area.

### Norway will:

- Engage in dialogue with strategic partners in the humanitarian field on establishing a systematic approach to the planning, documentation and reporting of efforts targeting persons with disabilities in different types of projects.
  - Support research projects designed to enhance knowledge of the situation of persons with disabilities, which in turn can improve programmes and results.
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## ■ Knowledge of disability

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One of the obstacles to increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in society is the lack of understanding and inadequate knowledge of disability as a human rights and poverty issue, including in aid administrations.

### **Norway will:**

- Seek to increase knowledge of disability issues in its own public administration.
  - Promote capacity building, for example by sharing information and experience, and developing training programmes and recommended practices with national, regional and global actors.
  - Draw up guidelines for rights-based development cooperation, with information about how to use development cooperation to promote the rights of persons with disabilities.
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