



Photo: NRC / Christian Jepsen, South Sudan.

NRC as a courageous advocate for the rights of displaced people

Strategy for Global Advocacy 2015-2017

NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL



Established in 1946, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is a rights-based organisation whose work is guided by a commitment to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality. In 2014, NRC responded to displacement crises in 26 countries and deployed more than 500 experts to over 50 countries.

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Norwegian Refugee Council works to protect the rights of displaced and vulnerable persons during crises. Through our programmes we provide assistance to meet immediate humanitarian needs, prevent further displacement and contribute to durable solutions. Through our standby rosters we provide expertise as a strategic partner to the UN, as well as to national and international actors. Through our advocacy we strive for rights to be upheld and for lasting solutions to be achieved.

Goal and priorities: All NRC advocacy efforts aim to fulfil the NRC vision of *Rights Respected, People Protected*. Our aim is to influence policies and practices that strengthen displaced and vulnerable people's access to protection and assistance. Realising that we will need to focus our efforts, we will continue to develop our expertise in advocating for the following priorities during the strategic period 2015-2017*:

- 1 Protection:** Displaced and vulnerable people's safety and dignity is significantly improved
- 2 Response:** The humanitarian system is increasingly accountable to the displaced and vulnerable
- 3 Rights:** Displaced and vulnerable people can access education in emergencies and rights to housing, land and property are respected.

* The following criteria have been deemed particularly important when selecting priorities for 2015-2017: 1) There is a potential for positive change for affected displaced, 2) NRC has a comparative advantage/added value to influence, 3) the advocacy theme is based on our operational experience, programmatic work and expert deployment experience, 4) the theme reflects the NRC mission, policies and previous commitments, and 5) the theme reflects an area in need of a significant humanitarian response from organisations such as NRC.



Displacement: Through all phases of a crisis, NRC will advocate for the rights of displaced and vulnerable people. The search for a life in safety here illustrated by Syrians crossing into Iraq to seek refuge.

Photo: NRC/Christian Jepsen

APPROACH:

NRC focuses advocacy efforts on improving the lives of those who are most vulnerable during crises. We advocate through direct consultations or by speaking out publicly. We must strive to denounce violations and speak out when that is the best way to help the displaced and vulnerable, without risking their safety or that of our staff.

INFLUENCING THROUGH ADVOCACY:

NRC advocacy priorities and messages reflect our operational experience from programme work and deployments. At the local and national level, NRC advocates primarily through our country and regional offices. When issues require urgent attention beyond the national level, they will be addressed at global level. Through global advocacy, NRC strives to influence decision-makers and systems beyond the national level. NRC global advocacy work is spearheaded by our headquarters in Oslo and representation offices in Addis Ababa, Brussels, Dubai and Geneva. In addition to operational experience, the NRC Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre contributes with solid information and analysis on internal displacement. The global priorities reflected in this strategy may also be followed up nationally or regionally to maximise our efforts towards a particular goal.

TARGET GROUPS:

The primary targets for each priority and objective will be detailed in specific work plans. Governments are engaged directly and through secondary avenues. International organisations, such as the United Nations and its various agencies and bodies, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and regional bodies such as the African Union and the European Union are important direct target groups. NRC donors, in particular Norway, the European Union, the UK, Sweden and the US, are crucial as both partners and targets groups.

PRIORITY 1:

Protection: Displaced and vulnerable people's safety and dignity is significantly improved

Objective 1.1: NRC will advocate for states and non-state armed actors to uphold their responsibilities under international law to ensure the safety and dignity of the displaced and vulnerable in areas under their control.

NRC key messages:

- All warring parties must uphold their responsibilities to ensure that civilians are respected and protected.
- All states must adhere to international laws and standards, in particular international humanitarian law, fundamental human rights laws and the refugee conventions, including the right to seek asylum and the responsibilities of states to help with return, resettlement and local integration as appropriate durable solutions to displacement.
- States and non-state armed actors in control of an area must provide opportunities for civilians to move freely and to be able to access assistance, and must allow humanitarian actors to provide such help.

Objective 1.2: NRC will seek to influence relevant global and regional policies and practices to adequately reflect displacement-related concerns in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change. We will also advocate for the protection needs of people at risk of becoming displaced or who are already displaced by disasters and the effects of climate change.

NRC key messages:

- In order to reduce and mitigate displacement risks, global and regional climate and disaster conventions and frameworks should include prevention and preparedness and secure durable solutions for the displaced.
- States and other duty bearers need to protect and assist people displaced or at risk of displacement by disasters and the effects of climate change. Assisting such people is not only a humanitarian imperative; it is an essential component of disaster risk management, climate change adaptation and development planning.
- National and regional authorities and the UN should provide more accessible and user-friendly disaster risk and climate information as part of systems for early warning and action (including evacuations), and disaster and displacement risk reduction.

PRIORITY 2:

Response: The humanitarian system is increasingly accountable to the displaced and vulnerable

Objective 2.1: NRC will advocate for relevant parties to respect the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and to ensure the protection of displaced and vulnerable persons and their access to assistance.

NRC key messages:

- States and non-state armed actors need to ensure the ability of humanitarian actors to deliver assistance and protection to civilians living in the most vulnerable situations.
- To ensure that they are reaching those most in need of assistance and protection, humanitarian responders must be able to assist without regard to political conditions or donor requirements that limit their neutrality.
- Humanitarian organisations are accountable to affected populations and need to ensure they assist the most vulnerable and those hardest to reach in accessing the services and protection they need.

Objective 2.2: NRC will advocate for a strengthened focus in the humanitarian response on improving the safety and dignity of displaced and vulnerable persons, including through global and regional mechanisms, processes and protocols.

NRC key message:

- The humanitarian system needs to ensure that all new humanitarian structures and protocols are designed to improve the ability of displaced people to live in safety and dignity.
- Assessing threats and vulnerabilities that create risks for civilian populations should be the foundation of any humanitarian response strategy.
- Humanitarian actors must design their response to reflect needs prioritised by affected populations and reinforce their own protection strategies. Supporting self-protection reduces dependency on external actors and can prevent further crises by increasing the resilience of communities.
- The humanitarian community must strengthen preventive and risk-reducing aspects of all responses.

PRIORITY 3:

Rights: Displaced and vulnerable people have access to education in emergencies and rights to housing, land and property are respected.

Through all phases of a crisis, the rights of displaced and vulnerable people are at risk of being violated. Realising that NRC cannot address all rights violations; we will focus particularly on the right of children and youth to education during emergencies and on housing, land and property rights for displaced people.

Objective 3.1: NRC will advocate for donors and humanitarian actors to recognise education in key global policies and practices as a crucial component of emergency response and to ensure that it is funded accordingly.

NRC key messages:

- Education should be acknowledged as an essential component of humanitarian assistance, from the acute phase through to recovery.
- Donors should include education as part of their humanitarian strategies and allocate at least 4% of funding for education in emergencies.

Objective 3.2: NRC will advocate for the reinforcement and application of policies that ensure learning centres are free from military attacks, violence, armed use and sexual exploitation and abuse.

NRC key messages:

- States and non-state armed actors must observe international humanitarian standards to protect education spaces from attack, military use and occupation.
- Students must be able to access education without fear of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- States and non-state armed actors must endorse the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. States must implement the guidelines in their own legislation or military doctrine.

Objective 3.3: NRC will advocate for displaced peoples' housing, land and property rights, with a particular focus on displaced women, and on strengthening secure tenure arrangements in shelter assistance.

NRC key messages:

- Displaced people's housing, land and property rights should be upheld so that they are protected against forced eviction and secondary displacement.
- While this is primarily the responsibility of governments, housing, land and property rights are an essential aspect of shelter programming and in the overall humanitarian response.
- Governments and the humanitarian community should address the specific challenges faced by displaced people, especially women, in claiming their housing, land and property rights, including removing barriers to attaining civil documentation when this is a basis for secure tenure.



Education: NRC will advocate for donors and humanitarian actors to recognize education as a crucial component of emergency response. The wish for education here illustrated by young girls at a school in Kabul.

Photo: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun

Particular considerations on implementation: NRC integrates a gender, age and diversity perspective in all our work. This should be reflected in NRC research, position papers, briefs, talking points and messages.

Representation of displaced people: NRC advocates for needs identified by displaced people themselves. NRC will therefore seek the participation of displaced people while undertaking the activities envisioned in the strategy.

Timeframes and resources: NRC will adopt an incremental approach to implementing this strategy, building on our ongoing advocacy experiences and activities. Activities to implement the objectives of this strategy will be detailed in separate work plans. Implementing advocacy activities requires dedicated funding and human resources. To this end, NRC will strive to secure advocacy funding throughout the strategy period. We will also strengthen our analysis of external environment and displacement contexts to maintain our role as a reliable and courageous advocate. Proposed changes to priorities after a rapid review in 2016 will be assessed in light of available funding and other resources.

Monitoring and evaluation: A monitoring and evaluation framework will underpin the Strategy for Global Advocacy to ensure that we assess progress towards NRC advocacy goals, make necessary adjustments as contexts evolve and identify opportunities for learning. The framework will include indicators, tools and sources of information to be collected and monitored at the objectives level and will incorporate after-action reviews at key milestones and other outcome tracking as appropriate.



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