

Norway's efforts in the Sahel region, 2018–2019

Status report



Cover photo from the Sahel strategy of 2018. Photo: Johannes Zielcke, Flickr.

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Follow-up of the Sahel strategy

The [strategy](#) for Norway's efforts in the Sahel region (2018–2020) was published in September 2018 and is currently available in Norwegian, English and French. The strategy has provided a framework for strengthening Norwegian efforts during this period.

The strategy defines three primary objectives for Norwegian efforts in the Sahel region:¹

1. to promote conflict prevention and conflict resolution;
2. to promote political stabilisation and enhance security;
3. to build resilience and lay the foundation for inclusive economic, social and political development, with a view to improving living conditions and reducing the need for humanitarian aid.

The key premise underlying the strategy is that an integrated approach is needed to deal with the complex challenges in the region and to achieve stability and development in keeping with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This will require well-coordinated efforts extending across a number of areas ranging from political dialogue, work on peace and reconciliation and measures within the security sector, to humanitarian efforts, human rights work and development aid.

There are no easy solutions or short-term fixes to these challenges. Development in the Sahel region continues to move in a negative direction despite an increase in international engagement in security and stabilisation, development cooperation and humanitarian efforts. The strategy provides a platform for long-term, integrated Norwegian involvement. Norway's activities are part of a broader international effort to promote progress in the Sahel region in which cooperation between the states and civil societies of the region, G5 Sahel cooperation,² African regional organisations, the UN, the World Bank, the EU and other countries will be essential.

¹ The Sahel strategy defines 'the Sahel' as the countries 'that lie between the Sahara and the savannah to the south: Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Chad, and Burkina Faso, and to parts of northeastern Nigeria.'

² The G5 Sahel is a regional structure for cooperation on security and development between Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad.

Norway's efforts also build on close cooperation with Norwegian NGOs and centres of expertise with extensive experience in the Sahel. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs greatly appreciates the close contact with Norwegian civil society via regular meetings in the informal 'Sahel forum' and other contact channels.

In recent years, Norwegian efforts have increased along several tracks:

- Our political and diplomatic dialogue with the Sahel countries and with international partners about the Sahel has expanded significantly.
- The establishment of the Norwegian Embassy in Bamako, Mali, in autumn 2017 has provided us with better situational awareness and a far greater ability to promote Norwegian priorities in dialogue with the authorities and other key actors.
- In 2018 the Government named Mali and Niger as two of Norway's 16 partner countries in development policy, and a large proportion of the bilateral efforts are concentrated in these countries.
- Financial support for sustainable development and humanitarian efforts in the Sahel region has greatly increased and totalled roughly NOK one billion (approximately USD 100 million) in 2018 and 2019. A significant proportion of Norway's contribution to the region is channelled through multilateral organisations such as the UN (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, UN Women and UNHCR) and the World Bank.
- Humanitarian efforts in the Sahel have increased in the wake of the dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation.
- Norway contributes uniformed personnel and civilian aid to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We also support various capacity-building measures for the justice and security sector in the relevant countries.
- We cooperate closely with the UN and other multilateral organisations to ensure better-coordinated, more effective efforts at country level.
- Norwegian organisations are playing a key role in the efforts, not least at a grassroots level and in sectors such as education, food security and climate.
- Sahel-related work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is headed by a special representative who also represents Norway in various international forums. The Sahel team assists in coordinating activities between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries.

According to the Sahel strategy, efforts are to be reviewed after a three-year period in order to assess the extent to which the chosen direction contributes to the achievement of Norway's objectives and whether any adjustment is needed. The purpose of this status report is to give a general impression of developments in the Sahel and the overall Norwegian effort. This status report discusses elements of the Norwegian support and highlights the scope of activities and most important topics and partners.

We hope this status report will be a useful resource in the public debate and in further cooperation with civil society on the development in this region. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will regularly assess the need to adjust efforts in the Sahel based on experience gained and in consultation with its partners.

Sahel team, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 April 2020



Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Sørensen met with the parties to the Mali peace agreement during the Oslo Forum at Losby Manor, 18 June 2019. Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

About this status report

This status report for the period 2018–2019 offers insight into how Norway is following up the Sahel strategy via various channels, without going into detail about every aspect of the activities or providing specifics about overall achievement of objectives. The purpose of the report is to give the reader insight into the main approach of Sahel-related efforts and the key priority areas. Details on the results of Norway's development aid to the Sahel are provided via the reporting processes for individual projects and programmes and in the annual budget proposal (Prop.1 S).

This status report is also an initial contribution to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' own review of the Sahel strategy for 2018–2020. A more comprehensive review of the objectives achieved is planned to be carried out at the end of the strategy period.

This status report has not been structured to correspond to the Sahel strategy's three primary objectives. Instead, we seek to give a general impression of how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has approached challenges in the region through efforts to promote enhanced security, closer political dialogue, expanded Norwegian development efforts, humanitarian aid and Norwegian contributions to peace and reconciliation.

As part of the follow-up of the Sahel strategy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has developed an internal tool that provides a consolidated overview of activities and makes it possible to adjust the course as needed. This status report is based on information from the internal activity overview and other sources of information such as the PTA³ administrative tool (a system for financial administration and follow-up of grant agreements), reports from relevant embassies and other information shared across sections and departments.

³ The statistical information compiled in the centralised *Plan Tilskudd Avtale* (PTA) grant management system is reported to the OECD/DAC as Norway's official figures for development cooperation.