



Annual Report 2015 from the Board

MAY 2016

Cover photo: *Twins, Sara and Fatima (5) have fled from Afghanistan together with their family and reached Chios in Greece. The twins are both ill - and the family hope they will be able to get treatment in Europe.*
Photo: NRC/Tiril Skarstein

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Global crisis – global response

In 2015, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) continued to be one of the main responders to the humanitarian crisis in the Syria region, while at the same time maintaining or increasing our activities in countries such as Yemen, South Sudan, DR Congo, and Afghanistan.

The global displacement crisis escalated further, with more than 60 million people forced to abandon their homes because of war and conflict. In addition, millions of people were displaced by natural disasters.

A year of desperation

The war in Syria was the largest, single driver of displacement. Millions of Syrians became increasingly desperate as the civil war continued unabated. After four years of conflict, many of the Syrian refugees exhausted all their savings at the same time as lack of international funding forced the United Nations (UN) to cut back on food rations and other forms of support. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Syrians saw no other option than to embark on a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean in search of better lives. More than one million migrants and refugees arrived in Europe in 2015. This raised the profile of the global displacement crisis, but also brought to light difficulties, contradictions and challenges on how the international community perceived and responded to the global crisis.

In addition to Syria, the UN defined three other conflicts areas, Iraq, South Sudan, and Yemen as countries suffering a “most severe, large-scale humanitarian crisis”. NRC was operational in all these countries.

NRC further provided assistance in protracted displacement crises, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Palestine. Over the last two decades, finding viable political solutions to armed conflict has failed in many places, leaving millions of people unable to build sustainable futures for themselves.

NRC response

Almost 5.4 million individuals across 31 countries received help from NRC during the year. Through NRC's expert rosters, almost 800 expert deployments were provided to 70 countries. Key responses were the Ebola crisis, the Middle East, the Nepal earthquakes, and the European refugee crisis, the latter with a focus on Greece and the Balkans.

NRC's policy and advocacy work focused on upholding the rights of displaced people and improving living conditions for refugees and internally displaced people. An important part of NRC's broader response to the Syria crisis was to promote humanitarian access and improved living conditions for displaced Syrians. In Europe, NRC advocated for search and rescue capabilities in the Mediterranean, adequate reception conditions in Europe, and for asylum and return procedures to follow international refugee law and not undermine the Refugee Convention.

Other important issues were concerns related to displaced people's right to protection and assistance being undermined by counter-terrorism measures, ensuring rights and protection for people displaced by natural disasters, and education in emergencies.

Organisational development

Internally, staff care was raised as a key priority in 2015. This will remain especially important as NRC continues to experience sustained growth in the size and complexity of our operations and seeks to assist displaced people in increasingly volatile and challenging locations.

NRC's mandate and organisational set-up

NRC is Norway's largest international humanitarian organisation and is widely recognised as a leading field-based displacement agency within the international humanitarian community.

NRC promotes and protects the rights of refugees and people who have been displaced within their own country. We take action during situations of armed conflict, and engage in other contexts where our competences will add value.

NRC's main activity is the delivery of humanitarian aid through programme activities in the field. NRC specialises in six programme areas, or core competences – Shelter, Food Security, Information, Counselling and Legal Aid (ICLA), Education, Camp Management and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). The core competences are adaptive to different contexts and are mutually reinforcing.

In addition to programme activities, NRC contributes to the overall coordination and strengthening of humanitarian response through our stand-by rosters. The Norwegian Refugee Council's Expert Capacity (NORCAP) provides expert personnel to national stakeholders, and international and regional organisations to enhance their ability to prevent, prepare for, manage and recover from crises. The UN is the main recipient of experts from NORCAP.

NRC also advocates on local, national, regional and global levels for the rights of displaced and vulnerable people. Our advocacy is based on first-hand experience from the field. In order to understand and respond better to displacement, NRC conducts research into both global displacement and specific displacement contexts. NRC's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is a global leader in monitoring, reporting and advocating specifically on internal displacement.

NRC's country programmes are managed and coordinated by four regional offices. The regional office for the Middle East is based in Amman and the Horn of Africa region in Nairobi. Both the Asia/Europe region and the Central and West Africa/South America region are based in Oslo. In addition, NRC has representational offices in Brussels, Geneva, Dubai and Addis Ababa (liaison to the African Union). These representation offices have been established to ensure close and ongoing dialogue with decision makers and partners around the world.

NRC's head office is located in Oslo, and the organisation participates actively in Norwegian civil society, engaging in a broad range of information and advocacy efforts on displacement issues in Norway, targeting decision makers, civil society and the public at large.

Programme activities

In 2015, NRC reached almost 5.4 million individual beneficiaries, which is a substantial increase from 2014.

NRC was operational in 31 countries in 2015: In Asia Afghanistan, Iran, Myanmar and Pakistan; in the Middle East Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen; in Africa Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda; in South America Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Honduras and Panama. In Europe, NRC worked in Ukraine and established a flexible response programme to assist refugees arriving in Europe. The programme was designed to be able to provide assistance where the needs were greatest. In 2015, this programme operated in Greece and Serbia.

After 12 years, NRC closed down its activities in Liberia. The Liberia programme was established in 2003 to help people displaced by the civil war to return home or resettle. In addition, NRC has provided assistance to refugees from Cote d'Ivoire who arrived in Liberia in 2010 and in 2014 and 2015 we contributed to relief efforts during the Ebola crisis.

New operations include Nigeria, where NRC responded to internal displacement caused by Boko Haram, and the flexible response programme set up in Europe. NRC also strengthened its Syria response by streamlining all activities within Syria into one operation, including all cross-border activities from neighbouring countries and from Damascus.

NRC continued to focus on reaching the most vulnerable among our target populations. In existing country operations, more than 20 new population groups received assistance in 2015.

None the less, in many places, war and conflict restrict access to people in need. Syria, Yemen and South Sudan were the most difficult countries to access communities in need.

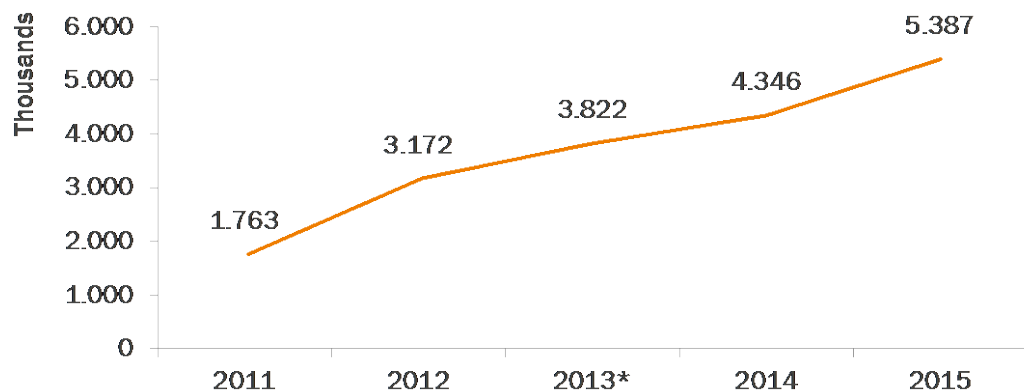
One million in school

In 2014, NRC decided to significantly scale up its education activities with the goal of reaching one million children annually by 2017. In 2015, 525,000 children received education support, exceeding the target set for 2015.

NRC has supported the work of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) concerning the Safe Schools Declaration, on education financing and on the development of the Norwegian Government's plan of action on education in conflict. To focus our education response, NRC has chosen four strategic response areas in which the organisation has long-term expertise and where there are possibilities to scale-up. These are: education in acute emergencies; continuity of education in displacement; youth education and empowerment; and safe and inclusive learning environments. Work on targeting the broader needs of youth has been led by both the Horn of Africa and the Middle East offices with groundbreaking work over the last year of funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation's (Sida) Child and Youth Framework. Approaches have both focused on accessing new academic pathways for youth and in developing capacity for stronger labour market analysis in the development of livelihood opportunities for youth.

Despite an international commitment to increase the support towards education in crisis, it has been difficult to mobilise institutional donors to increase funding for education. This has, and continues to make it difficult to move the "1 million initiative" forward as planned.

Number of direct beneficiaries 2011-2015



(* Numbers from 2013 are corrected for double counting)

Expert deployment

In 2015, NRC's expert rosters provided experts for 799 missions to 70 countries. In total, our experts carried out more than 2,650 person-months of work.

While the situation in Syria continued to attract much attention and funding, NRC's expert rosters carried on the support to protracted crises in the Central African Republic, The Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. The Ebola response continued to be a priority, even as other actors pulled out. In addition, we provided substantial support to enhancing protection and assistance to refugees arriving in Europe, and to the humanitarian response following the Nepal earthquakes.

Nepal earthquakes

The April and May earthquakes in Nepal led to one of the biggest responses for NORCAP in 2015. Thirty-eight experts contributed to the emergency response, contingency planning and capacity building in areas including camp coordination and site planning, needs assessment, education, logistics, protection, gender and food security.

The Camp Coordination Camp Management deployees played a particularly important role in the response. Six NORCAP roster members deployed immediately after the earthquake. NORCAP architects were also critical in planning and building the first rehabilitation centre in Nepal, where people with physical injuries and disabilities received professional, medical help and treatment.

The high refugee influx in Europe

Thirty-five experts supported the European refugee response on various Greek islands, but also deployed to countries such as Serbia, Hungary, Macedonia, Italy and Morocco.

NORCAP deployees have contributed to setting up systems for refugee and migrant registration, identified particularly vulnerable cases and made sure these received appropriate assistance, established systems of reception and initiated better coordination of humanitarian actors, local authorities and Greek and international volunteers. The deployees provided capacity training of local authorities and volunteers.

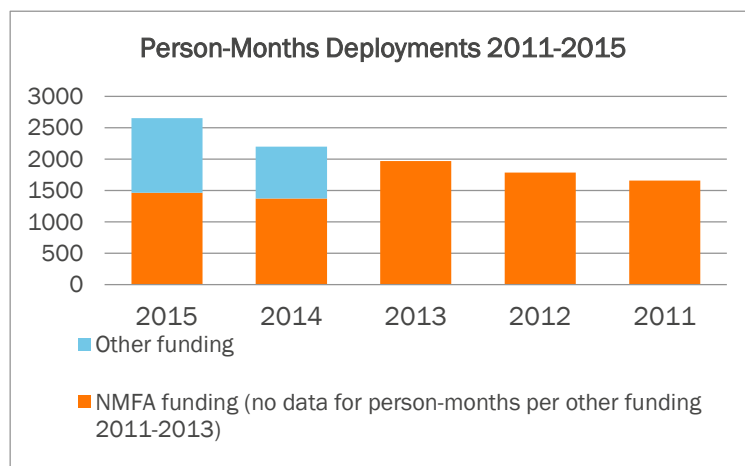
The sudden onset of international volunteers arriving in Greece to help refugees added a new dimension to the coordination of humanitarian response. While inexperienced in terms of humanitarian work and principles, volunteers were able to operate and offer relief at times when the established humanitarian community was struggling to get activities approved by the Greek authorities.

Key areas of development

NRC strengthened its work on climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR). The climate services initiative was established and recruitment of hydrologists, meteorologists and DRR specialists resulted in seven deployments. Several new partnerships were established, among others with the United Kingdom (UK) Meteorological Office, the University of Reading, and the Centre for International Climate and Environmental Research (CICERO) in Oslo.

In 2015, NRC was key actor in establishing the interagency Cash and Markets Capacity Building Roster (CashCap). The roster will provide senior cash and market programming experts to facilitate and strengthen capacity, and focus on cash transfers in humanitarian emergencies. A mentoring and on-the-job training scheme will build more expertise in the area.

In addition, 2015 saw the establishment of the Humanitarian Communication roster set up in collaboration with the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network. Its aim is to improve capacities to meet the information and communication needs of people affected by crisis, and increase accountability in humanitarian response. A Communicating with Communities (CwC) team deployment to The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Greece since October worked to improve communication with both refugees and host communities.



Information and advocacy

Much of NRC's advocacy work focuses on improving protection and assistance to displaced populations in our countries of operation. We also engage in advocacy on a wide number of global issues. In 2015, NRC increased its public advocacy outreach, and was regularly asked to comment on displacement issues, both in Norway and internationally.

Overarching themes

Several important trends within humanitarian policy received increased attention and influenced NRC's advocacy work in 2015.

Governments increasingly saw humanitarian aid as a useful tool to counter terrorism and violent extremism. This resulted in a continued threat to humanitarian space and a greater need to advocate for the humanitarian principle of impartiality to be respected. The International Committee of the Red Cross and NRC worked together to initiate discussion around these issues with key government stakeholders around the world.

In many of the displacement contexts NRC operated in, refugees were increasingly portrayed as a potential threat and not as individuals with the right to seek protection. NRC's clear stance on the side of displaced and their need to be able to seek refuge was a response to this.

Syria displacement crisis

Advocacy focusing on increased humanitarian access, living conditions, and protection issues related to the Syria crisis remained a top priority. The report *"Failing Syria"*, which NRC published together with 20 other non-governmental organisations in March 2015, highlighted how the international community had failed to improve access and protection for Syrian refugees.

As the situation for Syrian refugees and internally displaced became increasingly desperate, NRC strongly advocated for the international community to step up humanitarian funding and support for Syria's neighbouring countries.

Influx to Europe

As the Syria crisis started to increase refugee flows into Europe, the humanitarian situation for Syrian refugees was brought to the forefront of the political and public agenda. In addition to advocating for increased funding to cover humanitarian needs, NRC argued that Europe should increase its resettlement quotas and agree to share responsibility for receiving and integrating Syrian refugees.

In addition to public advocacy through media comments and debates, NRC had an on-going and constructive dialogue across the Norwegian political landscape and with government bodies and the wider NGO community particularly in Norway and Brussels. In Norway, NRC coordinated 11 civil society organisations that ensured a parliamentary agreement to increase the resettlement quotas in Norway for Syrians to 8,000 over three years. In Norway and Brussels, NRC was a vocal advocate for the continuation of search and rescue operations to save refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

Education

NRC continued to lobby on the need for greater education opportunities for children and youth displaced by crisis. Among other initiatives, NRC contributed to new donor and government commitments to give all Syrian refugee children access to primary education (formal or non-formal) by the end of the coming school year. In Colombia, the Ministry of Education agreed to work with NRC to produce internal protocols to promote safe schools, while in Mali and Burkina Faso the Ministry of Education accepted NRC's new Accelerated Learning Programme curriculum.

NRC's global advocacy on education has focused on two main issues - namely the need for increased funding for education in crisis, and the protection of learning spaces.

NRC worked to generate support for the Oslo Safe Schools Declaration, through which states can express political support and commitments for the protection of education in armed conflict. By the end of 2015, 51 Member States had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration

Disaster displacement

NRC, NORCAP and IDMC's advocacy efforts contributed substantially to the inclusion of disaster displacement within key global policies such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the groundbreaking Paris Climate Agreement. NRC also supported the Nansen Initiative, established to build consensus among states about how best to address cross-border displacement in the context of sudden- and slow-onset disasters.

Finance and revenue base

In 2015, NRC's gross income was NOK 2.8 billion, a 15 per cent increase from 2014. The increase was primarily linked to the organisation's dedicated and diversified support to the victims of the Syria crisis. Ninety eight per cent of overall costs were used to fulfil NRC's mandate. Since the 2008 financial year, NRC has used the temporary accounting standard for NGOs.

The annual result showed a positive result of NOK 18 million. In 2015, the equity with external restrictions was reduced by NOK 28 million to NOK 46 million, whereas equity with internal restrictions was strengthened by NOK 28 million and other equity was strengthened by NOK 18 million. By the end of the year, current assets amounted to NOK 1.152 billion, against a short-term debt of NOK 765 million, a ratio of 1,5, which is satisfactory. The organisation has no long-term debt and although there are large variations during a year, liquidity is good. Surplus liquidity is invested in money market and bond funds, not in the stock market.

A significant part of NRC's income and costs are in foreign currencies and the organisation's activities are therefore vulnerable to fluctuations in exchange rates. However, the large decline in the value of the NOK and other currencies against the United States Dollar (USD) had limited negative effects.

The risk is partly mitigated by the large variety of currencies involved and also the donors carry most of the currency risk. Additionally NRC is using forward contracts to reduce risk. As the organisation has no interest-bearing debt, increases in interest rates will improve results.

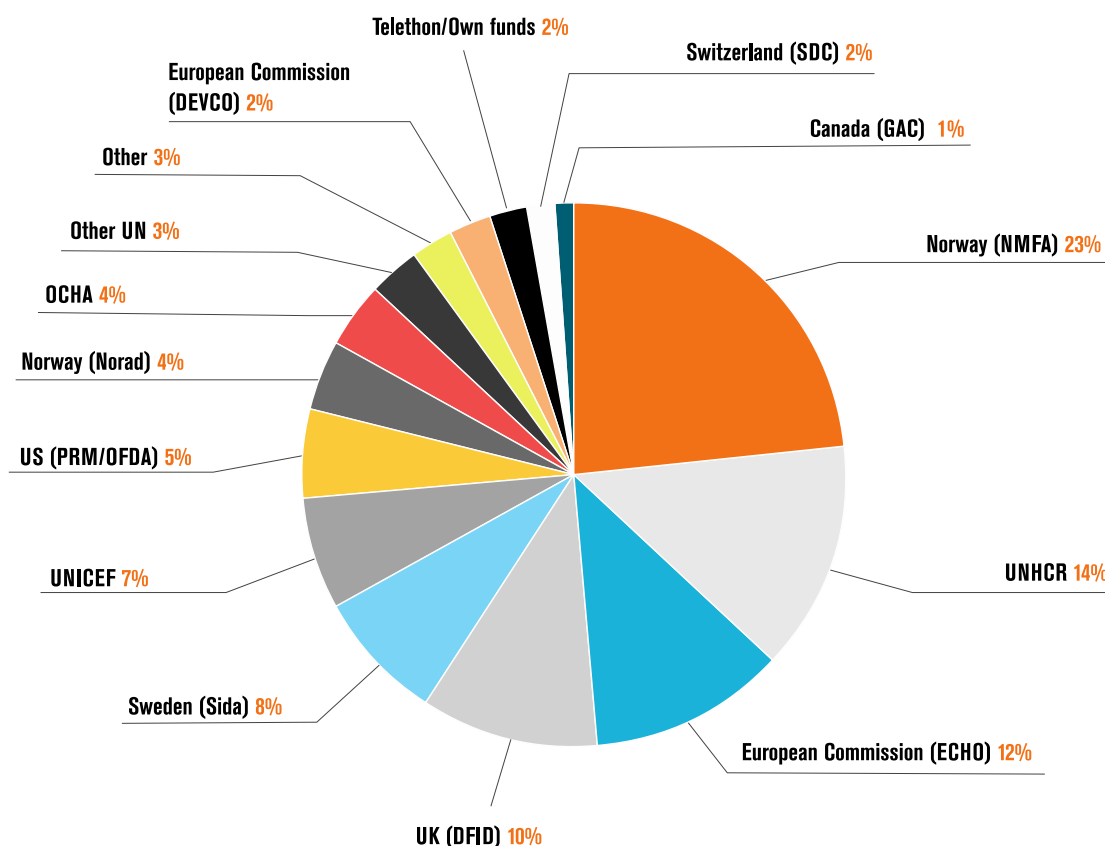
Further strengthening strategic partnerships

NRC has a robust and broad donor base. This is a strategic priority as it provides the organisation with a higher level of financial security and predictability. On the downside, compliance with the different donor requirements leads to higher costs, and NRC is therefore actively advocating for harmonisation between donors.

The NMFA remained the largest single contributor, and is an important strategic partner for NRC in most programme countries as well as for deployments. NRC places great emphasis on the further development of this positive collaboration.

Over the last years, NRC has considerably strengthened relations with a number of non-Norwegian donors, and in 2015, more than 70 per cent of the organisation's income came from other donors. The largest foreign contributors were UNHCR, the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection - European Commission (ECHO), and the UK and Swedish governments. Compared to 2014, the largest nominal increase in funding (in NOK) was from the United States government, NMFA, UNICEF and Sida.

NRC donor income 2015



“Other UN” includes WFP, UNDP and Other UN agencies. “Other” includes Australia (DFAT) and Denmark (Danida), as well as other smaller donors.

Over recent years, NRC’s financial position has also improved as a result of an increase in support from private donors. This is essential for NRC to maintain the ability to respond quickly and efficiently to the humanitarian needs of refugees and internally displaced people around the world.

In 2015, income from individual donors reached NOK 89 million, up 82 per cent. In addition the increase from corporate partners was three times as high as in 2014. Increase in support from the private sector is linked to the Syria crisis and the influx into Europe, but systematic focus on regular donor acquisition and building corporate relations resulted in both of these approaches being reinforced by the emergency campaign.

The income from the 2010 Telethon was and will also, in 2016 and 2017, continue to be of significant importance for NRC’s level of activity and financial situation. The funds are invested in accordance with NRC’s and the Telethon secretariat’s instructions.

Another important reason for the positive 2015 result is that NRC implemented a very significant increase in activity levels without an equivalent increase in administrative costs.

The accounts are prepared on the assumption of continued operations, and the Board confirms that this assumption is correct. The organisation's operations do not result in any significant environmental pollution.

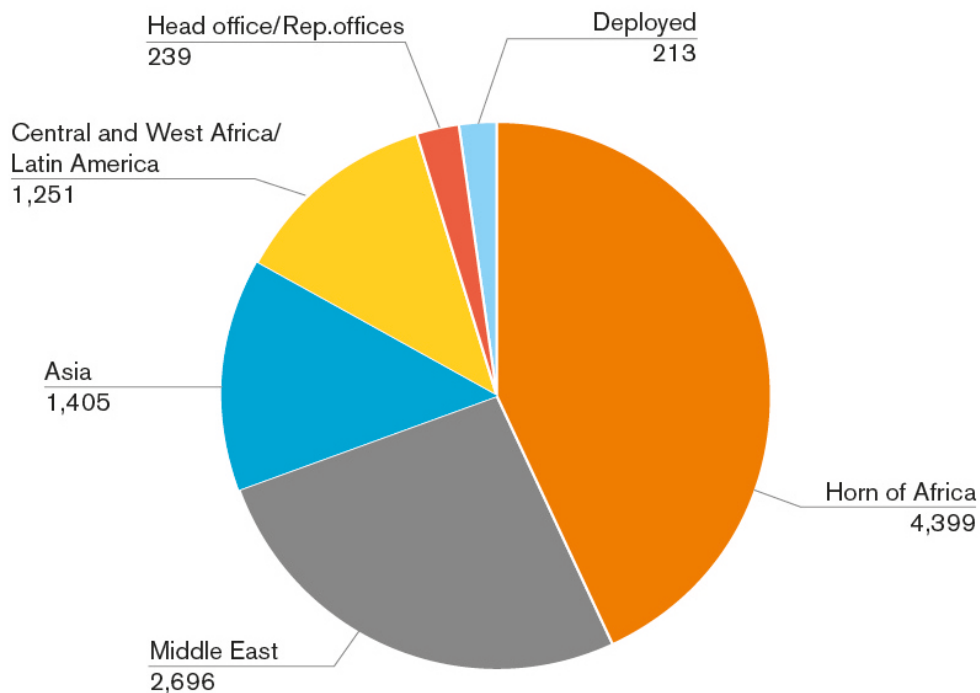
Human resources and duty of care

NRC's Human Resources (HR) policy is to ensure equal opportunities and rights, and prevent discrimination based on ethnic origin, nationality, language, gender, religion or beliefs.

At the end of 2015, NRC employed a total of 4,648 staff, 3,877 were national staff, 319 were international employees working at the country level and 239 people worked at Head Office in Oslo and in NRC's representation offices. By the end of 2015, 213 experts were deployed by NRC's standby rosters.

In addition, approximately 5,572 incentive/daily workers were engaged in specific projects, typically displaced people or members of the local community engaged in large projects in camps. This brings the total number of people working in NRC programmes, at the end of 2015, to more than 10,000.

Total share of employees, including incentive/daily workers, per office/area as of 31 December 2015



Nationality, gender distribution and immigrant background

The 306 employees on international contracts represented 56 different nationalities. The two largest groups were employees from Kenya and the UK, followed by nationals from France, Norway, the United States, Canada and Italy. Thirty three per cent of employees at Head Office had an immigrant background, defined as having immigrated to Norway or having parents who were both born outside of Norway.

Distribution of gender at Head Office was at 60 per cent women and 40 per cent men at the end of 2015. At Country, regional and representation office director levels, there were 33 per cent women and 67 per cent men, while management at Head Office comprised of 48 per cent women and 52 per cent men. Among international staff gender distribution was 60 per cent men, 40 per cent female, while men made up 71 per cent and women 29 per cent among national staff. Gender distribution in Head Office senior management and the Board was at 50-50.

Among staff in advisory roles and line managers, men and women at Head Office were at approximately even salary levels

Duty of care

NRC actively works to maintain a good working environment in all offices.

At Head Office, management worked closely with the Working Environment Committee (AMU). Meetings were held regularly throughout the year, in which the status of the working environment and specific improvement measures were discussed.

NRC mainly operates in conflict areas and has larger operations in more complex environments than ever before. Ensuring security for staff and beneficiaries is therefore a priority concern.

In 2015, NRC further strengthened our security risk management system to ensure that the organisation and our field teams continue to have the skills and resilience required to access, stay, and deliver effective assistance without taking unnecessary risks.

In total, NRC recorded 302 incidents linked to our field operations in 2015. There were 36 instances of injury to person, mainly related to traffic accidents and physical assault during robberies. One severe incident was recorded, when a staff member was abducted for ransom and later released.

Sick leave

In 2015, the sick leave rate at Head Office was 3.97 per cent, compared to 2.21 per cent in 2014, 3.27 in 2013, 4.83 per cent in 2012 and 4.3 per cent in 2011. Opportunities and commitments within the Norwegian IA agreement obliging the organisation to facilitate an inclusive work environment were upheld.

The Dadaab court case

On 29 June 2012, a group of armed men opened fire on an NRC convoy in the Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya. Several people suffered gunshot wounds and one driver was fatally injured. Four NRC staff were abducted and taken across the border into Somalia. The abducted staff were rescued four days later. In 2015, one of the abducted NRC employees, Mr Steve Dennis, filed a claim against NRC. In the following court case, Oslo District Court found NRC grossly negligent in regards to the safe-guarding of staff during the visit in Dadaab in 2012, and awarded Mr Dennis compensation of NOK 4.4 million.

In an Extraordinary Board Meeting on 7 January 2016, the NRC Board of Directors decided not to appeal the judgment of the Oslo District Court, of 25 November 2015. The Board issued the following statement to explain its decision:

“The Board does not agree with Oslo District Court that the decisions and considerations made in Dadaab 2012 or the mistakes openly admitted and detailed by the organisation itself, constitute

'gross negligence'. The Board will, however not appeal the judgment, as it does not wish to expose past and present staff members to a new and demanding trial at a time when we face greater numbers of displaced people since the aftermath of World War II.

The organisation has learnt from the tragic events described in the judgment. NRC will continue to learn from this and other critical incidents and continuously strive to improve our risk management and staff care.

The Board stands by NRC field managers in their difficult task of managing operational and security risks, while always ensuring a safe and secure environment for staff and the civilians we assist. Going forward, NRC will continue to foster an organisational culture of openness and continuous learning.

The organisation remains committed to devoting all its resources and attention to come to the assistance of millions of refugees and displaced in the most difficult of circumstances".

Programme development and strengthening quality

Over the last years, NRC has undertaken a process towards ensuring greater programme quality, the process is supported by our internal monitoring and evaluations systems, learning reviews and internal audit.

Internal reviews and improvements areas

The NRC Annual Learning Review, reflecting on evaluations conducted in 2014, found that NRC must improve our use of needs assessments and beneficiary involvement in programme design in order to ensure that the most vulnerable can access our programmes. To address these gaps NRC developed several needs assessments tools in 2015, setting standards for NRC beneficiary involvement.

The Internal Audit and Quality support function conducted four internal audits in 2015, assessing the systems for risk management and internal control in our programme operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and in NRC's overall finance function. It also conducted two internal reviews, looking at NRC's response to the Ebola crisis and NRC's system for security management, as well as managing the annual country operation self-assessment process for internal control systems. The audits and reviews identified that NRC sometimes has challenges in ensuring consistent compliance and oversight at all levels. The findings will be addressed in 2016.

Areas under development

Humanitarian Innovation has become an important element in NRC's interactions with existing and potential partners. NRC has increasingly engaged in networks and forums discussing and aiming to encourage innovation,

In 2015, we also continued to expand our cash programming which helped NRC to position itself as a key global cash actor. Bringing together our expertise on cash and remote management, NRC is positioning itself on cash programming in high-risk areas.

Board of Directors

The following people constituted the Board in 2015:

- Idar Kreutzer (Board Chair)
- Gisele Marchand (Deputy Chair, stepped down after the Board meeting 20 April 2015)
- Cecilie Hellestveit (Deputy Chair from 7 December 2015)
- Ahmed A. Madar
- Per Byman
- Lisa Ann Cooper
- David Sanderson
- Katja C. Nordgaard (Elected 23 February 2015)
- Ingvill Frederiksen (employee representative)
- Petr Kostohryz (employee representative, elected 15 January 2015)
- Stine Paus (deputy employee representative)

During 2015, the Board conducted six ordinary Board meetings and two Board seminars. The Board discussed 62 agenda items this year.

The Board of Directors and the administration had a close and productive collaboration throughout the year. Board meetings and seminars were characterised by comprehensive discussions focusing on continued organisational development, accountability and programme delivery.

The Board thanks NRC's employees for their dedication and hard work, and looks forward to continued cooperation in 2016.

Prospects for the coming year

In 2016, NRC will continue our extensive work across the Syria region and continually assess how we best can contribute towards protection and assistance for refugees in Europe. NRC will carry on prioritising cash programming, beneficiary involvement, and increased humanitarian access to populations in need. We will also continue to scale up our education work through the "*1 Million initiative*".

The organisation will also continue to explore how we can respond to displacement caused by general violence and natural disasters through work in Honduras and potential start up in Bangladesh.

Oslo, 10th May 2016



Idar Kreutzer
Board Chair



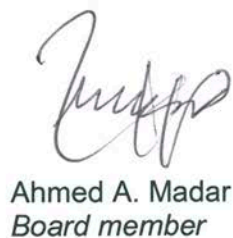
Cecilie Hellestveit
Vice Chair



Per Byman
Board member



David Sanderson
Board member



Ahmed A. Madar
Board member



Lisa Ann Cooper
Board member



Katja C. Nordgaard
Board member



Simon Giverin
Staff repr.



Petr Kostohryz
Staff repr.



Jan Egeland
Secretary General



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