

## Strategic plan

2019–2023

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## Who we are

NOREF was established in 2008 by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as an independent non-profit foundation. The declared aim was to build NOREF into a peacebuilding resource centre, focusing on political analysis and capacity building. In 2014 the Centre's board made a strategic decision to redefine the organisation's focus, changing its primary role from a resource centre to that of a hands-on operational actor that would initiate and develop actual peace and reconciliation processes in a global arena and/or support parties engaged in such processes.

In line with this strategic shift, NOREF's defining task is to actively work for the peaceful resolution of conflicts involving armed parties, to prevent and reduce violent conflicts, and to prevent the escalation of violence. In an increasingly multipolar world characterised by multiple and often-competing proxy actors and elusive networks of armed actors, the importance of this task, internationally as well as for Norway's long-term interests, is likely to grow in the near future. Thus, NOREF's mission statement is as follows: *NOREF is committed to mitigating and resolving armed conflicts through informal diplomacy and support to Norwegian and international mediation efforts.*

## Operational principles

With its history of several decades of engagement in a broad range of peace and reconciliation processes, Norway is an important force and actor with high levels of global legitimacy in the area of conflict resolution outside the UN. As a Norwegian institution with a close working relationship with the MFA, NOREF is strategically placed as a non-state actor that is able to complement formal Norwegian peacemaking efforts on the international scene. NOREF's approach and operational activities build directly on the Norwegian tradition of informal conflict resolution and are based on the following core operational principles:

- *Firstly:* NOREF's only agenda is conflict prevention, conflict resolution, conflict mitigation and reconciliation, with no other political aims.
- *Secondly:* NOREF will not offer externally pre-defined solutions to a conflict. Reconciliation must be shaped by the parties to the conflict; NOREF's task is to prepare the ground and facilitate processes and spaces for communication.
- *Thirdly:* Peace initiatives are often contentious and delicate. NOREF is committed to maintain confidentiality for as long as the parties themselves require it.
- *Fourthly:* NOREF has a long-term perspective and accepts that processes can stagnate or even seemingly collapse, without letting this dictate further engagement.

- *Fifthly:* As a Norwegian organisation that occupies a clearly defined niche, NOREF is able to engage conflict parties across a wide range of issues and approaches.
- *Finally:* NOREF is committed to contributing to core international obligations to support sustainable development, gender equality, the protection of civilians, and the reduction of climate-affecting footprints.

## Relevance

NOREF's position between formal and informal actors allows the Centre to move between supporting traditional formal peace processes (often referred to as *Track 1*) and undertaking informal back-channel conflict diplomacy (often referred to as *Track 1,5 and 2*). This makes NOREF a predictable and reliable actor in the area of conflict resolution and mediation. The Centre is able to select its areas of intervention based on its assessment of the particular potential and relevance of each conflict situation.

## Work pillars, 2019-2023

NOREF's interventions are both result- and process-oriented. The operational aims of these interventions are often multifaceted and may range from ending conflicts and actual conflict resolution to opening up space for dialogue; preventing relapse into or the escalation of conflict; preparing seemingly irreconcilable parties to willingly participate in a reconciliation process; supporting the work of formal facilitating actors in peace processes; maintaining open channels to all the actors involved in a conflict; facilitating communication between/among actors who otherwise are not in contact; or maintaining and developing a wide array of networks and contacts with important actors and partners in conflict-afflicted areas. As a way of achieving the defined outcomes, NOREF's work will be organised in terms of three work pillars:

### Pillar 1: Internally initiated processes

NOREF explores, initiates, and facilitates discreet processes (*Track 1,5 and 2*), and maintains contact with strategically important parties and armed actors. The work of this pillar is divided into two types of projects that reflect the volatile and political nature of conflict resolution:

1. Established, long-term projects; and
2. Exploratory, tentative and "back-burner" projects and initiatives.

### Pillar 2: Process support to externally owned processes

NOREF specialises in operational and logistical support, process design, networking, knowledge management and research, and communication in providing support to national, international, and regional actors, including the UN. (*Track 1*)

### Pillar 3: Knowledge: cross-cutting and thematic work

NOREF's thematic areas are designed to capture and deepen its understanding and operational capacity in selected thematic areas that are often of significant relevance for the successful and sustainable conclusion of peace processes. These specialised areas of support focus on:

- Gender and inclusivity;
- Military-civilian dialogue; and
- Ceasefires and ceasefire monitoring.

## Strategic goals, 2019-2023

NOREF's main strategic goals for the period 2019-2023 are laid out below. They build on the Centre's previous achievements, and in particular those after NOREF's strategic shift in 2014. In the period, NOREF

- Will further develop its role as a significant international actor in the field of informal conflict diplomacy.
- Will document its ability to reduce violence, facilitate critical communication between/among conflict actors, and assist in resolving or preventing armed conflicts.
- Will work to refine and develop its documented competence in the areas of process support, contact work with conflict actors, the opening of dialogue tracks, preparation for peace processes, and in-house expertise in its defined thematic areas.
- Will work to productively extend its documented record of delivering projects with high policy relevance for Norwegian foreign policy
- Will reinforce its position as Norway's leading partner within the area of conflict resolution.
- Will continue to nurture and develop its high-level network of actors representing pivotal global and regional powers with direct relevance for conflict resolution.
- Will improve its competence in and contribution to the thematic area of gender and inclusivity, and will integrate these perspectives into all aspects of its activities.
- Will further consolidate its position as a centre of high competence and methodological professionalism in the area of conflict resolution, based on the Norwegian tradition of supporting peace and reconciliation.
- Aims to be perceived as a partner and positive contributor within the Norwegian foreign policy research community. In the period it will work to maintain and improve this perception.
- Will further work to ensure its role as a well-known and clearly understood institution within the relevant national public sphere.
- Will attempt to further consolidate and augment its position as an integrated and widely recognised part of the international network of comparable institutions.
- Will be a creative, caring, and diverse workplace, driven by knowledge and innovative thinking. In the period 2019-2023 it will strive to maintain and improve its proud record in this regard.

A set of internal measures designed to meet the strategic goals will be integrated into the work plans over the next five year period.

## Criteria to measure progress and success

NOREF will assess the progress and success of its work against these strategic goals and measures. Moreover, the Centre has developed and employs several tools and procedures centred on the life cycle of individual projects to ensure the relevance, efficiency, and results of its work. In the period 2019-2023 NOREF will seek to further improve the review and quality control processes it uses to assess its activities. At the same time, the Centre's management team will continue to develop a flexible and unbureaucratic organisation with the ability to rapidly adjust to changes, new challenges, and fresh demands in both the national and international contexts.