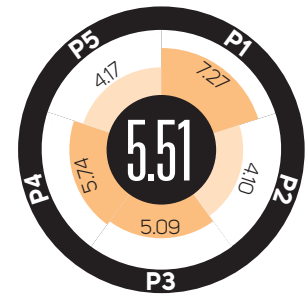


# BELGIUM

HRI 2011 Ranking  
**13th**



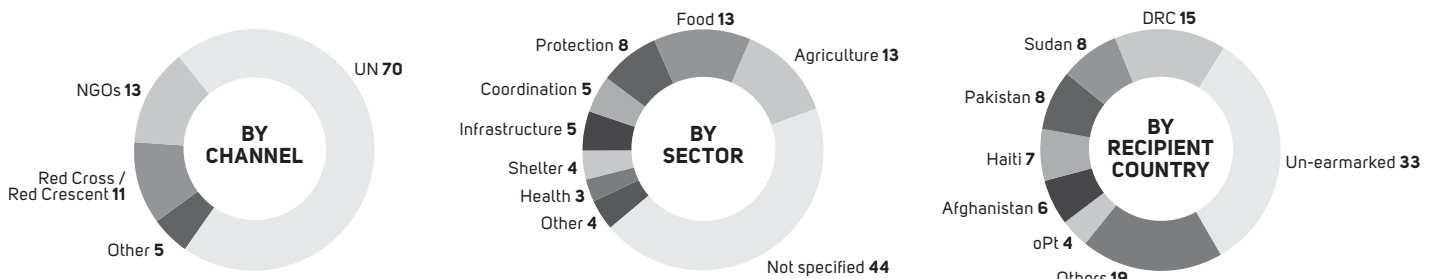
Group **3**  
**ASPIRING ACTORS**

**OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE** **0.64%**  
of GNI

**HUMANITARIAN AID** **7.8%**  
of ODA

**US \$22**  
Per person

## HUMANITARIAN AID DISTRIBUTION (%)



## GENDER RATING POLICY FUNDING FIELD PERCEPTION

STRENGTHS				
Pillar	Type	Indicator	Score	% above OECD/DAC average
4	QL	Facilitating safe access	6.19	+21.4%
5	QL	Appropriate reporting requirements	8.35	+17.9%
1	QT	Funding vulnerable and forgotten emergencies	8.11	+17.5%
1	QL	Independence of aid	8.24	+11.3%

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT				
Pillar	Type	Indicator	Score	% below OECD/DAC average
5	QT	Funding and commissioning evaluations	1.00	-75.8%
5	QT	Participating in accountability initiatives	1.81	-59.6%
2	QT	Funding international risk mitigation	2.84	-40.6%
5	QL	Accountability towards beneficiaries	2.87	-33.6%
1	QT	Timely funding to sudden onset emergencies	6.52	-19.0%

## OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Belgium ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the HRI 2011, a major improvement from its 18<sup>th</sup> place ranking in 2010, largely due to significantly higher scores in the quantitative indicators compared to 2010. Based on the patterns of its scores, Belgium is classified as a Group 3 donor, “Aspiring Actors”. Donors in this group tend to have more limited capacity to engage with the humanitarian system at the field level, but often aspire to take on a greater role in the sector. They generally focus on a few core strengths, such as in the area of prevention, preparedness and risk reduction, or on specific geographic regions. Other donors in the group include Australia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg and Spain.

Belgium’s overall score was below the OECD/DAC average, and also slightly below the Group 3 average. Belgium scored below the OECD/

DAC and Group 3 averages in all pillars, with the exception of Pillar 4 (Protection and international law), where it scored below the OECD/DAC average, yet above the Group 3 average. Belgium received its lowest overall score in Pillar 3 (Working with humanitarian partners).

Belgium did best compared to its OECD/DAC peers in indicators on *Facilitating safe access*, *Appropriate reporting requirements*, *Funding vulnerable and forgotten emergencies* and *Independence of aid*. Its scores were relatively the lowest in the indicators on *Funding and commissioning evaluations*, *Participating in accountability initiatives*, *Funding international risk mitigation*, *Accountability towards beneficiaries* and *Timely funding to sudden onset emergencies*. Overall, Belgium scored significantly higher on the qualitative, survey-based indicators than on the quantitative indicators.

SOURCES: UN OCHA FTS, OECD StatExtracts, various UN agencies’ annual reports and DARA

All scores are on a scale of 0 to 10. Colours represent performance compared to OECD/DAC donors’ average performance rating: Good Mid-range Could improve Non applicable Quantitative Indicator Qualitative Indicator

# AID DISTRIBUTION

In 2010, Belgium's Official Development Assistance (ODA) comprised 0.64% of its Gross National Income (GNI), up from 0.55% in 2009, yet slightly short of its prior pledge of 0.7% by 2010. Humanitarian assistance represented 7.8% of its ODA, or 0.049% of its GNI. Belgium's sector-specific funding focused on food, agriculture and protection.

According to data reported to the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service, Belgium channelled

70.0% of its 2010 humanitarian assistance to UN agencies, 13.5% to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), 11.0% the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and 1.6% to private organisations and foundations. In 2010, Belgium provided humanitarian assistance to 11 crises in Africa - especially the Great Lakes region, which is prioritised in Belgium's 2006 *Strategic Plan* - six crises in Asia and three in the Americas. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan and Sudan received the greatest amount of funding in 2010.

# POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGDC), under the Department of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, manages Belgium's humanitarian aid. Belgium has recently undergone restructuring whereby most humanitarian assistance now falls under the DGDC with the aim of enhancing opportunities for cooperation with development programmes (OECD/DAC 2010). The 1999 *Law on Belgian International Cooperation* limits the number of partner countries to 25 (Government of Belgium 2011b). With the exception of food aid, which is governed by the 1999 *London Food Aid Convention*, Belgium's current policy is largely based on a 1996 *Royal Decree*. All funding to NGOs is subject to the decree and must be project-based, with limited implementation periods, and undergo an extensive approval process. Funding to UN agencies and the Red

Cross/Red Crescent Movement, however, generally does not encounter the same restrictions. The 2006 *Strategic Plan for Humanitarian Aid* has been able to overcome some of these obstacles. In addition, the *Royal Decree* has been circumvented to a certain extent by the creation of the Belgian First Aid and Support Team (B-FAST) and increased funding to pooled funds, such as the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) (OECD/DAC 2010). Belgium is currently drafting a new humanitarian aid strategy, which has the potential to accelerate the positive changes already underway in its humanitarian policy framework (Government of Belgium 2011a). Belgium currently has field presence in 18 partner countries where programmes are monitored by relevant Belgian embassies' development cooperation attachés and are often implemented by Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC).

## HOW DOES BELGIUM'S POLICY ADDRESS GHD CONCEPTS?

# GENDER

Both Belgium's 2006 *Strategic Plan* and its draft humanitarian strategy contain a number of cross cutting issues, including gender (OECD/DAC 2010). The draft humanitarian strategy emphasises the importance of mainstreaming gender and Belgium's intention to financially support gender-sensitive approaches in humanitarian situations. Belgium also prioritises sexual reproductive health and rights and has developed a national action plan to ensure implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (Government of Belgium 2009).

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## PILLAR 1

# RESPONDING TO NEEDS

Belgium recognises the importance of a principled, needs-based approach to humanitarian assistance. Its draft humanitarian aid strategy reaffirms Belgium's commitment to humanitarian principles, including the importance of needs-based humanitarian action, while also acknowledging its limitations to do so due to its comparatively small size. Therefore, Belgium intends to focus on geographic and thematic areas such as the Great Lakes region, food security and protection (Government of Belgium 2011a). Belgium acknowledges the importance of timeliness but is hampered by the limitations of the *Royal Decree* (DBEO 2008, DBEO 2009). Belgium endeavours to enhance the timeliness of its support by maintaining B-FAST, its rapid response unit and by providing flexible and core funding to multilateral organisations (DBEO 2008 and Government of Belgium 2011a).

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## PILLAR 2

# PREVENTION, RISK REDUCTION AND RECOVERY

Belgium's previous humanitarian policies have highlighted the need to mainstream environmental issues, although this is absent from its draft humanitarian strategy (OECD/DAC 2010 and Government of Belgium 2011). The need for disaster risk reduction and linking relief, rehabilitation and development are expressed in Belgium's current humanitarian policy, but do not form an integral part thereof as a result of the *Royal Decree*. This is due to the fact that the decree limits the funding of local capacity building and action by local NGOs. For similar reasons, Belgium is also restrained from promoting disaster preparedness (OECD/DAC 2010). However, the draft humanitarian strategy could bring about significant progress in these issues, as it emphasises the importance of beneficiary participation and local capacity building (Government of Belgium 2011a).

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## PILLAR 3

# WORKING WITH HUMANITARIAN PARTNERS

Flexibility and multi-year funding are limited by the Royal Decree, although Belgium has been able to circumvent this to an extent by providing core funding with limited earmarking for multilateral organisations and by contributing to pooled funds, such as the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) (OECD/DAC 2010 and DBEO 2008). The draft humanitarian strategy continues this approach, in addition to narrowing the number of NGO framework partnerships with the aim of increasing flexibility and predictability. Belgium recognises the leading role of UN agencies, particularly OCHA, for the coordination of the humanitarian system (Government of Belgium 2008).

## PILLAR 4

# PROTECTION AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

Belgium's current humanitarian policy makes little mention of protection and international law, although they are addressed to a greater extent in the draft humanitarian strategy, which contains a thematic focus on protection, particularly that of children. The same strategy mentions the importance of international humanitarian law (IHL), refugee law and human rights, in addition to specific UN resolutions, as establishing the international legal framework for humanitarian aid. Belgium intends to advocate against breaches of IHL, and for the security of aid workers and increased humanitarian space (Government of Belgium 2011a).

## PILLAR 5

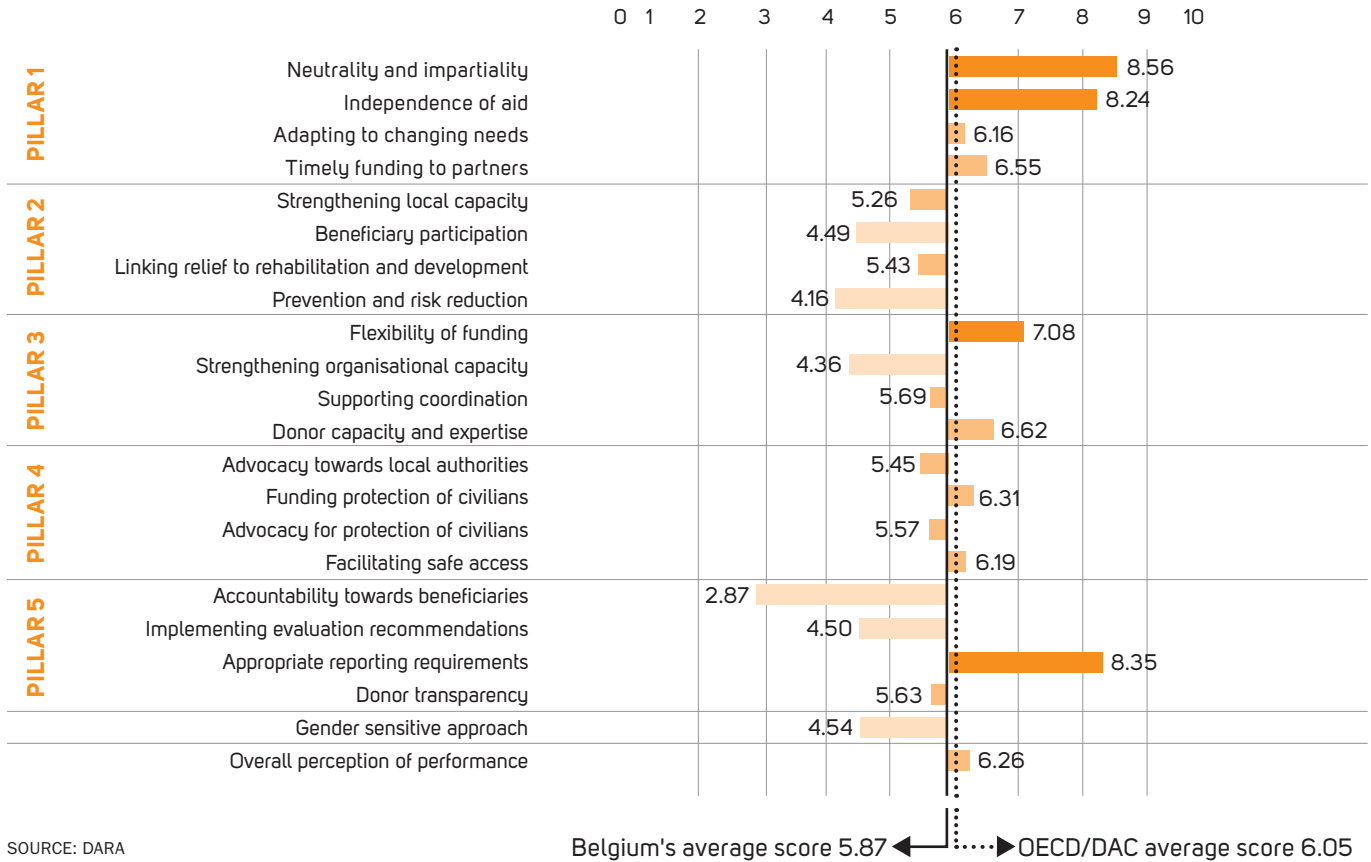
# LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Belgium's draft humanitarian strategy lays out plans to provide additional funding to projects and international efforts that build knowledge, particularly in relation to standards. It also affirms its commitment to supporting initiatives such as the Sphere Project and views international standards as an important means to increase transparency (Government of Belgium 2011a). Belgium has its own "Special Development Cooperation Evaluation Unit" (DBEO), which conducts independent evaluations of Belgium as a donor. These evaluations have previously called for an increase in transparency and accountability, as well as a greater focus on evaluations (DBEO 2008 and DBEO 2009), which are reflected in the draft humanitarian strategy. It stresses the importance of applying different methods of evaluation, both internally and for partners (Government of Belgium 2011a), as well as the need for upward and downward accountability.

# FIELD PARTNERS' PERCEPTIONS

## BELGIUM'S FIELD PERCEPTION SCORES

Collected questionnaires: 17



SOURCE: DARA

Colours represent performance compared to donor's average performance rating:

■ Good 
 ■ Mid-range 
 ■ Could improve

## HOW IS BELGIUM PERCEIVED BY ITS PARTNERS?

### GENDER

Field organisations do not consider Belgium to be strong in ensuring gender-sensitive approaches are integrated in programming. The country received low marks in this regard; some asserted that gender did not seem to be on its agenda.

### PILLAR 1

## RESPONDING TO NEEDS

Belgium received some of its highest qualitative scores in Pillar 1. The vast majority of Belgium's field partners felt that its humanitarian aid was neutral, impartial and independent, although a few considered that "Belgium is very much influenced by their politics" and that "Belgium places a high economic conditionality on aid", but they were in the minority. Organisations in the field held slightly more mixed views regarding Belgium's verification that programmes respond to changing needs. For example, one organisation praised Belgium, as its "director of cooperation visited Haiti for two weeks, traveling everywhere in the country [...] There was a will to understand the needs and see what projects other donors were funding and learn from their experience." Another agency in a different country reported, however, that Belgium "just checks reports", while its other donors engaged in monitoring visits.

### PILLAR 2

## PREVENTION, RISK REDUCTION AND RECOVERY

Belgium's scores were relatively low in the qualitative indicators that make up Pillar 2. Field perceptions in this pillar were lowest regarding Belgium's support for prevention, preparedness and risk reduction, followed by beneficiary participation.

### PILLAR 3

## WORKING WITH HUMANITARIAN PARTNERS

In Pillar 3, Belgium's field partners were largely positive regarding the flexibility of the country's funding. One organisation noted that Belgium is "generally accommodating for change". Most partners also considered that Belgium has sufficient capacity and expertise to make appropriate decisions. They were more critical in relation to Belgium's support for partners' organisational capacity and for coordination.

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## PILLAR 4

# PROTECTION AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

In Pillar 4, Belgium's partners found it to be somewhat weaker in issues related to advocacy, both for protection of civilians and toward governments and local authorities. Facilitating safe access and security of humanitarian workers, on the other hand, was found to be a "top priority".

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## PILLAR 5

# LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In Pillar 5, Belgium received one of its highest scores for the appropriateness of its reporting requirements. One organisation highlighted that Belgium was also "generally accommodating with common reporting mechanisms." Field organisations were much more critical, however, regarding requirements to ensure accountability toward affected populations and the transparency of Belgium's funding and decision-making.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on data from 2010. It remains to be seen how Belgium's new policy will influence these issues.

## ● RENEW COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

Belgium has room for improvement in its commitment to accountability. Although Belgium financially supports a number of humanitarian accountability initiatives, it received one of the lowest scores of the OECD/DAC donors for its participation in accountability initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Its partners also report that Belgium could do more to ensure accountability toward beneficiaries at the field level, as Belgium received the lowest score for this qualitative indicator. It appears this will be addressed in Belgium's new strategy, but Belgium would do well to follow-up with field partners to ensure mechanisms for accountability are properly integrated into programmes.

## ● ENHANCE USE OF EVALUATIONS

Belgium received the third-lowest score for *Funding and commissioning evaluation*, which measures the number of joint and individual evaluations commissioned and the existence of an evaluation policy. Belgium has not yet formalised an evaluation policy and has only commissioned one joint evaluation and two individual evaluations (publicly available) over the past five years. This appears to support the findings of Belgium's DBEO, which called for a greater focus on evaluations.

## ● CONTINUE PROGRESS UNDERWAY TO IMPROVE TIMELINESS


Belgium has improved substantially the timeliness of its funding to complex emergencies. In 2009, it provided only 4.4% of its funding within the first three months following a humanitarian appeal, while in 2010 it provided 51.4% during this time frame, compared to the OECD/DAC average of 59.4%. It has also improved significantly the speed of its response to sudden onset emergencies, but still has room for improvement. In 2009, Belgium provided 14.9% of its funding within the first six weeks of sudden onset disasters. In 2010, it provided 65.2% of its funding within this period, though it is still below the OECD/DAC average of 80.5%.

## ● ENHANCE SUPPORT FOR PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS, RISK REDUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Belgium's support for prevention, preparedness, risk reduction and reconstruction is fairly weak. Its funding for prevention and reconstruction comprised 13.7% of its humanitarian aid, while its OECD/DAC peers provided an average of 18.6%. Similarly, its funding for international risk mitigation mechanisms represented only 0.55% of its ODA, below the OECD/DAC average of 0.77%. Belgium's field partners seem to confirm this, rating Belgium below average for its support for prevention, preparedness and risk reduction.

## ● ENSURE AID MEETS THE DIFFERENT NEEDS OF WOMEN, MEN, BOYS AND GIRLS

Although Belgium's policy highlights the importance of gender, its partners indicate the need for greater emphasis on gender-sensitive approaches and follow-up to ensure it is properly integrated into humanitarian programmes.

 Please see [www.daraint.org](http://www.daraint.org) for a complete list of references.