

UN-CMCoord as auxiliary to humanitarian access, protection and security

I. Background

Over the past years, the operational linkages between humanitarian civil-military coordination (UN-CMCoord), access, protection and security have become increasingly apparent.

While they are all distinct issues, with protection as a cross-cutting issues, the notion of a conducive humanitarian operating environment brings them together as complementary and integral elements of a principled humanitarian response operation.

The need for a coordinated and complementary approach to these issues has brought with it an increasing need to clarify how associated staff roles interrelate and intersect and on the role, responsibility, scope and limits of each. Most OCHA Offices have Humanitarian Affairs Officers serving as dedicated focal points for Humanitarian access, Protection, or Civil-Military Coordination and many offices even have fully-fledged dedicated UN-CMCoord Officers. The UN-CMCoord Officer can be an important enabler for the other roles and leverage their work, yet should, when possible, remain complementary and auxiliary rather than a substitute. In other words, the UN-CMCoord Officer assists in critical areas while not being meant to fill them.

A variety of models have been implemented in different OCHA field operations, depending on the context and available resources. In contexts such as South Sudan or Iraq, fully-fledged cells with dedicated resources for a UN-CMCoord Officer (OCHA), an access and a protection focal point (OCHA) as well as a security officer (UNDSS) have been created. In contexts such as Mali, the UN-CMCoord Officer is concurrently functioning as access and/or protection focal point. In yet other contexts such as oPt, an access coordinator is fulfilling access as well as CMCoord tasks.

Although a range of OCHA staff may engage or support on these issues, and protection is considered a cross-cutting issue, the different staff functions may carry an **individual comparative advantage** by the nature of their activities and constituencies (e.g. a UN-CMCoord Officer might be better placed to liaise with national military forces, whereas an access focal point might be preferred to negotiate with Non-State Armed Groups). Therefore, where it is considered necessary, efforts should be made to provide dedicated capacity for respective roles.

II. Aim and Scope

The aim of this paper is to outline the main features of the four roles related to humanitarian civil-military coordination, access, protection and security and in a second part to provide clarity to the UN-CMCoord Officer on his/her role with regards to and when interfacing with the other functions. Ultimately, this should support smooth cooperation, interoperability and coordination between the four functions and provide practical guidance for the UN-CMCoord Officer and OCHA Country Offices together with further guidance documents to be provided at later stages on Access and Protection.¹

III. Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination - definition and tasks

UN-CMCoord is the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency and, when appropriate, pursue common goals. Basic strategies range from cooperation to co-existence. Coordination is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training.

The key coordination elements in natural disasters and complex emergencies are information sharing, task division and planning. The scope and modus operandi of these key elements will change with the context and with the focus of UN-CMCoord tasks:

1. Establish and sustain **dialogue** with military forces.
2. Establish and sustain **dialogue** with the humanitarian and development community
3. Establish a **mechanism for information exchange** and humanitarian action with military forces and, depending on contexts, with other military actors.
4. Assist in **negotiations** in critical areas of humanitarian-military interaction.
5. Support development and dissemination of **context-specific guidance** for the interaction of the humanitarian community with the military.
6. **Monitor activity** of military forces and ensure positive impact on humanitarian communities.
7. **Support the set-up** of humanitarian notification systems for de-confliction purposes

It is critical to establish and maintain **relationships of trust and confidence** with partner organisations on the ground for effective work and long-term impact on the ground. Turnover in staffing is often detrimental to such efforts although it often cannot be avoided.

IV. Humanitarian access, security and protection of civilians - core tasks

1. Humanitarian access

Humanitarian access is two-fold: access by humanitarians to affected people and access by affected people to basic goods and services. At the field level, OCHA supports the HC in leading and coordinating efforts to gain and maintain humanitarian access. Many OCHA field offices have HAO access focal points that act as primary focal points and assist OCHA senior management and broader staff on access issues and who engage regularly/closely with relevant actors/fora, including HC, HCT, Access working groups (where existing) and Inter-cluster, which are the primary actors/fora for coordinating on overall access issues.

OCHA Offices undertake various activities to improve humanitarian access. The humanitarian access focal point supports and advises OCHA's senior management in coordinating these and may undertake many of them directly. Main activities may include:

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- Build synergies and facilitates collective understanding and approach on access among humanitarian partners, through HCT, Inter-Cluster and other relevant standing or specific access fora
- Ensures identification, monitoring, analysis and reporting on humanitarian access and key constraints in collaboration with humanitarian partners
- Coordinates development of an Access and Monitoring and Reporting Framework (AMRF) in collaboration with humanitarian partners
- Coordinates development and publication of OCHA access products (e.g. snapshot, maps, etc.)
- Leads consultations and development of an HCT access strategy as a general framework setting principles and actions to address access constraints

- Contribute to the development of key/common messages/advocacy toward duty-bearers
- Coordinates/leads development of an internal OCHA work plan on access, in coherence with the HCT strategy when available
- Encourages and leads/facilitates the development of frameworks of engagement of humanitarian actors with relevant actors on access issues (e.g. 'ground rules for humanitarian action, of interaction with armed groups, etc.')
- Leads and/or supports engagement with relevant actors on humanitarian access issues, including advocacy and negotiations with all relevant actors (e.g. government, armed groups, communities, etc.)
- Supports the HCT to analyse and take into account access issues in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and throughout the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) as relevant
- Manages the access unit where applicable
- Develops/facilitates the development of awareness-raising and training materials and conducts training on access including on negotiations with humanitarian organisations on the ground and other relevant non-humanitarian actors

The UN-CMCoord Officer can engage in access, including to chair/serve as secretariat to working groups on the subject or engage in access negotiations, depending on the context and common and agreed guidance. The set-up of the coordination structure relating to humanitarian access is a matter of agreement and decision by the HCT.

2. Security

As part of his/her TORs, the Chief Security Adviser (CSA)/Security Advisor (SA), UNDSS²:

- Participates in and provides security inputs to operational planning
- Cooperates closely on security matters with representatives of organisations at the country level and all other officials of the United Nations system at the duty station to ensure the best possible security management
- Assists with security operations conducted by agencies as requested
- Establishes and chairs a security cell for duty stations where there are also Single-Agency Security Officers, in order to ensure that all security officers at the duty station are working together to further security management
- Develops contacts with national security agencies with a view to obtaining the best possible protection for personnel employed by the organisations of the United Nations system and their recognised dependants and their property
- Prepares, maintains and updates the country-specific security plan, contingency plans and security lists of personnel employed by the organisations of the United Nations system and their recognised dependants
- Prepares and maintains current, feasible and implemental plans for relocation/evacuation to a safe area
- Maintains an effective and functioning security and emergency communications system, supporting the Designated Official

It is understood that the UN-CMCoord Officer is not a Security Officer and neither designated nor mandated to take on security-related tasks which are at the discretion of UNDSS. However, the UN-CMCoord Officer will need to be acutely aware of security tasks and areas which may require coordination, or present a potential cross-over of responsibilities, with the Security Officer.

² Chief Security Advisor/Security Advisor TORs, UNDSS

3. Protection – a cross-cutting issue

All humanitarian actors have a responsibility to place protection at the centre of humanitarian action.³ Protection is defined as all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with International Human Rights, Humanitarian and Refugee Law.⁴ Protection is both a strategic objective or expected outcome of, and a cross-cutting issue for, humanitarian action, in addition to a cluster/sector of response, and a legal responsibility of States and, in situations of armed conflict, parties to conflict. At the field level, OCHA supports the HC in ensuring the delivery of a strategic, effective and coordinated response to the protection risks and needs of crisis-affected populations, including IDPs. It works with the HC, HCT and Protection Cluster to implement the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, including ensuring that protection priorities are identified and incorporated within strategic humanitarian planning and decision-making.⁵ OCHA does not, however, implement specialized protection programmes.

Many OCHA field offices have HAO protection focal points that support and advise OCHA senior management and broader staff on protection issues and who engage regularly/closely with the Protection Cluster, which is the primary forum for coordinating protection responses. OCHA Offices undertake various activities to support protection, working with the HC/HCT and in close collaboration with and in support of the protection cluster. The protection focal point assists OCHA's senior management in coordinating these and may undertake many of them directly. Activities may include:

- Assist in monitoring and analysis of the protection needs of affected, including IDPs, and identification of key protection threats and vulnerabilities
- Contribute to the identification of core protection priorities, and to the development of a coherent, overarching protection strategy to address these (at Cluster and/or HCT level)
- Ensure that the above are incorporated into overall humanitarian planning and response, including HNO and HRP, and into broader advocacy efforts by the HC or the ERC
- Contribute to the development of key/common messages/advocacy toward duty-bearers (including conflict parties, UN Member States/Security Council, other UN partners)
- Ensures that cross-cutting protection concerns, including those of IDP's, are adequately reflected and addressed in the work of all clusters through its inter-cluster coordination role
- Builds synergies with other key actors, such as protection-focused staff within peacekeeping and political missions and development actors.
- Ensures that protection cluster inputs into high level fora and mechanisms, such as the UN Security Council Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians, relevant Secretary-General country-specific and thematic reports and statements of the Secretary General or the ERC
- Develops/implements strategies/recommendations on how OCHA can assist to address identified protection priorities/gaps
- Establishes and maintains networks with relevant protection actors to continuously contribute to OCHA's overall understanding of protection issues
- In close coordination with Head of Office (and HAOs working on access and UN-CMCoord), establishes and maintains networks with relevant duty-bearers to advocate for enhanced protection of civilians
- Drafts reports, policy/position papers, talking points and background notes on protection issues as necessary

³ IASC, Statement on the Centrality of Protection, 17 December 2013 <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/52d7915e4.pdf>.

⁴ Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, Inter Agency Standing Committee Policy Paper, pg.4 December 1999, https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/FINALIDPPolicy.pdf.

⁵ Summary Conclusions between UNHCR and OCHA on Protection and Displacement (2014) and Policy Instruction on OCHA's Role in Supporting Protection: International and Field Responsibilities, 2006 (the latter currently under revision)

The UN-CMCoord Officer may support protection in her/his capacity by liaising with and facilitating effective and appropriate coordination between protection lead organisations and the protection cluster with military personnel, including peacekeeping operations. UN-CMCoord Officers may also, as appropriate, help to reinforce advocacy with international and domestic military actors on their protection obligations.

V. UN-CMCoord interface with access, protection and security

Levels of interface

1. At the global/HQ level: Dialogue and consultation with OCHA HQ, in particular ESB/CMCS and PDSB/PAPS. For protection-related matters, this could also include dialogue with the Global Protection Cluster in coordination with PDSB/PAPS.
2. At the national/capital city level: Dialogue and consultation with the OCHA HoO, the HC and the HCT, the Access and Protection officers/focal points, clusters and coordination fora, as well as relevant peacekeeping mission components, national forces and other deployed forces.
3. At the sub-national level: Dialogue and consultation with the Head of Sub-Office, coordination fora and relevant actors.

In addition, given the potential linkages and overlap, interface/ coordination is essential where more than one of the OCHA functions herein is deployed. For all functions, dialogue at all levels is key to comprehensively fulfilling their role.

The role of the UN-CMCoord Officer

When dedicated focal points exist on access and protection, the UN-CMCoord Officer takes on a supporting role, enabling the other functions to fulfil their task and facilitate dialogue, coordination and information sharing. This includes engagement at all levels, directly and/or through relevant channels, while fulfilling an operational role on a day-to-day basis.

When no designated focal point exists on access or protection, but OCHA's engagement is required, the UN-CMCoord Officer can find him/herself taking on some of the above-listed tasks. Vice-versa, access or protection focal points can find themselves having to take on UN-CMCoord tasks when no dedicated capacity is on the ground. In such cases, it is important that there is clarity on what is undertaken in the UN-CMCoord capacity and what is undertaken in a new/expanded capacity as focal point. .

For security, the UN-CMCoord Officer coordinates and liaises with UNDSS/UN Security on the ground and participates in certain fora. The UN-CMCoord Officer would however not take on additional security-related tasks in absentia of the UNDSS Security Officer.

Typically, additional tasks of the UN-CMCoord Officer can include, depending on context and which other functions are deployed:

- Negotiate with armed groups as required, based on context and common and agreed guidance
- Set up mechanisms for humanitarian notification systems for de-confliction purposes and increased access and/or facilitate the processing of related requests
- Liaise between humanitarian organizations and military forces for instance in peacekeeping operations and advising military actors on protection-related matters in close coordination with the Protection Cluster and, as relevant DPKO Protection of Civilians (PoC) Advisors; participate in protection for a, for instance the protection cluster, based on context and common and agreed guidance
- Participate in a crisis management cell set up by NGOs, and support drafting NGO evacuation procedures

- Act as Security Focal Point for the OCHA Office in the field and participate in the Security Cell chaired by UNDSS
- Support the OCHA HoO in advising the DO on the use of armed escorts

Training and skillset

The skillsets for each one of these four functions are critical tasks for an OCHA Office. Having one skillset does not confer any of the other skills to a staff member. OCHA HAO's should have an awareness of basic notions of each other's areas of work. This includes basic training on humanitarian principles, humanitarian negotiations, protection principles and UN-CMCoord guidelines for all functions, along with guidance throughout the operation. Awareness-raising modules can be provided to UNDSS on the ground by the OCHA Office on an as needed basis.

