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About HPN

The Humanitarian Practice Network at the Overseas Development Institute is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience. The views and opinions expressed in HPN's publications do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Humanitarian Policy Group or the Overseas Development Institute.

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Editorial



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The special feature of this edition of *Humanitarian Exchange*, co-edited with Victoria Metcalfe, focuses on issues related to humanitarian civil-military coordination. In the leading article, Simone Haysom sets out the rationale for civil-military coordination, and the challenges involved in establishing effective relations between humanitarian actors and the military. In their article, Jenny McAvoy and Joel R. Charny argue that NGOs must continue to invest in dialogue to address new challenges arising from the US military's expanding presence in increasingly diverse contexts and roles. Heiko Herkel, from NATO's Civil-Military Co-operation Centre of Excellence (CCOE), makes the case for the continued involvement of humanitarian actors in training and doctrine development. Lauren Greenwood explores how stabilisation operations have challenged British military culture and leadership styles. Reflecting on her experience of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines revision process, Jules Frost concludes that building consensus within the humanitarian community requires strong leadership and consistent and informed engagement. Mike Fryer, the first UNAMID Police Commissioner in Darfur, outlines some of the challenges the police contingent faced in their relations with humanitarian actors, local communities and conflict parties, and Ruben Stewart discusses how the Israeli military offensive in Gaza in 2008, Operation Cast Lead, resulted in significant changes to humanitarian civil-military coordination in the occupied Palestinian territory. Finally, Steven A. Zyck examines information-sharing mechanisms between civilian and military actors in Afghanistan, while Jessica Hatcher explores the problematic relationship between humanitarian agencies and foreign military forces in Somalia.

Articles in the policy and practice section examine Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)'s approach to remote management in Somalia; discuss the results of a recent Department for International Development (DFID) study of the economics of resilience in the Horn of Africa; review lessons learned from Action Against Hunger (ACF)'s experience of working in partnerships in large-scale emergencies in Pakistan and Kenya; and consider whether there are adequate incentives for national NGOs to engage with the cluster system.

As always, we welcome any comments or feedback, which can be sent to hpn@odi.org.uk or to The Coordinator, 203 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NJ.

Civil–military coordination: the state of the debate

Simone Haysom

Civil–military coordination in humanitarian crises is a controversial issue, particularly for humanitarian actors. There is anxiety about cooption and contagion by the military, about trade-offs between enduring political solutions and long-term basic assistance and about the relationship between principles and pragmatism in the delivery of aid. In the midst of these debates the original purpose of civil–military coordination – to have a structured dialogue that enables more effective and principled delivery of assistance to affected populations – tends to be forgotten. With growing interest on the part of militaries to be involved in the provision of assistance there is both a need to revisit the basic intentions of civil–military dialogue and to address the gaps that past practice and current guidance do not cover.

The rationale for civil–military coordination

By the nature of the contexts that they work in, humanitarian actors share an operating environment with the military. Pragmatic concerns for maintaining neutrality in these environments have always necessitated dialogue with militaries, in addition to other armed actors. Militaries may also have functions that dovetail with the work of humanitarian agencies, such as managing flows of displaced people or delivering assistance, and they have obligations towards civilian populations embodied in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) which overlap with the mandates and concerns of humanitarian organisations. There is a long history of militaries participating directly in the provision of humanitarian relief, including during the Abyssinian Crisis in 1935 and in the Berlin Airlift of 1948. In many countries, national militaries are the primary organised responders, particularly following natural disasters.

Much of the guidance produced by humanitarian organisations and bodies such as the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) acknowledges the need for coordination between civil and military actors in conflicts and natural disasters. While many of the rationales for coordination have remained constant, the increasing role of the military in humanitarian contexts in recent decades has necessitated an evaluation of current approaches. In the eyes of many humanitarian actors, humanitarian aid has become increasingly politicised as it has become incorporated into the stabilisation agendas of the major Western donors, which have seen militaries undertake humanitarian assistance activities to achieve strategic or tactical goals in theatres such as Afghanistan. International militaries have also become increasingly involved in natural disaster response; the US military, for instance, has deployed to disaster zones 40 times since 2004. Given this increasing military involvement in humanitarian action, there is a growing need for humanitarian actors to evaluate how constructive their dialogue with the military can be. Are

existing attitudes, guidelines and mechanisms adequate to achieve constructive dialogue on the ground?

Some humanitarian organisations have reacted to increased military involvement in the humanitarian sphere by further limiting dialogue, on the apparent assumption either that engagement will do nothing to address humanitarian concerns, or that eschewing dialogue is necessary to protect the independence and neutrality of humanitarian action. Attitudes to dialogue have been shaped by the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan, where international militaries were at the same time belligerents in counter-insurgency campaigns and actors in stabilisation efforts which explicitly used humanitarian assistance as part of a military strategy supported by Western donor countries. These situations polarised the humanitarian community and have left many with a lasting cynicism about the value and objectives of civil–military coordination. However, while these experiences offer many lessons to humanitarian and military actors alike, they are not necessarily typical. Indeed, if anything they underscore the need to refresh the longstanding commitment in the humanitarian community to principled interaction with the military, and to update approaches and mechanisms to achieve this.

Challenges

Humanitarian actors need to understand what the real challenges in civil–military coordination are, and how policies and approaches can facilitate more constructive engagement. The differences between military actors and humanitarian actors are not simply about language and terminology, although these are important in shaping the nature of the dialogue between the two sides; rather, they relate to fundamental differences in their agendas and priorities. These are invariably different, even between UN peacekeeping missions and humanitarians, and these differences have an effect on the interaction between the two spheres of action at policy and strategic level and on the ground, in theatres of operation. Clarity on roles and responsibilities is important, but it is not necessary to fight for a common agenda or to hammer out a way to co-exist. Militaries will rarely have a purely humanitarian role, even in natural disaster response. Humanitarian organisations should accept this, and focus proactively on their role in promoting adherence to the basic tenets of IHL and human rights law, and on areas of common ground, such as the protection of civilians.

There is a need too to address gaps in guidance, particularly in complex emergencies. The IASC guidelines on civil–military coordination describe four scenarios (peacetime, peacekeeping, peace enforcement and combat). In practice, however, it is often difficult to distinguish between these



© UN Photo/Pasqual Gorriz

UN peacekeepers serve food to people displaced by the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010

scenarios, or to guide the transition between one scenario and another. For their part, the Oslo Guidelines on the use of military assets in disaster response do not cover situations where disasters occur during ongoing conflict, generalised violence or political instability. Greater clarity is also needed on how to operationalise key aspects of the civil-military relationship, including the principle that military assets are used only as a last resort, and with respect to information-sharing.

The humanitarian community also needs to recognise and address its own deficiencies when it comes to adherence to humanitarian principles. Organisations have a poor track record in following existing guidelines, while the proliferation of humanitarian agencies in recent years, with different mandates, philosophies and approaches, makes it very difficult to achieve a consensus view on the appropriate level and form of interaction with the military. The heterogeneous and loosely aligned nature of the humanitarian sector also makes it difficult for militaries to know how to interact, and whom to interact with. Inappropriate engagement with the military by individual agencies has implications not just for the agency in question, but for the broader humanitarian community. Often agencies simply do not understand the legal obligations on military forces in particular contexts, and find it difficult to adapt to the different mandates they may be working under. For their part, the military finds it difficult to understand the differences in the approach, language and role of the various humanitarian actors they encounter.

Conclusion

For good or ill, proactive military engagement in humanitarian assistance is here to stay. Militaries and humanitarian organisations rarely interact on an equal footing: the civil affairs staff of NATO and the major Western military powers dwarfed those of the humanitarian community in Afghanistan,

the funds available to militaries for assistance activities are far larger than the funds humanitarian agencies can call on and ministries of defence generally have more political clout than development and humanitarian aid departments. While difficult to achieve given variations in mandates and priorities, a common approach to the military will be far more effective than fragmented attempts at influence. Experiences from numerous contexts show that some level of dialogue – preferably at an early stage – has a greater chance of preserving humanitarian space and influencing military conduct. In a number of contexts, even those where the relationship has been most fraught, consistent efforts on both sides have enabled the development of clear structures and mechanisms for coordination.

Humanitarian and military actors alike need to remind themselves of the fundamental purpose of civil-military dialogue, namely to improve the delivery of assistance to conflict- and disaster-affected people. Such dialogue has enabled humanitarian actors to share space with military forces since the advent of modern humanitarian action. Refusing any dialogue with the military is not an option: humanitarian actors must realise that engagement with the military, whatever their particular strategy in the environment in question, is a critical component of humanitarian action. This dialogue is necessary both to promote adherence to IHL and, symbolically, to demonstrate neutrality by speaking to all sides in the conflict. It is also an essential practical component in gaining access to populations in need.

Simone Haysom is a Research Officer in the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG). This article is based on Victoria Metcalfe, Simone Haysom and Stuart Gordon, *Trends and Challenges in Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination*, HPG Working Paper, May 2012, <http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/6584-civilian-military-humanitarian-response>.

Civil–military relations and the US armed forces

Jenny McAvoy and Joel R. Charny

With an annual budget of \$650 billion and over two million military and civilian personnel, the US Department of Defense is the largest institution in the world. Since September 2001, its primary focus has been the ‘global war on terror’, a war of avowedly unlimited scope and duration. Its critical components include counter-insurgency and stabilisation operations, which have increasingly involved the US military in relief and development activities. NGOs have struggled to develop a unified response to the growing scope and pace of US military involvement in areas normally reserved for civilian leadership and action. Although regular dialogue has been established, much greater collective effort is needed on the part of US humanitarian and development NGOs to shape this engagement.

The Guidelines

Following the 9/11 attacks on the United States, NGOs abruptly found themselves operating alongside US soldiers who were simultaneously fighting enemies and acting like NGO workers in the name of ‘winning hearts and minds’. Clear rules were needed. The *Guidelines for Relations Between US Armed Forces and Non-Governmental Humanitarian Organizations in Hostile or Potentially Hostile Environments* resulted from more than two years of intense negotiation beginning in 2005 between InterAction staff, member representatives and the Department of Defense, under the good offices of the US Institute of Peace (USIP), an independent think-tank.

Negotiating the Guidelines was challenging. The military wanted a quick, practical outcome that would allow them to get on with their main tasks. NGO representatives wanted to make sure that underlying humanitarian principles were clear, and used the dialogue sessions as didactic opportunities to explain them. USIP was invaluable in its role as facilitator; without its objective and experienced staff, agreement would have been much more difficult to achieve. Ultimately, the Guidelines are practical, focusing on mundane though essential issues such as meeting places, liaison arrangements and communication protocols. Two components have been especially significant. The first is the agreement that US military personnel wear uniforms when conducting relief activities. The second is the agreement that the US armed forces should not describe NGOs as ‘force multipliers’ or ‘partners’. Each of these components was seen as essential to ensuring that the security risks faced by humanitarian organisations, and the civilian populations they seek to assist, are not exacerbated by the conflation of humanitarian action with the political objectives and activities of US military forces.

Implementation challenges

There have been a number of challenges to implementing the Guidelines. Firstly, the Guidelines are not being explained consistently and are not regularly included in US professional military education or military hand-

books, or in doctrine on stabilisation operations, counter-insurgency, protection of civilians and related topics. Although the Guidelines provide the rules to regulate US military behaviour towards humanitarian organisations, military personnel lack comprehensive understanding of both the normative and operational considerations underpinning the necessary distinction between military personnel and operations, and the concurrent roles and activities of humanitarian entities. This inhibits the full internalisation and operationalisation of the rules, including their application in new doctrine and training.

Secondly, the Guidelines are inconsistently implemented by force commanders in theatre, and some elements of the Guidelines are neglected, whether due to lack of awareness or because it is believed that operational necessity outweighs the importance of adherence. For example, US military personnel still visit the offices of local NGOs, or wear civilian clothing or use unmarked vehicles for force protection purposes. Often the civilian Chief of Mission, normally the US Ambassador, insists on such force protection practices without being aware of the Guidelines.

A third factor concerns the conduct of NGOs themselves. While many regularly cite humanitarian principles when trying to persuade US forces to modify their behaviour, their own compliance with the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence tends to be erratic. Large international NGOs have accepted substantial US government funding in Afghanistan and northern Pakistan, for example, despite the counter-insurgency framework for these programmes. Some NGOs choose to collaborate with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and consciously or not accept the consequences in the form of security risks and limited humanitarian access to all affected populations. The diversity of the NGO community is understandably confounding to the US military, especially in places where humanitarian and development NGOs are working side by side. Development NGOs in particular do not frame their role in terms of impartiality or treat access to all populations as a fundamental operational requirement.

New dynamics

The scope of the Guidelines may now be outstripped by the ever-evolving footprint and activities of US military deployments. Developed in response to the operational challenges faced in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Guidelines focus on ‘hostile and potentially hostile environments’ – contexts where US forces are party to the conflict or where the situation may otherwise escalate and become hostile to the presence of US forces. Their focus is limited to humanitarian action and international NGOs, excluding development actors as well as national and local civil society organisations. However, the US is now broadening the scope of its doctrine and operational missions; ‘humanitarian’ roles for US forces are now being elaborated and embedded in military doctrine, and new



© DoD photo by Sgt. William Begley, US Army

A US soldier distributing clothing at El Salam Egyptian Field Hospital, Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, March 2012

missions are being conceived and carried out. While the massive logistical capabilities of the US military may help to save lives in major catastrophes, InterAction and its members repeatedly reinforce the civilian and impartial character of humanitarian action, the use of military assets as a 'last resort' and the importance of maintaining strict limits on the US military's role in the provision of relief or development assistance. This is falling on deaf ears.

There is a strong consensus in the United States, including within Congress and the senior leadership of the Obama administration, that military advantage and political dividends can be derived from relief and development activities conducted by the military. These dividends include showing the 'friendly' face of the US armed forces, addressing perceived drivers of instability, building local relationships and gaining access to information about local populations or the activities of insurgents, positioning forces to rapidly intervene to quell violence and restore stability and extending the host state's legitimacy by winning the loyalty of local populations or local elites. Such expectations drive efforts to recruit local civil society and international NGOs as implementing partners in counter-insurgency and stabilisation activities. The US military is providing food and building schools and other infrastructure in a range of countries, from Latin America to Southeast Asia and Africa. Military officers frequently refer to the inability of the US government's civilian institutions to carry out assistance activities within the timeframe and to the scale that their security-driven objectives demand.

Overall, there has been little critical examination within the US military, and the US government as a whole, of the underlying rationale driving these activities, and whether these military and political benefits outweigh the costs, including for humanitarian organisations. There is little understanding of how US military proximity to civilian populations and resource transfers may make civilian populations more vulnerable, fuel local tensions, create opportunities for

corruption and diversion of resources and exacerbate conflict. On the civilian side of the US government, the emphasis on 'whole of government' approaches to achieve security outcomes tightly binds relief and development programmes to military objectives. USAID's policies validate the alignment of resources against security priorities, for example through its Civilian-Military Cooperation policy and its recently issued policy on countering violent extremism. Where NGOs decline to cooperate, private contractors conveniently pick up the slack.

Additional developments in US military posture and activities have humanitarian implications and should be accounted for in shaping future civil-military dialogue. Firstly, there is a growing emphasis on achieving economy of force through small forward outposts to enable rapid deployment in high-risk environments and quick interventions in crises. Military operations appear more forward-leaning and wide-ranging. International, national and local NGOs that seek to save lives, alleviate suffering and facilitate sustainable development in these contexts are encountering US military forces more frequently, and may find it increasingly difficult to separate themselves from US political and military objectives. The diversity of contexts and the sheer spread of the US military presence will hugely expand the challenge of civil-military relations.

In addition, the US government and military forces, as well as NATO and other regional organisations, have increasingly sought to frame overall political objectives, doctrine and operational stabilisation missions in terms of proactive measures to protect civilians in armed conflict. However, doctrine and guidance in this area remains a work in progress, with many questions unanswered. For example, it remains unclear whether and how US military doctrine will be impartial in its pursuit of greater protection of civilians, or whether such measures will be pursued only when they do not conflict with US political objectives.

Learning from InterAction's experience, there will be two important components to US protection of civilians doctrine. Firstly, it will be important to ensure that US military forces are able to situate the design of protection of civilians efforts within the normative framework governing civilian immunity from the effects of war, in particular to establish awareness of the status of 'protected persons' and the relevant obligations of parties to conflict. This is essential to ensure that military forces know the parameters of the desired outcome they may help to bring about. A second and related component should ensure that US military forces are able to understand their role in relation to civilian actors seeking to enhance the protection of civilians in the same context. Without these, protection of civilians operations by US military forces may undermine the efforts of other actors and may place civilians at the centre of competing political objectives.

Looking to the future

While these expanded US military roles are already well in motion, there are reasons to feel positive about future civil-military dialogue. In informal, private conversations, some US military officers understand very well why humanitarian action requires actual and perceived neutrality in order to help ensure safe access to all affected populations, even as they recognise that their own behaviour undermines this. Some also express concern over the ever-expanding scope of the roles expected of US military forces, and are reluctant to encroach on the roles and responsibilities of civilian entities. In the words of one officer involved in developing doctrine for US forces: 'We hear you when you say, "stay in your lane" but we don't know what our lane is anymore'.

The current Guidelines provide an important tool to navigate relationships at an operational level. Clearly, however, the investment by both development and humanitarian NGOs in this dialogue needs to increase in scale and in scope. Firstly, greater investment is needed in dissemination and training on the Guidelines, including simulation exercises, audio-visual materials and online training. Both development and humanitarian NGOs need to invest personnel time in this effort. On the US military side, directives from force commanders and the appointment of senior-level liaison officers would support compliance in operational theatres. The US Department of State and USAID should ensure that US ambassadors, foreign service personnel and specialised staff are familiar with the Guidelines and support their implementation.

Secondly, while NGOs are typically invited to input into doctrine before it is finalised, this often entails reviewing many hundreds of pages within a short timeframe and without any concurrent dialogue with US military personnel on the effect of the doctrine on humanitarian issues or actors. NGOs need to be present in the process of doctrine development much earlier in order to help ensure that relevant norms and standards are used, and to craft appropriate limits and firewalls to safeguard humanitarian action.

Thirdly, NGOs need to seek dialogue with senior civilian leaders in the executive branch, as well as Congress, which provides the mandate and the money for these expanded US military roles. In the first instance, this dialogue should enhance awareness of the humanitarian implications of new doctrine and new types of military deployments with a view to modifying or clarifying the directives given to the military leadership. This dialogue should be informed by more objective research to examine assumptions about expected political dividends arising from US military engagement in assistance activities, and whether the benefits outweigh the costs, including in terms of their net effect on impartial humanitarian actors and the civilian populations they seek to assist.

Finally, the NGO community itself, starting with the major operational international agencies, requires an urgent process of internal reflection on its own adherence to humanitarian principles in the context of these developments. NGO leaders need to ask themselves hard questions about whether the drive for ever-expanding budgets has undermined their ability to adhere to humanitarian principles, and what the costs of a pragmatic approach have actually been. Efforts in this direction, organised by the Norwegian Refugee Council, for example, are already under way. Links with research institutions such as the Humanitarian Policy Group and Tufts University will be critical in making an objective assessment and planning for a future of continued operational complexity.

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The CIMIC Centre of Excellence: improving cross-organisational perspectives on civil-military interaction

Lieutenant Colonel Heiko Herkel

Modern militaries no longer engage in combat operations alone, but are increasingly involved in supporting humanitarian response, stabilisation and reconstruction in contexts where insecurity, or a lack of willingness or capacity, prevents governments, international organisations and non-governmental organisations from taking up these responsibilities. In disaster relief operations this is less of an issue, while in complex emergencies, where conflict and insecurity are key features, some types of interaction between humanitarian actors and the military can undermine humanitarian principles. This is particularly problematic in counter-insurgency operations where a 'clear-hold-build' approach is applied. This involves clearing an area of insurgents and then maintaining sufficient security to allow the implementation of stabilisation and reconstruction programmes. As many humanitarian actors are reluctant to operate under such circumstances, foreign non-military governmental agencies and for-profit contractors inevitably end up taking their place.

The Civil-Military Co-operation Centre of Excellence

The Civil-Military Co-operation Centre of Excellence (CCOE), formally established in 2007, is a multinationally-sponsored institution providing capacity for reviewing and improving policy, procedures and training in civil-military cooperation and related areas for NATO, the UN, the European Union (EU) and the CCOE Sponsoring Nations (SNs).¹ However, contrary to the CCOE's aims, the EU has not made use of this offer, while involvement in UN projects is limited. The CCOE believes that a thorough understanding of the principles, procedures and worldviews of humanitarian actors is key to advising militaries on how to implement effective civil-military interaction. Offering opportunities to civilian actors to better understand the military is a secondary field of activity. The dissemination of knowledge and training to NATO and SN troops regarding appropriate civil-military interaction is intended to improve how they approach, understand and respect their civilian counterparts. What differentiates the CCOE from other such centres is the comprehensive spectrum of training offered to both military and humanitarian organisations.

Vital to the CCOE's work is its relative independence. Standing outside the NATO Command Structure, and not committed to any national command in regard to content, allows for innovative thinking, including new perspectives on how to interact with humanitarian stakeholders. CCOE personnel are experienced in engaging with civilian actors in joint missions, and have a good understanding of their principles and concerns. CCOE uses these insights to stimulate improvements in NATO procedures. In addition, CCOE's involvement in policy and lessons-learned discussions within NATO, and in humanitarian policy fora

such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s meetings on the use of Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA), are crucial to developing a comprehensive understanding of both sets of actors.

NATO can be resistant to change, and initiatives like these are not always welcomed. There is also considerable mistrust and resistance among humanitarian actors when being approached by the military, or even by the CCOE. The CCOE takes every opportunity to engage with humanitarian actors around how to improve civil-military interaction to help increase understanding and build trust. This includes explaining the role of military actors in humanitarian response and the legal obligations of the military with respect to relief activities. The CCOE also analyses the position papers of humanitarian organisations and maintains regular dialogue with them to better understand their perceptions of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), learn about their experiences of dealing with the military, better recognise good and bad practices and monitor any policy developments as a result of this engagement. The CCOE participates in the annual meeting of the Consultative Group on MCDA and sub-working groups, visits NGOs and international organisations, invites them to discussions, workshops and courses at the CCOE and participates in workshops and exercises organised by humanitarian actors.

The revision of NATO's CIMIC doctrine

In 2008, the CCOE assumed responsibility for reviewing NATO's doctrine for CIMIC, AJP-9. The original document, ratified in 2003, largely reflected experience from the Balkan wars, and as such had lost operational relevance due to changed mission environments, notably Afghanistan. In assembling a community of interest to draft the new doctrine, the CCOE invited several non-military organisations to contribute, including OCHA, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM); several academics also participated in the conceptual development of the doctrine. A key contribution of the humanitarian organisations involved was the addition of a chapter to the doctrine which describes the different types of civilian organisations the military is likely to encounter on missions, including how they operate, how they are organised and funded, and to what degree, under what circumstances and in which situations they are able to cooperate with the military. Such contributions are of great value since they convey a sense of counterparts' perceptions and degree of acceptance of the military's approach to civil-military interaction.

The CIMIC doctrine was revised in parallel with NATO's top-level doctrine (AJP-01) and the direct subordinate doctrines on Intelligence (AJP-2), Operations (AJP-3) and Planning (AJP-5). Regular harmonisation between these documents ensured that CIMIC was not unnecessarily compromised, and that, as far as possible, the key

¹ The Sponsoring Nations are Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia.

requirements for successful civil-military interaction were covered. For example, a paradigm change was made to the section on the Intelligence Domain, which developed from a restrictive 'need to know' to a 'need to share' culture, supporting the proactive sharing of classified and unclassified information.

Drafting and reviewing other NATO doctrines

Since civil-military cooperation and interaction are of relevance in all potential scenarios and mission types, a number of doctrine reviews require special attention given the potential impact military activities can have on other actors. Considering these effects and providing advice on how to mitigate them is a main task for CIMIC personnel, and needs to be reflected in all relevant doctrine. Consequently, the CCOE comments on reviewed, or newly drafted, doctrine to ensure that CIMIC and civil-military interaction are taken into consideration in the planning and conduct of military missions. Relevant doctrinal themes include 'Military Involvement in Stabilization and Reconstruction', 'Support to Civil Authorities' and 'Targeting'. Targeting is the process of selecting and prioritising potential targets and the corresponding action to be taken, bearing in mind operational requirements and capabilities as well as – from a CIMIC perspective – the potential impact on other actors and the civilian population. For example, a decision regarding whether or not to destroy a bridge to hamper opposing forces' movement and supplies would have to consider the impact on local civilians and humanitarian actors.

Involvement in policy reviews

NATO's military policies are usually drafted and reviewed by NATO Headquarters (NATO HQ) in Brussels. However, in the case of CIMIC policy the CCOE was asked to provide an initial outline and comments on subsequent drafts. NATO HQ has also taken up the CCOE's recommendation that humanitarian and development organisations be invited to provide comments on future drafts. At a recent meeting with key humanitarian interlocutors (ICRC, IFRC, OCHA and IOM) it was suggested that comments be solicited from the IASC Task Force on Humanitarian Space and Civil-Military Relations. Drafting is still at an early stage, and how much of this input will be incorporated into the final document depends ultimately on whether it accords sufficiently with the interests of NATO member countries.

Contribution to reviews of Tactics, Techniques and Procedures

Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) are the lowest level of commonly applied instructions, and are officially disseminated as a Allied Command Operations Manual. Going further down into practicalities, TTPs are important because they address military units and individuals that are in regular contact with humanitarian organisations and other civil actors in the field, assessing the overall situation and providing advice on the impact of military activities on the civil environment and vice versa. Current ambitions for increased and more direct military involvement in stabilisation and reconstruction require special attention and new approaches to balance the pros and cons not only for the benefit of NATO as an organisation, but also

for the sake of the overall effectiveness of all contributors. Consequently the CCOE provides a balanced view which recognises potential negative impacts on civilian stakeholders, and which ultimately also supports the military in efficiently achieving its mission.

Concept Development and Experimentation

Concept Development and Experimentation (CD&E) is a NATO process for developing and testing new approaches and solutions to current and potential operational challenges. Those concepts that are successfully tested and accepted by NATO are then taken into consideration during policy and doctrine reviews. The CCOE, holding the largest group of experts on CIMIC and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI), supports NATO agencies working on CD&E and proposes new research themes.

The CCOE also indirectly supports CD&E through its articles and other publications, which cover subjects such as gender, the protection of cultural heritage and good governance. The Centre also shares knowledge on new approaches and good practice, raises concerns and challenges military and civilian actors alike to reconsider outdated and often entrenched views. For example, following practical trials and testing it is now standard practice to deploy all-female military teams in Muslim contexts, and specific issues and challenges facing women and girls are now more explicitly taken into account in stabilisation and reconstruction operations.

Education, Individual and Collective Training

Military personnel must be prepared to plan and act based on latest policy, doctrine and TTPs. As Department Head (DH) for NATO CIMIC and CMI Education, Individual and Collective Training, the CCOE is responsible for translating operational requirements into effective training products, and it has designed a NATO CIMIC and CMI Training Landscape covering the training requirements for individuals of all military command levels, from the strategic level to the operational and tactical levels. The courses and related curricula are to be applied in all accredited CMI and CIMIC courses in any NATO-associated training institute beyond core CIMIC personnel and providing interoperable training standards for all other entities involved in NATO training on CIMIC and CMI. Given CCOE's scope, it is important to ensure that this training benefits humanitarian personnel as well, reflecting issues of concern to them and giving them the opportunity to influence military course participants and familiarise themselves with their military counterparts, and the range of military support that can be made available. Humanitarian personnel actively participate in simulations and training exercises, and feed into the design and learning objectives. The CCOE develops CIMIC and CMI-related 'injects' which usually involve sending a report or statement to a simulated TV news programme, to which the military participants are expected to react during the simulated military exercise, in accordance with accepted standards and good practice.

Conclusion

By taking a proactive and consultative approach to engaging with humanitarian actors through initiating

meetings and involving them in training and doctrine development, the CCOE has made a significant contribution to improving civil-military cooperation and interaction. The CCOE serves as an important entry-point for humanitarian actors to engage in dialogue with the military on civil-military interaction, and can also explain military doctrine, procedures and attitudes to humanitarian counterparts. The CCOE has found that some of the most useful input and feedback on CIMIC doctrine and guidelines has come from external non-NATO sources.

The CCOE's approach to engaging with civilian actors involved in delivering humanitarian and development assistance has enabled it to build trust with these organisations and to better understand their principles, objectives and culture. As a result, NATO and the humanitarian and development communities are more open to engaging constructively with each other.

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Testing the cultural boundaries of the British military

Lauren Greenwood

The British military has faced a range of challenges when engaging with non-military actors in 'population-centred' counter-insurgency and stabilisation operations. Such actors include humanitarian agencies, non-government organisations, civilian populations and national and international government institutions. There has been considerable resistance, especially from the British Army, to processes that have the potential to undermine traditional military combat skills. Managing the interface with civilian organisations is the task of the tri-service British Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG), formerly the Joint Civil Military Cooperation Group. Members of the MSSG must learn and then embody a new set of rules and cultural codes that allows them to take military practices out of the strict confines of military hierarchies and into the comparatively undisciplined, messy and unpredictable civilian sphere. This includes developing an awareness of humanitarian principles and stabilisation practices, and educating the wider armed forces about these concepts, both during training in the UK and on deployment. These challenges have heightened the tension between tradition and change within the British military, and have tested identities, boundaries and roles in a plethora of ways. This article explores three problem areas: the (re)negotiation of masculinity; issues of 'common sense'; and the effect of increased civilian interactions on military leadership styles.¹

(Re)negotiating masculinity

Gender, and the relational constructions of masculinity and femininity, can be conceived of as practices that are produced socially, where social structures shape the actions of individuals and vice versa.² Masculinity is socially and culturally expressed, and is not confined to just the male body: both men and women go through a militarisation process in which they learn to reproduce a range of culturally specific military masculinities within the confines of their respective service. Military institutions exhibit certain particular characteristics, including clearly

defined physical and social boundaries, with members working and living together in barracks that provide a place of residence for large numbers of like-minded individuals.³ The identities of British military recruits are heavily influenced by the service they join – the Royal Navy, the British Army or the Royal Air Force – by their position within the military hierarchy, and whether they are regular or reserve members. This complex identity is visually and formally illustrated by military uniforms, which locate individuals by service, rank and branch, each with its formal and informal cultural codes. Behind the uniform is a military institution that is culturally rich and diverse, and much broader than popular stereotypes, with a multiplicity of roles and competing and potentially paradoxical identities.

For the British Army, warfighting demands that soldiers see themselves as warriors, with a warrior ethos. Counter-insurgency and stabilisation, with their focus on populations rather than, or at least in addition to, 'the enemy', challenges this traditional warrior ethos. Such operations require a different set of qualities, skills and practices, including 'emotional intelligence, empathy, subtlety, sophistication, nuance and political adroitness'.⁴ They entail restraint within the rules of engagement, heightened force protection and interaction with the media. They also involve working with a range of 'non-warrior' actors, the deconstruction and problematisation of the objective term 'enemy' and a focus on long-term solutions.⁵ These two self-perceptions – of the traditional warrior and this new 'population-centred' warrior – are essentially mutually exclusive, and handling the tension between them can be extremely difficult.⁶

For stabilisation operatives, managing the interface between the military and the civilian worlds requires a fundamental shift in mindset. British military stabilisation

1 L. Greenwood, *British Military Stabilisation Training and the Negotiation of Masculinity: 'It's Not Pink and Fluffy, It's Difficult and Dangerous'*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2012.

2 R. Connell, *Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

3 C. Kirke, 'Orders Is Orders ... Aren't They? Rule Bending and Rule Breaking in the British Army', *Ethnography*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2010.

4 J. Kiszely, 'Learning About Counter-Insurgency', *RUSI Journal*, vol. 151, no. 6, December 2006.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*



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British soldiers on patrol near Camp Bastion in Afghanistan

training teaches new recruits a spectrum of ‘masculinities’, from the kinetically oriented combat soldier, where weapon-handling skills, fitness and situational awareness are necessary to establish trust within the team, to the more feminised and ambiguous masculinity of the military facilitator. This facilitator masculinity is constantly in flux, and while it draws on the dominant masculinity of the combat soldier and notions of emotional control as the first point of acceptance and credibility, especially in terms of situational awareness, it also expands, restrains and resists elements of this combat masculinity, through specific articulations of cultural awareness and empathy. In this sense, stabilisation operatives are caught between the demands of the ‘disciplined’ military body and the creative subjectivity of the military facilitator, where challenging traditional military perceptions is a fundamental aspect of the role. The skilled stabilisation operative develops a ‘chameleon-like’ flexibility between these masculinities.

‘Common sense’?

Within the military ‘common sense’ is something that is formally trained and drilled, a specific way of doing things, of unifying behaviour and making reactions predictable in situations of intense pressure. A phrase I repeatedly heard from stabilisation operatives during my fieldwork was: ‘It’s just common sense, people just need to be able to speak to other people’. But ‘common sense’ within a military setting is very different to ‘common sense’ in a civilian or humanitarian setting. To the military, ‘common sense’ means referring to books, pamphlets or doctrine: it is, in other words, a ‘way of doing things’ that is rational, efficient and objective. It is also culturally dependent.

In stabilisation operations, black and white, clear-cut military approaches are substituted for complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, a focus on restraint and an understanding of the importance of intangible processes, such as generating a sense within communities that their

perspectives have been heard. However, within the wider military an end product is often seen as more important than process. As one informant put it: ‘When on tour people [the wider military] kept saying what does the doctrine say? We kept turning around and going what doctrine, there is no doctrine for this’. When the British military’s stabilisation doctrine (Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40 on *Security and Stabilisation: The Military Contribution*) was produced in November 2009 it was criticised within the military for not being ‘doctrine’ as commonly understood: it was too ‘grey’ and ‘ambiguous’, and it failed to set out the ‘fundamental guiding principles’. An attempt to address this was made with the release

in April 2010 of *A Guide to Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40 Security and Stabilisation: The Military Contribution*, which is designed to be read quickly and feed the military’s need for clarity, certainty and speed.

Whilst on field research I watched one stabilisation Commanding Officer chatting with their six-person Military Stabilisation Support Team during a training exercise, trying to explain the team’s role and asking them to start ‘thinking outside the box’. Many people ‘got it’ and, although a difficult task, took to the role relatively quickly. Others found the ambiguity and flexibility highly frustrating. A lack of flexibility and lateral thinking within the army has, on a number of occasions, been described to me using the Parachute Regiment phrase ‘bone’:

bone, completely indoctrinated, 100% Army, twenty years of being an Infantry man or Cavalry man. You explained it [civil-military coordination, stabilisation] to them and they get it, they understand, it’s not a difficult concept to understand, but there were lots of people who should know better in theatre who still don’t get it.

Once trained, it is the military Stabilisation Operatives’ role to help educate the wider military in these principles, although evidently this is taking time to feed into wider military culture.

Leadership

The skilled stabilisation operative develops the leadership skills to help the wider military valorise interaction through culturally specific forms of communication and discussion to establish and build relationships. One way of achieving this is in the practical application of the term ‘courageous restraint’, a term coined by American General Stanley McChrystal. The term connects courage, one of the valorised attributes of soldiering associated with bravery under fire, to a form of self-control that associates bravery

with the resistance of conditioned reflexes, valorising ‘the use of brainpower rather than firepower’. The power vested in the word courage has been attached to what is viewed by some as a softer or more feminine form of performance. Paradoxically, restraint for the combat soldier is harder to perform. The term, although not the concept, was short-lived, going out of fashion in 2010. It was replaced by the phrase ‘tactical patience’, which was deemed to be less confusing for soldiers and ‘more war-y’ through the removal of any associations with emotion, especially the emotions invoked by the word courage. During fieldwork I heard stories of how military stabilisation operatives had either successfully or unsuccessfully used their training and experience to persuade the wider military to use ‘courageous restraint’ or ‘tactical patience’ and adopt ‘population-centred’ stabilisation practices. As one informant told me, this was not easy: ‘generally, the ideas for counter-insurgency or stabilisation are not that easy to reconcile with red meat-eating killers. A lot of them really, really, want to get into fire fights’.

Good leadership, military teamwork and physical fitness are fundamental skills taught during military training. It is a powerful emotion to be part of a team that is working efficiently and symbiotically. Multi-actor stabilisation operations provide testing conditions for military leadership styles. Stabilisation operatives are required to fit into the infantry-dominated military chain of command, and embed with infantry patrols on the ground and in military headquarter formations. To perform their role effectively they must learn to switch between quite different leadership styles: a direct, forceful, sometimes aggressive style when dealing with soldiers or the military chain of command, and a quieter, softer but still direct style when dealing with all the other actors involved. Essentially, as one operative told me: ‘It’s all personality driven; it’s about getting relationships going. Stabilisation Operatives need to demonstrate that they are a vital component both up and down the military chains of command’. It is evident that the masculinity

of the combat soldier, and its forceful and direct style of leadership, remain dominant within the British Army. However, if Stabilisation Operatives are able to gain credibility, and therefore power and authority, they have the means to ‘influence, cajole and sometimes slap’ the fighting-oriented soldiers they work alongside towards adjusting to population-centred stabilisation practices.

Conclusion

Stabilisation operatives must act as ‘go-betweens’ in the complex area opened up between bounded, disciplined and hierarchical mainstream military institutions and the comparatively undisciplined and unpredictable ‘outside world’. By becoming ‘critical centres of knowledge’ and learning how to engage with controlled and rationalised forms of emotion and empathy, stabilisation operatives challenge the dominant masculinity of the traditional soldier on the ground. On the one hand, operatives must live up to the ideal of ‘the soldier’, the warrior; on the other, they are expected to engage with non-traditional forms of conduct and emotion that pose a threat to both the status and identity of ‘the soldier’.

Military Stabilisation Operatives are now being referred to as ‘hybrid soldiers’. While the British military has been slow to adapt,⁷ it is this ‘hybrid soldier’ that the humanitarian community will increasingly be engaging with in stabilisation operations. This ‘hybridity’ is achieved through formally and informally negotiating masculine performance, ‘common sense’ knowledge, learning to deal with ambiguity and intangibility, prioritising process over product and developing the flexibility to switch between leadership styles.

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⁷ S. Catignani, “‘Getting COIN’ at the Tactical Level in Afghanistan: Reassessing Counter-Insurgency Adaptation in the British Army”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4.

Building consensus within the humanitarian community: lessons learned from the revision process for the IASC guidelines on the use of military and armed escorts

Jules L. Frost

In July 2011, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group asked the Task Force on Humanitarian Space and Civil-Military Relations to review and update the IASC Non-binding Guidelines on the Use of Military and Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys (2001). The primary concerns that led to the decision to revise the guidelines were the recognition of a growing reliance on armed escorts, the need to synchronise a more robust decision-making process on the use of armed escorts with the new UN

Security Management System (SMS) and inconsistencies in the interpretation and application of the out-of-date guidelines. The revised guidelines, which are currently under review by the IASC Working Group and Principals, include a new section which encourages due consideration of alternatives to armed escorts. Throughout the revised guidelines, greater attention is drawn to the importance of conducting comprehensive security risk assessments that emphasise programme criticality as well as threat,



Soldiers from the joint African Union–United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) peacekeeping force guard a supply convoy

vulnerability and risk analysis as key decision-making criteria. The revised guidelines also highlight the need for UN and non-UN agencies to work towards developing a common position on the use of armed escorts, and propose that Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meetings should be used as the primary fora to debate this.

This article reflects on the long and difficult process of revising the guidelines, offering insights and lessons learned on how to build consensus on the complex issues relating to civil–military coordination.

Revising the guidelines

The task of revising the guidelines was assigned to a drafting team consisting of IASC members and representatives from UN agencies, international NGOs, the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) and the Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was not formally involved in the revision process, but participated as an observer. Throughout the ten months it took to revise the guidelines, there were rigorous debates on content. While some of the obstacles to reaching agreement stemmed from a lack of familiarity with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and differing interpretations of humanitarian principles amongst participants, the greatest constraints to achieving consensus were related to process. Some participating agencies did not prioritise engagement in the process, and did not allocate sufficient staff time or follow through on agreed action points.

This lack of investment by agencies in the process of revising the guidelines was disappointing. It is also a cause for concern given the challenges that face humanitarian actors working in conflict areas. The operating environment for humanitarian actors has changed significantly in

recent years, and relations with military actors, including international peacekeeping and other forces, have become more complex. As we have seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and elsewhere, achieving consensus amongst humanitarian actors operating on the ground with regard to their relationship with military actors is crucial to promoting and protecting the humanitarian principles which are necessary to support safe and effective humanitarian action.

Achieving consensus

Consensus amongst humanitarian actors is difficult to achieve, particularly in relation to some of the most complex aspects of civil–military coordination. The mandate, mission and values of humanitarian organisations vary significantly. They rely on diverse ethical frameworks and values variously informed by principles, rights, sympathy and dignity and/or rules. The willingness of organisations to compromise these values to achieve critical humanitarian objectives also varies considerably. Thus, there are many diverse approaches to engagement with military actors, which are difficult to reconcile into a common position.

The goal of a consensus decision-making process is to arrive at an acceptable compromise, not unanimous agreement on every issue. Throughout the process of revising the guidelines several issues provoked lengthy and heated debates. Clarifying language choice and meaning was central to the resolution of several of these disputes. Obtaining consensus on what is meant by terms like ‘last resort’ reinforced the importance of words and their meanings. In other cases disagreement arose because some participants did not have a good understanding of IHL, or held different interpretations of humanitarian principles. One of the more contentious issues, which was extensively debated, concerned which actors (private

security companies, local guards, military actors) should be listed as potential providers of armed escorts, and whether they should receive financial or in-kind support, at what level and under what circumstances. Reaching agreement on the roles, responsibilities, relationships and decision-rights of the various actors involved in humanitarian civil-military coordination, including the UN Designated Official, UN DSS, the Humanitarian Coordinator, the HCT and international NGOs, was complicated by a lack of clarity around how the ongoing implementation of the Transformative Agenda could affect these organisations.¹

Less time could have been spent debating and trying to reach consensus on these points had the agencies involved already developed clear internal policies and positions regarding engagement with the military or other armed actors. For example, one of the agencies involved struggled to present a united perspective amongst its own staff during the revision process. Debate that should have been internal to the agency took place during drafting team sessions, which diverted attention from the primary agenda, delayed progress and impacted on the agency's credibility with partners. In other cases, representatives of agencies that had no clearly defined policy or position aggressively put forward their own personal beliefs and preferences, which were not always endorsed by their organisations later.

Lessons learned

Leadership

Building consensus requires strong and effective leadership committed to maintaining the momentum necessary to achieve the desired outcome. An effective leader has a clear vision and strategy, can structure and run meetings effectively, actively engages interested stakeholders and is able to elicit and incorporate a range of opposing views. Investment upfront in crafting a course of action can save a great deal of time and energy throughout the consensus-building process.

Establish the 'decision-rule'

Achieving consensus does not necessarily mean obtaining the agreement of everyone to everything. Therefore, it is important that the group establishes at the beginning of the process the 'decision-rule', that is the level of agreement necessary to finalise the decision (for example, agreement of all but one or two participants). If this is not done, as was the case in the drafting task force, the consensus-building process remains open-ended and can result in frustration and disappointment. It was not clear at the end of the process whether the leader was empowered to make a decision on behalf of the group, or whether another round of consultations was required.

Commitment, collaboration and compromise

Commitment of the leader and group members to both the process and the end result is vital. The high turnover of the task force members indicated that some agencies

either did not see participation as a priority or did not have the capacity to maintain a consistent presence. In several cases, task force members were reassigned or redeployed elsewhere by their agencies, and new people were assigned who had not been adequately briefed. Trust between members then had to be rebuilt, and whatever consensus had been achieved up to that point had to be renegotiated. This substantially slowed down the process and created a degree of frustration. While it is impossible to eliminate this problem entirely, the participation of those agencies that did try to manage and minimise the rotation of staff in and out of the task force was more effective.

Knowledge and experience

It is important to have people with relevant knowledge, experience and decision-making authority around the table. We have all participated in meetings where the room is filled with staff that are present because no one else could attend. They have not been briefed and are unable to make effective contributions or take decisions. This can easily demotivate those who have come prepared. During the debates pertaining to the roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority of the various UN entities, the people who had this knowledge were often not present. This resulted in time being wasted on long-drawn-out debates. The drafting team had extensive policy experience but lacked significant operational experience pertaining to the use of armed escorts. Efforts to get this experience on the drafting team from the beginning would have improved the process and perhaps eliminated the need to 'ground-truth' the guidelines.

Time and active listening

All participating organisations should be afforded equal opportunity for input into the process. It is essential to ensure that concerns that are either fundamental to an organisation's mission or mandate or which could negatively affect the wider humanitarian community are not overlooked. The result will be a stronger, more informed outcome owned by the task force, thus setting the stage for greater adherence and success in implementing the resulting decision.

Conclusion

For the humanitarian community to improve its relationships with military actors, it is important that we build consensus on how we should interact with the military. Achieving a greater degree of consensus within the humanitarian community on civil-military relations can contribute towards:

- *A common understanding of civil-military relations:* This can minimise complexity, increase adherence to existing policy and guidance and clarify and maintain the fundamental distinctions between the humanitarian and military domains. Greater cohesion among humanitarians will enable the military to engage more effectively with us.
- *Mitigating security risks to humanitarians and beneficiaries:* The nature of the relationship between one humanitarian agency and the military may have an

¹ The Transformative Agenda, launched in December 2010, aims to build on and improve the impact of the Humanitarian Reform process initially in large-scale, sudden-onset emergencies that require a 'system-wide' mobilisation. The three priority thematic areas addressed are leadership, coordination and strategic systems.

impact on the work of other humanitarian agencies. For example, the use of armed escorts by one agency may negatively impact the perception of neutrality and impartiality of other humanitarian agencies in the same operational area. An agreed approach among the humanitarian community regarding the use of armed escorts can improve operations, mitigate security risks and identify an appropriate balance between a principled and pragmatic approach.

- *Identifying better solutions:* Focus on making use of the diversity that exists within the humanitarian community to discover alternatives and improve the effectiveness and impact of humanitarian assistance.

Lessons learned from the revision process for the guidelines on the use of armed escorts demonstrates that getting the right people around the table at the right time, with strong leadership and adequate time to share perspectives, learn from one another and discover areas of agreement to build upon, is key to achieving consensus. Given the degree of collective action that is required of the humanitarian community, we need to better equip ourselves to lead and manage consensus-building processes.

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Working it out on the ground: coordination between UNAMID Police and humanitarian actors in Darfur

Michael Fryer, Major-General, Retired

International police and Formed Police Units (FPUs) are deployed in a range of contexts and by a range of actors, including the UN, the European Union and the African Union (AU).¹ Their tasks include substituting for national law enforcement actors, empowering or building their capacity and monitoring their performance, as well as joint patrols and co-location with national police forces, crowd control and criminal investigations. These forces have also become increasingly involved in the protection of civilians under threat. This article assesses the experience of the police component of the UN/AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID), outlining the challenges it faced in its relations with other actors, including conflict parties and humanitarian agencies.

The context

UNAMID, a UN/AU hybrid mission, assumed operations in El Fashir, Darfur, on 31 December 2007, following the ‘rehatting’ of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Under UN Security Council Resolution 1769/2007, its main functions were to support implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) and to protect its own personnel and the civilian population. Its mandated strength was around 25,000 personnel, mainly military but also including a civilian component of up to 3,700 international police and 19 special police units with up to 2,660 officers. The Police Commissioner and his Deputy were deployed on 21 December 2007.

The security situation was extremely volatile. The DPA had been signed by just two of the many conflict parties, the government of Sudan and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) Minni Minnawi, meaning that there was effectively no

peace to keep. There was fighting between armed groups that had signed the DPA and those that had not, as well as tribal conflict, often related to longstanding competition over scarce pasture and water resources. Criminality, including carjacking, murder and robbery, was another significant source of insecurity. The presence of proxy forces backed by neighbouring Chad further complicated the situation. Firearms proliferated.

The UNAMID Police deployment also faced significant internal challenges. Approximately 1,300 AMIS Police were relocated to UNAMID, but most lacked proper pre-deployment training and did not comply with UN minimum standards. Some contributing countries deployed civilians for financial reasons. In addition, the morale of former AMIS officers was very low. They had not been paid for several months and were unable to undertake crime prevention patrols in the IDP camps because local IDP communities had little confidence in them. Many officers found the harsh living conditions and climate difficult to cope with.

Civilian protection

UNAMID Police were mandated to build the capacity of the national police, implement community policing and patrol the IDP camps. Protection of civilians (POC) was also part of the mandate. In operational terms UNAMID interpreted the three tiers of POC – protection through the political process, protection from physical violence (prevention/response) and protection through a protective environment (facilitation of humanitarian aid and legal protection) – as meaning protection from imminent threat, preventive measures and the strengthening of host state capacity.

UNAMID Police were in daily contact with affected communities, and with international and local NGOs. A healthy working relationship was fostered between UNAMID Police management and its civilian partners. Soon after UNAMID was established, the UNAMID Police Commissioner met with

¹ FPUs are mobile police units designed to provide support to UN operations and ensure the safety and security of UN personnel. They are generally deployed in higher-risk operations. See Summary Note, ‘Roundtable on Civil–Military Coordination: The Police, Humanitarians and the Protection of Civilians: Coordinating “Civilian” Contributions’, 1 March 2012, ECHO Headquarters, Brussels, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/events-documents/4896.pdf>.

representatives of international NGOs, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other UN agencies to discuss the relationship and establish ground rules for cooperation. This included agreeing to the timely sharing of information on incidents and trends to support the protection work of the police and humanitarian actors. Senior UNAMID officers also attended a meeting with humanitarian actors in Nyala where they were introduced to the UN Country Team (UNCT) and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). Lines of communication were established and UNAMID's daily operational report was shared with the UNAMID Humanitarian Liaison Office and with the civilian and military components of the mission.

The first priority was to re-establish daily patrols in the IDP camps. The strategy was in three phases: first, patrols from 08.00 to 16.00, then patrols from 06.00 to 24.00, and finally, in the third phase, around-the-clock patrols seven days a week. Phase 1 was implemented after negotiations with the IDP leadership and the Sudanese police. Patrols were conducted under military protection because no Formed Police Units were deployed and UNAMID Police were unarmed. As FPU started to arrive they took responsibility for protection inside the camps, with the military component of UNAMID patrolling the outer perimeter. In areas where FPUs were deployed, UNAMID Police could operate independently of the military. At sites without FPUs UNAMID Police had to rely on the UNAMID military for protection and the difficult and time-consuming process of coordinating movements and negotiating priorities with the military resulted in inconsistent UNAMID Police patrols in these areas. The three-phase strategy was eventually instituted in 13 main IDP camps.

Following consultation with humanitarian actors via the Humanitarian Liaison Office, regular patrols of firewood collection routes, markets and farming areas were established to help prevent attacks on civilians using them. Some patrols were conducted by UNAMID Police and military and some by fully integrated units consisting of police, military and civilian components. Patrols varied in range from 500km to 1,000km, and humanitarian partners were given an open invitation to join long-range patrols.

These patrols eventually helped to establish a safer environment for the affected population, and a good relationship between UNAMID Police and IDPs and their leadership in most of the main IDP camps. Daily interaction with humanitarian agencies also helped UNAMID Police to identify possible risks beforehand and to take the necessary preventive action. Meanwhile, Community Policing Centres (CPCs) were constructed in or near IDP camps. These acted



An Indonesian UNAMID police officer on patrol in Darfur

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as police posts from where patrols were conducted and complaints could be registered.

Capacity-building

The second pillar of the UNAMID Police mandate involved capacity-building of local law enforcement agencies. The government of Sudan had a national police force with its headquarters in Khartoum and regional HQs in Darfur, including in the areas where UNAMID Police were operating (Sector North (El Fashir), Sector South (Nyala) and Sector West (El Geneina)). The UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) also had a police component with a capacity-building mandate, and so close cooperation, coordination and communication between the two missions and the UNCT was necessary to standardise capacity-building programmes. One of the key challenges for UNAMID Police was how to balance the provision of support to the national police with the requirement to ensure that the police were held to account for violence and abuse.²

A training needs assessment of Sudanese government police in Darfur was conducted with all relevant stakeholders, including the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women (UNIFEM). Training curricula were developed and submitted to the government's police HQ in Khartoum, together with the CVs of the proposed UNAMID Police trainers. Approval was granted after five months and training commenced in all three sectors, in training facilities constructed by UNAMID. The UNAMID Police trainers, from Egypt, Jordan and Yemen, were chosen primarily because they had similar customs, languages and religious backgrounds to their Sudanese counterparts. Topics covered included community policing, human rights and gender-based violence, crime scene management, crime investigation principles, election security and the handling of suspects.

Capacity-building for the SLA Minni Minnawi was also conducted. While the SLM had a rudimentary police structure, officers were former military combatants with no police training or experience. A needs assessment was

² Summary note, 'Roundtable on Civil-Military Coordination'.

done in collaboration with the SLM leadership and other stakeholders, including UNDP and UNIFEM, which helped to shape the content and sequence of training modules. IDPs were also included in training and workshops.

Working together

A number of police interventions took place in consultation with and with assistance from the humanitarian community, different sections of UNAMID and the UNCT. In particular, UNAMID Police collaborated with humanitarian agencies on training for local law enforcement actors in human rights, gender-based violence, child protection and community policing. Humanitarian NGOs worked with UNAMID Police to support the establishment of Security Committees in IDP camps; the recruitment and training of community policing volunteers; and community activities such as soccer games and cleaning-up operations. UNAMID Police interacted daily with IDP leaders and communities, including through vehicle and foot patrols. In some instances UNAMID Police had greater engagement with local communities than humanitarian actors did and were therefore able to provide key information on protection risks and threats, and to relay requests for humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian agencies subsequently followed up on these concerns and requests directly with the communities affected, taking care that UNAMID Police understood the importance of not making commitments on behalf of humanitarian actors.

The good relationship and open dialogue between UNAMID Police and humanitarian agencies also enabled them to address major issues, such as the government's politically motivated plan to return IDPs to their areas of origin, more effectively. When patrolling designated return areas, UNAMID Police were able to investigate and

share information and analysis with the humanitarian community on security and other conditions for return. This enabled a shared understanding and analysis and consistent messaging and approaches with the Sudanese government.³ UNAMID Police were also involved in sensitising IDP communities on controversial issues such as the announcement of indictments of Sudanese government officials by the International Criminal Court and the outcome of Sudanese elections, to minimise the risk of unrest. An open invitation was also issued to the humanitarian community to make use of UNAMID Police convoys from Khartoum/El Obeid to El Fashir/Nyala to facilitate the movement of humanitarian aid into and within Darfur (only ICRC and WFP made use of the convoys).

Conclusion

From the beginning, UNAMID Police tried to establish open and transparent two-way communication with humanitarian actors, helping to reduce suspicion and manage expectations. Developing and maintaining a positive relationship between UNAMID Police and humanitarian agencies was particularly important because the operating environment for both was extremely complicated and difficult and the levels of risk and violence that the civilian population were facing were high. While problems and misunderstandings still arose, and no practical guidelines existed regarding how UNAMID Police should engage with humanitarians, building trust and mutual respect made it possible for both to work together constructively. This in turn ensured good information exchange, which helped humanitarians to do their job better and UNAMID Police to deliver on its mandate.

Mike Fryer was the first Police Commissioner for UNAMID.

³ Summary note, 'Roundtable on Civil-Military Coordination'.

Humanitarian civil-military coordination in the occupied Palestinian territory

Ruben Stewart and Ana Zaidenwerg

This article discusses how experience from the 2008 Israeli military operation in Gaza, Operation Cast Lead, resulted in important changes to humanitarian civil-military coordination strategies in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The civil-military component of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) is called COGAT (Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories), a small specialist unit with responsibility for the daily coordination of humanitarian and development activities with the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian population and international organisations in the oPt. COGAT has its own courses and career progression and, unlike many other militaries, which use reserve officers, is staffed by active duty officers and soldiers.

Lessons learned from recent IDF operations in Lebanon and Gaza suggest that, while COGAT was able to handle day-to-day coordination, it did not have sufficient capacity

to manage civil-military coordination during large-scale military operations. The IDF has, consequently, established dedicated coordination mechanisms, staffed by military personnel trained and deployed specifically to coordinate with humanitarian organisations. For their part, the UN and its NGO partners were also ad hoc in their engagement with the IDF – primarily sharing information on locations of UN facilities.

Operation Cast Lead

Operation Cast Lead began on 27 December 2008, when Israel launched a 22-day offensive in the Gaza Strip. The operating environment for humanitarian actors was complex. The closure of the borders with both Egypt and Israel resulted in the internal displacement of between 150,000 and 200,000 people at the height of the operation.¹ The Gaza Strip was effectively divided between the conflict

¹ OCHA – oPt, *Fragmented Lives: Humanitarian Overview 2011*, May 2012.



© Ana Zaidenweg

Coordinating with IDF officers near Gaza

parties; humanitarian convoys and ambulance movements originating in the southern part of the Gaza Strip (where the majority of relief items could enter) thus had to pass through at least two areas under Israeli control, three areas under Hamas control and contested areas in between. High population density (1.5 million people in an area of only 365km²) and security-related restrictions meant that the civilian population of Gaza and humanitarian actors shared a very small geographic space with belligerents, and as such were forced to coordinate closely with the military in order to function effectively on the ground.

Once Operation Cast Lead began, it quickly became apparent that more regular and formal coordination between the IDF and the humanitarian community was necessary. As a result, the UN deployed additional staff to Gaza and Jerusalem to manage engagement with the IDF. The IDF moved COGAT staff from the West Bank and other locations to work within military units inside Gaza to coordinate humanitarian assistance. Ten days into the operation, the IDF established, under emergency orders, a Joint Humanitarian Coordination Centre (JHCC) which answered directly to IDF Headquarters. The UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs were partners in the centre, which aimed 'to assist the organizations in carrying out and improving their work vis-a-vis the civilian population in Gaza'.² The decision to establish the centre was made partly in response to pressure from the humanitarian community, but also because of the IDF's interest in minimising civilian casualties and property damage (in accordance with IDF doctrine) and improving its public image. It was 'also due to the realization that, if a battalion does not have someone taking care of these

² OCHA – oPt, *Situation Report on the Humanitarian Situation in the Gaza Strip* – No. 10, 2009.

³ Anshel Pfeffer, 'IDF Warns Next Cast Lead "Urban Warfare"', Jewish Chronicle online, 29 December 2011.

matters, it will delay us [IDF] from carrying out our missions and hamper the army on a strategic level'.³

Coordination between the IDF and humanitarian organisations on the ground was the responsibility of 25 COGAT officers, who reported directly to the Brigadier General commanding the JHCC. These officers, mostly reservist colonels and majors from COGAT attached to the operational forces and headquarters inside Gaza, had responsibility for facilitating the humanitarian response. Being Arabic speakers they could communicate with Gaza residents and with the Palestinian employees of humanitarian organisations. COGAT officers also occasionally intervened during the fighting to resolve humanitarian access issues. In one example, a UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) convoy en route to southern Gaza to pick up humanitarian supplies was blocked by a tank. The JHCC contacted the COGAT officer closest to the commander responsible, who immediately ensured that the tank was moved and the convoy cleared to continue. Following a request from the UN and the diplomatic community, the IDF also initiated a daily three-hour ceasefire allowing the movement of relief convoys, the delivery of relief items to civilians surrounded by military forces and the recovery of bodies. This enabled the entry of over 1,500 truckloads of humanitarian supplies from Israel to Gaza and the movement of 500 trucks carrying humanitarian aid and 131 ambulances within Gaza. Despite these efforts problems still occurred. For example, on 8 January 2009 a UN convoy was shot at in an incident that Israeli officials acknowledged was probably due to a communications error.⁴

Subsequent developments

Hostilities ceased on 18 January 2009, when Israeli forces withdrew from Gaza. Three days later the JHCC was closed, with all future coordination between the IDF

⁴ Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Operation in Gaza: Factual and Legal Aspects*, 2009.

and international organisations to be handled through existing COGAT channels. However, as a result of the experience during Operation Cast Lead, the IDF, the UN and international NGOs all recognised that there was a need for enhanced humanitarian–military coordination during large-scale military operations. The IDF has since made a series of significant changes to its approach, and has made humanitarian affairs an integral part of its operations. It has assigned a Humanitarian Affairs Officer (IDF HAO) to every battalion, brigade and division as the deputy Operations Officer. The HAO's role is to promote the protection of civilians as an integral part of a commander's mission and increase the attention paid to civilian matters in operational planning. New combat guidelines have been developed outlining that the HAO is now responsible for advising the commanding officer and educating soldiers on the protection of civilians, property and infrastructure; the planning of humanitarian assistance; the coordination of humanitarian movements; and the documentation of humanitarian safeguards employed by the IDF.⁵ HAOs are experienced officers with extensive command experience,⁶ and they are put through intensive training and tests of their knowledge and skills in supporting humanitarian response.⁷

The UN and its partners also changed strategies of engagement with the IDF after the Cast Lead experience. The UN has developed a more comprehensive humanitarian Inter-Agency Contingency Plan, which includes an expanded humanitarian–military coordination mechanism, developed and tested in coordination with the IDF. The Access Coordination Unit (ACU) was established in 2008 to support the UN Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator in developing and implementing an access strategy aimed at facilitating the movement of humanitarian staff and goods. Following Cast Lead, the ACU, staffed by experienced personnel with Arabic and Hebrew language skills, leads humanitarian civil–military coordination in the oPt on behalf of the UN and its partners. It coordinates daily with the IDF and other key interlocutors to facilitate humanitarian access, and is a key feature of the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan for future large-scale emergencies. The ACU participates in all IDF HAO training at the COGAT School, delivering presentations on the role and functions of UN agencies and other humanitarian actors in the oPt and the modalities of and principles underpinning humanitarian action. The constructive relationship the ACU has built with the IDF not only facilitates current operations but also builds a solid foundation for the more intense civil–military coordination that will be needed during any future large-scale IDF military operations in the oPt.

The ACU's involvement in COGAT training is the cornerstone of its strategy. The objective of the dialogue with the IDF (as a belligerent) is to remind, encourage and

help it to fulfil its obligations to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian operations. Allowing ACU's liaison officers and the IDF's HAOs to engage, exchange ideas and understand their respective roles is essential to ensuring more constructive engagement between the IDF and humanitarian actors, to support more effective humanitarian operations and enhanced protection of civilians. Options for expanding joint training and interaction between the ACU and the IDF HAOs are currently being discussed, including the execution of joint drills for the evacuation of humanitarian personnel and access for humanitarian assistance during any escalation in conflict.

Conclusion

Operation Cast Lead shows that civil–military coordination in the oPt is best achieved by establishing clear channels of communication between the humanitarian community and COGAT at operational and headquarters levels. Ongoing dialogue has also resulted in agreed procedures and planning for augmented coordination between humanitarian actors and the IDF in the event of a large-scale emergency. The ACU has also established liaison with other Israeli security actors, such as the police and the Home Front Command, which is responsible for civil defence in Israel.

By creating the HAO function and embedding it at the operational level, the IDF has increased the number of officers tasked with dealing with affected populations and improved channels of communication in its own chain of command, as well as with humanitarian actors. The UN system has also incorporated lessons learnt during Cast Lead in its planning processes by developing a more comprehensive humanitarian Inter-Agency Contingency Plan and tasking the ACU with the civil–military coordination function. The central coordinating role of the ACU during emergencies at the operational level simplifies the UN system by channelling all humanitarian access requests through a specialised unit familiar with the HAO function and IDF operations in general.

This is a positive example of a military that has recognised the need to deploy extra capacities beyond standard civil–military coordination staff and mechanisms to engage with humanitarian operations. It is also an example of how humanitarian actors can organise themselves to engage with the military in an effective and coordinated manner. The ACU has developed highly effective coordination mechanisms, while consistent engagement between ACU staff, the IDF and COGAT officers on everything from training to operations helps to maintain trust and understanding, even when staff change. This model, consisting of a dedicated team of experienced staff tasked exclusively with engaging with the Israeli military and security institutions, should be considered in complex emergencies when coordinating humanitarian access with a national military that is party to the conflict.

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5 The State of Israel, *Gaza Operation Investigations: Second Update*, 19 July 2010.

6 Harriet Sherwood, 'Israeli Army To Get Humanitarian Affairs Officers in Wake of Gaza War', *The Guardian*, 21 July 2010.

7 Pfeffer, 'IDF Warns Next Cast Lead "Urban Warfare"'.

Towards more effective civil-military information-sharing in stabilisation contexts

Steven A. Zyck

Afghanistan has come to be seen as a laboratory for the development of civil-military coordination and information-sharing. However, while numerous information-sharing portals have been established, none has emerged as the single indispensable venue for coordination between civilian organisations and military actors. As this article explains, the limited uptake of such systems reflects three broad challenges: technical problems in the design of information-sharing systems; concerns among civilian organisations that sharing information with the military violates humanitarian principles and puts them at greater risk of attack; and the military's long-standing restrictions on sharing information.

Information-sharing portals for Afghanistan

Within Afghanistan, face-to-face coordination and information-sharing initially involved a Civil-Military Working Group and various initiatives designed by Regional Commands and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). These were frequently ad hoc and were unable to bring together all relevant stakeholders. Subsequently, a number of web-based platforms have been developed, including the Civil-Military Fusion Centre (CFC), the US military's RONNA-HarmonieWeb system, the US inter-governmental Protected Information Exchange (PIX, formerly Indure/Tabulae) and the All Partners Access Network (APAN) (see Table 1).

These systems approach information-sharing in very different ways. For instance, APAN uses discussion fora and document libraries built up by participants, a model similar to that employed by PIX and RONNA, while the CFC focuses more on distilling published information into short research reports. For the most part, these systems are intended to share information with all the stakeholders that use them, rather than allowing one specific individual or organisation to share information with another.

Challenges facing information-sharing portals

A number of technical challenges hinder effective information-sharing. Sites tend to require passwords, and several of the systems noted above only allow people to join if they are specifically invited or sponsored by a current user. Sites also tend to be poorly designed and ill-suited for individuals with relatively weak web connections. For instance, PIX includes an excellent mapping function, but it requires several minutes to load and is difficult to navigate. RONNA, while containing excellent information, is organised into several different sub-sites with different structures and security settings, making navigation cumbersome.

There are also concerns among civilian agencies about the implications of sharing information with the military, in

Table 1: Information-sharing platforms for Afghanistan

Name (with hyperlink)	Stakeholders	Types of information
All Partners Access Network (APAN) (https://community.apan.org/aix/default.aspx)	US and non-US government personnel, international organisations, NGOs and others; actual number of members is limited (less than 350)	Very limited: four 'forum' posts on Afghanistan and 15 documents
Civil-Military Fusion Centre (CFC) (https://www.cimicweb.org)	Fully 'open' website enables all stakeholders to access information	Social and Economic Development, Governance, Rule of Law, Humanitarian Affairs, Infrastructure and Security, plus databases including maps and province-level data
Protected Information Exchange (PIX) (https://www.pixtoday.net)	Accessible to those with an account, including US government personnel, ISAF member nations and NGOs	Maps, articles and 'wiki' pages with content extrapolated from members' contributions and available research
RONNA-HarmonieWeb (https://ronna-afghan.harmonieweb.org)	Mostly 'open' website enables stakeholders to access information; account-holders can post content and access some non-public resources	Development, Governance, Security and Transition, plus several issue-specific communities of practice (e.g. contracting, insurgent reintegration)

Sources: Organisations' websites, as of 3 September 2012.



terms of operational independence, neutrality and the safety of staff and beneficiaries. While online information-sharing tools were designed to sidestep face-to-face information sharing, sharing information or collaborating with the military in a web portal is not necessarily more permissible than doing so in a public forum, and civilian organisations cannot be confident that online information-sharing will not become known to armed groups. The Taliban, for instance, are increasingly web savvy and are likely to be aware of systems such as those noted here. In addition, military actors could make it known to Afghan communities or local leaders that they are receiving information from NGOs. Military forces in Afghanistan have demonstrated a tendency to boast about instances where they have cooperated with NGOs and other civilian organisations, and have in the past appropriated the logos of civilian organisations for use in presentations; accordingly, civilian agencies may have little confidence that they would handle web-based information sharing with the requisite degree of discretion.

Lastly, the military has frequently been unable or unwilling to use information-sharing systems given concerns regarding information security and a tendency to over-classify information. While senior military officers increasingly emphasise the need to share information with civilian organisations and local government institutions, there are few incentives to do so. A soldier who shares information risks severe repercussions if this is perceived as a violation of information security policies. While information disclosure officers have the authority to de-classify information in the interest of transparency and collaboration with civilian stakeholders, they are in exceedingly short supply. Nor would a typical UN or NGO worker in Afghanistan know whether the information they wanted existed in classified

sources, or how to engage with someone capable of de-classifying that information. As a result, 'civil-military' systems ultimately end up allowing the military to access civilian information without offering civilian stakeholders much in return. In fact, military stakeholders have not even used these systems to share information that they had agreed – within the Kabul-based Civil-Military Working Group – to supply to civilian counterparts, including reports concerning civilian casualties caused by international military forces and plans for military operations that could affect humanitarian personnel.

The challenges noted above have been exacerbated by the military's ownership of 'civil-military' portals and by the specific language used by military bodies when discussing information-sharing. Information-sharing systems are almost exclusively established and owned by military institutions or alliances, with no civilian involvement in their design, management or operation. Information-sharing has also been complicated by the use of syntax that is divisive or not accepted by civilian stakeholders. For instance, one relatively recent US military information-sharing initiative describes its function as 'full spectrum information sharing, timely assessments [and] appropriate lethal and non-lethal target development', an objective that civilian stakeholders would presumably find both unclear and objectionable.

Improving civil-military information-sharing

Civil-military information-sharing will continue to be pursued given that national governments and organisations such as NATO continue to emphasise joined-up, civil-military or comprehensive approaches to crisis response. It will also continue to face significant challenges, including a military incentive structure that complicates information-sharing as

well as humanitarian and development agencies that wish to operate in conflict-affected environments without being perceived as partisan. Given these obstacles, information-sharing will remain limited to those military bodies that are able to achieve two-way information flows, and to those civilian organisations that accept some degree of relatively discrete engagement with the military in stabilisation and reconstruction contexts. Hence, the following recommendations admittedly represent only a partial solution, applicable to a limited range of stakeholders.

- Ensure portals are established transparently and collaboratively. Civil-military information-sharing systems should be established through a collaborative process and should be 'owned' by a trusted entity. The United Nations, a collection of major bilateral donors or a private entity (e.g. a think tank or university) with a high level of credibility are all viable candidates. Once a host institution has been identified, it should lead a participatory process to collect the requirements and expectations of civilian and military stakeholders.
- Design the system to be user-friendly. Keep the information technology platform 'light' and easy to use. Complex structures and poor search functions are a core trap of many of the existing systems reviewed in this article. Few if any people in highly insecure contexts have the time to navigate and explore a virtual space replete with libraries, discussion forums and so on. By keeping information requirements structured and clear, users will be able to keep the system updated and find the information they require.
- Don't overlook the human element. Ensure that any information technology portal also includes a team of subject-matter experts. This secretariat would be able to consolidate information shared by civilian and military agencies in order to put together useful products, such as simple maps showing which organisations are involved in which sectors in which districts. One example is the Afghanistan Provincial Indicators (API) system produced by the CFC via its CimicWeb portal. The API consolidates data on development, governance and security for all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces from numerous public sources, including UN agencies and Afghan government institutions. Resources such as the API or the CFC's Afghanistan Map Library help to make information more accessible simply by organising it more effectively. It may be best to think of the secretariat as curators or librarians who are able to bring order and structure to information once the sheer volume being shared becomes too large to easily process or navigate.

Of course, such technical recommendations will not necessarily result in humanitarian organisations abandoning their attachment to neutrality or impartiality, or military officers opening the floodgates and releasing a cascade of sensitive information. That said, some useful steps can be taken to prepare the ground for civil-military information-sharing in the future. Firstly, humanitarian organisations must help the military to better understand why the principles of neutrality and impartiality to which most ascribe are important, so that military officers become

less vocal in proclaiming those instances in which they may receive information from particular civilian organisations. At present, many within the military continue to view humanitarian principles as principles for principles' sake, an obstructionist set of values that serves no practical purpose. They should be informed that perceived cooperation between NGOs and the military – bolstered by policymakers' and military officers' statements about joined-up, civil-military approaches to counter-insurgency – is one of several factors that have led to a sharp increase in attacks on aid workers in Afghanistan in recent years. While NGOs and others have previously conveyed such messages, they – and the military – need to keep emphasising this point given the size of military organisations and the high rates of turnover within the armed forces.

Secondly, the military must move beyond rhetoric that favours greater information-sharing, and should ensure that it gets the incentive structures right. Senior officers must take the lead on such issues rather than delegating them to information technology, civil affairs or public affairs personnel. Soldiers must be provided with new and clear regulations on what does and does not need to be classified. Those who over-classify information must be reprimanded, and those who share information that leads to positive outcomes should be rewarded and publicly praised for doing so. At the same time, additional information disclosure officers with the authority to de-classify documents should be put in place. Militaries must also establish well-advertised systems that can enable civilian organisations to identify the appropriate person to contact when they wish to seek information from the armed forces.

Thirdly, military institutions that request information from civilian agencies must be prepared, when requesting the information, to explain how it will be managed and for what purpose it will be used. Civilian organisations will be far less cautious about sharing information with the armed forces if they can be sure that it will be used for beneficial purposes, such as targeting reconstruction or humanitarian assistance to vulnerable communities in highly insecure areas, that cannot be reached by NGOs. Furthermore, they must monitor the use of that information, ensuring that it does not feed into intelligence or targeting processes, and the armed forces should be ready and willing to explain what ultimately came of information provided by civilian organisations. While perhaps a daunting task, this will be crucial in strengthening civil-military information-sharing.

None of the steps or measures recommended here will ultimately lead to the establishment of any universally trusted information-sharing system that is utilised by all stakeholders, and which enables everyone to obtain exactly the information they desire. There will always be gaps in knowledge and (often justified) mistrust between civilian and military stakeholders. That said, the ideas proposed here can incrementally move us in the right direction.

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Talking tactics: Kismayo, Somalia

Jessica Hatcher

Dialogue between military and civilian actors is problematic in Somalia, and no more so than in the southern port city of Kismayo, what was the Islamist group al-Shabaab's last remaining garrison. Considered the most complex urban space in the country, Kismayo is an important trade centre less than 200km from the Kenyan border, and the ultimate prize for the warring sub-clans in the region. After the fall of Siad Barre in 1991, the city was dominated by a succession of some of Somalia's most feared warlords, and most recently by al-Shabaab. The liberation of Kismayo, the fulcrum of al-Shabaab's economic activity in Somalia, has long been expected to deliver a fatal and decisive blow to the group. The Kenya-led regional coalition force that took control of the city in August this year has raised a number of concerns about best practice in civil-military coordination. Communication channels between civilian stakeholders and military actors have been problematic: humanitarian actors have risked compromising their neutrality and endangering local staff, military actors have risked jeopardising their operations and civilians in Kismayo have been liable to persecution. Even basic information-sharing, let alone effective cooperation, has been difficult.

In the capital Mogadishu, the problems involved in delivering humanitarian assistance have forced humanitarian actors to align themselves with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in order to reach people and address their needs. In Kismayo, where the situation is particularly fraught, it is generally agreed that taking assistance from the military could compromise humanitarian operations and create problems for local staff. But with heavy rains, major water and sanitation issues and a large displaced population, humanitarian agencies are asking whether at some point they need to reassess their position. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has stressed the need for humanitarian actors to remain independent of political and security processes. However, Russell Geekie, a spokesperson for OCHA, recently admitted to engaging in regular dialogue with 'a wide range of actors' (he did not specify which ones) to help reduce civilian casualties and suffering and to facilitate humanitarian access to those in need.

Battle lines

The operation to retake Kismayo seemed to take place with minimal loss of life: al-Shabaab withdrew and the Kenyans, largely re-hatted under the African Union, and Somali government troops moved in. But while negotiations took place in Nairobi over the future of Kismayo, a good deal of misleading information and speculation suggested little cooperation within the complex web of military and civilian actors.

At no point did the Kenyan military make it easy for humanitarians to operate. Early in 2012, OCHA in Nairobi was informed by an AU representative that the military operation in Kismayo would be a multinational AU undertaking. But by the time the UN's country team



Kenyan soldiers from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) on an armoured personnel carrier in Kismayo

for Somalia was told when the operation was likely to take place this was second- or third-hand information, according to a UN source. UN officials were informed that allied forces were to conduct a three-fold air, sea and land operation at the end of July. This was confirmed by Kenyan politicians, but by September the situation had not changed. During August and September, Kenya reportedly carried out isolated artillery strikes on al-Shabaab positions in the city, some of which they tried to deny. Elders in Kismayo called on Kenyan forces to stop shelling because they had no precise locations to target.

Representatives of the Kenyan military seemed to alternate between claiming responsibility for the operation in Kismayo and passing it off as an AMISOM task. In truth, while AMISOM was responsible for ground attacks, including those by Kenyan troops, Kenya's air and naval forces were not operating under the AMISOM banner; AMISOM was quick to point out that it had neither air nor naval capabilities. This resulted in confusion between international and foreign military forces regarding roles and responsibilities in Somalia. The knock-on effect was that humanitarians were unsure who they should be interacting with, civilians on the ground did not know who to trust and military actors sought to evade responsibility and blame others when things went wrong. While military actors worked on their approach without divulging their plans, it was the closed-door talks on the future of Kismayo, the outcome of which is still unclear, that were said to be what was holding the Kenyan assault back.

A key cause of concern for humanitarian actors was that no military force had sufficient intelligence of what was happening on the ground to minimise civilian casualties. In this, the distinction that has been drawn between Kenyan troops and AMISOM forces has been good for AMISOM's reputation. Reports suggest that the AU has worked hard to minimise civilian casualties, where possible using sniper fire and intelligence rather than shelling in the fight against al-Shabaab. The Kenyan invasion, however, has been less scrupulous. Kenyan forces made a slow start in October

2011, when their ground troops were literally bogged down in mud. Two weeks later a fighter jet struck an IDP camp in Jilib in south-central Somalia, prompting the evacuation of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) staff. 'We received intelligence that a top al-Shabaab leader was to visit a camp at Jilib so we conducted an air raid', a Kenyan army spokesperson told the BBC, before reports of civilian casualties emerged. At least five civilians died according to MSF, and another 45 were treated for shrapnel wounds. Kenya went on to deny responsibility for the bombing: a spokesperson said the jet had struck an al-Shabaab vehicle, which drove into the camp before exploding. In mid-July, a politician in Somalia, Mohamed Omar Geedi, voiced concerns about Kenyan airstrikes, which he said were killing and injuring livestock. In August, Human Rights Watch reported that three children and a pregnant woman had been killed after a Kenyan ship shelled Kismayo. In September, the Kenyan army confirmed that a Kenyan soldier had opened fire on civilians in a village 50km outside of Kismayo, killing six and seriously injuring two.

Unforeseen consequences

Organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are reluctant to discuss their work with warring parties before military action takes place, but steps are being taken to promote discussion afterwards. Kenya has set up a military commission of inquiry to look into violations of International Humanitarian Law. The commission has yet to produce results but is considered a positive starting point in a country where many of the political elite enjoy impunity and the security forces are rarely held to account. All of the various military actors involved in Kismayo stand accused of violating IHL with indiscriminate attacks on civilians. In the 12 months that followed the escalation of the conflict with al-Shabaab in August 2010, more than 4,000 civilian casualties were recorded, and over 1,000 deaths. The history of Somalia and its westerly neighbour, Ethiopia, is marked by suspicion, animosity and conflict, but neither country has ratified the Rome Statute so their forces are beyond the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Kenyans and Ugandans could be charged, but appeals have been made to the court before to probe possible war crimes in Somalia, and have not been prioritised.

International military interventions in Somalia have been plagued by unforeseen consequences. Many consider Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006 a significant contributing factor in the rise of al-Shabaab. One unanticipated outcome has been the increase in insecurity in towns where AMISOM has ousted al-Shabaab. Donors and aid agencies see the withdrawal of al-Shabaab as an opportunity, but they need to be aware of the risks inherent in this situation. Summary executions have been reported in two 'liberated' towns this year, and abuse against women is said to be on the rise in these areas. The security hold which so-called 'allied forces' have is temporary and ad hoc; allied forces carry out abuses by day, and al-Shabaab re-emerges at night.

For humanitarians, even if towns are fully under government control, delivering aid is not necessarily any easier since many of the rural areas surrounding towns remain in the hands of al-Shabaab or its sympathisers. AMISOM

has worked hard and done well to earn the support of the civilian population in Mogadishu. The challenge now is to achieve the same in Kismayo, and commentators believe that AMISOM's role will increasingly be that of a referee between local stakeholders. The humanitarian response is still hampered in the immediate term by restrictions imposed on international NGOs and UN agencies operating in Kismayo. Al-Shabaab started obstructing emergency food distributions by the ICRC in December last year, and made public a ban on the organisation's work in January. UN agencies were also banned from operating in the city. However, local partners have continued to work to meet needs.

In September, humanitarians had prepositioned emergency supplies around the city in preparation for an impending humanitarian crisis. Civilians had access to the Kismayo General Hospital, but this had extremely limited surgical capacity and was poorly stocked with even basic supplies. MSF, one of the few international NGOs allowed to continue with operations in Kismayo, ran a nutrition programme, but had no capacity for trauma care. The environment for healthcare in general has been extremely challenging: among other things al-Shabaab banned vaccinations and water chlorination (prohibitions that even members of the militant group struggled to justify). There was a risk that civilians could be trapped between fighting forces, further restricting their access to humanitarian assistance. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 800 people left the city between 30 August and 6 September in anticipation of war.

Even as al-Shabaab's insurgency in south-central Somalia appears to be coming to an end, problems are far from being resolved. Al-Shabaab's presence has guaranteed a degree of stability in Kismayo; now, competition for control of the city may inflame clan conflict. Given Kismayo's turbulent recent history, the authority of al-Shabaab may have represented a period of relative calm for the war-weary civilian population. This is a pivotal moment for Somalia. With al-Shabaab on the defensive, the deeply flawed presidential elections in September surprised everyone by producing a new leader, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who is commonly held to be honest and competent and has an extensive network of support amongst Somali civil society. The problems Somalia faces today are born of progress. The road to liberating Kismayo was by no means smooth, and with so many actors involved coordination was key. The lack of information-sharing between the various military actors and between the military and humanitarian agencies made it more difficult to minimise civilian casualties, and the lack of clear lines of command and accountability in relation to the Kenyan military further complicated matters. What is required now is ongoing cooperation between AMISOM, local leaders and the government, the creation of space for humanitarians to provide much-needed assistance while maintaining their independence from political and security processes, and to put the future of Somalia back in the hands of the Somalis, who may be sick of warlords and *jihadis*, but who are also sick of the West.

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'Remote management' in Somalia

Joe Belliveau

Core to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)'s approach to assistance is sending international staff into foreign contexts to work with, and usually direct, locally recruited national staff. Outsiders bring experience, leadership and technical skills, and are in a better position to 'witness' intolerable situations and speak out about them. International staff are also better able to resist local pressures for resource diversion, giving MSF greater confidence that donor money is being spent appropriately. For many within and outside MSF, this model is the only responsible option because the compromises assumed to be inherent in a remotely managed programme are unacceptable. MSF-Operational Center Amsterdam (MSF-OCA)'s experience in Somalia challenges this paradigm, and suggests that the specific remote management model developed in this context works well and does not entail unacceptable compromises. While remote management should never be a first choice, in some contexts it can be a viable operational alternative to the deployment of international staff.

Background

On 28 January 2008 three MSF employees, one local and two international, were killed by a roadside bomb in the Somali port city of Kismayo. The deaths prompted the withdrawal of all MSF international staff across Somalia. As the risk of deploying expatriates, at least permanently, became too great, the mission set about adapting to this new reality.

Remote management was not without precedent within MSF, but there was little documentation of lessons learnt, necessary preconditions and tools, protocols or strategies that could help guide the process in Somalia. The mission therefore started from scratch by identifying the following risks:

- Reduced control over resources, especially cash and consumable items.
- Declining medical quality.
- Limited or no programme expansion or adaptation, including emergency response.
- Increased risk to national staff, especially in senior positions.
- Impartiality could be compromised by local clan dynamics reflected in the staff corps.
- Limited or no *témoignage* (witnessing and speaking out on behalf of the affected population).

A system was subsequently developed to mitigate these risks, based on new and adapted tools and procedures. Gradually mission culture shifted and national staff, supported and held accountable by a mixed Somali, Kenyan and international Country Management Team (CMT) based in Nairobi, took greater ownership of programme activities.



© Audrey Giraud / MSF

MSF staff respond to the needs of IDPs on the outskirts of Mogadishu

The system

The remote management system is based on several key concepts:

- *Centralised decision-making.* To maximise control over resource flows and reduce the risks to national staff in the field, most resource-related decisions that would normally be taken at field level are instead taken by the CMT.
- *Micro-management and cross-checking.* The Nairobi CMT is much more closely involved in project details than CMTs in most other MSF missions. Information coming from the field, especially resource-related information, is cross-checked through other sources within and across departments.
- *Support and training.* Field staff are brought out to Nairobi (and in some cases sent to Europe) for meetings and training more frequently and for a wider range of topics than in other MSF-OCA missions. In 2011 and 2012, staff came to Nairobi (or were sent further abroad) 116 times.

Each support department – medical, logistics and finance/HR – has developed new ways of working to meet the particular demands of remote management, while continuing to use the same performance indicators as any other OCA mission. Medical staff based in Nairobi work very closely with their colleagues in the field. Daily contact, through email, phone and now video, is standard in order to track developments and coach, support and advise field staff. Weekly medical and surveillance reports are submitted, mortality reviews are conducted of all deaths, referrals are done in consultation with staff in Nairobi and exit interviews are conducted to help ensure that patients are receiving proper care. Patient registers are kept in duplicate, and individual files are monitored, either scanned and sent to Nairobi upon request or checked during visits. Prescriptions are checked for accuracy as well as to compare against drug consumption, and counter-signatures are required for external services like X-rays and lab work. For the two projects where international visits are possible, checklists are created to maximise the efficiency of visits, some of which last only a few hours.

There is a similar level of contact between Nairobi and field logistics staff, particularly around supply management. Stocks are reviewed weekly with monthly physical stock counts, and stocks are tracked digitally through the ‘shadow administration’ and approved from Nairobi down to hospital ward level. Medical consumption data is cross-checked with stock movement data to catch inconsistencies as well as to help avoid pipeline ruptures, for which a specific protocol is developed. Supply incident reports are written up to help learn from errors. Standard price and item lists, quotations and counter-signatures help control local purchasing, while supplier selection and payment is managed directly from Nairobi. Checklists are also used during international visits.

Financial control procedures are extensive, starting with exceptionally detailed line-by-line budget control. Staff in Nairobi approve all payments, orders and payroll adjustments. Local purchases are also approved in Nairobi after quotes have been obtained from pre-identified suppliers, using standard price lists drawn up after cross-checking prices from different suppliers in different locations. The cash is transferred directly to the supplier from Nairobi using a cash transfer order, minimising cash flow and increasing the potential for scrutiny. Receipts are sent to Nairobi on a weekly basis and analysed for inconsistencies. Checklists are also used by field staff to ensure that all tasks are completed, and to highlight any problems.

Most HR management decisions are made in Nairobi to reduce pressure on senior field staff and ensure consistency. Leave time, replacements during absences, casual labour and overtime are approved by staff in Nairobi. For unskilled staff, the mission has always asked the local administration or community elders for recruits in order to ensure an appropriate clan balance and deflect potential dissatisfaction away from MSF. For skilled staff, applicants are given an exam sent from and returned to Nairobi, and the best candidates are then interviewed from Nairobi. A rationalisation tool has also been created to allow comparison of staffing levels with current activities. Disciplinary action, including dismissal, is signed off by the

Head of Mission following a process of evidence-gathering and testimonies. Training is more frequent than normal, and covers a wider range of skills and categories of staff. Training is conducted in person in Nairobi and further abroad, via distance learning and where possible on the job. Trainees are tested before, during and after their sessions.

Evaluating remote management

An evaluation conducted in July 2012 by MSF’s internal resource auditor together with an external medical consultant concluded that the remote management model used in Somalia ‘leads to relevant programs, with good medical quality and control over resources comparable to regular projects’.¹ The extra checks and balances normally conducted by international staff in the field are largely compensated for by strong remote management procedures and extra scrutiny, and there is no systematic leakage or corruption on a noticeable scale. On the financial side, the evaluation concluded that control of financial resources was better than in many ‘normal’ missions, and that warehousing procedures and stock management were of a high standard. The quality of medical care was found to be comparable to, and sometimes better than, other MSF missions. Where dips in quality were observed corrective measures were applied. In terms of programme expansion and emergency response, since remote management started, two new hospital wards have been opened, as well as an under-12 out-patient service. Teams have managed a measles vaccination campaign, responded to measles, cholera and flooding emergencies within and outside existing facilities and scaled up to meet the spike in malnutrition during the 2011 famine, including in al-Shabaab-controlled areas. It is difficult to measure the degree to which national staff are at increased risk due to remote management, but locating resource-related decisions in Nairobi appears to have had a positive impact and so far there have been no major security incidents involving national staff.

It is equally difficult to measure the impartiality of our staff, although there is no evidence from exit interviews and patient register scans that particular groups have been excluded from assistance or discriminated against on clan or ethnic grounds. *Témoignage* is to some extent compromised by not having regular international staff presence on the ground, but the mission has nonetheless endeavoured to maintain a strong advocacy agenda. At the international level, the mission has been prolific in communicating to the public and to foreign governments about the condition of Somalis and the inadequate assistance they receive. In 2011, the mission produced over 40 public pieces including specific communications protesting against abuses faced by local civilians. And in Lower Juba, national staff successfully lobbied al-Shabaab for the expansion of activities during the crisis phase in 2011 (four new locations), passive vaccination and the return of confiscated therapeutic food.

Conclusion

The success of remote management in Somalia seems to be based on three key elements: a rigorous and transparent

¹ Sondorp and Ramshorst, *Somalia Remote Management Evaluation*, September 2012, p. 2

control system; the competence of national staff in the field, and their familiarity with MSF's principles and ways of working; and the high degree of ownership amongst national staff, who have a real stake in the mission's success and are motivated to go well beyond simply executing tasks. The remote management system is not airtight and improvements are continuously sought. Consumption data is now being cross-checked with stock movements at a more detailed level, and improvements are underway in prescription tracking, invoicing and staff evaluations. Video links are offering new means for recruitment, coaching, meetings and telemedicine. The system's greatest strength, though, is not in the procedures as such, but in the culture shift that has realigned roles and responsibilities and instilled a strong commitment at all levels to make it work.

Should remote management be adopted elsewhere? One factor that may be critical to the success of this approach in other contexts is the pre-existence of programmes with international staff in the field. National staff in Somalia were already familiar with MSF principles and protocols, and with absences of international staff due to insecurity, and this laid the groundwork for a shift to remote management that may not have been possible otherwise. The best we can say is that it is an acceptable system as it is currently implemented in Somalia, where the mission achieves very high impact in what is still one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

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The economics of early response and disaster resilience: lessons from Kenya

Catherine Fitzgibbon

In recent decades the drylands of the Horn of Africa have become one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. Drought in particular affects more people, more frequently than any other disaster. Drought periods were not always so disastrous but, combined with the region's underlying economic, social and environmental vulnerability, the impacts upon dryland inhabitants are extreme. Despite calls for greater investment in preparedness, early response and long-term resilience-building, the 2011 drought crisis in the region illustrates how this has not yet been translated into reality.

It is an intuitive belief that investment in early response and resilience-building in drought-prone communities is more cost-effective than funding ever-increasing humanitarian responses. Yet little solid data exists to support this claim. To this end the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) commissioned a study to examine the economic case for investment in early response and resilience-building in disaster-prone regions.¹ The study had two main components:

1. To compare the costs of three different approaches or 'storylines':
 - late humanitarian response
 - early humanitarian response
 - building resilience to disasters
2. To identify the types of interventions that provide the best value for money in building resilience to disasters.

The study looked at Kenya and Ethiopia, with a specific focus on the pastoral lowlands typical of many drought-affected areas in the wider region. This article briefly

outlines the findings of the economic analysis of the different scenarios from Kenya.

Approach to economic analysis

For each country the economic analysis was undertaken from both a top-down and a bottom-up perspective, using the three scenarios listed above. Top-down analysis was based on macro-economic data on emergency response and national drought eradication plans. The bottom-up analysis focused on a target community – in this case the 367,000 people that make up the Wajir southern grasslands pastoral household economy zone. Each of the three storylines was modelled using Household Economy Analysis (HEA) assessment data.² Annual estimated response costs were then modelled over 20 years (ten years in some cases) and discounted using a rate of 10%. It was also assumed that a high-magnitude drought occurs every five years. This was a conservative assumption, as droughts are estimated to have a 3–5-year return period in both countries.

Analysis of findings

The study concluded that early response is far more cost-effective than late humanitarian response. This was evident from the economic analysis for both countries from both the bottom-up and top-down perspective. As the figures show, storyline B2, which combines timely commercial destocking with other livestock support measures, is particularly cost-effective. The study found the figures to be consistent even when using highly conservative assumptions of costs and drought incidence.

² HEA is a livelihoods-based framework for analysing how people obtain the things they need to survive and prosper. It was designed to help determine people's food and non-food needs in response to an event such as drought, and is built up based on household-level evidence. The HEA data was used in conjunction with the herd dynamics model developed by the Food Economy Group (FEG), who formed part of the study team. The FEG study comprises one of the background reports.

¹ The report and related documents are on the DFID website at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/What-we-do/Key-Issues/Humanitarian-disasters-and-emergencies/Resilience/Economics-of-Early-Response-and-Resilience>.

Table 1: Summary of results for Kenya over 20 years (discounted)

US\$ million	Late response (A)	Early response (B1)	Early response (B2)	Resilience (C)
Bottom-up	\$606m	\$354m	\$214m	\$464m
Top-down	\$29,771m	\$22,330m	\$7,168m	\$9,168m

Note: Cost estimates are the sum of aid requirements, losses from animal deaths and response and resilience programme costs. The early response scenario was assessed in two ways. The first, B1, simply assumed 50% of excess adult animal deaths were avoided through commercial destocking. The second, B2, modelled a combination of commercial destocking and other early interventions (livestock, water, pasture and healthcare) that would further improve animal condition.

This finding is not a great surprise as it reinforces a very evident rationale. Early response ensures that assistance arrives before households have to resort to negative coping strategies such as selling productive assets like core breeding stock. In pastoral economies facilitating early destocking (via commercial sale) of quality animals emerges as a particularly effective way to reduce aid costs. If pastoral households can convert high-value animals into cash before their condition declines they can use the income to maintain the condition of their remaining animals and feed themselves without food aid.

Another key factor was the inflated cost of buying food aid during a crisis, as against buying it beforehand. The study estimated that food (and cash) transfers usually represent 60–80% of total humanitarian assistance, so the combined effect of purchasing cheaply earlier and reducing the number of people in need drastically reduces overall costs. This is an important finding in addressing the reluctance of many governments and donors to release humanitarian funds early in response to early warning reports for fear that they may be funding a ‘non-disaster’. In fact, the study points out that donors could mistakenly fund two early responses in Kenya, and seven in Ethiopia, before the cost matches that of even one late humanitarian response.

The more comprehensive storyline, C, which combines early response with resilience-building, was slightly more expensive than storyline B2. However, resilience-building also emerges as significantly cheaper than late response.³ Again this is not surprising as early response and resilience-building interventions both work to protect and build the asset base of vulnerable communities. In time this reduces the caseload of ‘vulnerable’ households that form the basis of humanitarian responses.

This being the case, why is there such limited investment in resilience-building? There are two key reasons. Firstly, investing in the key basic services and infrastructure that build resilience, such as water supplies, education and roads, is eye-wateringly expensive – in the short term. The Kenyan government, in common with others in the Horn of Africa, simply does not have these budgets to spare. Even if the money could be found, it is doubtful whether the political will exists to allocate it to the arid regions of Kenya, which are the most sparsely populated part of the country. Although there is an inherent understanding that such investments bring positive development gains, very little economic evidence exists to quantify the financial benefits and returns. The study recommends further work in this area. The second reason why resilience-building is not funded at the levels required is the fact that this cost must be added to the regular and significant costs of humanitarian response. This is because the number of vulnerable households dependent on food aid (drought year or no) would take some years to decline. This double-whammy of costs usually acts to undermine or reduce the ambition of any resilience-building plans.

The value for money of different resilience-building interventions

The second element of the study looked at the comparative value for money of different resilience-building activities regularly funded by donors. From a DFID perspective this entails examination of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness. The study did not involve a full cost–benefit analysis, but identified key issues in each sector. These are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Value for money

Sector and intervention	Kenya – Economy Cost per unit	Factors affecting efficiency (cost per output) and effectiveness (cost per outcome) of intervention
Food/cash		
Multi-year food/cash pipeline based on ‘live’ early warning/ food security data	US\$18–57 per person based on HEA modelling in drought and non-drought years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive payment mechanisms can significantly increase the efficiency of such transfers (i.e. smart cards/ e-vouchers) and the timeliness with which transfers can be delivered and scaled up and down. Ensuring that food and cash transfers are harmonised, fill a collectively assessed ‘gap’ and are not duplicated is essential to increase value for money. Early transfers in response to seasonal/external factors and the specific needs of different livelihood groups is likely to be more effective than long targeting processes that delay the transfer. Transfers improve households’ resilience to a specific crisis, but there is limited evidence to show that alone they build long-term resilience.

³ The costs of resilience are very difficult to estimate over a 20-year period. The bottom-up resilience calculations included livestock, water and education interventions.

Table 2: Value for money *(continued)*

Sector and intervention	Kenya – Economy Cost per unit	Factors affecting efficiency (cost per output) and effectiveness (cost per outcome) of intervention
Water and sanitation		
Establishing resilient community-based water systems	US\$8.40–41.80 per head (depending on size of community supported)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent, drought-proof water supplies are highly effective in building communities' resilience in arid and semi-arid areas. • Appropriate support to ensure that communities have the capacity to manage and maintain systems sustainably is essential. • More research is needed so that monitoring indicators and minimum standards can be established. • Government agencies should draw on the respective strengths of local and international NGOs/UN and government agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness with which community-based support for water programmes can maximise other benefits, including community governance/empowerment, health and nutrition and economic stimulation. • Some of the most efficient and effective water services in the Horn of Africa are provided by the private sector.
Livestock		
Early response package: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial destocking • Timely animal health campaigns • Pre-drought peace-building initiatives 	US\$10.49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock industry is currently the highest yielding agricultural use of the arid lands. Ensuring livestock values are maintained and realised is a highly effective way to build the resilience of livestock-dependent communities. • Although the early response approach emerges as cheaper per head, this is based on ad hoc rather than comprehensive coverage of commercial destocking. • Ultimately the comprehensive commercialisation of livestock producers via efficient livestock markets will be more effective in realising the value of more animals.
Longer-term resilience package		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded coverage of functioning livestock markets/marketing • On-going peace-building and conflict work • Establishment of comprehensive animal health care facilities • Livestock insurance schemes (where feasible) 	US\$23.48 per head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marginal pastoral producers require support to become more commercially orientated in selling, insuring and • Peace-building support provides excellent value for money and is most effective when combined with water and market interventions. • Pastoralists are willing and able to pay for animal health care services so long as they can realise the value of animals and operate as viable producers. This is most efficiently provided by the private sector so long as an enabling environment is in place, e.g. systematic provision of quality training (including facilities), quality controls on drug supply, supervision and ensuring private services are not undermined by free drugs and supplies. • Harmonise private sector delivery, e.g. vet services, with public sector policy and delivery.
Livelihood diversification		
Livelihood strengthening and diversification projects	US\$23–103 per head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency and effectiveness depend on how far the livelihood intervention increases household income and productivity relative to the initial cost/investment. Most interventions are not conceived from this perspective. • Most programmes fail to monitor beneficiary incomes or how far any income improvement translates into food security/resilience. If incomes generated are not sufficient to enable households to 'graduate' off regular or long-term food/cash handouts or other emergency relief then their effectiveness is undermined. • The timescale within which most programmes are implemented and monitored means that little is known about their long-term sustainability or success rate. • Long-term monitoring of all types of livelihood programmes (possibly by an external party) would assist in understanding the value for money of different interventions.

(continued)

Table 2: Value for money (*continued*)

Sector and intervention	Kenya – Economy Cost per unit	Factors affecting efficiency (cost per output) and effectiveness (cost per outcome) of intervention
Education		
Expanded provision of schools and teachers in arid areas to match national average	Capital costs per head US\$398 Annual revenue cost per head US\$17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong correlation between household income and education levels. • Areas with lowest school enrolment and completion rates are most food insecure and require the most humanitarian assistance following drought. • The construction of large numbers of formal schools is not necessarily the most effective way to educate dispersed or mobile rural populations. Funding required could be more efficiently spent on alternative approaches, e.g. community/outreach/mobile schools, boarding schools, bursaries to students to board elsewhere, radio education. • The value for money of education programmes in the arid lands must examine cost per head in relation to improvements in enrolment, completion and attainment rates. Improving the quality of teachers is likely to realise the greatest return on investment.
Roads/infrastructure		
Roads from high-potential areas to market centres in ASALs	US\$48 million per 100km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads are initially expensive but can stimulate economic growth by facilitating market integration. • Given the overall dearth of roads in arid areas, resilience-building should form the basis of any prioritisation criteria for deciding which roads to build first. • Evidence suggests that expanding roads and electricity to trading centres is more likely to help non-farm income-generating activities than expanding basic services (i.e. water and electricity) to every household.

Some general value for money issues emerged in all sectors. The same intervention may be more or less cost-effective depending on the specific context. Participatory approaches, unsurprisingly, were found to maximise benefits and hence provide better value for money. ‘Soft’ resilience measures that build human capital and skills that can be reapplied are often more cost-effective than ‘hard’ capital projects. For example, teaching soil and water conservation and water harvesting techniques provides longer-term benefits than the construction of a borehole without the appropriate management and technical support. Other factors affecting value for money included:

- Use of the private sector, which can ensure that private rather than public resources are used to build resilience. This is especially pertinent where communities already pay for services, such as animal health care.

- The value for money of an intervention may change depending on the timescale over which it is evaluated. In the longer term certain initially expensive investments can emerge as very good value for money. Short funding timeframes may not facilitate this. For example, a teacher training/up-skilling project may not last long enough for increases in attainment and hence the earning capacity of students to be monitored.
- An intervention that builds the resilience of one group may undermine the resilience of another; irrigation for agriculturalists, for instance, may reduce the grazing areas of pastoralists.

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Partnering in emergencies: lessons from ACF-USA's experience in Pakistan and Kenya

Paola Valdetaro, Daniel Nyabera, Huyen Tran, Joanna Friedman and Muriel Calo

Action Against Hunger (ACF-USA) has successfully worked through partnerships in responding to recent large-scale emergencies in Kenya and Pakistan. In addition to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian response, working in partnership facilitated a harmonised approach, with agreed programmatic responses, common needs assessments and tailored response analyses. Evaluations have shown that this approach improved coordination and information-sharing among agencies, catalysed debates around different approaches and how to harmonise them and enabled the exchange of technical expertise and lessons learned, not only among partnership members but across the wider humanitarian community. The partnership approach also enabled individual partners to leverage their expertise to influence host governments, donors and other key decision-makers.¹

Contexts: Pakistan and Kenya

Pakistan is prone to frequent humanitarian emergencies, from population displacements caused by military operations to drought, floods and earthquakes. Poor Pakistanis derive their income mainly from seasonal and irregular labour, which reduces their capacity to cope with shocks and renders them food insecure. Before the 2010 floods, which affected 14 million Pakistanis, the World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that 36% of the country's population of 180m was food insecure. That figure has since risen to 42%, and is likely to be higher still in the wake of further floods in 2011.

Some 28% of Kenya's 40m people are permanently food insecure, 14% are dependent on food aid and in half of the country's districts malnutrition rates have been alarmingly high (more than 15% global acute malnutrition (GAM)) for decades. Pastoral communities in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) that make up 80% of the country have become increasingly vulnerable as traditional coping mechanisms have weakened in the face of increasingly frequent and severe droughts. The 2008–2009 drought was particularly severe, destroying much of the livestock base and leading to acute food insecurity as food prices rose.

ACF's recent programmes in Pakistan and Kenya

ACF provided emergency food security, nutrition and water and sanitation responses following the floods of 2010 and 2011 in Pakistan. Six multi-sector interventions reached over 41,000 flood-affected households in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Sindh provinces. ACF carried out food security interventions in collaboration with other NGOs through two major partnerships, the Consortium of

British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA) and the Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance (PEFSA). Market-based approaches to food security interventions meant that coordination was required not only for assessments of needs and coverage, but also to ensure consistency in the values and intended uses of cash grants and vouchers.

ACF responded to the 2008 food price crisis and the 2008–2009 drought in Kenya through both standalone and integrated emergency and recovery-phase programmes in Northeastern and Rift Valley provinces, reaching 76,056 beneficiary households. ACF's response to the food crisis involves a drought and livelihood resilience programme known as the Arid and Marginal Lands Recovery Consortium (ARC). ACF also ran emergency water and sanitation and nutrition programmes in 2011 in drought-affected regions of the ASAL.

New approaches to coordinating emergency response

Pakistan

In 2010, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) funded the CBHA, a consortium of 15 UK-based humanitarian organisations, to 'pioneer new approaches to funding and resourcing' coordinated humanitarian responses. Six of these agencies – ACF, Save the Children, Oxfam GB, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), CARE and Concern – formed the 'CBHA ad hoc consortium for early recovery' in the wake of the 2010 floods in Pakistan, delivering a coordinated response to the crisis. The European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) was similarly interested in demonstrating the effectiveness of joint approaches to emergency response in the wake of the 2010 floods, and to that end encouraged partner agencies (ACF, Save the Children, Oxfam GB, the IRC, CARE and ACTED) to establish the PEFSA. While funding for the CBHA ad hoc consortium was not renewed due to the official end of the 2010 Pakistan emergency flood response period, PEFSA was extended into PEFSA II and the current PEFSA III, which will end in 2013. In order to capitalise on each NGO's strengths, PEFSA members were designated as cross-cutting focal points based on their areas of expertise: Save the Children for monitoring and evaluation, the IRC for gender mainstreaming, Oxfam for cash-based interventions and ACF for nutrition.

Over 60% of ACF's recent emergency response resources for Pakistan were channelled through partnerships. More than \$70m in assistance reached 259,750 households, 117,500 through the CBHA and 142,250 through PEFSA. ACF's budget represented 12% of the global budgets of the two alliances.

Kenya

The ARC, comprising ACF, Food for the Hungry Kenya, World Vision, CARE and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), was

¹ See Andy Featherstone, *CBHA Mid-Term Review*, February 2011; Henri Leturque, Raphael Beaujeu, Yasir Majeed and Saleema Saleem, *Evaluation of the CBHA Early Recovery Programme in Pakistan*, February 2012; and *Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance Lessons Learned*, May 2011.

awarded a three-year USAID/ OFDA grant in 2008 to address the food crisis in Kenya. The programme covered a large geographic area including the ASAL (Turkana, Marsabit, Moyale, Mandera, Wajir and Garissa districts), and Tharaka, Makeni and Malindi districts. The original 36-month ARC programme was extended until September 2012; it served 11,856 households (71,140 people), approximately 10% of the targeted vulnerable households. The total ARC budget was \$15.7m, of which 18% was managed by ACF. The programme strategy included both short-term actions to mitigate the effects of the food crisis and longer-term, more sustainable activities to strengthen and diversify livelihoods, primarily targeting pastoralists and farmers.



A CBHA beneficiary thumb-stamping a form before receiving payment

Partners formed the consortium on the basis of their comparative advantages and programmatic strengths. Each consortium partner had specific experience working in the ASAL and neighbouring pastoral areas and had particular thematic expertise. Five main thematic areas (animal health, markets and value chains, crop production, natural resource management and cash-based interventions) were covered in the emergency response programme, and the creation of the consortium ensured that there was adequate expertise across partners to address these five areas.

Emerging lessons from ACF's experience in Pakistan and Kenya

Alliances and consortia favour harmonised approaches and strategies, which can encourage consistency, but they can also limit the scope for flexibility and innovation by individual partners. PEFSA III partners work from a common logical framework and all agencies are expected to implement the same types of activities (e.g. cash grants, vouchers, cash for work) within their geographic areas of intervention, based on the results of the response analysis. This approach meant that some partners ventured outside of their typical methodology or areas of strength, for instance targeting based on nutritional risk rather than loss of livelihood, or implementing voucher-based programmes for the first time.

The harmonisation of approaches was achieved by assigning each member as a focal point for a particular cross-cutting issue, allowing alliance members to learn from each other through workshops, training and dissemination of specialised information. Learning exercises and discussion around cash disbursement methods in PEFSA led to the development of a strong relationship with a local financial partner, Tameer Bank. In Kenya, the

creation of technical working groups across ARC partners allowed for higher-quality interventions based on shared learning around best practices.

CBHA and PEFSA also prioritised discussion around cross-cutting issues such as gender, which also had to be addressed and mainstreamed across partner agencies. Following lessons learned in PEFSA II, the IRC developed a document on gender issues and cash transfers in Pakistan, and Oxfam produced a lessons-learned paper on a pilot to disburse cash through smart cards. ACF created a learning document in mainstreaming nutrition in FSL interventions.

Working in an alliance requires large investments of time and resources in coordination from both the lead agency and partner organisations. Experiences in Pakistan have also shown the need for strong leadership. PEFSA II, for example, had no chief of party. Agencies implemented their own activities independently, as they would have done had they not been working in partnership. Coordination meetings were ad hoc and often based on geographical proximity. Learning documents were created but without significant quality control. Partner agencies decided to hire a chief of party and create a joint monitoring and evaluation unit for PEFSA III, which is intended to standardise learning documents and ensure regular meetings.

The ARC in Kenya had no overarching monitoring framework or defined outcome and impact indicators, leading to difficulties in tracking and attributing long-term change. While output indicators for each sub-sector were clear, there was no agreement on methodology and common approaches for outcome and impact measurement by consortium members, nor was this required by USAID.

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To address this weakness, ARC engaged a full-time M&E Coordinator in the fourth phase of the programme, with the objective of harmonising data collection and monitoring key indicators, reporting and providing M&E technical support to all consortium members.

Donors in Pakistan have pointed to the efficiency and management capacity of consortia with respect to large grant disbursements. Dealing with one NGO partner instead of several helps donors to leverage resources and minimise administrative costs. Consortia can also add critical value to individual NGOs in terms of learning and advocacy initiatives. The development of a harmonised approach, the production of learning products such as case studies, reviews and lesson-learned documents derived from the testing of new approaches and a unique monitoring, evaluation and learning framework developed by multiple NGOs working on similar activities within the same context can provide greater breadth and depth of information than internal products from a single NGO.

This harmonised approach also provided the alliances and consortia with collective visibility and negotiation and advocacy capacity, enhancing their influence on decision-making processes at the country level. For example, the Kenya ARC consortium was able to provide significant information on the humanitarian situation in its operational areas following the declaration of a national state of disaster in 2011, which was then used to support analysis of drought impacts and inform and influence decision-making by key stakeholders, including the government and donors. Based on its experience the consortium plans to use its presence and reach in future phases in order to advocate around sound rangeland management strategies and pasture plans in the ASAL. Likewise the success of the piloted public–

private partnership between the county council of Isiolo and the Kenya Livestock Management Council in the management of livestock markets rehabilitated under the ARC has prompted other agencies involved in pastoralist livelihoods and programming in Northern Kenya to replicate the model. The partnership increased revenues to the country council, resulting in increased effectiveness of operations and maintenance activities and contributing to the sustainable management of livestock markets. In Pakistan, PEFSA became a reference point for cash-based interventions and nutrition mainstreaming in food security and livelihoods interventions. Oxfam and then ACF took on leadership of the Cash Working Group in Pakistan in the first and second phases of the alliance. The Cash Working Group built on the experience of PEFSA to develop policy for cash interventions and train and provide advice to members of the Food Security Cluster. The alliance also advocated for the effective mainstreaming of nutrition indicators in the Cluster. Due to the focus on nutrition mainstreaming in a high-profile partnership programme, the issue was mentioned frequently and given weight in the Food Security Cluster in which most of the partner agencies participated.

Conclusion

Working in partnership facilitated a harmonised approach to emergency response and recovery that contributed to improved coordination, enriched debates around harmonised approaches, improved information-sharing among agencies and generated exchange of each member's technical expertise and lessons learned, not only among partnership members but also across the wider humanitarian community. The partnership approach also provided a critical platform for influencing decision-making processes among humanitarian stakeholders by leveraging individual partners' thematic expertise and experience.

National NGOs and the cluster approach: the 'authority of format'

Matthew Serventy

Numerous evaluations have highlighted the poor engagement of national and local NGOs within clusters, listing practical concerns such as language, staffing and logistics barriers, but often without a thorough analysis of why national NGOs do not engage, or what their motivations are when they do. Two questions arise. If we focus on the motivating forces behind engagement, can we build better cluster relations with national NGO partners? And by creating a prescriptive format of participation, such as the cluster approach, have we actually created a barrier to true partnership? My research on cluster partner national NGOs from Somalia, Zimbabwe, Myanmar and Kyrgyzstan reveals common general trends as well as specific contextual motivations.

Patterns and motivations of engagement

Where clusters have been operating for some time (six months to two years in this study), national NGOs reported

being members of taskforces and co-chairing sub-clusters, and most described their level of involvement as very high. In the initial post-crisis period the number of participating national NGOs is generally low as awareness of the cluster system in general is low. Over time, clusters can diverge from their original intentions and may lose impetus. Conversely, the longer the cluster survives the greater the level of national NGO participation, both in numbers represented and in the depth of engagement, to the point where some NGOs expressed a desire for the clusters to continue as a permanent coordination tool.

Motivations for engagement include both what national NGOs can receive from the cluster and what they can provide, as their contextual advice ensures that populations can be reached efficiently. Information exchange was cited as an important motivation; it is important to let outsiders know what your national NGO is doing, while also keeping



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A meeting of the logistics cluster in Haiti

track of what activities others, in particular international agencies, are undertaking. Workshops and other training events become motivations to continue to engage, as well as possible avenues for material and financial assistance or technical advice. The study found some gently expressed negative comments about international technical experts importing ideas into a local context – ‘most of the experts, they have experience ... but the region is totally different, and that’s why they were having problems understanding the situation’.¹

Although funding was cited as a key motivation for joining a cluster, respondents unanimously reported that trying to access funding through the clusters was not working, and that national NGOs are expected to contribute information to funding appeals without necessarily seeing the benefits. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) specifically excludes national NGOs from applying for money directly, and the issue of funding needs to be handled more transparently by all parties. As always money equals power, and the funding power stays firmly in the hands of international agencies.

Personally and professionally, many respondents felt that they had gained significantly from cluster participation as it exposed them to the ‘bigger picture’ in emergency response. Some also found work, and used their participation ‘to tell people about myself and to advertise myself’.²

Benefits of engagement

National NGOs described numerous benefits from engaging with the clusters, including networking and an associated sense of legitimacy, knowledge exchange between members and internal changes within NGOs as a result of participation. Emergencies can encourage emergent coordination fora or stimulate the adaptation of existing

¹ Respondent in Kyrgyzstan.

² Respondent in Kyrgyzstan.

ones. In Myanmar the NGO network renewed its ‘policy, organisation systems and structure’ after exposure to clusters, and in Zimbabwe NGOs found that ‘partnerships that have developed within the cluster are also growing outside the cluster’.

In Kyrgyzstan, national NGOs coordinated in existing informal networks, but the introduction of the cluster approach made many aware of each other’s work for the first time, revealed their combined power and inspired national and local NGOs to come together in a formal coordination network, as ‘the cluster approach helped local NGOs to get more organised, and get into the one network’. NGOs found that, by banding together, they developed more credibility and legitimacy with their peers, and increased their influence over government decision-making. Developing legitimacy was felt to be an important benefit of cluster participation. In Somalia, one national NGO ‘is now known as an active NGO with a good reputation’, while the cluster also provides an opportunity to establish a track record in financial management.

Another important benefit for national NGOs is knowledge exchange: to the cluster from national NGOs regarding the local context, to national NGOs from international actors and in peer-to-peer exchanges. National NGOs provide details of the political, social and financial context, as well as local solutions, to international cluster members. The international community brings outside ideas, technologies and methods, in particular in management practice. As one representative from a national NGO in Zimbabwe put it: ‘these ideas which we are implementing now we take them from the cluster ... we decided ... to implement similar ideas following examples that we learnt from the cluster’. This opportunity to check in on each other’s projects and see how others are operating was ‘one of the best experiences from the clusters’,³

³ Respondent in Zimbabwe.

yet knowledge exchange is not always successful. In Zimbabwe, for example, a number of national NGOs were left out of workshops provided to identify shortfalls in financial skills, and no follow-up work was done to build capacity in financial management.

The personal and organisational changes that ensue after engaging with clusters are also important for national NGOs. In Kyrgyzstan an agricultural-based national NGO stated that, in general, the clusters encourage national NGOs to become 'more sophisticated, more organised', including new consideration of accountability. Although they have always attempted to persuade the government to be accountable, national NGOs now realise that 'we should be trying to be ... transparent to the local government and to our beneficiaries'. There is also growth in understanding of themselves as emergency responders, on top of their usual developmental roles. The most sustainable solutions to problems are generally locally generated, and the cluster approach succeeds where it offers knowledge exchange and encourages behavioural evolution.

Despite a certain level of mistrust among international organisations of the mandates and values of national NGOs, there was no discussion of humanitarian principles within the clusters. Explicit discussion of principles would clarify differences between organisations, and also take into account the reality and context of the specific situation. One national NGO in Somalia commented that they did not explicitly discuss principles 'since our objectives and that of most agencies are similar'. The technocratic face of clusters may result from many factors, including the technical background of many cluster coordinators and a lack of interest or ability in managing this type of discussion. However, discussion of principles need not be lofty or theoretical, but a very practical and daily part of emergency response.

Power and the authority of format

Despite being heavily engaged in clusters, national NGOs can still be removed from the true centre of decision-making power. In Zimbabwe there is a 'head-of-NGOs' group that meets bi-monthly. Only international NGOs and the UN are invited, and 'the influence lies in their hands, the hands of international organisations. This group decides what can be tackled in clusters'. In Kyrgyzstan, 'we see that ... these clusters belong to the cluster heads', despite the foundation of the cluster approach being one of partnership.

Antonio Donini speaks of partnership that is 'deceitfully participatory' and that 'promotes Western forms of organisation, concepts of management, standards of accountability, and the like'.⁴ On being asked whether her national NGO had the power to influence the way the cluster operated, one respondent in Somalia laughed and said 'No. I don't think so. Organisations don't feel ... like we can, and it's sort of a set kind of thing coming from whatever UN agency or international organisation that is running the cluster ... it's the authority of format ... There's a format and ... many organisations really tailor what they're doing with what the cluster has set'.

⁴ Antonio Donini, 'The Far Side: The Meta Functions of Humanitarianism in a Globalised World', *Disasters*, vol. 34, issue supplement s2.

The aid industry is built on predetermined formats – to report and describe emergencies, to apply for and report on funding and to manage intervention strategies. While standardised formats allow us to operate quickly in new contexts, we forget that they can hide the reality on the ground and predetermine our response. These formats dictate how we see, understand and react to emergencies, creating a neatly packaged world of humanitarian updates and dashboards that obscures the actual complex mess on the ground. Interventions designed on this basis run the risk of missing the real needs. The cluster approach in itself is a format, and some activities may not be undertaken simply because they do not fit neatly into the cluster structure; as one Somali NGO put it: 'we have learnt to structure our programmes the way clusters are structured'. Information is collected in assessments which answer predetermined questions, information is shared within prescribed formats and standardised situation reports advertise the situation globally. These documents become the reality that the cluster tackles. We cannot do away with frames and formats, nor do they have only negative consequences. However, we must remain aware of their existence and power, question their history and validity and appreciate that different formats may be better suited to different contexts.

Conclusion

National NGOs engage with clusters for a variety of reasons, personal, organisational and on principle. The benefits they see include networking, knowledge exchange and the opportunity for change. These networks in turn provide national NGOs with operational legitimacy and financial credibility. Focusing on these motivations and benefits should encourage broader engagement by national NGOs in the cluster approach. However, the 'authority of format' means that the cluster approach appears inflexible to national NGOs, and unable to adapt to contextual requirements and the needs and expectations of national actors. Instead, it is the national NGOs that have to adapt themselves to the clusters, and change their own internal structures. Humanitarian reform sought change, and we should focus on change that improves the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. National NGOs report beneficial change after engagement with clusters, but this change is entirely in line with the Western enterprise of humanitarian action.

We should employ forms of coordination that focus on what needs to be done and how it should be achieved within the context, rather than according to a pre-established format. While clusters may well fill this role, they need to remain adaptable, avoiding a 'cookie cutter' mentality that risks ignoring operational realities and opportunities. Humanitarian reform and the cluster approach were designed to increase predictability, when the complex nature of emergencies means that what is required is flexibility. Clusters must be created, adapted and managed with the operational context as their key guide.

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Humanitarian Practice Network

The Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience.

HPN's aim is to improve the performance of humanitarian action by contributing to individual and institutional learning.

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