



Module 7

Civilian Assistance

Lesson 24: Understanding Civilian Assistance defines different types of assistance and emphasises the gap between good intentions and unintended impacts when carrying out assistance.

Lesson 25: Coordinating Civilian Assistance identifies international guidance for civilians and military forces when working in the same complex environment.

This Module identifies helps civilians, military and police to understand different terminology, potential dangers and international guidance for coordinating civilian assistance.



Lesson 24

Understanding Civilian Assistance

Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Define key terms related to civilian assistance
- Recognise the distinctions between different forms of assistance, such as the difference between humanitarian assistance and development assistance
- Identify three ways that assistance impacts or relates to security
- Identify military and police roles in civilian-led humanitarian assistance
- Identify military and police reasons for engaging in civilian assistance
- Identify civilian concerns with military and police roles in civilian assistance
- Identify principles of effective development assistance
- Identify civil society principles for assistance
- Identify methods for reducing the negative impacts of assistance

This lesson defines and identifies the scope of civilian assistance. It explores some of the reasons why civilian assistance is important to different stakeholders. It also identifies principles and best practices for anticipating and avoiding unintended impacts. Good intentions behind civilian assistance do not always lead to good impacts.

1. Terminology

Lesson 8 identified legal frameworks that guide assistance for people in need. Civilian and military organisations use different terminology in reference to assistance given to local populations.

Civilian assistance or civil aid: This is a broad term used to describe all efforts to help civilians.

Disaster Assistance: Civilian assistance given during a natural disaster. Military and police may take on civilian roles to assist with the crisis.

Foreign Disaster Assistance: Some militaries use this term to describe a situation where a foreign military assists civilians in another country during a crisis.

Humanitarian Assistance: By definition, the primary objective of humanitarian assistance or aid is to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity through material or logistical assistance in response to natural disasters and man-made disasters.

Development Assistance: Also referred to as international aid, overseas aid, official development assistance (ODA), or foreign aid, supports the economic, environmental, social, and political development of developing countries.

Governance Assistance: A specific type of development assistance related to how society makes decisions and manages its resources. In most societies today, informal, non-state governance structures complement or exist outside of formal state governance.

The distinction between humanitarian assistance and development assistance is important. Humanitarian assistance requires strict operational requirements for neutrality, impartiality, independence and a sole goal of relieving human suffering. While humanitarian assistance addresses specific crises, development assistance provides longer-term efforts to transform the root causes of poverty, economic inequality, lack of healthcare and education, and other social problems. For this *Handbook*, the term “civilian assistance” is used to refer to both humanitarian and development assistance.

2. Relationship between Security and Assistance

There is a complex relationship between assistance and security. Scholars refer to a “security-development nexus” revealing that assistance to people in need can improve security, or it can fuel insecurity.¹¹⁵

- a. Development can weaken local support for violence by spreading the economic benefits of peace. Development can foster middle class and civil society actors that can put a brake on political violence.
- b. Development can discourage people who might use violence or join a violent group by addressing their perceived grievances and offering better economic alternatives.
- c. Development can empower local change agents who can make demands on their government for transparency and accountability.

3. Assistance Can Contribute to Insecurity and Fuel Support for Violence

No type of assistance, regardless of intent, has a purely neutral affect. All assistance creates winners and losers. Providing assistance is complex, and accompanying dangers can create harmful and counterproductive second and third order effects. Development experts and NGOs with decades of experience have recognised that despite their good intentions, they have often caused harm and increase local conflict by their lack of understanding of local culture and contexts. Despite the best of intentions, sometimes humanitarian and development assistance does more harm than good. International assistance, be it private or governmental, can undermine local initiative, disrupt local economies, and create a dependency trap.

- a. Any transfer of assistance resources into a community can foster corruption and unintentionally legitimate unpopular local leaders and armed groups.
- b. If development resources are perceived to benefit some groups but not others, development can exacerbate existing tensions between groups.
- c. External development assistance can free up local resources for war, relieving leaders of their responsibilities to provide basic services to citizens.
- d. If assistance is suddenly withheld or repeatedly used as a “stick” to punish support for political leaders, it can foster a backlash of support for groups that provide aid in the vacuum of international support.
- e. Inadequate development assistance funding relative to the population, geography and needs may lead dependency and inflated expectations and public frustration.

4. Sequencing of Assistance and Security

Some argue that security should come first, and assistance should follow. In counterinsurgency, for example, a “clear, hold, build” approach would see military efforts to clear and hold an area to come first, before the “build” approach which would include development assistance and governance efforts. Others

argue that security, development, and governance are interdependent. In most situations, civilian assistance and security efforts should be *simultaneous and not sequenced*.

5. Military Assistance for Humanitarian Purposes

Military forces conduct a range of activities in civilian sectors. Military leaders articulate a range of objectives for their involvement in civilian assistance. Some of these fit into the civilian definition of humanitarian assistance, aimed purely at relieving human suffering. Many civilians recognise that in the midst of a disaster or crisis, only the military has the logistical capacity to assist with infrastructure support and transportation of large-scale humanitarian assistance efforts. Many civilians also recognise that the military and police contribute to area security.

- Providing area security to help establish and maintain the basic conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance by civilian organisations
- Providing indirect assistance (transportation), logistical support or infrastructure support after natural disaster or manmade crisis as a last resort through civilian-led effort (See MCDA guidelines)

6. Military Civilian Assistance for Non-Humanitarian Purposes

Some civilian and military leaders ask military forces to take part in civilian assistance activities for non-humanitarian purposes. This list below identifies some of these purposes.

- Preparing forces to work abroad through training and exercise
- Improving visibility, access, and influence in support of broader military and national interests through security cooperation
- Providing capacity building and infrastructure support to help other countries prepare for crises
- Creating “peace dividends” to help publics see the impact of a peace process
- Building confidence in the good intentions of military forces; Generating collaborative relationships with a host nation’s civil society as well as positive public relations and goodwill
- Addressing perceived drivers of instability and the root causes of ideological extremism
- Extending the state’s local legitimacy and authority by gaining support and winning the loyalty of relevant communities or local elites
- Countering ideological support for terrorism
- Gaining access to and information about specific populations, including intelligence that can assist in enemy targeting

For example, the UN’s Quick Impact Project (QIPs) provide peacekeeping forces with funding to do civilian projects aimed at helping local communities and in turn, adding legitimacy to the presence of UN forces.¹¹⁶ International forces in Afghanistan built schools and health clinics to win support of local populations.

Some military personnel express concern that civilian tasks distract from military tasks. They would prefer to “stay in their lane” with activities that are purely military. They question the rationale for participating in civilian activities. In particular some see efforts to win the hearts and minds of local populations as “soft” and ineffective.

7. Civilian Concerns with Military Civilian Assistance

Some civilians view the increase in military-based civilian assistance activities as “instrumentalising assistance” for security purposes, thus distracting from civilian goals of poverty alleviation or relieving human suffering. A number of researchers have already documented a range of unintended consequences from complex peace operations and peacebuilding systems.¹¹⁷ These unintended effects include those that obstruct the goals of international development and peacebuilding programmes, and those that adversely impact local governments and populations.¹¹⁸ Civilians assert that military involvement in civilian activities has a variety of potential negative impacts, including the following:

- Decreases Trust and Access: Military involvement in civilian tasks or efforts to work with civilian populations can blur the distinction between civilians and combatants mandated by the Geneva Conventions. Such blurring can reduce the ability of civilian agencies to maintain trust with, and access to, people in need of assistance.
- Decreases Safety: Lack of distinction between civilians and military forces can result in threats to civilian beneficiaries and civilian staff.

- Undermines or Duplicates Civilian Assistance: Military involvement in civilian tasks to achieve short term political and security goals can also duplicate, undermine, or conflict with civilian activities, making assistance efforts less effective in the long term.
- Fuels Corruption, Conflict, and Unintended Impacts: Military assistance provided without proper oversight and accountability has the potential to fuel corruption or increase divisions, causing unintended second order impacts. In many instances military involvement in civilian activities have not taken adequate precautions to avoid negative impacts such as increased conflict and corruption.
- Is not cost effective: Deploying military personnel to conduct civilian assistance is often far more costly than civilian alternatives.

Civil-military guidance and coordination mechanisms are needed to address these potential negative consequences of military involvement in civilian assistance, and to allow dialogue between civilians and the military in those instances where civil-military cooperation and collaboration are appropriate and necessary.

The next two lessons on civil-military-police coordination and lessons identify the following principles for military support to civilian assistance that relate to these concerns.

8. Busan Principles for Effective Development Cooperation

The [Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation](#) build off a series of international conferences highlighting best practices of development assistance.

- Local ownership of development priorities by developing countries and supporting local capacity
- Focus on sustainable results of development assistance on eradicating poverty and reducing inequality
- Inclusive development partnerships characterised by openness, trust, and mutual respect and learning between the distinct and complementary roles of all assistance actors
- Transparency and accountability to each other and the intended beneficiaries of development cooperation as well as to our respective citizens, organisations, constituents and shareholders.

The [International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding](#) is another international process to identify standards for assistance to address the root causes of security challenges.

9. NGO and CSO Assistance Standards

Umbrella networks for NGOs aim to identify best practices, standards and accountability mechanisms. [The Sphere Project](#) is a global effort to establish minimum standards in humanitarian response.

In development assistance, NGOs insist HOW assistance is provided is more important than WHAT is provided. Civil society emphasises *empowerment* and *inclusion* of local people in the planning, design & delivery of efforts to *minimise human suffering and maximise the quality of life*. Civil society organisations focus on human security goals related to the safety of individuals and communities.

Focus on Local Goals: The goal of any form of assistance is to improve the lives of local people and not to achieve foreign political or economic goals. Assistance should build programmes from the community level, focusing on local aspirations and needs.

Local Ownership and Genuine Partnership: Locally identified needs provide guidance for NGOs. Assistance should be demand driven, not supply driven. Ideally, beneficiaries invite NGOs in. Principled NGOs never impose their programmes upon communities. Assistance works best when national staff with local knowledge hold key leadership positions within the NGO. While there is a clear trend towards international NGOs hiring local people as staff members, few NGOs actually provide direct funding to locally-led independent institutions. To the extent possible, assistance should ensure local people are in charge of programme decisions that affect their communities.

Local Accountability and Sustainability: Assistance should be accountable to both donors and local beneficiaries. The objectives and budgets of any assistance should be transparent so that they can be understood and examined by local governments and communities. NGOs are accountable for the positive and negative impacts of their assistance efforts. They are responsible for monitoring, evaluating programmes and redesigning their plans if their assistance efforts cause harm. All programmes should be for sustainable.

CSOs met in Istanbul, Turkey in 2010 to outline “Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles.” These principles guide the work and practices of civil society organisations in both peaceful and conflict situations, in different areas of work from grassroots to policy advocacy, and in a continuum from humanitarian emergencies to long-term development.

- Respect and promote human rights and social justice.
- Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls’ rights.
- Focus on people’s empowerment, democratic ownership and participation, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalised.
- Promote environmental sustainability with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.
- Practice transparency, accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.
- Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity with other CSOs and development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organisational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.
- Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities.
- Commit to realising positive sustainable change, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.

10. “Do No Harm” Approach

Assistance is never simple or inherently good. All assistance efforts change dynamics in the local context. All forms of assistance have frequent unintended consequences, also known as second order effects. There are no completely neutral assistance interventions. When assistance is given without a thorough understanding of the local conflicts and divisions between groups, assistance can easily and frequently create further conflict or do more harm than good.¹¹⁹ Most civil society organizations, including NGOs, have taken steps to anticipate and mitigate any negative impacts through specialised *Do No Harm* training that enables them to provide conflict-sensitive assistance.

Conflict Sensitivity is an approach to programming and policymaking that recognises the potential influence for any type of intervention to cause harm. It is also referred to as “*Do No Harm*.” Conflict-sensitive policies, programmes and projects aim to minimise unintentional negative impacts that may drive conflict and cause further social divisions while maximising positive impacts on the context that mitigate conflict and bridge social divides. Conflict assessment and self-assessment research is central to conflict sensitive policies, programmes and projects in human rights, humanitarian assistance, development and related efforts.

Lesson 13 on Conflict Assessment Tools outlines how the Do No Harm method for assessment of context works to reduce unintended consequences and improve the design of programmes to foster resilience. In addition, when bringing aid resources into a complex operational environment, Do No Harm approaches strive to be aware of the following five dangers:¹²⁰

- a. Theft: Armed groups may steal assistance to support their forces or to sell to raise money to buy weapons.
- b. Market Effects: Aid may undermine the local civilian economy by making it difficult for local producers to find a market for their goods and reinforce the war economy where people benefit from the continuation of violence.
- c. Distributional effects: Assistance given to some groups and not to others can reinforce lines of conflict and increase divisions between groups.
- d. Substitution Effects: Foreign assistance can substitute for local resources held by the government or armed opposition groups that would have been used to meet civilian needs, thus freeing up resources needed to continue to wage war and making it possible for local governments to not provide for its own citizens. Donor driven assistance can also discourage local volunteerism and create a brain drain of staff toward international efforts rather than local, national government and non-profit agencies.
- e. Legitimisation Effects: Assistance can unintentionally provide legitimacy to armed groups on all sides of a conflict who control territory where assistance is provided. When NGOs engage with such groups to demand access to a given territory, they accept them as the “de-facto” authorities, although the government or other actors may still be in control of the affected area.

For example, when security forces go into a community and build a school or hire a contractor to build a school, a range of unintended impacts could occur.

- It could be a disincentive for participation in programmes that require volunteers.
- It could be inadvertently placed on land that privileges one group within the community.
- It could bring in resources to the community that are siphoned off by contractors, fuelling corruption, or worse, end up in the hands of violent groups.

“Do no harm” is a commitment that all groups offering assistance can avoid harming others intentionally or unintentionally by ensuring all programmes, particularly transfers of resources, are sensitive to dynamics in local conflicts and divisions.

11. Conflict-Sensitive Assistance

A conflict sensitive approach to assistance examines whether there is an inclusive and transparent process for designing the assistance programme, involving local leadership, if not input, into decision-making at every possible step, from design of the project to who is involved to where and when it takes place and how it is evaluated. Conflict sensitive assistance asks, “How will the assistance exhibit caution in every step so that it does not inadvertently increase tensions or re-affirm existing power structures and divisions between groups?” A conflict sensitive design of any type of assistance effort continually questions the following:¹²¹

- a. Where will the assistance take place? Will those who live further away resent the geographical location of the project? Will there be a local office for the project? Will the location of this office favour one side of the conflict? How will local people perceive the location of and standard of living at the office in relation to the standard of living of local people?
- b. Where will resources for the assistance come from? Will funds be used to buy local goods and services? How will decisions be made about which local vendors are used? Will they come from all sides of the conflict?
- c. Who will benefit from the assistance? Will those left out of the project resent those who benefit or those who helped them? Is there a way of structuring the project so that neighbouring communities can also benefit at some point?
- d. Who will staff the assistance? Do they represent people from all sides of the conflict? Will those not represented resent those who are? Will all staff be evacuated if violence should take place? If not, how will security decisions be made and prepared for ahead of time?
- e. Why is the assistance being provided? Are the goals of the assistance transparent?
- f. What will the assistance impact? How might the project be negatively impacted by the conflict-affected context? How might the context be negatively affected by the peacebuilding effort?
- g. How will resources be brought into the local context to support the assistance? What intended or unintended impacts will these financial, material, or human resources have on the local context?
- h. When will the assistance take place? Will some people be left out because of the time of day or year when it will happen?

SUMMARY

Civilian assistance will be an important set of activities in any complex environment. Many different stakeholders will be providing civilian assistance. This lesson surveyed the different forms of civilian assistance. It also outlined the tensions between civilian, military and police roles in civilian assistance. For all stakeholders, there is often a gap between the good intentions and unintended impacts of civilian assistance. This lesson described the standards and principles for civilian assistance that help to mitigate, anticipate and prevent unintended impacts.

Citations

¹¹⁵ See the following publications for a discussion on the relationship between civilian assistance and security: Paul Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler, *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*, (Washington DC: The World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 2355, 2002).

Kim Cragin and Peter Chalk. *Terrorism and Development: Using Social and Economic Development to Inhibit a Resurgence of Terrorism*, (Washington, DC: RAND, 2003).

Lael Brainard and Derek Chollet. Editors. *Too Poor for Peace?* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2007).

Mark Halle. Sonia Peña Moreno. Sebastian Winkler. Editors. *Trade, Aid, and Security*, (London: Earthscan, 2007).

Coralie Bryant and Christina Kappaz. *Reducing Poverty, Building Peace*. (West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 2005).

Lael Brainard, editor, *Security By Other Means*. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2007).

¹¹⁶ "Quick Impact Projects – A tool for confidence-building" in *Civil Affairs Handbook. United National Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support*, (New York: United Nations. 12 March 2012).

¹¹⁷ See Aoi, Chiyuki, Thakur, Ramesh Chandra, De Coning, Cedric. Eds. *Unintended Consequences of Peacekeeping Operations*, (New York: United Nations University Press, 2007).

¹¹⁸ Hull, Cecilia, Mikael Eriksson, Justin MacDermott, Fanny Rudén and Annica Waleij, *Managing Unintended Consequences of Peace Support Operations*, (Stockholm, Sweden: FOI Swedish Defence Research Agency, December 2009).

¹¹⁹ Mary Anderson. *Do No Harm: How Aid can Support Peace - or War*, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010).

¹²⁰ See CDA Collaborative Learning Projects for more information on this training programme on conflict sensitivity and "Do No Harm," <http://www.cdacollaborative.org/programs/do-no-harm/>, accessed October 2015.

¹²¹ Excerpted from Schirch, Lisa. *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*. Kumarian Press, 2013.

Lesson 24

Learning Exercises

Anchor

10 minutes

To begin the lesson, anchor the content in this lesson with a series of questions:

- What is one experience you have had in your life where someone else offered you assistance when you were in need?
- Based on your experiences, what do you think are the links between civilian assistance – helping local populations – and security?

Add

20 minutes

Present the PowerPoint slides or ask participants to discuss the lesson readings in a small group.

Apply

25 minutes

The goal of this exercise is to understand the role of civilian assistance in a complex environment. An earthquake occurs in each scenario. It is now eight months after the humanitarian crisis. The government declares a shift from humanitarian assistance to development assistance. The military had a significant role in humanitarian assistance. The Ministry of Interior announces that \$300 million in remaining funds for assisting civilians in recovering from the earthquake will be channelled through military forces to build positive relationships with citizens and counter violent extremism.

Each scenario stakeholder team should assess their reaction to this announcement. Each group has thirty minutes to develop an initial response and to negotiate with other stakeholders to develop a plan for how remaining civic assistance funds should be spent. Groups may continue to discuss internally their own plan, or work with other stakeholders to reach a joint plan. Then, each stakeholder team or group of teams has two minutes to outline their plan and/or to oppose the plans of other groups.

Debrief with open questions about the challenges and trade-offs in this role-play.

Away

5 minutes

In a large group, participants can discuss this question:

- What will I take away from this lesson on civilian assistance that might impact the way I do my work in the future?



Lesson 25

Coordinating Civilian Assistance

Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify the current international guidance for how civilians, military and police relate to each other in complex environments
- Identify the most appropriate roles for military, police and other civil defence in civilian assistance
- Identify the limits on the use of foreign military, police and other civil defence assets in humanitarian assistance
- Identify the principles for the use of military escorts, police or civil defence forces by humanitarian organisations and other civil society organisations

This lesson describes official global guidance on humanitarian assistance. Many of the principles in this guidance are relevant to other, non-humanitarian forms of civil-military-police coordination in civilian assistance. Civilian government and civil society organisations may need to coordinate with military and police in a range of civilian assistance activities. This lesson identifies common principles and practices for coordination on civilian assistance.

1. Normative Principles from International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL)

IHL and IHRL, described in Module 2/Lesson 8, provide a foundation for civil-military-police coordination in complex environments. IHL principles are a foundation for all civil-military-police guidance and coordination, in all regions where IHL is applicable.

Distinguish between Civilian and Military/Police/Civilian Defence: The IHL principle of distinction refers to armed forces making a distinction between civilians and combatants and between civilian objects (such as hospitals) and military or police objects (such as military or police training centres). Recognise that when military personnel engage in civilian activities this may blur the lines between civilians and military targets and can place civilians at risk. Civilians should never be asked to wear military or police uniforms and military and police personnel should refrain from presenting themselves as NGOs or humanitarians.

- Be aware that direct contact between military, police, and civilian personnel can cause suspicion and may contribute to armed groups attacking civilians or civilian programmes.
- Military, police and civilian agencies should arrange all visits with each other by prior contact over phone or email.
- Conduct a risk analysis to identify potential risk factors for participating in a coordination mechanism and how this will impact local perceptions of civilian efforts.

Practice the principle of proportion: The IHL principle of proportion refers to armed forces ensuring that any harm caused to civilians or civilian property must be proportional and not excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated by an attack on a military or police objective. The benefit of a military or police programme in civilian assistance– such as gathering intelligence or building confidence in the security mission - must be proportional to the potential harm to civilians. For example, the benefits must be weighed against the potential for harm to civilian populations or civil society if military-based assistance increases the chance that other armed groups may view civilian beneficiaries of assistance as “soft targets.”

Practice the principle of precaution: The IHL principle of precaution refers to the duty of each party to the conflict to take safety measures to protect civilians. Armed forces need to take into account the presence of civilians prior to any attack or security operation. Military, police and civilians should take safety measures for the protection of civilians in lethal and non-lethal military and police activities. Military and police efforts in civilian assistance should anticipate potential lethal negative impacts on civilian beneficiaries and civilian projects.

2. IASC Humanitarian Policy and Guidance

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) coordinates the development of guidelines on humanitarian civil-military coordination.¹²² This global coordination body for humanitarian action, mandated by the UN General Assembly, has established non-binding guidelines relating to the use of military, police, and other civil defence assets and other aspects of civil-military relations. It aims to assist humanitarian, military, police, and civil defence professionals to deal with civil-military-police coordination on civilian assistance in a manner that respects and appropriately reflects humanitarian concerns at the strategic, operational and tactical levels, in accordance with international law, standards and principles.

The IASC plays an important role to develop and promote policy and guidance on issues related to humanitarian civil-military coordination.¹²³ Some UN Member States contributed to the *Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief*¹²⁴ (also known as the *Oslo Guidelines* or *MCDA*), which now form a part of IASC guidance on civil-military relations. Individual countries have also adopted their own humanitarian civil-military guidelines. IASC policy and guidance¹²⁵ includes guidance on a variety of topics, including:¹²⁶

- a. Operational Civil-Military Guidance
- b. Guidelines for Humanitarian Organisations on the Use of Armed Escorts
- c. The Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Humanitarian Action (MCDA)

The IASC “Operational Civil-Military Guidance” and Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts apply to both foreign and national military forces engaged in civilian assistance. Affected states have the responsibility to respond to the humanitarian needs of their citizens with all civilian and military assets. National military assets of the country experiencing a humanitarian crisis have an appropriate role in responding to a crisis. They may be the first-responders. But even national military forces should consider the potential negative impacts of their involvement in direct humanitarian assistance and instead consider the most complementary roles of military support to humanitarian assistance.

3. Military, Police, and Civil Defence Roles in Humanitarian Assistance

The IASC Guidelines on *The Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Humanitarian Action* (MCDA), also known as the “Oslo Guidelines,” identify that military, police, and civil defence forces can

best contribute to humanitarian assistance through infrastructure support (building a bridge or a road) or indirect assistance (transporting humanitarian assistance, providing water or clearing mines). Direct assistance, such as handing out nutritional biscuits or providing emergency medical care, is best provided by humanitarian agencies that practice humanitarian principles and already have trusting relationships with local communities. Military and civil defence assets should be used for direct assistance only in situations of last resort, determined on a case-by-case basis.

Direct Assistance is the face-to-face distribution of goods and services, such as handing out a nutritional cookie.

Indirect Assistance is at least one step removed from the population and involves transporting relief goods or relief personnel, for example, with military trucks.

Infrastructure Support involves providing general services such as construction, airspace management, and power generation that facilitate relief, but are not necessarily visible to or solely for the benefit of the affected population, such as building or repairing a road or bridge.

Figure 59: IASC Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence

Appropriate Relief Tasks of Military Actors
- based on missions

Availability and impartiality of forces decreases →

Mission of Military Humanitarian Tasks	Peaceful	Peace & Security Activities		Combat
		Peacekeeping	Peace Enforcement	
Direct	Maybe	Maybe	No	No
Indirect	Yes	Maybe	Maybe	No
Infrastructure Support	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Maybe

↓ Visibility of task decreases

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In some circumstances, NGOs may assess conditions to be appropriate for military forces to provide the following kinds of complementary activities:

- Enhancing area security, for example through long- and short-range patrols, so that humanitarian organisations can travel and work in safe environments.
- Providing security briefings to inform NGOs of potential threats such as land mines, or insecure areas so that NGOs can make informed decisions about where they work and how they travel to provide humanitarian assistance.
- Providing indirect assistance, such as providing transportation of humanitarian assistance to warehouses where NGOs and other humanitarian organisations can then provide the direct assistance. Military logistical skills are a complementary asset to NGO skills in direct assistance.
- Providing infrastructure support such as repairing bridges or roads that are necessary for delivering humanitarian assistance, particularly access to remote locations or ports. Military engineering skills are a complementary asset to NGO direct assistance skills.

Every form of military assistance to humanitarian activities should be assessed for potential unintended impacts that might occur if civilians or civilian objects come to be seen as part of a military operation. This may put them at risk of attack by armed opposition groups.

4. Use of Military Assets

The IASC guidelines also caution against any use of military and civil defence assets for direct humanitarian assistance because this can bring unintended harmful consequences. There may be increased security risks for those people directly receiving humanitarian aid from military forces and there may be increased risks to aid workers for direct cooperation with military forces.

International standards for humanitarian assistance from the IASC therefore recommend that military forces should engage in humanitarian assistance when it is a demand-driven response to locally identified humanitarian needs and not when it is supply-driven to achieve political or military goals established by foreign forces.

Military forces should not provide direct humanitarian assistance unless it meets the criteria set out in the *IASC Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) in Disaster Relief*, also referred to as the *Oslo Guidelines* and the *MCDA Guidelines for Complex Emergencies*. The U.S. was part of the drafting committee for these guidelines and approved them.

Humanitarian assistance should be as civilian as possible and as military as necessary. Any humanitarian operation using military assets must retain its civilian nature and character, making a clear distinction between military assets used for humanitarian purposes and those used for military purposes. The *Oslo Guidelines* state that military forces should participate in humanitarian assistance only under the following circumstances:

- Last resort: When the military has unique capability and no appropriate civilian resources exist;
- Timeliness: When the urgency of the task at hand demands immediate action;
- Civilian Control: When there is civilian control over the use of military assets;
- Time-Limited: When the use of military assets is limited in time and scale.

The principle of last resort has been further defined as including the following characteristics:

- A specific capability or asset requirement that cannot be met with available civilian assets has been identified;
- Foreign military and civil defence assets would help meet the requirement and provide unique advantages in terms of capability, availability, and timeliness;
- Foreign military and civil defence assets would complement civilian capabilities.

An example of last resort was when military forces coordinated the opening of the airport after the 2010 Haiti earthquake or provided sea transport and heavy lift to reach isolated areas after the 2013 hurricane in the Philippines. In the midst of on-going hostilities, foreign military support for humanitarian assistance inside an active military theatre should only be considered when there is a highly vulnerable population that cannot be assisted or accessed by any other means. Preference should be given to military assets of parties not engaged in combat operations.

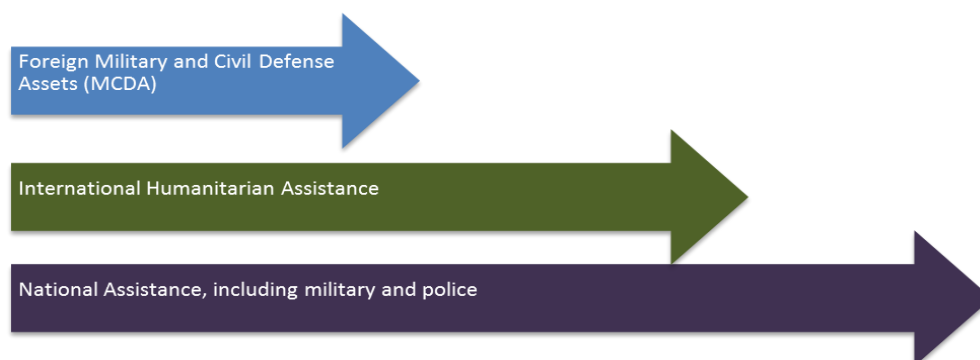


Figure 60: Humanitarian Assistance Roles Over Time

The diagram above illustrates the short-term role of foreign military forces relative to international civilian humanitarian assistance and the long-term local response from the affected nation.¹²⁷

5. Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (CMCOORD)

Humanitarian civil-military coordination is more established and institutionalised than any other form of civil-military-police coordination. The UN defines humanitarian civil-military coordination as “*the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimise inconsistency, and when appropriate, pursue common goals.*” UN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (CMCOORD) establishes coordination centres to achieve strictly humanitarian goals.¹²⁸

Recognising both threats and opportunities in humanitarian civil-military relationships, the UN created the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to strengthen coordination of humanitarian assistance in the

1990s. Humanitarian civil-military coordination holds lessons for civil-military coordination in other sectors. Most international humanitarian organisations argue that civil-military coordination is essential wherever there are civilian agencies and military forces operating in the same environment. The IASC first developed guidance in regard to situations of natural disasters, and later in regard to complex emergencies.¹²⁹

UN OCHA sets up On-Site Operations Coordination Centres (OSOCC) to help local authorities in a disaster-affected country to coordinate international relief. An OSOCC has three primary objectives:

- To be a link between international responders and the Government of the affected country.
- To provide a system for coordinating and facilitating the activities of international relief efforts at a disaster site, where the coordination of many international USAR teams is critical to ensure optimal rescue efforts.
- To provide a platform for cooperation, coordination and information management among international humanitarian agencies.

6. Humanitarian Clusters

The IASC created the cluster system in 2005 (illustrated below) to improve coordination in specific sectors of humanitarian response such as water and sanitation, health and protection of civilians. The goal was to improve the predictability, timeliness and effectiveness of response, improve support for national-led humanitarian response, and identify common standards and tools. A Cluster is a group comprising humanitarian organisations (UN and non-UN), with one (and sometimes two) organisations acting as a designated leader working in each of the main areas of humanitarian action (water, health, education, etc.). The cluster leader is not in command, but rather facilitates cooperation and information sharing. Some Clusters may be very informal. Clusters may conduct joint needs assessments, identify gaps and requirements for meeting standards for each sector, and develop action plan to clarify roles and determine “who is doing what where.” Clusters can also prepare for monitoring and evaluation, as well as contingency planning.

There is currently no general policy on military participation in the UN cluster system. Clusters make decisions about how to coordinate with military forces on a case-by-case basis. Certain clusters have been working on how to engage with military forces based on their sectoral expertise. Currently, it is more or less up to the cluster lead at the local level. That person will often bring the question to the cluster members and seek consensus. Cross-sectoral civil-military guidance for the cluster system is currently missing. OCHA remains in a position to help military forces identify relevant points of contact for coordinating their civilian activities in relevant sectors and locations. In each context OCHA will be able to point military representatives to the go-to person coordinating the specific sector.

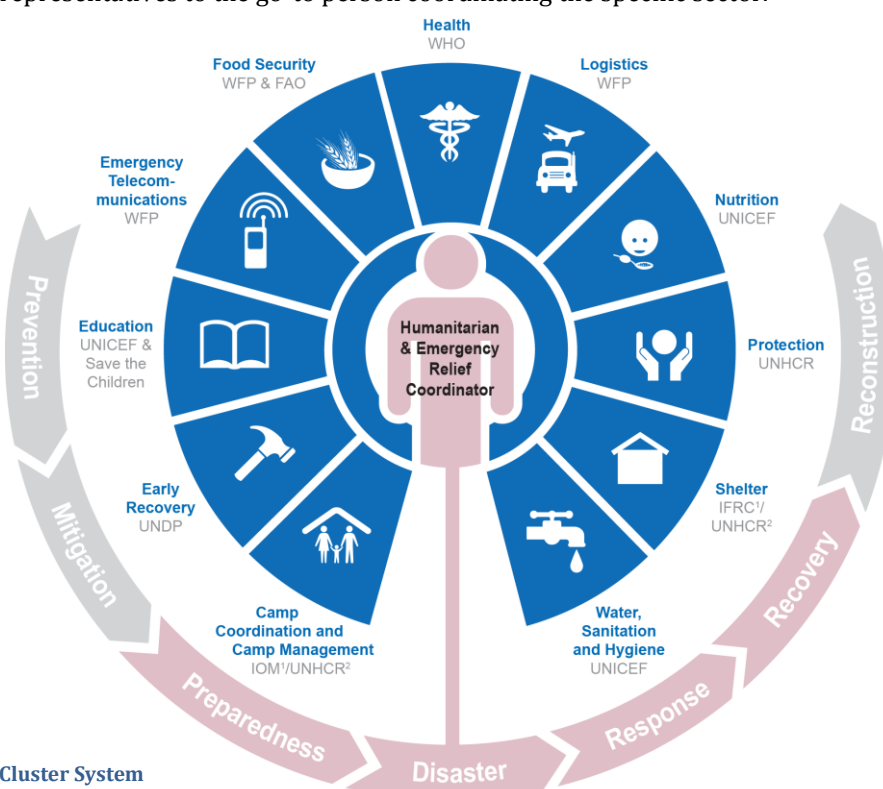


Figure 61: UN Cluster System

7. De-conflicting Approaches to Civilian Assistance

There are steps to reduce these tensions and conflicts between government and CSO approaches to development assistance. Military planners should work with the host-nation government and its National Development Plan to ensure scarce assistance resources complement the contributions of other interveners. Coordination can avoid assistance programmes that undermine the local economy and can ensure military assistance programmes offer a comparative advantage, such as undertaking large construction projects. CSOs do not, for example, tend to reopen factories or build roads or bridges but they do build schools and health clinics. Avoiding competition or duplication means each organisation recognises it contributes to a broader set of interventions in a complex environment.

For example, military forces constructing a road or opening a factory aimed to improve local perceptions of military forces should ensure that their projects are coordinated with a country's National Development Plan. Conflict-sensitive programme design could, for example, use road-building assistance as an opportunity for local employment generation to address an economic development goal. Creating work teams of mixed ethnic or tribal groups to build roads together could also produce outcomes related to social cohesion and reconciliation.

8. Role of Military Forces in Relation to the Security of CSOs

International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) and the IASC define the military's role is to provide area security or a secure and safe area for civilians, and humanitarian organisations in particular. The military is not obliged to provide direct protection for any type of civil society organisation. CSOs have their own security strategies, as identified in Lesson 7, whereby they can gain the consent of all armed groups to access people in need without being seen as a military target.

According to IHL/LOAC, military forces party to the conflict are obliged to facilitate and allow the passage of impartial humanitarian assistance through territory under their control to reach civilian populations. Humanitarian organisations liaise with all parties to conflict with the purpose of ensuring that their humanitarian purpose and modalities of operation are understood, and to establish practical arrangements that enable the safe and timely passage of relief supplies and personnel.

9. Guidelines for Humanitarian Organisations on the Use of Armed Escorts

There is no legal obligation for military forces to provide armed escorts to humanitarian organisations or any type of civilian organisation. The 2013 *IASC Non-Binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys* outlines the circumstances of last resort detailing how and when escorts are appropriate and alternatives to armed escorts.

Armed escorts are deemed acceptable based upon the following needs:

- *Humanitarian Need*: When a lack of humanitarian action would lead to unacceptable human suffering;
- *Permission from authorities*: When responsible authorities are unable or unwilling to permit the movement of humanitarian convoys without armed escort;
- *Safety*: When armed escort is a deterrent to enhance safety and does not impact the security of humanitarian personnel or beneficiaries;
- *Sustainability*: When use of armed escort will not compromise future humanitarian programming.

Humanitarian convoys should always retain their civilian humanitarian identity with the use of logos and symbols, so as to make clear the distinction between civilian and military targets. In practice, humanitarian organisations face pragmatic choices and tradeoffs when using armed escorts or when interacting directly with armed groups.¹³⁰ The consequences of NGOs asking for or accepting an armed escort could include the following potentially harmful impacts:

- Armed opposition groups would perceive NGOs as being agents of military forces and therefore legitimate targets for attack. This may affect not only the specific humanitarian agency using an armed escort, but also all other humanitarian agencies operating in the region.
- Armed escorts may themselves be a target of attack by other armed groups, especially if they do not possess a deterrent capability, and thereby increase the chance of attack on a humanitarian convoy.
- Use of armed escorts on one occasion may make it impossible for humanitarian agencies to travel anywhere without armed protection, thereby making it impossible for them to operate.

10. Relevance of the IASC Five Commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations

In 2011, the IASC issued this guidance to improve leadership and accountability to affected populations in complex humanitarian crises. Again, these principles are relevant outside of the humanitarian field and could be considered for inclusion in new civil-military guidance.

Leadership/Governance: Demonstrate commitment to accountability to affected populations by ensuring feedback and accountability mechanisms are integrated into country strategies, programme proposals, monitoring and evaluations, recruitment, staff inductions, trainings and performance management, partnership agreements, and highlighted in reporting.

Transparency: Provide accessible and timely information to affected populations on organisational procedures, structures and processes that affect them to ensure that they can make informed decisions and choices, and facilitate a dialogue between an organisation and its affected populations over information provision.

Feedback and Complaints: Actively seek the views of affected populations to improve policy and practice in programming, ensuring that feedback and complaints mechanisms are streamlined, appropriate and robust enough to deal with (communicate, receive, process, respond to and learn from) complaints about breaches in policy and stakeholder dissatisfaction. Specific issues raised by affected individuals regarding violations and/or physical abuse that may have human rights and legal, psychological or other implications should have the same entry point as programme-type complaints, but procedures for handling these should be adapted accordingly.

Participation: Enable affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately and ensure that the most marginalised and affected are represented and have influence.

Design, Monitoring and Evaluation: Design, monitor and evaluate the goals and objectives of programmes with the involvement of affected populations, feeding learning back into the organisation on an on-going basis and reporting on the results of the process.

11. Integrity of Civilian Assistance

All forms of civilian assistance should aim to support local populations as the primary goal. Civilian oversight should ensure that assistance is accountable to local people.

- *Civilian actors should identify appropriate and complementary roles for the military in specific sectors.* Prepare military forces with guidance on how to communicate with civilian actors without endangering their safety or access to beneficiaries and the need for talking to other components of the mission or civilian actors outside the mission.
- *Anticipate the lethal and non-lethal unintended impacts of using civilian activities to achieve a short term political or security goal.* Military involvement in these civilian activities may undermine local ownership and sustainability in development and peacebuilding programmes.
- *Follow the principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality,* so that recovery and peacebuilding efforts relieve human suffering, regardless of the ethnic, religious, political or other affiliations of the population. All forms of civilian assistance to local populations require some degree of impartiality and neutrality.
- *Assure access to vulnerable populations.* Like humanitarians, civilians working on early recovery and transition to development, governance and peacebuilding need to maintain and should be allowed access to vulnerable populations, regardless of their ethnic, religious, or political identity or affiliations. Civil-military coordination may be necessary to ensure that military activities support civilian access rather than hinder it.
- *Provide clear, transparent, civilian-led strategic direction:* Civil-military coordination works best where there is legal authorisation, transparent mandates, and a coherent overall strategy. All foreign assistance should be civilian-led.

REVIEW

This lesson described identified the current international guidance for how civilians, military and police relate to each other in complex environments. This guidance describes appropriate roles for military, police and other civil defence in civilian assistance. It also discusses the principles for the use of military escorts, police or civil defence forces by humanitarian organisations and other civil society organisations.

Citations

¹²² The IASC was established in 1992 in response to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182 that called for strengthened coordination of humanitarian assistance. In 1993, the General Assembly, through Resolution 48/57, affirmed IASC's role as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. A broad range of UN and non-UN humanitarian partners participate in this Standing Committee. The IASC includes the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the operational UN humanitarian organisations (such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and the World Food Program), the UN Development Program, the three international NGO consortia (InterAction, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), and International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)), and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, is the inter-agency body responsible for international policy on international humanitarian action. Under the leadership of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, the IASC develops humanitarian policies, agrees on a clear division of responsibility for the various aspects of humanitarian assistance, identifies and addresses gaps in response, and advocates for effective application of humanitarian principles. See [UN and IASC Civil-Military Guidelines and Handbook](#) for more information.

¹²³ *Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies*. March 2003/ revised January 2006.

¹²⁴ [https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Oslo%20Guidelines%20ENGLISH%20\(November%202007\).pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Oslo%20Guidelines%20ENGLISH%20(November%202007).pdf)

¹²⁵ UN Civil Military Coordination (UN CMCOORD). See: <http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/UN-CMCoord/overview> and <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/> accessed October 2015.

¹²⁶ See the following Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidance (Geneva, Switzerland: Inter-Agency Standing Committee) at <http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/UN-CMCoord/publications> accessed October 2015.

- Civil-Military Guidelines and References for Complex Emergencies,
- Guidelines on The Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief - Oslo Guidelines, OCHA- November 2012,
- United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination - Concept Paper.
- Use of Military or Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys

¹²⁷ Adapted by UN Organisation for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance OCHA from IASC Guidance

¹²⁸ UN CMCOORD. See: <http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/UN-CMCoord/overview>

¹²⁹ <http://ochaonline.un.org/OCHAHome/AboutUs/Coordination/HumanitarianCivilMilitaryCoordination/PolicyGuidelinesRelatedDocuments/tabid/4938/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

¹³⁰ Edwina Thompson, *Principled Pragmatism: NGO Engagement with Armed Actors* (Monrovia, CA: WorldVision International, 2008).

Lesson 25

Learning Exercises

Anchor

10 minutes

To begin the lesson, anchor the content in this lesson with a series of questions:

- Based on your experience or your imagination, what is the most difficult part of coordinating assistance to civilians after an earthquake, hurricane or in the midst of some other crisis?

Add

20 minutes

Present the PowerPoint slides or ask participants to discuss the lesson readings in a small group.

Apply

25 minutes

The goal of this exercise is to understand complementary roles, challenges and guidelines for coordinating civilian assistance – especially between civil society and the security sector. In each of the scenarios, it is now eight months after an earthquake. International and local aid groups coordinate with military units through UN OCHA. After eight months, most of the international humanitarian organisations leave along with OCHA. A new coordination mechanism is needed to ensure all the different groups involved in assistance to civilians are not duplicating or undermining each other's work.

Each group has thirty minutes to develop an initial plan for a coordination mechanism and to negotiate with other stakeholders to develop a coordination plan. Groups may continue to discuss internally their own plan, or work with other stakeholders to reach a joint plan. Then, each stakeholder team or group of teams has two minutes to outline their plan and/or to oppose the plans of other groups. Debrief with open questions about the challenges and trade-offs in this role-play.

Away

5 minutes

In a large group, participants can discuss this question:

What will I take away from this lesson on coordinating civilian assistance that might impact the way I do my work in the future?