

1. RATIONALE

Humanitarian and military actors often share the same operating environment during emergencies. Coordination — whether with military, civil defence, police or private security actors — is essential to ensure the protection of civilians and create optimal conditions for the delivery of assistance to people in need in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Humanitarian civil-military coordination varies depending on the context. It ranges from on-site coordination of foreign military assets in disaster relief, to access negotiations during complex emergencies. Relationships between humanitarian and military actors range from full cooperation, to coordination through interlocutors, to coexistence with indirect contact through third-party conduits. As such, it is imperative that humanitarian and military actors understand and apply the guidelines and criteria that determine their level and type of interaction and the principles underlying their engagement. It is also essential that each side understand their respective mandates, principles, structures and working methods.

One way of enhancing such awareness and understanding is through humanitarian participation in military events. This presents both potential benefits as well as challenges that must be carefully considered before a decision on participation is made. This guidance note aims to assist humanitarian actors in determining in which military events to participate. It sets out the type of events humanitarian actors are often invited to, the potential benefits and challenges of participation, and suggests criteria for assessing when and under what conditions to attend.

2. TYPES OF MILITARY EVENTS

The following are examples of military events to which humanitarian organizations are often invited:

- Conferences, workshops and speaking engagements, including those to outline or update doctrine or policy guidance.
- Military Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) courses that include civilian and military participants.
- Scenario exercises, including support to planning conferences, scenario writing and scripting, pre-exercise 'academic' sessions for key leaders, the exercise itself, and post exercise feedback. This may include multi-day simulation exercises.
- Pre-deployment training for headquarters, commanders and staff.
- Contingency planning at headquarters or in the field to ensure humanitarian aspects are taken into account.

3. POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

There are a number of reasons why humanitarian actors would participate in military events, including to:

- **Promote awareness of the approaches and principles that guide humanitarian civil-military coordination.** Participation in military events allows humanitarian actors to raise military actors' awareness of the critical differences in civil-military coordination during natural disasters and complex emergencies and the criteria that determine the different types and levels of interaction.
- **Further militaries' understanding of humanitarian assistance and protection.** Interaction during these events allows humanitarian actors to increase militaries' understanding of humanitarian organizations' respective mandates, principles of action and coordination structures, as well as the diversity of the humanitarian community. They also provide humanitarian actors with an opportunity to influence military policy and doctrine on how they interact with the humanitarian community, to promote adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law and to advocate for efficient civil-military coordination and engagement at the level of key military decision-makers.

- **Further humanitarian understanding of militaries' and their structures.** Participation similarly allows humanitarian organizations to gain a greater understanding of militaries' organizational structures at the strategic, operational and response field/tactical levels as well as how they operate, including their command and control procedures, culture and vocabulary.
- **Building relationships before emergencies occur.** Military events are also important to building effective relationships and networks in advance of working in the same operational space in a natural disaster or complex emergency, thereby helping to strengthen humanitarian civil-military coordination during actual responses. In particular, these events provide humanitarian personnel unique access to senior military officers, staff and planners they would not often interact with during an emergency.
- **Exchange of knowledge and good practice in emergency preparedness and response.** Engaging in dialogue and scenario-based exercises allows for mutual learning and the exchange of lessons learnt and good practices in emergency preparedness and response.

4. POTENTIAL CHALLENGES OF PARTICIPATION

While there are a number of advantages to participation in military events, there are also potential challenges, including:

- **Issues of neutrality.** Participation in military events could lead to adverse effects on the neutrality – real or perceived – of humanitarian actors, particularly in cases where the military/militaries are parties to a conflict and/or have been accused of violating international humanitarian and/or human rights law.
- **The content of military events.** The design, content and/or structure of the military events may not be appropriate or realistic or may not effectively lead to improvements in civil-military coordination.
- **Resource limitations.** Humanitarian organizations might not have sufficient resources to participate in such events, particularly when they entail multi-day simulation exercises, pre- and post-engagement activities and/or travel or other associated costs.

5. CRITERIA TO BE CONSIDERED FOR PARTICIPATION

Humanitarian engagement in military events should be prioritised based upon a mutual benefit to both the organization and the military bodies participating. Clear objectives for involvement in any specific military event are essential to decide on or prioritise attendance, and subsequently, to analyse the impact of participation. When formulating the objectives to be achieved for participation in military events, several criteria should be considered:

- **What is the likelihood that the military actor/s will be deployed to a theatre where humanitarian organizations might interact with them?** Humanitarian actors should prioritise their participation in military events according to the likelihood that the military interlocutor/s will be deployed to an emergency where they will be involved in civil-military coordination or will have an impact on humanitarian action. Even if the request comes from a key interlocutor – such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the African Union (AU) or the Department of Peace-Keeping Operations (DPKO) – humanitarian actors should evaluate if the specific military body/bodies involved are likely to be deployed and interact with humanitarian actors in the field.
- **Is the event likely to promote improved civil-military coordination?** Participation should improve and/or influence civil-military relations as well as increase awareness of, and sensitivity to, humanitarian concerns. In the case of a military exercise, the scenario should be relevant and realistic and accurately portray humanitarian actors and the purpose of humanitarian action. Care also needs to be taken to ensure that the humanitarian-military relationship is appropriately established according to the objectives of the military mission and based on established international guidance. If the event is not sufficiently realistic from a humanitarian perspective, the decision to participate should also be influenced by the extent to which the organizers are open to restructuring the event and/or discussing potential refinement of underlying military guidance and/or doctrine.

- **Is the event conducive to adequate representation by humanitarian organizations?** In the case of scenario exercises, humanitarian actors should have adequate physical and information access to the exercise programming system to influence exercise serials and 'play'. If a portion of the exercise and/or scenario will be classified, organizations should evaluate if participation will benefit their organization or if the limits on information sharing will negatively impede their ability to effectively contribute to the event. It is also imperative that humanitarian organizations are not viewed simply as scripted "role players" but as active participants. As such, they should be involved in the scenario development, inject scripting (including remotely) and any post exercise evaluation. In the event that several humanitarian organizations have been invited to participate in a military event, organizations are encouraged to engage with one another prior to the event to facilitate common messaging or approaches, if applicable.
- **Could participation negatively impact the humanitarian organisation's neutrality, actual or perceived?** Humanitarian organizations should use caution and assess if participating in the specific military event might risk negatively impacting perceptions of the organization, particularly in countries where the involved military might be a party to the conflict and/or viewed negatively. Where the military is a party to the conflict, organizations should evaluate the benefit of their participation on facilitating greater understanding of humanitarian concerns and mitigating potential negative impacts to humanitarian operations. They should also consider any damage it might have on their perceived neutrality and/or actual field operations and what, if any, negative impacts their participation could have if it were publicised.
- **Are sufficient resources available for effective participation in the event?** While participation in some of these events may be done remotely, such as VTC presentations, others may require physical attendance to have effect. Often with pre-deployment training and exercises, the event may run over several days or weeks. Organizers should therefore be requested to schedule activities when the presence of humanitarian organizations is most necessary and can have the greatest impact. The potential resource burden can also be mitigated by having several organizations agree on sending a representative/s on their behalf.

When considering participation in military events, humanitarian organizations should analyse each invitation on a case-by-case basis. They should take a broad view and not necessarily decide to participate based on any single factor. Even if there may be some possible negative consequences of participation, it is recommended that a judgement be made only after balancing the accumulative benefits and concerns.

6. NOTIFICATION OF EVENTS AND ATTENDANCE

OCHA's Civil-Military Coordination Section as well as country and regional offices will publicise military events that it has knowledge of or is participating in, on the Google+ Community of Practice platform of the Humanitarian//Military Dialogue site (<http://tinyurl.com/HMDDialogue>). Other humanitarian organizations are encouraged to do the same. Should organizations wish to become involved in advertised events or provide additional information thereon, the use of this medium is encouraged as a conduit to maximum beneficial networking. The site also contains a reference library with related guidance documents.

*Civil-Military Coordination Section (CMCS),
Emergency Services Branch (ESB),
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Geneva*

April 2015