HUMANITARIAN ACADEMY · HUMANITAIRES JOBS

Mini MBA Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord): preserving access and principles with armed actors

Complete manual

A programme of exactly 3 months (12 weeks, 144 hours) to coordinate humanitarian action with armed actors: principles, armed actors and their culture, the Oslo and MCDA Guidelines, foreign military assets in disasters, complex emergencies and integrated missions, armed escorts, humanitarian notification and information sharing, access negotiation, liaison and forums, protection, country-specific guidelines and dilemmas. Based on the public texts of OCHA and the IASC. Corrected numerical exercises, three monthly exams with case studies, and a verifiable diploma from the Humanitarian Academy. Independent course: it is not OCHA's official UN-CMCoord course, to which it refers, and it does not award any United Nations certification.

https://humanitairejobs.org/en/academy/mini-mba-coordination-civilo-militaire/

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Week 1 : Why coordinate with armed actors: principles and definition of CMCoord

Objectives

- Define humanitarian civil-military coordination (CMCoord) and distinguish it from military civil-military cooperation (CIMIC).
- Explain how humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence guide every interaction with armed actors.
- Place a relationship on the spectrum from cooperation to coexistence, and justify that choice according to the context.

Aid workers and weapons on the same ground

In almost every crisis, humanitarians share the space with **armed actors**: the armed forces of the affected State, foreign militaries that come to help after a disaster, peacekeepers, coalitions, non-State armed groups, police forces and private security companies. Ignoring them is impossible; being confused with them is dangerous.

After an earthquake, a military helicopter may be the only way to reach a cut-off valley. In a conflict, a convoy that moves without the belligerents knowing may be targeted. In both cases, the question is not "should we talk to the military?" but **"how, about what and how far?"**.

> Humanitarian civil-military coordination exists to protect two things at once: access to people in need and the humanitarian nature of aid.

The reference definition

The United Nations field handbook on civil-military coordination (UN-CMCoord Field Handbook) defines CMCoord as **the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies** that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimise inconsistency and, when appropriate, pursue common goals.

The definition contains three ideas:

- dialogue is **essential**, not optional;
- it serves first to **preserve the principles**;
- pursuing common goals is only possible **"when appropriate"**, which depends on the context.

The handbook describes three basic tasks: **information sharing**, **task division** and **planning**. Their intensity varies with the context, from very close to almost none.

CMCoord is not CIMIC

Armed forces have their own functions for relations with civilians: **CIMIC** (civil-military cooperation, in NATO and many armies), **civil affairs** or **civil-military operations** depending on the country. Their purpose is to support the military mission: facilitate movements, win the support of the population, reduce obstacles.

CMCoord, by contrast, is a **humanitarian** function, carried out by civilians, in the service of humanitarian objectives. The two talk to each other, but they have neither the same mandate nor the same criteria of success.

Example. A CIMIC unit offers to distribute school kits in a village where it also patrols. For the unit, it is a way to improve its image. For a humanitarian, it is a risk: people may associate all aid with that force, and schools may become potential targets.

Humanitarian principles as a compass

Four principles, recognised by the United Nations General Assembly (resolutions 46/182 of 1991 and 58/114 of 2003) and by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, guide every decision:

- **Humanity**: relieve suffering wherever it is found, protect life and dignity.
- **Neutrality**: take no side in hostilities or in political, religious or ideological controversies.
- **Impartiality**: help on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases, without discrimination.
- **Independence**: keep humanitarian objectives autonomous from political, economic or military objectives.

An interaction with an armed actor is judged by its effect on these principles, both real and **perceived**. A sound decision that people misunderstand can cost access.

The spectrum: from cooperation to coexistence

The relationship between humanitarians and the military sits on a **spectrum**:

- **Cooperation**: in peacetime or after a natural disaster, when the affected State's army or foreign forces help under civilian control. Information sharing, task division and joint planning can be close.
- **Coordination**: intermediate situations, for example a peacekeeping mission that is not a party to the conflict.
- **Coexistence**: in armed conflict, especially when the force present is a party to hostilities. Contact is limited to what is needed to avoid competition, reduce risks and protect civilians.

The choice is not fixed once and for all: a disaster in a conflict zone, or a peace mission turning into a fighting force, moves the relationship along the spectrum.

What this programme is, and what it is not

This Mini MBA is an **independent** course of the Humanitarian Academy of Humanitaires Jobs. It is based on the public reference texts: the **Oslo Guidelines**, the **MCDA Guidelines**, the **IASC reference paper** on civil-military relationships in complex emergencies, the **IASC non-binding guidelines on armed escorts** and the **UN-CMCoord field handbook**.

It **does not replace** OCHA's official UN-CMCoord course and does not award any United Nations certification. For the official training, take OCHA's free online modules, then apply for the UN-CMCoord course. The links are in this week's readings.

Exercise: where does the relationship sit?

For each of the following situations, give the position on the spectrum (cooperation, coordination, coexistence) and one action to avoid.

1. A cyclone hits a country at peace. The national army clears roads and offers its trucks.
2. A foreign force is fighting an armed group in the north of a country. It offers to carry food to the villages it has just retaken.
3. A peacekeeping mission, not a party to the conflict, patrols around a displacement camp.

Model answer. 1: cooperation, under civilian control; avoid letting the army choose the beneficiaries alone. 2: coexistence; avoid using its trucks, which would associate aid with a party to the conflict. 3: coordination; avoid handing distribution or registration of displaced people to the mission.

Key takeaways

- CMCoord is the essential dialogue between civilians and the military to protect principles and access, not systematic cooperation.
- Three basic tasks: information sharing, task division, planning.
- CIMIC serves the military mission; CMCoord serves humanitarian objectives.
- Humanity, neutrality, impartiality, independence: every interaction is judged by its real and perceived effect.
- Spectrum: cooperation in natural disasters, coexistence in armed conflict, with intermediate situations.

Quiz

1. According to the field handbook, the three basic CMCoord tasks are:
   A. Negotiation, advocacy and funding of operations
   B. Needs assessment, distribution and monitoring
   C. Information, task division, planning
   D. Armed escort, logistics and convoy security
2. An army's CIMIC function serves first of all:
   A. Donors
   B. The military mission
   C. United Nations agencies
   D. Humanitarian objectives
3. In an armed conflict where the force present is fighting, the relationship is most often:
   A. Close cooperation
   B. Joint planning
   C. Full integration
   D. Coexistence
4. The principle that forbids taking sides in hostilities is:
   A. Humanity
   B. Impartiality
   C. Independence
   D. Neutrality
5. This Mini MBA:
   A. Replaces OCHA's course for NGO staff
   B. Is independent and points to the official course
   C. Is mandatory for all UN staff
   D. Awards the official UN-CMCoord certification

Quiz answers : 1. B · 2. A · 3. C · 4. D · 5. C

Week 2 : Knowing armed actors: who they are, how they think, how they decide

Objectives

- Distinguish the main armed actors in a crisis: forces of the affected State, foreign militaries, peace missions, non-State armed groups, police and private companies.
- Understand military organisation, chain of command and vocabulary in order to talk to the right counterpart.
- Map the armed actors in an area and define an interaction mode for each of them.

A family of very different actors

"The military" are not a single block. The interaction mode depends on the actor's **status** and its **role in the conflict**:

- **Armed forces and civil defence of the affected State**: often the first to respond to disasters; they act under the authority of the government, which has the primary responsibility to protect and assist its population.
- **Foreign militaries**: deployed as bilateral support after a disaster, or as parties to a conflict within a coalition or an agreement.
- **Peacekeeping missions** of the United Nations or regional organisations: military, police and civilian components, with a Security Council mandate, often including the protection of civilians.
- **Non-State armed groups**: very diverse, from a structured movement administering territory to a local militia.
- **Police forces** and **private security companies**: civilian status, but weapons and a security logic.

How an army is organised

Armies follow a clear **chain of command**. An officer in the field applies orders and often cannot commit beyond them; the useful counterpart for a decision is sometimes two levels higher.

In headquarters, functions are often numbered ("J" system for a joint force, "G" for land forces): **1** personnel, **2** intelligence, **3** operations, **4** logistics, **5** planning, **6** communications, **9** civil-military cooperation in many armies. The J9 or G9 officer is often the first contact, but decisions on movements belong to the 3.

Armies work through **planning**, **written orders**, short **rotations** (often four to twelve months) and a culture of quick results. A humanitarian who presents a clear request (what, where, when, how much, why) gets an answer faster.

Cultures clash, and that is normal

Cultural differences explain many misunderstandings:

- **Hierarchy** versus **consensus**: the army decides quickly through the chain of command; humanitarians coordinate among independent organisations, with no single leader.
- **Information security**: the army classifies, humanitarians publish and share.
- **Indicators**: the army measures tasks completed, humanitarians measure needs met and people protected.
- **Time**: the force leaves when its mission ends; humanitarians and populations stay.

Understanding these differences does not mean erasing them: the distinction of roles is itself a protection.

Non-State armed groups

In many conflicts, it is **non-State armed groups** that control access to populations. International humanitarian law (Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and, where it applies, Additional Protocol II) binds them in non-international armed conflicts.

Humanitarian dialogue with them is legitimate and necessary to obtain access and security. It gives them no legal status. It must, however, take into account **counter-terrorism laws and sanctions regimes**, donor clauses and the organisation's internal rules: the content of contacts and any transaction must be controlled and documented.

> Talking to every weapon bearer who controls access is not taking sides. It is what makes it possible to help on both sides of a front line.

Mapping armed actors

A simple tool: a table with one row per actor and the following columns.

- **Status**: affected State, foreign, peace mission, non-State, private.
- **Role in the conflict**: party to hostilities or not.
- **Area and capabilities**: where it operates, what assets (air, engineering, medical).
- **Chain of command** and **counterparts**.
- **Perception** by the population and by other armed actors.
- **Recommended interaction mode**: cooperation, coordination, coexistence.

The mapping is updated at every significant change and shared in humanitarian forums according to the agreed confidentiality rules.

Exercise: mapping a province

In the fictitious province of Rémi, there are: the national army, which is conducting an offensive; a peacekeeping mission tasked with protecting civilians, not a party to the conflict; an armed group controlling two districts; a private security company guarding a mine.

Build the mapping table (status, role, interaction mode) and say which counterpart you would contact first for a convoy to a district controlled by the armed group.

Model answer. National army: party to the conflict, coexistence, notification of movements. Peace mission: coordination (security information, protection of civilians). Armed group: coexistence, dialogue on access through humanitarian channels. Private company: no humanitarian role, keep distance. For the convoy: the armed group controlling the area and the national army operating around it, in parallel, through the agreed notification mechanisms.

Key takeaways

- The interaction mode depends on the armed actor's status and its role in the conflict.
- Find the right level: the CIMIC contact (often J9/G9) is not always the one who decides on movements (J3/G3).
- Cultural differences are normal; the distinction of roles protects.
- Dialogue with non-State armed groups is legitimate, framed and documented (sanctions, counter-terrorism).
- An up-to-date mapping of armed actors guides every interaction.

Quiz

1. Who has the primary responsibility to assist the population affected by a disaster?
   A. International NGOs
   B. The peace mission
   C. The affected State
   D. Foreign armies

2. In many armies, function 3 of a headquarters corresponds to:
   A. Operations
   B. Intelligence
   C. Communications
   D. Logistics

3. Humanitarian dialogue with a non-State armed group:
   A. Gives it State status recognised by the UN
   B. Must go through the country's national army
   C. Is legitimate, without giving it any status
   D. Is always prohibited by humanitarian law

4. A peacekeeping mission that is not a party to the conflict rather calls for:
   A. Strict coexistence
   B. Coordination, without integration
   C. Integrated distributions
   D. No contact with any armed actor in the area

5. Why take sanctions regimes into account in contacts with certain groups?
   A. To control and document the exchanges
   B. To obtain additional funds from donors
   C. To inform the press of every contact
   D. To refuse any contact with these groups

Quiz answers : 1. D · 2. D · 3. A · 4. C · 5. B

Week 3 : The normative framework: Oslo Guidelines, MCDA Guidelines, IASC reference paper

Objectives

- Identify the CMCoord reference texts, their scope and their value (non-binding but widely recognised).
- Apply the common criteria: last resort, unique capability, civilian control, time limitation, distinction.
- Explain the role of country-specific guidelines and how they are developed.

A set of texts, each for a context

CMCoord rests on **guidelines** negotiated between States, the United Nations and humanitarian organisations. They are not treaties, but they are widely recognised and form the basis of organisations' policies and national guidelines.

- **Oslo Guidelines** (1994, revised in 2006 and updated in 2007): use of **foreign** military and civil defence assets in **disasters**, in peacetime.
- **MCDA Guidelines** (2003, revised in 2006): use of military and civil defence assets to support United Nations humanitarian activities in **complex emergencies**.
- **IASC reference paper** on civil-military relationships in complex emergencies (2004): principles and concepts for all humanitarian organisations.
- **IASC non-binding guidelines on armed escorts** (2013): when and how an armed escort may, exceptionally, be accepted.
- **Country-specific guidelines**: adaptation of the principles to a given context.

The UN-CMCoord field handbook (version 2.0, 2018) brings these texts together and explains how to apply them in practice.

Last resort

The central criterion of all these texts is **last resort**: military assets are used to support humanitarian action only when there is **no comparable civilian alternative** and only their use can meet a **critical humanitarian need**.

"Comparable" is assessed in terms of **capability** and **timeliness**. If a civilian helicopter can arrive within 48 hours and that delay puts no lives at risk, the military asset is not a last resort. If no civilian asset can reach a cut-off area before people die, it may be.

> Last resort is not measured by cost or convenience. A free and available military asset is not, for that reason alone, a last resort.

The other common criteria

Beyond last resort, the texts converge on several rules:

- **Unique capability**: the military asset provides what civilians cannot (heavy lift, engineering, airport, communications).
- **Civilian control**: assets remain under military command, but the humanitarian operation remains under the overall authority of the responsible civilian organisation.
- **Limited in time and scale**, with an **exit strategy** defined from the start.
- **Distinction**: avoid humanitarian aid and personnel being confused with armed forces.
- **Request or consent of the affected State** for any foreign deployment in a disaster.
- **Cost**: the Oslo Guidelines provide that foreign military assistance should, in principle, be provided at no cost to the affected State.

Disaster or conflict: why two texts

In a peacetime disaster, armed forces are not parties to a conflict: cooperation is easier and the Oslo Guidelines apply. In a complex emergency, association with an armed force can compromise perceived neutrality and endanger staff and beneficiaries: the MCDA Guidelines and the IASC reference paper require greater caution.

When a disaster strikes a conflict zone, the two logics meet. The practical rule: apply the criteria that best protect populations and staff, and analyse the military actor concerned case by case (affected State, foreign, party to the conflict or not).

Country-specific guidelines

In many crises, the humanitarian country team (HCT) adopts **country-specific guidelines**, generally prepared by OCHA with humanitarian organisations. They set out:

- the relationship mode with each armed actor present;
- the rules on armed escorts, use of military assets and notification of movements;
- the rules on information sharing;
- the rules of conduct (visits to bases, transport in military vehicles, uniforms and weapons in premises).

They are adopted by the humanitarian leadership, shared with armed actors and revised when the context changes. Each organisation remains free in its decisions, but commits to respecting the common rules that protect the whole humanitarian community.

Exercise: is it a last resort?

A flood isolates 18,000 people. Three options exist to deliver 60 tonnes of food and water within 72 hours:

1. Military helicopters of the national army, available immediately, free.
2. Chartered civilian helicopters, available in 5 days, USD 180,000.
3. Local civilian boats, available within 24 hours, total capacity of 20 tonnes per day.

The country is at peace. Which option do you recommend, and does the last-resort criterion apply?

Model answer. The boats deliver 20 tonnes per day from day 1: 60 tonnes in three days, within the 72-hour deadline. There is therefore a comparable civilian alternative for the requested volume; the military helicopters are not a last resort for this delivery, except for cases the boats cannot handle (urgent medical evacuations, areas unreachable by water). As the country is at peace, cooperation with the national army remains possible for these specific needs, under civilian control.

Key takeaways

- Oslo: peacetime disasters, foreign assets. MCDA and IASC 2004: complex emergencies.
- Last resort: no comparable civilian alternative in capability and timeliness, for a critical need.
- Unique capability, civilian control, limited duration and planned exit, distinction, consent of the affected State.
- Disaster in a conflict zone: apply the most protective criteria and analyse the actor case by case.
- Country-specific guidelines turn these principles into common rules adopted by the humanitarian country team.

Quiz

1. The Oslo Guidelines mainly concern:
   A. Armed escorts for convoys in conflict
   B. United Nations peace missions
   C. Private security companies and their guards
   D. Foreign military assets in disasters

2. A free military asset is available, and a comparable civilian asset arrives in time. The military asset is:
   A. A priority because it is free
   B. Not a last resort
   C. A last resort
   D. Mandatory

3. "Civilian control" means:
   A. The donor commands the loaned military assets
   B. The operation remains under overall civilian authority
   C. Soldiers become civilians during the mission
   D. The military run distributions under supervision

4. Who generally adopts country-specific guidelines?
   A. The force commander
   B. The Ministry of Defence
   C. The humanitarian country team, supported by OCHA
   D. Each NGO separately, according to its own policy

5. The 2004 IASC reference paper deals with:
   A. Civil-military relations in armed conflict
   B. Vehicle purchases by UN agencies
   C. Security Council sanctions regimes and their exemptions
   D. Natural disasters in peacetime

Quiz answers : 1. A · 2. D · 3. A · 4. C · 5. B

Week 4 : Disasters: requesting, coordinating and withdrawing foreign military assets

Objectives

- Classify tasks given to military assets as direct assistance, indirect assistance and infrastructure support, and choose the most appropriate.
- Describe the path of a request for military support and the coordination platforms (multinational coordination centre, HuMOCC, OSOCC).
- Plan the exit of military assets from the moment they arrive.

The role of the affected State

In a disaster, the **affected State** leads the response. Its armed forces and civil protection are often the first mobilised, within its national disaster management plan. **Foreign** military assets only arrive at its request or with its consent, generally through bilateral agreements.

Many States have set up a **national coordination centre** or a **multinational coordination centre** (often called MNCC) that receives foreign forces, allocates them and links them to civilian authorities. The role of humanitarian CMCoord is to connect this system with humanitarian coordination (clusters, humanitarian country team, OCHA).

Three types of tasks

The Oslo Guidelines distinguish three types of assistance:

- **Direct assistance**: face-to-face distribution of goods and services (distributing food, providing care).
- **Indirect assistance**: at least one step removed from the population (transporting food to a warehouse, from where humanitarians distribute it).
- **Infrastructure support**: general services that benefit everyone but are not necessarily visible to beneficiaries (repairing roads, running an airport, restoring electricity).

The more **indirect** the assistance, the less it risks blurring the distinction between humanitarians and the military. As a general rule, infrastructure support and indirect assistance are preferred; direct assistance by foreign military personnel is avoided as far as possible, all the more so in a sensitive context.

The path of a request

A well-made request for military support starts from a **need**, not an asset. It specifies:

- the humanitarian need (what, for how many people, where, when);
- why civilian assets are not enough (last resort, unique capability);

- the expected task (for example, transporting 40 tonnes per day to two points) and not the resource ("two helicopters");
- the planned duration and end condition.

In the United Nations system, requests from humanitarian organisations go through the clusters (often the logistics cluster) to OCHA, which checks them, consolidates them and passes them on to the authorities or forces concerned. Each request is tracked: accepted, refused, completed.

Coordination platforms

- **OSOCC** (On-Site Operations Coordination Centre): set up by UNDAC teams to coordinate international responders in the first days.
- **HuMOCC** (Humanitarian-Military Operational Coordination Concept): an OCHA concept to bring humanitarians and the military together around a common space for planning and information sharing in disasters.
- **Multinational coordination centre** of the affected State: entry point for foreign forces.

Several regions have adopted their own guidance, for example the Asia-Pacific regional guidelines for civil-military coordination in disasters, developed within the Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on humanitarian civil-military coordination.

Planning the exit from arrival

Foreign military assets are temporary. Their departure must be planned from the start:

- **End criteria**: civilian capacities restored, roads reopened, functioning transport market.
- **Transition**: gradual handover of tasks to civilian actors, without gaps.
- **Timetable** shared with clusters and authorities.

Numerical example. Military helicopters carry 50 tonnes per day. Roads reopen gradually: civilian trucks carry 10 tonnes on day 10, then 10 tonnes more each day. From day 14, trucks carry 50 tonnes per day: the helicopters can withdraw, keeping a reserve for areas still isolated.

Exercise: drafting a support request

After a cyclone, 3 islands are cut off. Needs: 25 tonnes per day of food and water for about 10 days; no civilian boat available before 6 days; the national navy has a 30-tonne barge; a foreign navy offers two ships.

Write an 8-line support request in line with the Oslo Guidelines: need, justification, task, type of assistance, duration and end criterion.

Model answer. Need: 25 t/day for 3 islands. Justification: no civilian asset before 6 days. Task: transport 25 t/day from port X to the quays of the three islands (indirect assistance), with distributions carried out by humanitarian organisations. Asset: the national barge has enough capacity; the foreign navy would only be requested if the barge were unavailable. Duration: until the civilian boats arrive (day 6), with a 2-day overlap.

Key takeaways

- The affected State leads; foreign forces come at its request or with its consent.
- Prefer infrastructure support and indirect assistance; avoid direct assistance by foreign military personnel.
- A request describes a need and a task, not a resource, and justifies last resort.
- OSOCC, HuMOCC and the multinational coordination centre link humanitarians, authorities and forces.
- The exit is planned from arrival, with measurable end criteria.

Quiz

1. Transporting food to a warehouse from where NGOs distribute it is:
   A. Infrastructure support
   B. Deterrence
   C. Indirect assistance
   D. Direct assistance

2. Repairing an airport runway is:
   A. Indirect assistance
   B. Protection of convoys and warehouses
   C. Infrastructure support
   D. Direct assistance

3. A good request for military support describes:
   A. The need, the task and the planned duration
   B. The name of the air base commander
   C. The type of helicopter wanted and its crew
   D. The donor's budget for the operation

4. The HuMOCC is:
   A. A pooled donor fund
   B. An armed group active in the affected areas
   C. A humanitarian-military platform
   D. A radio system for convoys

5. When should the exit of foreign military assets be planned?
   A. At the end of the year
   B. Never: they stay
   C. From their arrival, with a criterion
   D. When the military ask to leave the country

Quiz answers : 1. B · 2. A · 3. D · 4. C · 5. D

Week 5 : Complex emergencies: distinction, perception and integrated missions

Objectives

- Explain why the distinction between humanitarians and armed forces is vital in conflict, and how to protect it day to day.
- Analyse the risks and benefits of an integrated United Nations presence (political or peace mission and humanitarian team).
- Apply concrete rules of conduct: vehicles, premises, weapons, visibility, meetings.

What changes in a conflict

In a **complex emergency**, the humanitarian crisis stems from armed conflict or widespread violence, often with a breakdown of authority. Armed forces are rarely neutral there: they fight, administer and control populations.

If humanitarians are perceived as linked to one party, three consequences follow: **loss of access** to areas held by the other party, **attacks** on staff and beneficiaries, and **distrust from populations**, who no longer dare to come for aid.

> Perception matters as much as reality. A strictly neutral NGO can lose access if its vehicles are seen parked in a military base.

Protecting distinction day to day

Country-specific guidelines and organisational policies translate distinction into simple rules:

- **No weapons** in humanitarian premises and vehicles ("no weapons" policy displayed at the entrance).
- **No transport** of humanitarian staff in military vehicles, except for exceptions decided under the rules (last resort, medical evacuation).
- **No uniformed military personnel** in distributions or humanitarian activities.
- **Civil-military meetings** preferably in neutral places, not in bases.
- **Distinct visibility**: humanitarian logos, vehicles and clothing clearly different; the military must not use white vehicles or humanitarian symbols.
- **Language**: humanitarians are not "force multipliers" and do not take part in "hearts and minds" operations.

The integrated United Nations presence

In several countries, the UN deploys both a **mission** (political or peacekeeping) and a **country team** (agencies, funds and programmes). The United Nations **integration policy** aims at a

shared strategic vision between the two, under the authority of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Often, the Humanitarian Coordinator is also Deputy Special Representative.

Benefits: coherence of peace, protection and aid efforts. Risks: **association** of humanitarian action with the mission's political or military agenda, especially if the mission supports a party to the conflict.

The integration policy recognises these risks. It provides that integration should take forms adapted to the context and preserve **humanitarian space**: for example, humanitarian offices separate from the mission, distinct communication, logistics assets without mission markings in sensitive areas. NGOs are not part of integration.

Protection of civilians: complementary roles

Many peacekeeping missions have a mandate to **protect civilians**. For the military, this means deterring and responding to physical threats. For humanitarians, protection also covers access to rights, documentation and support to survivors.

Dialogue is useful: sharing trends (without personal data), flagging risk areas, coordinating patrols around displacement sites. However, humanitarian information must not serve military targeting, and patrols must not expose the people who spoke to humanitarians.

Coexistence does not mean silence

Even in coexistence, a minimum of dialogue is essential:

- **Notification** of humanitarian sites and movements (week 7);
- **Advocacy** for respect of international humanitarian law: protection of civilians, hospitals and schools; unimpeded access;
- **Exchanges on security** needed to protect staff.

This dialogue is conducted by designated people (OCHA, CMCoord focal points of organisations), with prepared messages, to avoid scattered contacts that blur the image of the humanitarian community.

Exercise: a delicate invitation

The commander of a foreign force, a party to the conflict, invites all NGOs to lunch in his base to "present his school rehabilitation projects". Journalists will be present.

Propose a joint response from the humanitarian organisations, in three points.

Model answer. 1. Decline to attend in the base and in the presence of the press, to avoid any visible association. 2. Propose a technical coordination meeting in a neutral place, through OCHA, to discuss security and avoid duplication. 3. Recall the country guidelines: military projects must not be presented as humanitarian, and schools must not become targets.

Key takeaways

- In conflict, the perception of neutrality determines access and security.
- Distinction rules: no weapons in premises, no military transport except by exception, meetings in neutral places, distinct visibility.
- The UN integration policy aims at coherence but must preserve humanitarian space.
- Protection of civilians: complementary roles, without humanitarian information serving targeting.
- Coexistence: minimal, targeted dialogue carried by designated people.

Quiz

1. In a conflict, being perceived as linked to one party mainly leads to:
   A. More funding from donors for the response
   B. Loss of access and risk of attack
   C. Better security
   D. No effect

2. Where should a civil-military meeting preferably be held in a conflict zone?
   A. In the commander's vehicle
   B. In the military base
   C. During a distribution
   D. In a neutral place, outside bases

3. The United Nations integration policy:
   A. Includes all NGOs present in the country
   B. Aims at a shared vision, with humanitarian space preserved
   C. Forbids any contact between mission and agencies
   D. Abolishes humanitarian coordination by clusters

4. Humanitarian information shared with an armed force must never:
   A. Concern the general security of roads
   B. Be useful to protection of civilians operations
   C. Be accurate, verified and dated by the organisation
   D. Serve targeting or expose people

5. May the military use white vehicles and humanitarian symbols?
   A. Yes, always
   B. Only at night
   C. No
   D. Only in disasters

Quiz answers : 1. C · 2. C · 3. D · 4. A · 5. B

Week 6 : Armed escorts: the rule, the exceptions and the decision

Objectives

- State the general rule of the IASC guidelines: humanitarian convoys do not use armed escorts.
- Analyse a request for an exception with a structured grid: critical need, alternatives, real security, perception, duration.
- Organise an escort accepted as an exception and prepare its end.

The general rule

The **IASC non-binding guidelines on the use of armed escorts for humanitarian convoys** (2013, replacing the 2001 paper) set a clear rule: **as a general rule, humanitarian convoys do not use armed escorts**.

Why? An armed escort:

- visibly associates aid with an armed actor, which compromises perceived neutrality;
- may **attract** attacks rather than deter them;
- creates a **dependence** that is hard to end;
- may weaken the acceptance patiently built by all organisations, including those that do not use escorts.

Exceptions exist, but they are **exceptional**: a last resort to meet a critical need, when no other measure can bring the risk to an acceptable level.

A grid for deciding on an exception

To decide, the Academy suggests answering the following questions in writing, in order (they follow the spirit of the guidelines; read the full text in this week's readings):

1. **Need**: is the activity critical? How many people, what risk if it does not take place?
2. **Alternatives**: access negotiation, change of route or timing, low profile, accepted local partners, civilian air transport... have they been tried or analysed?
3. **Real security**: does the escort really reduce the risk, or does it increase it (attracted target, exchange of fire)?
4. **Provider**: who would escort? A party to the conflict raises more problems than a host-State police force or a peace force that is not a party.
5. **Perception and effects**: what effect on the acceptance of the organisation and of the whole humanitarian community?
6. **Duration and exit**: for how long, and under what condition does the escort stop?

Who decides

Each organisation remains responsible for its security decisions. In the United Nations, the use of armed escorts falls within the security risk management system and involves the country's humanitarian leadership. The guidelines recommend that exception decisions be taken at the **highest level** in the country, documented, and as far as possible **discussed collectively** (humanitarian country team, NGO forums), because one organisation's escort affects all the others.

Many NGOs have an internal policy that excludes any armed escort, unless decided by the head office. Others, like the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, keep to a very strict policy based on acceptance.

Organising an accepted escort

If an escort is accepted as an exception, rules limit its effects:

- **Written agreement** with the provider: strictly defensive role, known rules of engagement, clear chain of command, no transport of weapons or soldiers in humanitarian vehicles.
- **Distance** between escort vehicles and humanitarian vehicles, to keep the distinction visible.
- **No payment** that would turn aid into a source of funding for an armed party; if costs are unavoidable (for example fuel or allowances for a host-State police force), they are transparent and approved.
- **Regular review** (for example monthly) against the criteria, with a plan to return to convoys without escort.

A numerical example

On a road to a camp of 40,000 people, 6 convoys out of 50 were attacked in three months (12%). The attacks are by bandits, not by a party to the conflict. The host-State police offer an escort. After negotiation with community leaders and a change of timing, the rate falls to 2 attacks out of 45 convoys (4.4%) the following quarter, without escort.

Lesson: the grid requires testing alternatives first. Here, they reduced the risk by almost two thirds; the escort was no longer a last resort.

Exercise: applying the grid

A non-State armed group controls the road to an area where a cholera outbreak is spreading (12,000 people exposed). The national army, a party to the conflict, offers to escort your trucks. The armed group has declared that it will attack "any military convoy". No dialogue has yet been attempted with it.

Apply the grid and give your recommendation.

Model answer. Need: critical. Alternatives: not tried (dialogue with the armed group, delivery through an accepted organisation, air transport). Real security: the army escort would increase the risk, as the group has announced it would attack military convoys. Provider: party to the conflict, very negative perception. Recommendation: refuse the escort, urgently open a dialogue on access and study a civilian airlift.

Key takeaways

- General rule: no armed escort for humanitarian convoys.
- Exception only as a last resort for a critical need, when no other measure is enough.
- Grid: need, alternatives, real security, provider, perception, duration and exit.
- Decision at the highest level, documented and discussed collectively.
- Accepted escort: written agreement, distance, no funding of an armed party, regular review.

Quiz

1. According to the IASC guidelines, as a general rule, humanitarian convoys:
   A. Use private escorts
   B. Do not use armed escorts
   C. Are escorted by donors' security staff
   D. Use armed escorts
2. Which step comes first when analysing an exception?
   A. Choose the provider
   B. Establish the critical need
   C. Set the distance between vehicles
   D. Negotiate the price

3. An escort provided by a party to the conflict:
   A. Is always preferable to a police escort
   B. Is required by the 2013 IASC guidelines
   C. Raises more perception problems
   D. Is neutral with regard to humanitarian principles

4. Why discuss an escort decision collectively?
   A. Because it is mandatory for all donors
   B. To get good press coverage
   C. To share the cost of the escort between organisations
   D. It affects everyone's acceptance

5. In the numerical example, the attack rate falls from 12% to about:
   A. 2%
   B. 10%
   C. 8%
   D. 4.4%

Quiz answers : 1. B · 2. C · 3. A · 4. D · 5. A

Week 7 : Notify, deconflict, share: information between humanitarians and the military

Objectives

- Explain how a humanitarian notification (deconfliction) system works and its legal and practical limits.
- Decide which information to share, with whom and in what form, without endangering people.
- Set clear sharing rules: classification, personal data, channels.

What humanitarian notification is

In conflicts with intense hostilities (air strikes, artillery), humanitarian organisations inform the parties to the conflict of the location of their **fixed sites** (offices, warehouses, supported hospitals) and their **movements** (routes, times). This mechanism, called a **humanitarian notification system** or **deconfliction**, is often managed by OCHA.

Aim: that the parties can take this information into account in their operations and **avoid striking** humanitarian sites and people.

> Notification is a risk-reduction measure. It gives no additional protection: protection comes from international humanitarian law, whether or not notification took place.

The limits to know

- **No guarantee**: a party may ignore the information, receive it too late or pass it badly to its units.
- **No condition**: a site that has not been notified remains protected by law (civilians, civilian objects, medical units). Never let anyone believe that the absence of notification makes a site a target.
- **No authorisation**: notifying is not asking for permission. In some contexts, parties turn notification into an authorisation regime; this must be documented and reported.
- **Risk of misuse**: a site's location could be used to target it. The decision to notify is taken after analysis.

Which information to share

A simple rule: share **what protects**, do not share **what exposes**.

- **To share** (depending on the context): humanitarian sites and movements for deconfliction; general situation of needs; state of roads, bridges and airports; security trends; disaster response plans; areas contaminated by explosive ordnance.

- **Not to share**: beneficiaries' personal data; lists of displaced people; information on violations collected from victims; locations of people at risk; any information that could be used for targeting, recruitment or reprisals.

Sharing is **reciprocal** as far as possible: forces can provide information on road safety, dangerous areas, unexploded ordnance and planned operations that will affect civilians.

Forms and channels

- **Aggregate and anonymise**: share "3,200 displaced households in the northern district" rather than a list.
- **Designated channels**: through OCHA or the CMCoord focal point, not through multiple informal contacts.
- **Written rules** in the country guidelines: what is public, what is restricted, what is never shared.
- **Data protection**: organisations apply their policies (for example the United Nations principles on personal data protection, or the ICRC handbook on data protection in humanitarian action).
- **Traceability**: keep a register of what was notified, to whom, when, and the replies received.

When a notification fails

If a notified site is hit, the organisation:

1. brings its staff and the people present to safety;
2. documents the facts (time, coordinates, proof of notification);
3. informs OCHA and the coordination forums;
4. together with the other organisations, raises the issue with the party concerned and requests an investigation;
5. reassesses the usefulness and risks of notification in this context.

Rigorous documentation of notifications is what then allows credible advocacy.

Exercise: sorting information

A peace force asks humanitarian organisations for: (a) the list of names of displaced families in a camp; (b) the coordinates of your warehouses; (c) the areas where children have been recruited by an armed group, with the names of the families who reported it; (d) the state of the roads to the south.

For each request, say whether you share, in what form and through which channel.

Model answer. (a) No: give aggregated figures. (b) Yes, for deconfliction, through OCHA's mechanism. (c) Not the names or sources; a general trend can be shared by child protection actors, according to their protocols. (d) Yes, it is useful to everyone, shared through the logistics cluster or OCHA.

Key takeaways

- Humanitarian notification reduces risks but creates no protection: protection comes from the law.
- A non-notified site remains protected; notifying is not asking for authorisation.
- Share what protects, never what exposes: no personal data or information about victims.
- Aggregate, anonymise, use designated channels and keep track of every notification.
- When it fails: secure, document, inform, raise the issue, reassess.

Quiz

1. A humanitarian site not notified to the parties:
   A. Must close until it is notified
   B. Remains protected by humanitarian law
   C. Loses its civilian status in law
   D. Becomes a legitimate target for the parties
2. Humanitarian notification is:
   A. A risk-reduction measure
   B. A donor obligation
   C. A request for authorisation
   D. A security guarantee

3. Which information must not be shared with an armed force?
   A. The list of beneficiaries' names
   B. Needs aggregated by district
   C. The state of the roads
   D. Warehouse coordinates for deconfliction

4. Why keep a register of notifications?
   A. For the media and public reports
   B. For the payroll of site staff
   C. For accounting of mission costs
   D. To document and advocate

5. The best channel to share information with the forces is:
   A. The organisation's social media
   B. The channel designated by coordination (OCHA)
   C. Drivers, who meet the patrols
   D. Each staff member through personal contacts

Quiz answers : 1. D · 2. C · 3. A · 4. D · 5. B

Week 8 : Humanitarian access: negotiating with armed actors without losing your principles

Objectives

- Explain the legal framework of humanitarian access and the obligations of parties to a conflict.
- Prepare an access negotiation: analysis of counterparts, interests, room for manoeuvre and red lines.
- Handle unacceptable demands (payments, diversion, beneficiary lists) and document impediments.

The access framework

International humanitarian law provides that parties to an armed conflict **allow and facilitate** the rapid and unimpeded passage of impartial humanitarian relief for civilians in need, subject to their right of control. Consent to relief operations may not be arbitrarily withheld.

Impediments to access take many forms: refusal of movements, endless administrative procedures, checkpoints, taxation, interference in the choice of beneficiaries, violence against staff. OCHA often tracks these impediments in an **access monitoring framework** that feeds collective advocacy.

Preparing the negotiation

Frontline humanitarian negotiation methods (for example the field manual of the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation, CCHN) suggest structured preparation:

- **Analyse the context** and the negotiation environment: who controls what, what the trends are.
- **Map the counterparts**: who decides, who influences, who can block; their interests, values and constraints.
- **Distinguish positions and interests**: "no convoy" (position) may hide the fear that the convoy carries weapons (interest: security).
- **Define your room for manoeuvre**: what is negotiable (timing, routes, inspection arrangements) and what is not.
- **Set the red lines** with management, before the negotiation.

Red lines

Common red lines, set in writing and shared between organisations as far as possible:

- choosing beneficiaries on the basis of need alone (impartiality);
- no payment or share of aid to an armed actor;
- no transport of weapons, armed men or military equipment;

- no sharing of beneficiary lists;
- the right to monitor and verify distribution.

> A red line crossed by one organisation quickly becomes the new norm demanded of all the others. Collective consistency protects everyone.

Unacceptable demands: what to do

When an armed actor demands a share of aid, a payment or a list:

1. **Do not answer on the spot**: thank them and say the request will be passed on.
2. **Escalate** the request to management and coordination (OCHA, NGO forum).
3. **Analyse** the real interest behind the demand (security, recognition, needs of fighters' families).
4. **Respond collectively** by explaining the principles and proposing what is possible (for example, including vulnerable families according to the usual criteria).
5. **Document** the impediment and, if necessary, **suspend** the activity rather than give in.

Sanctions and counter-terrorism

Some national laws and sanctions regimes prohibit providing funds or resources to designated groups. In 2022 the United Nations Security Council adopted a cross-cutting **humanitarian exemption** for its sanctions regimes (resolution 2664), but national laws and donor clauses vary.

In practice: know the applicable rules, have arrangements validated by the legal or compliance department, never make an unplanned payment, and document all contacts. Humanitarian dialogue in itself is not support to a group; transfers of resources may be.

Exercise: the checkpoint tax

At the Kéri checkpoint, a local commander demands 5% of the bags in each food convoy "for road security". Your convoy carries 1,200 bags for 2,400 households. Your organisation's red line is that no share of aid is given to an armed actor.

Calculate what the demand represents and propose a course of action.

Model answer. 5% of 1,200 = 60 bags per convoy, the equivalent of 120 households deprived of aid on each trip. Course of action: give nothing on the spot, turn back if necessary without confrontation, escalate the demand, analyse the interest (perhaps the fighters' families have received nothing), respond collectively with the other organisations, document the impediment for OCHA, and seek dialogue with the higher level of command.

Key takeaways

- Parties must allow and facilitate access for impartial relief; arbitrary refusal is prohibited.
- Prepare: context, counterparts, interests behind positions, room for manoeuvre, red lines.
- Red lines are set in advance, in writing, and shared between organisations.
- Unacceptable demand: do not give in on the spot, escalate, analyse, respond collectively, document.
- Dialogue is not support; transfers of resources may be (sanctions, counter-terrorism).

Quiz

1. Under international humanitarian law, the parties must:
   A. Allow and facilitate relief
   B. Distribute the aid to civilians themselves
   C. Pay NGOs for their services
   D. Choose beneficiaries according to their criteria

2. "No convoy" is:
   A. An interest
   B. A value
   C. A position
   D. A humanitarian red line

3. Faced with a demand for payment at a checkpoint, the first reaction is:
   A. Accept if the amount demanded is small
   B. Threaten the commander with an official complaint
   C. Pay discreetly to get through this time
   D. Do not answer on the spot, escalate the request

4. Why share red lines between organisations?
   A. For donors only, in the annual report of the project
   B. To reduce costs
   C. Because a concession is quickly demanded of all
   D. For the press

5. 5% of 1,200 bags is:
   A. 50 bags
   B. 120 bags
   C. 600 bags
   D. 60 bags

Quiz answers : 1. B · 2. C · 3. A · 4. D · 5. C

Week 9 : The CMCoord function: officers, focal points, liaison and forums

Objectives

- Describe the roles of OCHA, CMCoord officers and organisations' focal points.
- Organise liaison with armed actors: who, at what level, with what messages.
- Run a civil-military coordination forum and measure its usefulness.

Who does what

- Within the United Nations, **OCHA** is responsible for humanitarian civil-military coordination. Its specialised section in Geneva develops guidelines, trains and deploys CMCoord officers; its country offices lead coordination in the field.
- OCHA's **CMCoord officers** link the humanitarian community and armed actors: they analyse, advise the humanitarian leadership, run forums and manage humanitarian notification.
- The **CMCoord focal points** of agencies and NGOs apply the rules in their organisation and take part in forums.
- On the military side, **liaison** or CIMIC officers are the usual counterparts; in peace missions, there are also officers in charge of liaison with humanitarians.

Organising liaison

Effective liaison is prepared:

- **Levels**: strategic (humanitarian leadership and force command), operational (OCHA and headquarters), tactical (field offices and local units). Each level deals with matching issues.
- **Common key messages**, validated by the humanitarian leadership: principles, country rules, priority requests.
- **One voice**: a small number of designated counterparts, to avoid contradictory messages.
- **Continuity**: military rotations are short; a handover file (contacts, agreements, rules) is given to each new team.

> Each military rotation is an opportunity to recall the rules. An arriving force knows neither the country guidelines nor the history of relations.

The civil-military forum

In many countries, a **civil-military working group or forum** regularly brings humanitarian organisations together, sometimes with military representatives for part of the meeting. It serves to:

- share the analysis of armed actors and risks;
- prepare common positions (escorts, use of military assets, military aid projects);
- track incidents linked to civil-military interaction;
- update the country-specific guidelines.

A good practice: a **humanitarian-only** part, to discuss freely, then a part with armed actors if needed.

Measuring the usefulness of coordination

A few simple indicators help monitor the quality of CMCoord:

- share of notified movements that received an acknowledgement;
- average processing time of requests for military support;
- number of incidents linked to confusion between humanitarians and the military;
- share of military rotations that received a briefing on the country guidelines;
- number of access impediments resolved through dialogue.

Example. Out of 240 movements notified in a month, 180 received an acknowledgement: 75%. If the target is 90%, 216 acknowledgements are needed, that is 36 more: liaison with headquarters must be strengthened.

Training and preparedness

Preparedness improves coordination when a crisis strikes: joint disaster simulation exercises, training of the military on humanitarian principles, contingency plans that set out the role of national armed forces.

Humanitarians take part in these exercises **as humanitarians**, without playing a military role, and with caution in conflict settings: taking part in an exercise of a party to the conflict may be perceived as association.

For practitioners, OCHA offers free online modules and a UN-CMCoord course of several days, by application: this is the official path to becoming a CMCoord focal point or officer.

Exercise: preparing the handover

A new foreign brigade replaces the previous one in your area in two weeks. You are your NGO's CMCoord focal point and are preparing, with OCHA, the first contact meeting.

List the five key messages to convey and the three documents to hand over.

Model answer. Messages: humanitarian principles and distinction; rules of the country guidelines (no weapons in premises, no shared transport); how humanitarian notification works; request to share information on explosive ordnance and operations affecting civilians; designated counterparts. Documents: country guidelines, notification procedure, list of designated contacts.

Key takeaways

- OCHA coordinates CMCoord; CMCoord officers make the link; focal points apply the rules in their organisation.
- Liaison at three levels, common validated messages, one voice, continuity at every rotation.
- Civil-military forum: a humanitarian-only part, then a part with armed actors if needed.
- Track a few indicators: acknowledgements, processing times, confusion incidents, briefings, impediments resolved.
- Preparedness and joint exercises, with caution in conflict; official training through OCHA.

Quiz

1. Within the United Nations, humanitarian CMCoord is coordinated by:
   A. UNDP
   B. UNICEF
   C. OCHA
   D. The Department of Peace Operations
2. Why do military rotations require a handover?
   A. To change the guidelines at each arrival
   B. To prepare the payroll of the new units
   C. To reduce the strength of the force present
   D. They are short and the force does not know the rules

3. A good practice for a civil-military forum:
   A. Do away with minutes
   B. Let the army chair every meeting of the forum
   C. Always meet in a base
   D. Plan a humanitarian-only part

4. 180 acknowledgements out of 240 notified movements is:
   A. 80%
   B. 70%
   C. 60%
   D. 75%

5. The official path to becoming a CMCoord officer is through:
   A. This Mini MBA, recognised as equivalent
   B. A military school and CIMIC training
   C. An engineering degree in logistics
   D. OCHA's official modules and course

Quiz answers : 1. A · 2. A · 3. D · 4. C · 5. B

Week 10 : Protecting people: camps, sexual violence, children and aid delivered by armies

Objectives

- Defend the civilian and humanitarian character of camps and displacement sites.
- Integrate protection, gender, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and child protection into dialogue with armed actors.
- Analyse aid projects carried out by armed forces and limit their negative effects.

The civilian and humanitarian character of camps

Camps and sites for displaced people or refugees must keep a **civilian and humanitarian character**: no weapons, no recruitment, no military presence inside, separation of combatants. Primary responsibility lies with the host State; UNHCR and camp coordination actors support it.

Security forces can provide **security around** the sites (patrols outside, response to attacks), in ways discussed with humanitarians and residents' committees. Their presence inside is limited to specific, agreed situations.

Sexual violence, gender and PSEA

Women, girls, men and boys do not face the same risks. Dialogue with armed actors can cover:

- risks linked to movements (collecting firewood and water, checkpoints) and measures to reduce them;
- respect, by the forces, of the prohibition of **sexual exploitation and abuse**: peace missions apply a zero-tolerance policy, with reporting mechanisms;
- referral of survivors of violence to safe and confidential services, **never passing on** their identity to the forces without their informed consent.

Individual cases of sexual violence are handled by specialised actors, according to their protocols, not in civil-military meetings.

Children and armed conflict

Humanitarian dialogue can support child protection: prevention of recruitment, release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups, protection of schools. The Security Council has set up a monitoring and reporting mechanism on six grave violations against children (killing and maiming, recruitment and use, sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access).

The **Safe Schools Declaration** (2015), endorsed by many States, encourages not using schools for military purposes. Humanitarians can remind forces of these commitments.

When the army delivers aid

Armed forces sometimes carry out aid projects: free medical care, distribution of goods, school rehabilitation, quick impact projects of peace missions. Their aim is often to win the support of the population or to facilitate the mission.

Risks for humanitarian action: **confusion** between humanitarian aid and military operations; **targeting** of places where the army has built; projects that are **not sustainable** or not coordinated with clusters; aid guided by military priorities rather than needs.

What humanitarians can ask: that these projects **are not presented as humanitarian**, that they are coordinated with clusters to avoid duplication and contradictions, that they respect technical standards, and that they do not concern places where humanitarians already work, when this creates a risk.

Private security companies and guards

Humanitarian organisations sometimes employ unarmed guards for their premises. Using **armed guards** or armed private security companies is an exceptional deterrence measure, subject to an analysis similar to that for escorts: last resort, effect on acceptance, control of the rules on the use of force.

The **International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers** and the **Montreux Document** provide useful benchmarks for choosing and overseeing a provider.

Exercise: the patrol in the camp

After several thefts and two assaults at night in a site of 15,000 displaced people, the national army proposes setting up an armed post in the middle of the site. Women's committees mainly ask for lighting and patrols around the latrines.

Propose a response that protects residents and the civilian character of the site.

Model answer. Refuse an armed post inside; propose police patrols outside and at the entrances, at agreed times; install lighting and separate lockable latrines; strengthen unarmed community security with the committees, including women; set up a confidential reporting channel; monitor incidents with the camp coordination cluster and protection actors.

Key takeaways

- Camps: civilian and humanitarian character, no weapons or military presence inside, security provided around them.
- Protection and gender: discuss risks and PSEA, never pass on survivors' identity without consent.
- Children: six grave violations monitored by the Security Council; do not use schools for military purposes.
- Military aid: do not present it as humanitarian, coordinate it with clusters, avoid targeting effects.
- Armed guards and private companies: an exceptional measure, analysed like an escort.

Quiz

1. In a displacement camp, security forces should preferably operate:
   A. Around the site, under a written agreement
   B. Inside the site, permanently
   C. In the registration of residents
   D. In distributions, to keep order

2. The identity of a survivor of sexual violence may be passed on to the forces:
   A. Never without her consent
   B. Always, to speed up the investigation
   C. If the army officially asks for it
   D. If the NGO judges the case serious

3. How many grave violations against children does the Security Council mechanism monitor?
   A. Four
   B. Ten
   C. Three
   D. Six

4. An aid project carried out by an army must:
   A. Be presented as humanitarian aid
   B. Be coordinated, without calling itself humanitarian
   C. Use white vehicles to reassure people
   D. Replace clusters in front-line areas

5. The Montreux Document concerns:
   A. Data protection
   B. Private military and security companies
   C. UN escorts
   D. Disasters in peacetime and foreign military assets

Quiz answers : 1. B · 2. C · 3. A · 4. D · 5. B

Week 11 : Analysing a context and drafting civil-military guidelines for a country

Objectives

- Conduct a CMCoord context analysis: armed actors, perception, dynamics, scenarios.
- Draft the outline and main rules of country-specific guidelines.
- Anticipate changes in context: disaster in a conflict zone, withdrawal of a mission, epidemic.

The CMCoord context analysis

Before any strategy, an analysis answers five questions:

1. **Which armed actors** are present, with what status, what role in the conflict, what capabilities?
2. **How are they perceived** by the population, the authorities and other armed actors?
3. **What interactions** already exist between them and humanitarians, and what incidents have resulted?
4. **What dynamics** are at work: offensives, elections, seasons, withdrawal of forces?
5. **What scenarios** in the next 3 to 6 months, and what consequences for the civil-military relationship?

Sources: OCHA reports, security analyses, perception surveys, exchanges with communities and interviews with armed actors.

The standard outline of country-specific guidelines

Useful guidelines are short and precise. A common outline:

1. Purpose, scope and reference texts.
2. Summary analysis of the context and armed actors.
3. Principles and position on the spectrum for each category of actors.
4. Operational rules: use of military assets, armed escorts, transport, premises and weapons, visibility, meetings.
5. Information sharing and humanitarian notification.
6. Roles and responsibilities: humanitarian leadership, OCHA, focal points.
7. Exception and review procedure.

The draft is discussed in the civil-military forum, adopted by the humanitarian country team, translated into useful languages, shared with armed actors and reviewed at least once a year or at every major change.

Writing clear rules

A useful rule says **who** does **what**, **when**, and **how exceptions are decided**.

- Weak: "Humanitarians avoid military vehicles where possible."
- Clear: "Humanitarian staff do not travel in military vehicles. Exception: medical or security evacuation with no civilian alternative, decided by the head of office and reported to OCHA within 24 hours."

Rules are tested on real situations: if two people apply the rule to the same case and reach different decisions, it must be rewritten.

When the context tips over

- **Disaster in a conflict zone**: the affected State's army, a party to the conflict, offers its assets. Analyse case by case: area concerned, perception, alternatives; prefer infrastructure support and indirect assistance, away from front lines.
- **Withdrawal of a peace mission**: security, logistics (runways, airports) and protection capacities decline. Plan early for civilian actors to take over critical functions, and analyse the risks for civilians.
- **Epidemic**: armies often support logistics, field hospitals or checks. The principles remain the same: need, alternatives, distinction, and attention to coercive measures that keep patients away from care.

Scenarios and warning indicators

For each scenario, define **warning indicators** and the decisions to take:

- "The peace force becomes a party to hostilities" → review the position on the spectrum, suspend the use of its logistics assets in the areas concerned.
- "The number of blocked movements exceeds 20% for two weeks" → high-level advocacy, review of notification procedures.
- "Fighters enter displacement sites" → alert the Humanitarian Coordinator, dialogue with the commands.

Exercise: rewriting three rules

Rewrite clearly and verifiably:

1. "Armed escorts should be avoided."
2. "It is advisable not to share too much information with the military."
3. "Meetings with the military take place in appropriate places."

Model answer. 1. "Humanitarian convoys do not use armed escorts. Any exception is decided by the Humanitarian Coordinator after advice from the civil-military forum, using the grid in annex 2, for 30 renewable days." 2. "No beneficiary personal data is shared with an armed actor. Deconfliction information goes only through OCHA." 3. "Civil-military meetings take place in OCHA or agency premises, never in a military base, unless the OCHA head of office decides otherwise."

Key takeaways

- CMCoord analysis: actors, perceptions, interactions, dynamics, scenarios.
- Country guidelines: short outline, precise operational rules, roles, exceptions and review.
- A clear rule says who does what, when, and how an exception is decided.
- Disaster in conflict, mission withdrawal, epidemic: same principles, case-by-case analysis.
- Warning indicators trigger decisions planned in advance.

Quiz

1. Which question comes first in a CMCoord context analysis?
   A. What are the scenarios for the next six months?
   B. Who funds the force present in the area?
   C. What is this year's security budget?
   D. Which armed actors, with what status and role?

2. A well-written rule specifies:
   A. Only the general objective of the text
   B. The cost of each coordination meeting
   C. The names and ranks of the soldiers present
   D. Who decides what, when, and the exceptions

3. Who adopts country-specific guidelines?
   A. Each NGO
   B. The main donor of the humanitarian response plan
   C. The force commander
   D. The humanitarian country team

4. When a peace mission withdraws, the main thing is to:
   A. Ask the mission to stay longer
   B. Wait for the official end of the withdrawal
   C. Suspend aid in the provinces concerned
   D. Plan early for civilians to take over

5. A simple test of a rule's clarity:
   A. Its length
   B. Its approval by the army
   C. Its translation into English
   D. Two people apply it to the same case and reach the same decision

Quiz answers : 1. B · 2. A · 3. D · 4. C · 5. B

Week 12 : Leading through dilemmas: difficult decisions and a complete CMCoord plan

Objectives

- Reason through civil-military dilemmas with an explicit, documented method.
- Exercise CMCoord leadership: convince your management, your peers and armed actors.
- Present a complete CMCoord plan for a given context, ready to be defended before a humanitarian country team.

Why dilemmas are unavoidable

CMCoord often sets two goods against each other: saving lives **now** thanks to a military asset, or protecting **tomorrow's access and security** by keeping a distance. No text settles every case. The guidelines provide criteria; the decision remains a judgement.

Examples of dilemmas: accepting a helicopter from a party to the conflict to evacuate wounded people; sharing the location of a hospital that a party might target; using an airstrip controlled by a foreign force; continuing a distribution under the threat of a group demanding a share.

A decision method

1. **Clarify the need**: who, how many, how urgent, what consequences if nothing is done.
2. **List the options**, including civilian options and the "do nothing" option.
3. **Assess each option** against the criteria: last resort, effects on principles and perception, real security, effects on other organisations, duration and exit.
4. **Consult**: OCHA, civil-military forum, management and, where possible, communities.
5. **Decide at the right level**, in writing, with conditions and a review date.
6. **Explain** the decision to partners and communities.
7. **Learn lessons** afterwards.

CMCoord leadership

An effective CMCoord manager:

- **knows** the texts and the context better than their counterparts;
- **builds trust** with humanitarians (who sometimes fear any interaction) and with the military (who do not always understand refusals);
- **proposes** instead of only refusing: "no escort, but here is what we ask for road safety";
- **holds the collective line** when one organisation is tempted to go it alone;
- **documents** so that memory survives rotations, both military and humanitarian.

The complete CMCoord plan

The final assignment of this programme is a CMCoord plan for a real or realistic context, 8 to 10 pages long:

1. Context analysis and mapping of armed actors.
2. Position on the spectrum for each actor, justified.
3. Main operational rules (military assets, escorts, distinction, meetings).
4. Information sharing and humanitarian notification.
5. Access: impediments, red lines, negotiation strategy.
6. Protection: camps, gender, PSEA, children.
7. Organisation: roles, forums, liaison, handovers.
8. Scenarios, warning indicators and planned decisions.
9. Indicators for monitoring coordination.

After this programme

This Mini MBA is an independent course of the Humanitarian Academy. To go further:

- take **OCHA's free online modules** on civil-military coordination;
- apply for the **UN-CMCoord course** organised by OCHA and its partners;
- take part in your country's civil-military forums and in regional exercises;
- regularly read the country-specific guidelines published on ReliefWeb.

The diploma of this programme certifies that you passed the Academy's exams; it is not a United Nations certification.

Exercise: the evacuation dilemma

After a bombing, 9 seriously wounded people are in a health centre supported by your NGO. The nearest hospital is 6 hours away by road. The national army, a party to the conflict, offers a helicopter within the hour. No civilian air asset is available before 48 hours. The armed group controlling the neighbouring area has already accused your NGO of "working for the army".

Apply the decision method and make your recommendation.

Model answer. Immediate critical need; civilian alternative not comparable in time (48 h, or 6 h of dangerous road for seriously wounded people). Medical evacuation by military asset can be a last resort. Conditions: transport concerns only the wounded and strictly necessary medical staff, with no NGO logo or visible presence in the operation if possible; the decision is taken at the highest level in the country, documented, reported to OCHA; a message is prepared to explain to the armed group and communities that the evacuation follows medical criteria and that the NGO treats all wounded people, whatever their side. Review: do not make it a practice, seek an agreement for future civilian evacuations.

Key takeaways

- Dilemmas often set lives saved today against tomorrow's access; texts give criteria, not all the answers.
- Method: need, options, criteria, consultation, written decision at the right level, explanation, lessons.
- Leadership: know, build trust on both sides, propose, hold the collective line, document.
- The complete CMCoord plan covers analysis, positions, rules, information, access, protection, organisation, scenarios and monitoring.
- For official training: OCHA's free modules, then the UN-CMCoord course.

Quiz

1. In the decision method, what must always be included among the options?
   A. Civilian options and "do nothing"
   B. The military option alone, the fastest
   C. The cheapest option for the organisation
   D. The option proposed by the main donor

2. An effective CMCoord manager, faced with an unacceptable military request:
   A. Refuses without explanation
   B. Lets each NGO decide alone
   C. Accepts to keep good relations
   D. Refuses and proposes a useful alternative

3. Why document decisions and agreements?
   A. It is not useful once the decision has been taken
   B. So that memory survives rotations
   C. For the donor only
   D. For the press

4. In the evacuation dilemma, the military helicopter can be a last resort because:
   A. The army insists and threatens to leave
   B. The neighbouring armed group accepted it in writing
   C. Critical need, no civilian option in time
   D. It is free and available immediately

5. The diploma of this Mini MBA:
   A. Certifies success in the Academy's exams
   B. Replaces the UN-CMCoord course
   C. Is a United Nations certification
   D. Gives a military rank

Quiz answers : 1. B · 2. C · 3. A · 4. D · 5. B