HUMANITARIAN ACADEMY · HUMANITAIRES JOBS

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

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

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/semaine-11/

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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