

Guidance Note on OCHA CMCoord Support to Protection Outcomes

OCHA Civil Military Coordination Service (CMCS), October 2020

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I. Introduction

This Guidance Note will focus on actions that the OCHA Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord or UN-CMCoord) Officers and Focal Points can take, in contributing to protection outcomes at the country level. It also describes the role of OCHA’s Civil-Military Coordination Service (CMCS) at the HQ level in supporting protection outcomes. Five areas of CMCoord Tasks in support of protection outcomes are described in the Section III: 1) Analysis, 2) Dialogue, 3) Advocacy, 4) Capacity Building and 5) Planning and Preparedness.

The IASC defines **protection** as “... all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. International Human Rights Law (IHRL), International Humanitarian Law, International Refugee law (IRL)).¹ The Protection of Civilians (PoC), more specifically, encompasses all norms and measures that contribute to minimizing the impact of armed conflict on persons, who are not or no longer participating in hostilities, and civilian objects.²

Protection is thus a legal responsibility, an activity and a strategic objective.³ Protection encompasses all efforts to prevent, mitigate or end threats causing harm to affected populations, reducing people’s vulnerability to threats and reinforcing their capacities and their resilience.

Furthermore, in accordance with the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, protection must be central to humanitarian action and is a shared responsibility of all humanitarian actors.

OCHA’s role in protection⁴ is to ensure that humanitarian action responds to the overarching protection concerns and specific risks faced by affected populations in a crisis.

At headquarters, OCHA supports the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) to advocate for the protection of conflict- and disaster-affected populations, and it supports Security Council and wider UN engagement to strengthen the protection of civilians in armed conflict. At the country level, OCHA supports the HC to ensure that protection informs decision-making in the HCT and that protection priorities are identified and result in collective action.

OCHA’s contribution to ensuring an effective, coherent and complementary humanitarian response with protection at its core includes:

- Ensuring protection priorities are identified and addressed in strategic humanitarian planning and decision-making and humanitarian leadership provides direction across the response when faced with protection dilemmas;
- Advocating for the protection of affected persons and for respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law;
- Promoting and facilitating a collective approach in centralizing protection in humanitarian action;

- Fostering a complementary approach towards achieving protection outcomes by facilitating and coordinating collaboration and engagement with a broad range of actors beyond the humanitarian community⁵; and
- Ensuring sufficient funds are allocated to the protection response.

OCHA works closely with and is an active member of the Global Protection Cluster, supports the development of inter-agency policy and guidance, and contributes to building inter-agency capacity on protection. OCHA also works with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO) to promote effective and appropriate cooperation on protection where United Nations peacekeeping operations are deployed.

Where UN peacekeeping operations drawdown and/or transition to special political missions, OCHA will ensure continued attention and response to existing and anticipated protection concerns (e.g. transition from UNAMID, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Mission in Darfur to UNITAMS, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan).

All OCHA staff, including those with CMCoord functions, are accountable for the effective and consistent implementation of the IASC Protection Policy and have a responsibility to prioritize protection in their role.

OCHA is guided by the principle of “**Do no harm**” that requires humanitarian actors to anticipate, monitor and address potential negative effects of humanitarian action on affected populations.⁶ At a minimum, our action or inaction should not jeopardize the safety of persons with whom we come into contact. A practical application of the “do no harm” principle is to “examine the solutions being offered today as they might be the cause of problems tomorrow”.⁷

II. CMCoord Support to Protection Outcomes

Humanitarian civil-military coordination (CMCoord or UN-CMCoord) is the essential dialogue and interaction between humanitarians and military and other armed actors in humanitarian settings that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistencies and, when appropriate, pursue common goals.⁸ Besides OCHA’s CMCoord Officers, CMCoord and Access Focal Points, as well as OCHA Country Offices leadership (including Heads of Sub-Offices), may be asked to perform some CMCoord functions.

A primary function of a CMCoord Officer is to establish dialogue and coordination with armed actors. While the purpose of this dialogue and coordination may vary by context, ensuring that armed actors understand the importance of upholding IHL and IHRL is a core component. Additionally, CMCoord Officers may be well-positioned to support protection outcomes identified by protection actors and humanitarian leadership.

There are numerous protection actors that may also engage with armed actors, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Protection Cluster, and protection, security and access focal points at the regional and country levels. To ensure consistency and complementarity, CMCoord Officers should work closely with protection actors to coordinate on-going actions related to protection and place them within the wider civil-military coordination role of OCHA. Moreover, CMCoord Officers may be well placed to support the identified protection outcomes⁹ agreed by the HCT, and help reduce risk of violence, coercion, or deliberate deprivation, in situations of armed conflict, disasters, pandemics or other emergencies.¹⁰

In some contexts, the role of the CMCoord Officers may be limited to facilitate and coordinate engagement between armed actors and protection actors. In other contexts, CMCoord Officers

may work with OCHA protection focal points, the protection cluster/sector at the country level, or other protection actors to support their engagement with armed actors on protection issues.

The Civil-Military Coordination Service (CMCS) supports the CMCoord function, as an ‘enabler’ of protection outcomes at the country level, through operational field support, guidance and tools for training, incorporating good practices, lessons learned and noteworthy experiences. CMCS also builds and maintains partnerships of humanitarian civil-military coordination at the HQ level.

In settings with **UN peacekeeping or peace operations**¹¹, CMCoord Officers can assist in coordinating some of the tasks of missions that have a protection of civilians mandate. An effective mission PoC coordination system, often with OCHA’s active engagement, complements the work of the Protection Cluster, UN Country Team, and Humanitarian Country Team in a mutually beneficial relationship. However, the need among humanitarian actors to maintain a degree of distinction, both real and perceived, can mean that engagement with the mission is more limited or nuanced.¹² In addition, for peace operations PoC may be limited to protecting civilians from physical harm, whereas humanitarian protection is much broader in scope.

UN peacekeepers frequently operate in highly volatile conflict areas.¹³ UN military personnel can be called upon to protect civilians, non-governmental organizations and UN personnel, monitor a disputed border, provide security across a conflict zone, assist in-country military personnel with training and support.¹⁴ United Nations Police (UNPOL)¹⁵, an integral element of United Nations Peace Operations, contributes to the full peace continuum. UNPOL builds and supports host-State police capacity to prevent and detect crime, protect life and property and maintain public order and safety.¹⁶

In some settings, Humanitarian Liaison Officers, often embedded in the missions, work to build effective coordination between the humanitarian community and peacekeeping missions (e.g. MINUSMA).

Operating in peacekeeping environment translates into the following objectives for OCHA CMCoord Officers in support of achieving protection outcomes identified/agreed by the HCT¹⁷:

- Preserve humanitarian space to operate, by maintaining a clear distinction of the identities, functions and roles of humanitarians vis-à-vis peacekeepers;
- Defend principled humanitarian action and protect humanitarian space (by advocating for area security rather than armed escorts, for example)¹⁸;
- Ensure coherence of relief efforts to avoid duplication of military and humanitarian activities;
- Ensure an appropriate use of military resources for humanitarian response in accordance with humanitarian and CMCoord principles; and
- Support efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) within the UN system and to protect rights and dignity of affected communities.

III. Five Areas of CMCoord Tasks in Support of Protection Outcomes

The following are some specific tasks that may be performed by OCHA CMCoord Officers in support of protection outcomes, to be considered depending on the specific context that they operate in.¹⁹

1) Analysis

Analysis of the context will describe armed actors’ impact on the protection environment, assist protection actors and humanitarian leadership in having an in-depth overview of the

problem, and help identify points of entry for CMCoord officers and focal points. CMCoord Officers can:

- Conduct a stakeholder analysis and mapping (including spoilers and influencers on protection and access objectives) to inform OCHA, the HC and HCT engagement with parties to the conflict;
- Advise on how best to approach protection issues, with armed actors, as prioritized by humanitarian leadership, based on knowledge of the context and understanding of the relationships within and between armed groups and stakeholders;
- Share with the Protection Cluster and other protection actors operationally relevant information related to the protection of civilians, in accordance with existing guidelines and formalized data protection legal agreements to support protection outcomes and advocacy efforts; and
- Monitor, when appropriate and in support of protection actors, systems designed for tracking civilian casualties and documenting harm to civilians (e.g. UNAMA Civilian Casualty Recording, AMISOM Civilian Casualty Tracking and Response Cell), access impediments by armed actors (e.g. OCHA Access Monitoring and Reporting Framework, INSO Reports, etc.) and analyze the information to support advocacy towards civilian harm mitigation efforts, protection of humanitarian personnel and assets, humanitarian access and humanitarian space.

Settings with UN Peacekeeping/Peace Operations

- Contribute to encouraging a joint POC analysis according to the Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP) policy; and
- Provide inputs to the proposed changes in a UN Peacekeeping footprint with regards to its PoC mandate.

2) Dialogue

Establishing direct channels of communication, and dialogue with armed actors is a key tool of civil-military coordination and can help prevent or alleviate immediate effects of a violation or abuse. Dialogue can also contribute to building a conducive environment. CMCoord Officers can:

- Establish and sustain dialogue with armed actors and their allies, to address protection risks and threats;
- Influence humanitarian arrangements and modalities for camp closures, civilian evacuations and security screening of civilians, based on protection-related minimum standards, Security Council resolutions and legal frameworks, in collaboration with protection actors;
- Support the Protection Cluster or other designated humanitarian interlocutors in establishing links to military forces and other armed actors, if deemed appropriate by the humanitarian leadership;
- Share technical and operational information related to humanitarian access arrangements (including humanitarian pauses, corridors, days of tranquility, shifting frontlines, localized ceasefires, etc.) with protection partners; and
- Establish humanitarian notification systems, when required, to support protection and other humanitarian activities.

Settings with UN Peacekeeping/Peace Operations

- Engage with and participate in the mission's PoC coordination platforms (e.g. Protection Working Group).

3) Advocacy

As a result of their direct contact with armed actors, CMCoord Officers can contribute to building a more protective environment for civilians and raising awareness of the centrality of

protection in humanitarian action. Advocacy can take place at all levels, and CMCoord Officers can greatly influence key messages around specific protection issues linked to the behavior of armed actors to enhance the protection of civilians. CMCoord officers can:

- Support humanitarian leadership and protection actors to identify the most appropriate advocacy targets for sensitive protection issues and violations;
- Echo the Humanitarian Coordinator and HCT's advocacy for the protection of civilians and humanitarian space with armed actors;
- Promote compliance with and respect for International Humanitarian Law (Conduct of Hostilities) ensuring principled and coordinated engagement with parties to the conflict;
- Promote initiatives to safeguard protection principles, including safe and equitable access to humanitarian assistance, to minimize protection risks and build and maintain acceptance for humanitarian action;
- Encourage alternatives to the use of armed escorts and discourage direct assistance by military, promoting the principle of last resort, ensuring any use of military assistance takes on a humanitarian character;
- Ensure a *Do No Harm* approach and apply a protection lens, in facilitating negotiations for humanitarian access;
- Support the Protection Cluster by contributing to the development of advocacy strategies to address existing protection concerns (e.g. armed escorts, child recruitment); and
- Identify the most appropriate and effective actor(s) to influence combatant behavior, including through other military (military-to-military engagement) or humanitarian organizations.

Settings with UN Peacekeeping/Peace Operations

- Foster a conducive operating environment aimed at securing respect for IHL, IHRL and humanitarian action through engagement with Peacekeeping Missions /Peace Operations:
- Provide inputs to mission protection strategies, ensuring consistency and coherence with humanitarian protection and other relevant global humanitarian strategies and policies; and
- Encourage a coherent, strategic and coordinated approach within the humanitarian community and with UN mission components on protection-related issues.

4) Capacity Building

Building the capacity of civil-military coordination skills and competencies will ensure common understanding, and knowledge of humanitarian standards and UN-CMCoord guidance. Training events bring together participants to enhance civil-military dialogue and raise awareness of protection frameworks, thereby promoting a conducive protection environment. CMCoord officers can:

- Seek to influence military forces and other armed actors' respect for the protection of civilians, for example, ensuring that they receive training on IHL, IHRL and humanitarian principles;
- Raise awareness with armed actors of context-specific protection guidelines (e.g. evacuation of civilians, treatment of unaccompanied minors, the role of the military in civilian unrest, etc.);
- Conduct training workshops for armed actors on protection, access and UN-CMCoord normative frameworks and principles guiding humanitarian action, in cooperation with OCHA protection focal points and/or protection partners, as well as on access negotiation for protection stakeholders dealing with armed actors; and

- Ensure OCHA and other humanitarian actors, including international and local NGOs, participate in key training exercises to support cohesion and understanding across sectors.

Settings with UN Peacekeeping/Peace Operations

- Support the delivery of training programmes for peacekeepers to promote international humanitarian and human rights norms and awareness of humanitarian principles that govern humanitarian action.

5) Planning and Preparedness

Depending on the context, joint planning and information sharing between the humanitarian community and armed actors may be appropriate and could include protection-related issues and concerns. Existing CMCoord platforms that facilitate dialogue between military and humanitarian actors can play a key role in planning and preparedness and the process will help foster a conducive environment. CMCoord officers can:

- Advise the HC and HCT on applicable policy frameworks and support in the development of rules of engagement, codes of conduct and joint operating modalities;
- Ensure that protection concerns are proactively and preemptively conveyed to military forces and other armed actors during their operational planning, either by linking protection actors into the planning process, or by serving as an interlocuter between the armed actors and protection actors; and
- When appropriate, influence arrangements and modalities for civilian evacuation and security screening of civilians; and
- Ensure a current CM Coord assessment is in place that foresees what role armed actors might be forced to take in a humanitarian response.

Settings with UN Peacekeeping/Peace Operations

- Promote adherence to the Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP) policy and the Secretary General’s Directive on UN Transitions; and
- Identify protection risks to civilians, as well as humanitarian organizations, during scenario planning of military operations.

This Guidance Note was developed by OCHA’s Civil-Military Coordination Service (CMCS) with inputs from OCHA’s Policy Advice and Planning Section, Operations and Advocacy Division and field colleagues from OCHA offices in Afghanistan, CAR, ROAP, ROSEA, Sudan and Yemen. This Note is an evolving document and future updates will be undertaken in consultation with PAPS/OAD and OCHA field practitioners. CMCS will solicit context-specific examples from OCHA-CMCoord Officers and CMCoord and Access and/ or Protection Focal Points, as relevant. Please send any examples and other feedback on this Note to: Michael Marx (marxm@un.org) and Masayo Kondo Rossier (kondo@un.org), CMCS.

Annex 1: The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action¹

All humanitarian actors have a responsibility to place protection at the centre of humanitarian action. In 2013, the Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee issued a statement affirming the centrality of protection in humanitarian action. It calls on all humanitarian actors, in preparedness and immediate and life-saving activities throughout the duration of a crisis and beyond, to ensure that protection of all persons affected and at risk informs humanitarian decision-making and response, including engagement with States and non-State parties to conflict.²

The IASC's Protection Policy (2016) outlines the process for the implementation of the centrality of protection in humanitarian action at the country-level. It seeks to reinforce complementary roles, mandates and expertise of all relevant actors to engage collectively to achieve meaningful protection outcomes that reduce overall risks to affected persons by decreasing threats, reducing vulnerability and enhancing capacities. Given the multifaceted nature of protection threats and the complex contexts in which they arise, complementary coordinated and collaborative actions by multiple organizations and authorities are required.

Key actions to support the centrality of protection in practice include:

- Collecting and sharing data and information relevant to protection, as appropriate
- Continuous in-depth and integrated analysis of protection risks, violations and harm
- Integration and mainstreaming of protection into activities by all sectors/clusters
- Agreement among HCTs on protection priorities and shared actions to address these concerns
- Regular discussion on protection priorities in the HCT as a standing item
- Mobilising actors within and beyond the humanitarian system to contribute to protection outcomes, including development, peace and security actors,
- Regular monitoring of progress and results toward achievement of protection outcomes

¹ IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2016.

² IASC Principals, *Statement on the Centrality of Protection*, 17 December 2013

Annex 2: Reference Documents

Civil-Military Coordination

- [UN-CMCoord Field Handbook v.2.0](#) (2018)
- [A Guide for the Military v.2.0](#) (2017)

The [IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) (2016) lists reference and standards, including the following key documents:

- [IASC Principals Statement on the Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) (2013)
- [OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles](#) (2012)
- [IASC Guidance Note on Human Rights for Humanitarian Coordinators](#) (2006)
- [IASC EDG-Preliminary guidance note on Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations \(AAP\) in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#) (2016)
- [The Sphere Handbook](#) (2018)
- Global Protection Cluster [Diagnostic Tool and Guidance on the Interaction between Field Protection Clusters and UN missions](#) (2013)

In addition, the following thematic reference documents are available:

Protection

- [OCHA on Message: Protection](#) (2020)
- [ICRC Professional Standards for Protection Work](#) (2018)
- Global Protection Cluster: [Protection in a Climate of Change: Strategic Framework 2020-2024](#) (2020)

Protection of Civilians

- [Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General](#). UNSC. S/2020/366 (2020)
- [The Protection of Civilians in the United Nations Peacekeeping: Handbook](#), UNDPO (2020)
- [Policy: Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping](#), UNDPO (2019)
- [Building a Culture of Protection: 20 Years of Security Council Engagement in Protection of Civilians](#) OCHA (2019)
- [Security Council Aide Memoire on Protection of Civilians](#) (on-line depository)
- [Protection of Civilians Mandate, UN Peacekeeping](#) (on-line information)
- [Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations](#) Independent study commissioned by DPKO and OCHA (2009)

Prevention against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

- [IASC Strategy on Protection from and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment](#) (2018)
- [Summary of IASC Good Practices: Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Aid Workers](#) (2019)

Mine Action

- [United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes](#) UNMAS (2019)
- [Landmines, Explosive Remnants of War and IED Safety Handbook](#) UNMAS (2015)

Humanitarian Access

- [Humanitarian Access in Situations of Armed Conflict: Practitioner's Manual](#) Swiss FDFA (2014)

Integration

- [UN Integrated Assessment and Planning Policy](#) (2018)
- [Protection of Civilians: Coordination mechanisms in UN Peacekeeping Missions](#) DPKO/DFS (2012)

¹ *IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action*. IASC. (2016). p.2.

² Some peacekeeping missions have a mandate to protect civilians, where civilians are under threat of physical harm. In such missions, PoC is a responsibility which includes the civilian, military and police functions. "...the protection of civilians mandate in UN peacekeeping operations is defined as, without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the host state, integrated and coordinated activities by all civilian and uniformed mission components to prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians within the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force." [Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping](#). UNDP. 2019. p.5-6.

³ *IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action* (2016)

⁴ See the *Terms of Reference of the Humanitarian Coordinator*. See also: the *IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action* (2016), the *IASC Principals' Statement on the Centrality of Protection* (2013) and *OCHA/UNHCR Summary Conclusions on Protection and Internal Displacement* (2014)

⁵ Engagement with non-humanitarian actors must seek complementarity whilst at the same time safeguarding humanitarian principles and space.

⁶ See the [Sphere Standards](#), 2018, in particular core commitment 19: "Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action."

⁷ *UN-CMCoord Field Handbook, v. 2.0*. OCHA. 2019. p.20.

⁸ *UN-CMCoord Field Handbook, v. 2.0*. OCHA. 2019. p.8.

⁹ "The expected changes in behavior, knowledge, policy, practice, or decision of the duty bearers or any other relevant stakeholder." ICRC Professional Standards for Protection Work. 2018.

¹⁰ [Results-Based Protection: Protection Outcomes](#). InterAction. 2013.

¹¹ OCHA CMCoord Officers/Focal Points work with the following UN peacekeeping and peace operations, with POC mandate: UNSOM (Somalia), UNMISS and UNISFA (South Sudan), UNAMID (Sudan), MINUSCA (CAR), MONUSCO (DRC), MINUSMA (Mali), UNAMA (Afghanistan), UNIFIL (Lebanon), and with the mandate in facilitation of humanitarian assistance: UNAMI (Iraq), UNSMIL (Libya), UNMM (Turkey) and UNMHA (Yemen).

¹² "Peacekeeping missions are often deployed into challenging circumstances, navigating fraught political contexts and nonpermissive security environments in support of a range of early peacebuilding measures. As such, they may be engaged in political processes with one or several parties to a conflict that lacks popular support, or they may be tasked to support a government the institutions of which are responsible for threats to or violations against civilians; missions may also be obliged to take up offensive military postures. All of these circumstances, ... can strain mission-humanitarian coordination." *Protection of Civilians: Coordination Mechanisms in UN Peacekeeping Missions*. DPKO/DFS. 2012. p. 17.

¹³ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/preventing-conflicts>

¹⁴ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/military>

¹⁵ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-police>

¹⁶ UNPOL presence with OCHA CMCoord Officers and Focal Points: UNSOM, UNMISS, UNAMID, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, MINUSMA, UNSMIL, UNMHA and UNIFIL.

¹⁷ Adapted from *A Guide for the Military*. OCHA. 2017. p. 52.

¹⁸ "An alternative and good practice to deterrence measures and armed protection is to request **area security**. This may involve 'clearing' and patrolling roads, maintaining a presence in the area but not being visible or accompanying the convoy, or providing aerial flyovers." *A Guide for the Military*. OCHA. 2017. p. 48.

¹⁹ Adapted from: 6.5.2 UN CMCoord and Protection. *UN-CMCoord Field Handbook v. 2.0*. OCHA. 2018. pp. 156-157, complemented by OCHA's *CAP Hub paper*. 2019 and the *IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action* (2016), the *IASC Principals' Statement on the Centrality of Protection* (2013) and *OCHA/UNHCR Summary Conclusions on Protection and Internal Displacement* (2014).