

SEPTEMBER 2020

Re-assessing the Civil-Military Coordination Service of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Findings and Recommendations Based on Partners' Perspectives

AUTHORS

Rob Grace

Brittany Card

*A Report of the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies
Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University*



WATSON INSTITUTE
INTERNATIONAL & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

BROWN UNIVERSITY

**CHR
& HS** CENTER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS
& HUMANITARIAN
STUDIES

About CHRHS

Established in 2019 at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies (CHRHS) is committed to tackling the human rights and humanitarian challenges of the 21st century. Our mission is to promote a more just, peaceful, and secure world by furthering a deeper understanding of global human rights and humanitarian challenges, and encouraging collaboration between local communities, academics, and practitioners to develop innovative solutions to these challenges.

About the Authors

Rob Grace and Brittany Card drafted this report. Rob Grace led the re-assessment process in his capacity as a researcher for CHRHS. Brittany Card served as co-author and co-researcher, initially as a part of her role as a professor for the Humanitarian Response Program at the U.S. Naval War College, and subsequently, as a researcher at CHRHS.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to extend gratitude to all of the participants in the process of creating this report. They acknowledge with deep appreciation the great deal of time and energy that participants devoted, especially in light of the challenging circumstances brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic, which erupted mid-way through this process. The authors extend particular thanks to Adam Levine and David Polatty for their valuable feedback and support. The authors also benefited greatly from the work of two research assistants, Natalie Montufar and Christopher Kobel, and from Seth Stulen, who provided valuable administrative support and served as graphic designer for the report.

Suggested Citation

Rob Grace and Brittany Card, "Re-assessing the Civil-Military Coordination Service of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: Findings and Recommendations Based on Partners' Perspectives," Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies, Watson Institute of International and Public Policy, Brown University, September 2020.

© Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies. All Rights Reserved

Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies
Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University
280 Brook Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02912
watson.brown.edu/chrhs

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	i
Part One: Introduction	1
Part Two: The Landscape of Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination	3
I. Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination: A Brief Overview	3
II. Response Contexts: Current and Emerging Issues	5
III. The Role of CMCS	8
Part Three: Identified Gaps for CMCS	12
I. Operational Support	12
II. Guidance and Policy Engagement	17
III. Capacity Building and Strategic Outreach	20
Part Four: The Route Forward for CMCS	25
I. A Conceptual Vision for Operationalizing the Community of Practice Model	25
II. Phase 1: Re-invigorating Relationships and Feedback Loops	27
III. Phase 2: Systematizing and Sustaining the Community of Practice	31
IV. Phase 3: Expanding and Deepening Engagement	32
V. Overarching Recommendations for OCHA Senior Leadership	34
Part Five: Concluding Remarks	36
Annex I	37
Annex II	38

Executive Summary

Over the past two decades, the field of humanitarian civil-military coordination (CMCoord) has developed with the strategic aim of promoting effective and efficient humanitarian action, especially in contexts where it is necessary and appropriate to incorporate military and civil defence assets into humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. Ultimately, CMCoord seeks to coordinate humanitarian and military actors' activities while retaining the principled and civilian nature of humanitarian response.

As part of CMCoord's formalization as a distinct area of policy and practice, a dedicated CMCoord unit was established within the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). As the focal point for CMCoord in the UN system, OCHA's Civil-Military Coordination Service (CMCS) supports field and headquarters-level activities through three key activity areas: 1) operational support, 2) guidance and policy engagement, and 3) capacity building and strategic outreach.

Following two decades of driving and supporting the development of CMCoord, OCHA disbanded CMCS as a section in 2018, and then reversed this decision, reconstituting CMCS in 2019. These organizational decisions are the context in which the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies (CHRHS), based at the Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs at Brown University, led this strategic re-assessment of CMCS in order to help ensure, moving forward, that CMCS is adequately capacitated and resourced to fulfill its mandate and core functions effectively.

At this key moment in CMCS' evolution, this report takes stock of the perspectives of CMCS' partners—including operational humanitarian organizations, donor governments, and capacity building organizations—regarding key elements of current response contexts and partners' needs and expectations from CMCS. In this sense, rather than functioning as a more traditional evaluation, this report aims more specifically to paint a portrait of partners' views of the state of CMCoord, CMCS, and what partners would like to see from the service moving forward.

This report identifies 12 gaps related to CMCS' three main areas of activities based on written submissions, bilateral conversations, and group discussions with partners. Following group discussions of these gaps facilitated by CHRHS, this report presents a conceptual vision for linking together CMCS' key activities and presents a roadmap, consisting of concrete recommendations for CMCS and OCHA senior leadership, for operationalizing this vision and fulfilling CMCS' core mandate. As laid out in the report, this process will entail reinvigorating partnerships and feedback loops; systematizing and sustaining a community of practice; and finally, expanding and deepening this engagement over time. The ultimate aim is to enable CMCS to nimbly adapt and respond to the needs of current and emerging response contexts.

Identified Gaps for CMCS

Operational Support

Gap #1: CMCS is de-linked from the field, stymying its ability to perform its operational support function

Gap #2: Lack of sufficient human resources for CMCoord across OCHA

Gap #3: Insufficient information gathering, analysis, and sharing with external partners

Gap #4: Lack of clarity, guidance, and support regarding CMCoord officer engagement with NSAGs

Guidance and Policy Engagement

Gap #5: Existing CMCoord guidelines inconsistently operationalized

Gap #6: Lack of guidance or support for humanitarian notification systems

Gap #7: Lack of robust global policy leadership

Capacity Building and Strategic Outreach

Gap #8: Lack of a robust community of practice

Gap #9: No standardization for CMCoord officer capacity building

Gap #10: Limited responsiveness of CMCoord curriculum to evolving operational needs

Gap #11: The need to expand outreach with militaries

Gap #12: Insufficient information gathering, analysis, and dissemination of challenges encountered and lessons observed

Recommendations for CMCS

Phase 1: Re-invigorating Relationships and Feedback Loops

#1: Convene CMCoord officers to facilitate information sharing on challenges, needs, and lessons observed

#2: Convene existing military partners with aim of ascertaining challenges, needs, and lessons observed

#3: Convene interested CMCoord stakeholders for professional exchanges to better serve the aim of cultivating a community of practice

#4: Publish and circulate information on current CMCoord officer deployments

#5: Publish regular updates on CMCoord activities and developments

#6: Systematize approaches to humanitarian notification systems

Phase 2: Systematizing and Sustaining the Community of Practice

#7: Establish an ongoing, standardized process of gathering information about challenges faced and lessons observed in the field

#8: Standardize professional prerequisites for CMCoord officers

#9: Produce digestible guidance documents

Phase 3: Expanding and Deepening Engagement

#10: Expand outreach to a broader array of military actors

#11: Engage with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

#12: Pursue joint training opportunities for humanitarian and military actors

#13 Seek opportunities to lead discussions on CMCoord in other fora at the global level

Recommendations for OCHA Senior Leadership

#1: Embrace, invest in, and support CMCoord as a core competency across OCHA

#2: Formally integrate CMCS into the selection process for CMCoord personnel

#3: Situate the locus of OCHA's NSAG engagement strategy outside of—but linked to—CMCS

1 | Introduction

This report presents findings from a six month-long process of engagement between the Civil-Military Coordination Service (CMCS) of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and key CMCS partners, including operational humanitarian organizations, donor governments, and capacity building organizations.¹ CMCS initiated this process in fall 2019 and engaged the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies (CHRHS), based at the Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs at Brown University, as an independent academic partner to lead the process.

The context for this strategic re-assessment is the decision by OCHA to disband CMCS as a section in 2018; the reversal of this decision when OCHA reconstituted CMCS in 2019; and the importance of ensuring, moving forward, that CMCS is adequately capacitated and resourced to fulfill its mandate and core functions effectively. At this key moment in CMCS' evolution, this report takes stock of partners' perspectives regarding key elements of current response contexts—including emerging issues and anticipated future trends—as well as partners' needs and expectations from CMCS. In this sense, rather than functioning as a more traditional evaluation, this report aims more specifically to paint a portrait of partners' views of the state of humanitarian civil-military coordination (CMCoord), CMCS, and what partners would like to see from the service moving forward.

CMCS initiated the re-assessment process by convening a virtual meeting in fall 2019 with key partner organizations to discuss the aims and substantive scope of the process. Based on comments offered during this initial conversation, CHRHS created a draft list of framing questions in collaboration with CMCS. OCHA convened an on-site meeting with partners on January 15-16, 2020 in Geneva, Switzerland, during which participants reached consensus on the framing questions and also engaged in discussions about their CMCoord activities, challenges, and needs.² Per the work plan, partners agreed to submit written responses to the framing questions. CMCS and CHRHS agreed that CHRHS would independently lead the process of analyzing partners' submissions, as well as drafting and publishing a final report. Partners submitted their responses directly to CHRHS, which independently reviewed and analyzed the submissions.

At a second on-site meeting convened in Geneva, Switzerland on February 5, 2020 during Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW), partners met to discuss progress made on submitting their responses, as well as the work plan moving forward. Additionally, at the annual meeting of the Consultative Group on Civil-Military Coordination convened at HNPW, CHRHS presented the re-assessment and invited any interested attendees to participate in the process. CHRHS convened three virtual calls with CMCS and partner organizations between March and June 2020 to discuss CHRHS' preliminary analysis and findings.³

¹ Annex I offers a list of partner organizations that engaged in this process.

² Annex II presents the framing questions.

³ CHRHS originally planned to convene partners at an on-site meeting at Brown University in March 2020. CHRHS adapted this work plan after travel restrictions arose amidst the COVID-19 outbreak.

Ultimately, 14 partner organizations and 6 experts operating in their individual capacity participated in the re-assessment by delivering written submissions, offering inputs in bilateral conversations with CHRHS, and/or participating in group discussions that CMCS and CHRHS convened on-site and virtually. Some participants offered inputs based on organization-wide consultations, whereas other submissions reflected the views of individual participants, based on their professional experience and expertise. To supplement these inputs, CHRHS conducted interviews with 12 professionals within CMCS and across other branches of OCHA. Participants in this process understood that the report would adhere to a protocol by which responses and comments from individuals and organizations would not be attributable by name.

Two additional points are important to clarify. First, this process sought to engage a wide and diverse array of partners relevant to CMCS' activities. However, the pool of participants does not represent an exhaustive list of CMCS partners and organizations operating in the CMCoord space, but rather, select partners who already regularly engage with CMCS. In particular, this process entailed very limited involvement from military actors. Participants in this process discussed the desirability of viewing this report as simply the first phase, which can lead to a more inclusive effort to consult and engage with a broader pool of CMCS partner organizations, in particular, military actors, and also incorporating a wider array of non-Western perspectives. Second, this report is not a consensus document. The report will highlight points for which there was widespread agreement but will also discuss issues for which partners held divergent views. The report reflects CHRHS' analysis of participants' written and verbal inputs and key takeaways from group discussions.

The report proceeds in five parts. Part 1 offers introductory remarks and describes the basis and methodology of the report. Part 2 provides a brief overview of the landscape of CMCoord; presents partners' perspectives on the key elements of response contexts currently shaping approaches to CMCoord; and offers a brief overview of the role of CMCS. Part 3 lays out partners' perspectives on various gaps that persist relating to CMCS' core functions, namely: operational support, engagement in guidance and policy, as well as capacity building and strategic outreach. Part 4 proposes a route forward for CMCS, including a conceptual vision toward which CMCS can aspire, as well as concrete recommendations. Part 5 offers concluding remarks.

2 | The Landscape of Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination

To contextualize the findings and recommendations presented throughout this report, Part 2 offers background information on the landscape of CMCoord, including the role of CMCS. This part consists of three sections. Section I discusses the strategic aims of CMCoord, as well as key activities, stakeholders, and overarching challenges. Section II provides an overview of current and emerging issues shaping contemporary approaches to CMCoord. Section III presents a brief history of OCHA's engagement in and contribution to CMCoord, with a particular emphasis on the aims and activities of CMCS.

I. Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination: A Brief Overview

CMCoord is defined as:

[T]he essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and when appropriate, pursue common goals. Basic strategies range from coexistence to cooperation. Coordination is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training.⁴

The strategic aim of CMCoord is to promote effective and efficient humanitarian action, especially in contexts where it is necessary and appropriate to incorporate military and civil defence assets (MCDA) into humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR). CMCoord entails coordinating humanitarian and military actors' activities while retaining the principled and civilian nature of humanitarian response. In this sense, CMCoord is a subset of broader dialogue efforts between humanitarian and armed actors. This wider dialogue, which CMCoord can link to and support, stretches across a vast array of issue areas—including humanitarian access, the protection of civilians, security, and combatants' adherence to international humanitarian law (IHL)—and spans from field-level interactions to efforts at the global level to shape policy and practice.

As noted in the UN-CMCoord field handbook that OCHA published in 2018, CMCoord encompasses, among others, the following key tasks:

1. Establish and sustain dialogue with military and other armed actors.
2. Establish mechanisms for information exchange and humanitarian interaction with military forces and other armed actors.

⁴ OCHA, "Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination," <https://www.unocha.org/es/themes/humanitarian-civil-military-coordination>.

3. Assist in negotiations in critical areas of interaction between humanitarian workers and military forces and other armed actors.
4. Support the development and dissemination of context-specific guidance for the interaction of the humanitarian community with military forces and other armed actors.
5. Observe the activity of military forces and other armed actors to ensure that distinction is maintained and to avoid negative impact on humanitarian action.⁵

Interactions between humanitarian, military and other actors occur in various operational environments, including in peacetime, non-international armed conflict, international armed conflict, infectious disease outbreaks, complex emergencies, and natural disasters. Additionally, CMCoord engagements occur at various levels, from the headquarters level in national capitals to the local level, where field operations occur.

The CMCoord ecosystem consists of a diverse array of stakeholders, each of whom wields distinct comparative advantages at different levels of engagement. One could break down the categories of CMCoord stakeholders as follows:

- **Civilians affected by humanitarian crises**

First and foremost, it is important to recognize civilians affected by humanitarian crises as critical stakeholders. The ways that CMCoord can serve those who are receiving or are otherwise impacted by humanitarian operations should be central to strategic and operational planning.

- **Armed actors**

Armed actors that operate in the CMCoord space include national militaries; international militaries, including military coalitions; peacekeeping forces; and police. Although the nomenclature of CMCoord might appear to exclude police, it is important to acknowledge their relevance to the CMCoord ecosystem. CMCoord officers have also undertaken extensive dialogue with non-state armed groups (NSAGs), although the relevance of NSAG engagement to CMCoord activities is one for which partners articulated divergent viewpoints, as this report later addresses.

- **Governmental and inter-governmental organizations**

Governmental and inter-governmental organizations are also key stakeholders and may also serve as donors for organizations engaged in CMCoord. Relevant actors include governmental agencies—for example, the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, United States Agency for International Development (USAID); the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, U.S. State Department (PRM); and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID)—as well as regional organizations, including the European Union (EU), the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

⁵ OCHA, UN-CMCoord Field Handbook, Version 2.0, 2018, p. 8, <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/%5BE-Version%5D%20UNCMCoord%20Field%20Handbook%202.0%20%282018%29.pdf>.

- **Humanitarian organizations**

Humanitarian actors that engage in CMCoord include United Nations (UN) agencies, for example: OCHA, the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Humanitarian international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also engage in CMCoord, and there is great variety across organizations in terms of their CMCoord capacities. Another key network of actors is the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has a long legacy of engaging in dialogue with combatants to armed conflict, in particular, on issues of IHL and the protection of civilians. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has forged relationships, and engaged in coordination with, national governments and militaries across the globe. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies also play an important role in the CMCoord landscape.

Two overarching challenges frame the landscape of CMCoord. First, humanitarian organizations and militaries differ from one another in their organizational cultures and capacities, ultimate organizational aims, and use of language and terminology. Historically, the cultural differences between military and humanitarian actors has created a humanitarian-military divide that can be challenging to bridge. A persistent issue is that humanitarian and military actors often lack a clear understanding of one another’s planning priorities, decision-making processes, capacities, and limitations.

Second, the humanitarian sector is far from a homogeneous unit, with different organizations adopting distinct approaches to operationalizing humanitarian principles. Given the quantity and variety of organizations involved in the civil-military environment, as well as variant approaches adopted across operational contexts, no singular approach to CMCoord exists. As noted in the 2018 *Recommended Practices for Effective Civil-Military Coordination of Foreign Military Assets (FMA) in Natural and Man-Made Disasters*, “Each [humanitarian] organization should make its own decision on how and when to engage with military actors, both national and foreign, according to their internal policies and in light of the relevant legal framework at the time.” The challenge is thus how these different approaches can be coordinated to complement, rather than conflict with, one another.

II. Response Contexts: Current and Emerging Issues

This section delves more deeply into the aspects of current and anticipated response contexts that are shaping humanitarian organizations’ engagements with armed actors, informing what capabilities are required, and driving challenges faced at field and headquarters levels. Drawn from partners’ perspectives, this section highlights six intersecting dynamics, offering an initial baseline to inform this report’s assessment of CMCS’ future directions, actions, and priorities.

A. Natural Disasters and Climate Change

Natural disasters, the response context for which the field of CMCoord was initially spawned with the adoption of the Oslo Guidelines in the 1990s, will continue to occupy a prominent place on

the CMCoord operational and policy landscape. Climate change will drive more frequent and intense weather events—such as floods, droughts, and wildfires—that are likely to overwhelm domestic governments’ capacities to respond. The 2019 continent-wide Australian wildfires is a notable example, and as occurred in this context, climate events are increasingly likely to result in the deployment of foreign militaries to developed countries.

The effects of climate change will not be siloed but will affect a wide array of humanitarian vulnerabilities, including political stability, food security, water security, poverty, conflict, migration, and resilience to natural hazards. There is a need to adopt a proactive approach to the myriad direct and indirect effects of climate change. As one partner stated, “We are not prepared normatively, institutionally, or operationally—particularly for the scale of population movements we may now start to see.” These developments are arising amidst a trend in various regions of the world—for example, Asia-Pacific and Latin America—of governments relying on national militaries as first responders in HA/DR, and an increasing reluctance of some states to request external civilian or military support in response efforts for a variety of reasons, including national pride, geopolitics, and their own capacity to respond.

B. Infectious Disease Outbreaks

Humanitarian civil-military relationships are crucial during infectious disease outbreaks, especially in conflict or insecure settings with degraded health systems. The COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing at the time of this report’s drafting, is an emblematic example, as many countries have mobilized their militaries in a variety of roles to respond to the outbreak. Indeed, various countries have mobilized military medical facilities; relied on military logistics capabilities, including transportation; and deployed militaries in a law enforcement role to control population mobility across borders or internally in the context of national or localized lockdowns. Such response contexts can push the boundaries of humanitarian civil-military coordination due to the tendency for infectious disease responses to become politicized; the intensive requirements for technical civil-military exchange; and the need for specialized, context-specific response structures.

C. Lack of Respect for International Humanitarian Law and Principled Humanitarian Action

During engagements with armed actors of various types across the world—including militaries, NSAGs, and integrated peacekeeping missions—there can be an evident ignorance of, lack of appreciation for, and even blatant disregard for IHL. Indeed, some militaries lack the practical knowledge and skills to ensure that military operations adhere to IHL. There have been successes at various levels of interaction—from dialogue in operational settings to engagements with high-level political and military actors at the global level—to promote compliance with IHL and minimize civilian harm. Nevertheless, challenges persist in terms of instrumentalization of humanitarian actors by host governments and NSAGs, as well as constraints put in place by donor governments.

NSAG engagements can be particularly challenging in environments where control of territory changes rapidly and where NSAGs exhibit decentralized and shifting lines of authority. At the field

level, there is also a trend of stigmatizing civilians who have lived in or near territory under an NSAG's control. Moreover, counter-terrorism legislation and policies adopted by donor governments and/or host states complicate engagements with NSAGs listed as terrorist groups.

Another challenging aspect of current response contexts is that the distinction between humanitarian action and other modes of engaging in conflict—stabilization or development, for example—can become blurred. For example, complications can arise from integrated peacekeeping missions, and in particular, Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) that seek to leverage short-term development gains as mechanisms of peacebuilding. As one partner commented, integrated peacekeeping missions can create “challenges for humanitarian actors to maintain the perceptions of neutrality. We are continually fighting to preserve our humanitarian space in these contexts.”

D. The Complexity of Contemporary and Future Armed Conflicts

Various complex dimensions of contemporary armed conflicts shape the requirements for humanitarian coordination, and CMCoord, in particular. First, across the globe, exclusionary rhetoric, policies, and practices are prevalent. Xenophobia, hate speech via social media, and “othering” of population sub-groups are often drivers of humanitarian crises, exacerbating the threats that vulnerable populations face.

Second, there is a prevalence of “forever wars” and protracted conflicts of varying and oscillating intensities. Low-level conflict environments can include internal disturbances that fall short of the threshold for armed conflict, entailing organized crime, state instability, and the state's lack of an interest in enforcing the law. Such contexts can constitute a “grey zone,” as one partner called it, between a humanitarian crisis and a deterioration of development gains, a particularly important issue given massive ongoing development efforts being undertaken to combat global poverty alongside emergency relief activities.

Third, there are challenges related to conflict settings where one or more of the five permanent members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) are parties or proxy parties to a conflict. As one partner stated, “In many cases, these member states have little to no consequences when denying access to humanitarian actors or other norms (such as the bombing of hospitals, attacks on non-combatants, the use of chemical weapons, et cetera).” The contemporary moment, this partner described, is an “era of a dysfunctional or polarized UNSC” and an “era of impunity” for P5 Member States allegedly responsible for violations of IHL. The trend of parties to a conflict also serving as humanitarian donors can further fuel the “hyper-politicized” nature of contemporary humanitarian action. Additionally, the complex web of security assistance and partnerships between states—including coalition warfare, proxy wars, and partnered military operations—presents difficulties, although also opportunities, for promoting IHL compliance.

Fourth, the potential shift to great power or near-peer conflict will shape the future of warfare. Great power conflict may take many forms, ranging from hybrid warfare to large-scale combat operations. Militaries have started updating doctrines, strategies, training, and planning for such contexts, and humanitarians must do so as well. The risks and harms to civilians in a great power conflict will be immense, and despite the fact that the humanitarian sector has gained experience in how to speak

about and promote the protection of civilians in non-international armed conflict, a gap remains in how to engage in persuasive discourse on the protection of civilians with military forces in international armed conflict. Addressing this gap will be fundamental for humanitarian operations and civil-military coordination in the future.

E. Cyber Operations

Cyber operations can exploit vulnerabilities in civilian—including humanitarian—networks, systems, and infrastructure. Indeed, cyberattacks can target critical civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals, electrical grids, and water supply systems. Cyberattacks targeting infrastructure could also result in Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) incidents for which militaries would be primary responders due to the technical expertise required for response and containment. In discussions among partners, the question was raised how CMCoord can apply in the cyber domain, especially since anonymity is often a characteristic of a “successful” attack. Nevertheless, several partners articulated an interest in exploring the issue further, especially given its prominence in current response contexts and the likelihood of the continued relevance of cyber operations during armed conflict.

F. Urbanization

As the majority of the global population shifts to living in urban areas, the world is likely to see more humanitarian emergencies—resulting from conflicts, natural disasters, and infectious disease outbreaks—in urban contexts. Humanitarian response in urban environments requires organizations to adapt their way of working to reflect the complex, interrelated systems in these settings. For example, humanitarian response in urban environments will require international actors to learn how to understand and engage with decentralized authority and a diverse array of actors, including local NGOs, community-based organizations, private companies, and local leaders. In terms of CMCoord, this development points toward the importance of preparing for engagements with non-traditional armed actors beyond conventional militaries, such as police and non-state armed actors, including criminal gangs.

III. The Role of CMCS

OCHA’s engagement in CMCoord is derived from its mandate as the coordinator for the humanitarian system, as outlined in UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 46/182, adopted in December 1991. This mandate established the role of OCHA—initially called the Department of Humanitarian Affairs until the UN reform in the late 1990s—in “actively facilitating, including through negotiation if needed, access by operational organizations to emergency areas for the rapid provision of emergency assistance by obtaining the consent of all parties concerned...”⁶ Recognizing the need for a focal point to support humanitarian civil-military coordination, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) established a dedicated CMCoord unit in 1995. First called the Military and Civil Defence Unit, the unit in 2005 was renamed the Civil-Military Coordination

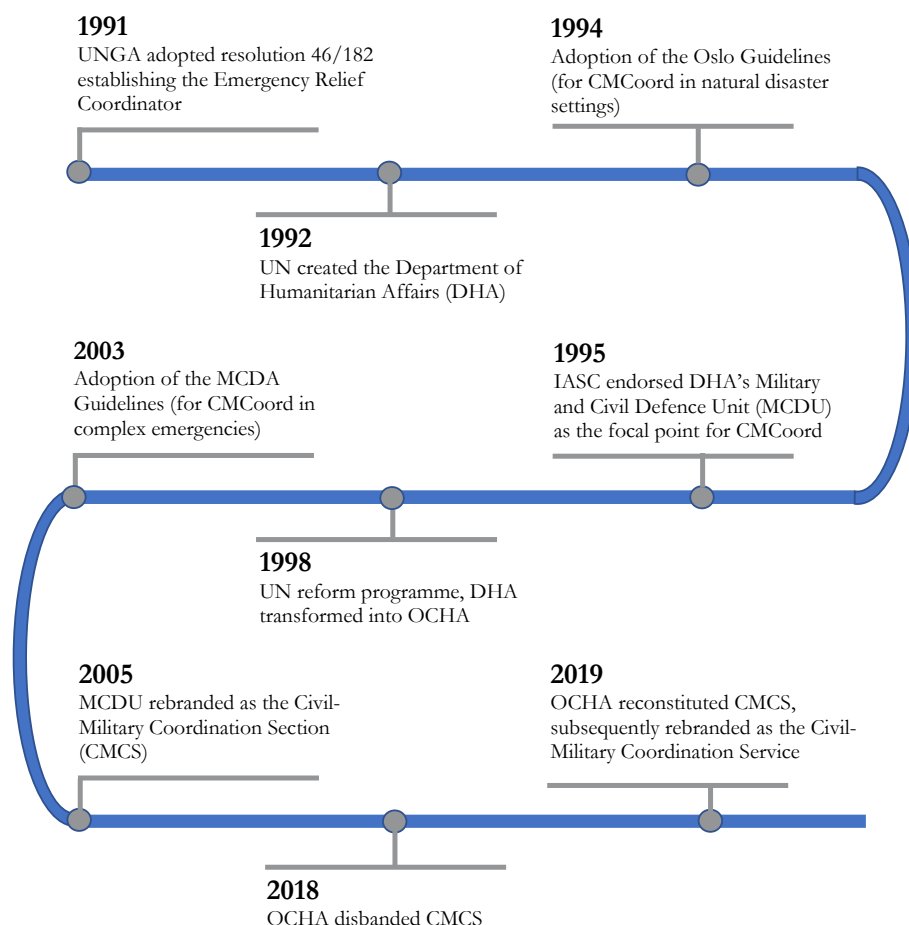
⁶ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 46/182: Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, paragraph 36(d), December 19, 1991, <https://undocs.org/A/RES/46/182>.

Section, and after being disbanded by OCHA in 2018 and then reconstituted in 2019, was rebranded as the Civil-Military Coordination Service.

In the initial period of the UN’s engagement in CMCoord in the 1990s and the early 2000s, the UN produced two foundational documents that normatively framed the field of CMCoord. They are:

- *Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief* (known as the Oslo Guidelines), first adopted in 1994 and then revised in 2007, relevant in natural disaster settings.⁷
- *Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies* (known as the MCDA Guidelines), first adopted in 2003 and then revised in 2006, relevant during complex emergencies.⁸

Figure 1: Timeline of OCHA’s Engagement in CMCoord



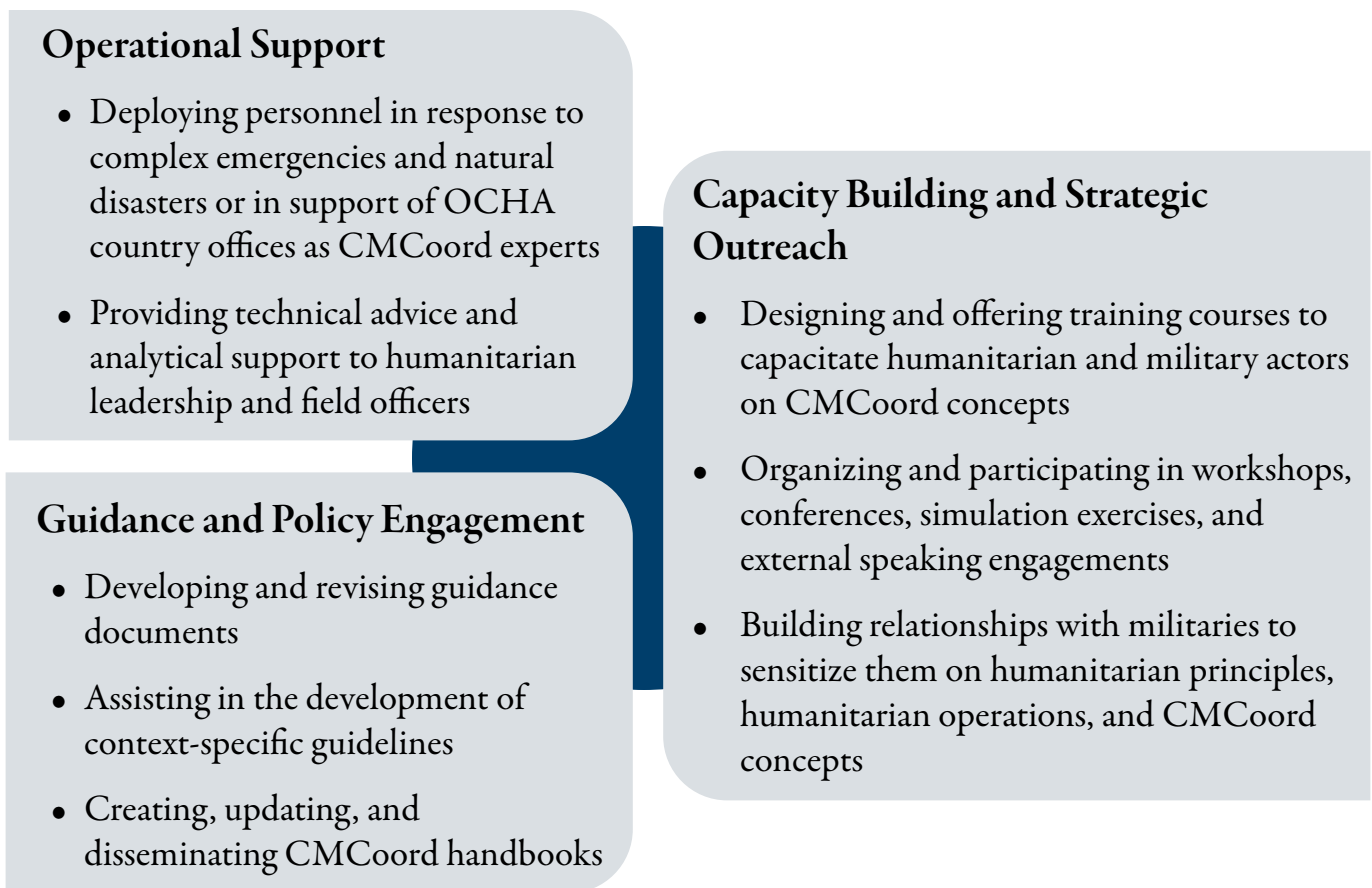
⁷ OCHA, *Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief* (Revision 1.1), November 2007, https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/OSLO%20Guidelines%20Rev%201.1%20-%20Nov%2007_0.pdf.

⁸ OCHA, *Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies* (Revision I), January 2006, https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/01.%20MCDA%20Guidelines%20March%2003%20Rev1%20Jan06_0.pdf.

These documents articulate key concepts of CMCoord, including the concept of last resort (by which civilians should only request MCDA if no comparable civilian alternative is available), the importance of retaining the civilian character of humanitarian operations even when they utilize MCDA, and the centrality of humanitarian principles to these operations. CMCS subsequently produced numerous outputs building on these foundational guidelines, including handbooks for military and humanitarian actors; context-specific guidelines; as well as documents that address particular thematic areas, such as the use of armed escorts and humanitarian notification systems.⁹

As the focal point for CMCoord in the UN system, the aim of CMCS is to support “relevant field and headquarter-level activities through the development of institutional strategies to enhance the capacity and preparedness of national and international partners.”¹⁰ One can divide CMCS’ key activities into three categories: 1) operational support, 2) guidance and policy engagement, and 3) capacity building and strategic outreach.

Figure 2: Key CMCS Activities¹¹



⁹ A repository of CMCoord global and context-specific guidance documents can be found in the Humanitarian // Military Dialogue Resource Library, <https://sites.google.com/dialoguing.org/home/resource-centre/resource-library>.

¹⁰ CMCS, “United-Nations Civil-Military Coordination Service,” Humanitarian // Military Dialogue, <https://sites.google.com/dialoguing.org/home/about-cmcs?authuser=0>.

¹¹ The information in this figure draws from CMCS, “United-Nations Civil-Military Coordination Service,” Humanitarian // Military Dialogue, <https://sites.google.com/dialoguing.org/home/about-cmcs?authuser=0>, and is complemented by information gathered over the course of the re-assessment process.

Historically, there has been widespread acknowledgment of and appreciation for the important role that CMCS, and OCHA more broadly, have played in the CMCoord space, as well as discussion about persistent challenges. A 2012 independent evaluation of OCHA's CMCoord engagement concluded, "In recent years OCHA has assumed its role in humanitarian civil-military coordination with increasing competence. The CMCS is seen as a good focal point for UN-CMCoord, and appropriate staffing, expansion of operations, and a more effective engagement in New York have all helped to facilitate greater civil-military coordination."¹² Nevertheless, the evaluation found shortcomings in terms of compliance with CMCoord guidelines; access to CMCoord training for relevant stakeholders within OCHA and externally; the ability of OCHA to recruit personnel in a timely manner; and the extent to which OCHA had successfully managed and disseminated information, including efforts to identify best practices and lessons learned in the field.¹³ As this report will describe, these issues persist today.

OCHA's 2018 decision to dismantle CMCS as a stand-alone section was reversed the following year after partner organizations—in particular, donor governments and operational humanitarian organizations—urged OCHA to do so. The episode highlighted a disconnect between OCHA and external partners regarding the perceived relevance and value of CMCoord and CMCS. Now that OCHA has reconstituted CMCS, the question is how OCHA—and CMCS, specifically—can close the gap between partners' needs and what CMCS can offer. As one partner in this re-assessment process commented, reflecting on OCHA's decision in 2019 to reconstitute CMCS, "Raising CMCS may be a wise decision, however I wonder how much reflection was done from its previous experience to go forward from here." The rest of this report—by delving more deeply into partners' perspectives on persistent gaps in CMCS' ability to undertake its core activities—aims to fulfill this demand for increased reflection to inform a more fruitful future.

¹² Universal Management Group, Independent Evaluation of OCHA's Role in Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination – Volume I, pg. iv, December 2012, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/224423/evidence-ocha-evaluation.pdf.

¹³ Ibid.

3

Identified Gaps for CMCS

Part 3 identifies gaps in CMCS' current ability to successfully undertake its core activities. There are 12 identified gaps in total: four related to operational support (gaps 1-4), three related to guidance and policy engagement (gaps 5-7), and five related to capacity building and strategic outreach (gaps 8-12). This part is divided into three sections, each one of which presents gaps related to a particular issue area (i.e., operational support, guidance and policy engagement, and capacity building and strategic outreach). Each section begins by offering introductory remarks, then provides a summary of the gaps identified, and finally presents a detailed explanation of each gap, based on partners' inputs offered over the course of this re-assessment process.

I. Operational Support

This section identifies four gaps relating to CMCS' operational support efforts. Before its dismantlement and reconstitution, CMCS engaged in a wide array of operational support activities, including providing technical advice and support, contributing to developing and updating country-specific guidance, deploying personnel to country offices or emergency responses as required, and working with in-country colleagues to create and/or deliver contextually tailored learning events. Throughout the re-assessment process, partners underscored the importance of OCHA's CMCoord operational support activities. Nevertheless, partners indicated that CMCS does not currently play the robust role in supporting field operations that is required.

A. Summary of Identified Gaps

Gap #1: CMCS is de-linked from the field, stymying its ability to perform its operational support function

Gap #2: Lack of sufficient human resources for CMCoord across OCHA

Gap #3: Insufficient information gathering, analysis, and sharing with external partners

Gap #4: Lack of clarity, guidance, and support regarding CMCoord officer engagement with NSAGs

B. Gaps in Operational Support

Gap #1: CMCS is de-linked from the field, stymying its ability to perform its operational support function

Partners' comments overwhelmingly point toward the limitations of CMCS' operational support activities. As one partner noted, there is a need for CMCS "to focus on the recapture of the field deployable element of civil-military coordination." However, this partner continued, "Given how far removed CMCS is from a directing role in the field support element of work (beyond the remaining surge posts) this is a significant ask. It would require a restructure internally and a focus on service delivery that OCHA and CMCS specifically have not been able to deliver on previously." In light of CMCS' limited and de-linked relationship from ongoing CMCoord operations in the field, a significant challenge for CMCS is how to bring the field and headquarters back into coherence with one another.

There are four overarching manifestations of this gap. First, CMCoord officers do not receive the support that they need from CMCS. Interviewees discussed instances in the past when CMCoord officers had never even heard of CMCS, lacked awareness of how CMCS could support their role, or had sought to connect with CMCS but found that CMCS was not able to offer useful problem-solving advice or guidance.

Second, humanitarian leadership often have little knowledge about humanitarian civil-military coordination and therefore lack an understanding of how to use CMCoord and CMCoord officers. There is often a lack of understanding—for example, from Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs)—about what the tasks of a CMCoord officer should be, leading RC/HCs to conflate CMCoord and security functions. CMCS can play an important role in closing this gap with more robust engagement with in-country humanitarian leadership to complement and further enable the CMCoord work that field officers undertake. Historically, CMCS' engagements with RC/HCs has been ad hoc and uneven across different contexts.

Third, partners articulated a strong demand for operational support from CMCS. The question was raised during this re-assessment process whether CMCS should prioritize intra-OCHA versus externally facing operational support efforts. Partners' inputs demonstrate a clear expectation and a need for CMCS to successfully tackle both fronts. In particular, partners discussed the need for CMCS to pursue more robust CMCoord engagement with NGOs.

Fourth, there is untapped potential for CMCS to engage with militaries at the headquarters level with the goal of advancing dialogue and supporting field officers when obstacles and challenges at the field level arise. Partners particularly stressed that OCHA, as an organization that is not itself a service provider, is well poised to engage militaries at senior levels, including on controversial issues, without concerns about impacts to service delivery that operational agencies would confront. CMCS has unique value added in this area given its ability to work across multiple levels, from the strategic to the field, and especially since CMCoord officers might lack the ability and power to engage the military at higher levels.

Gap #2: Lack of sufficient human resources for CMCoord across OCHA

In addition to more effectively linking headquarters to the field, there are also structural issues across OCHA that extend beyond CMCS itself. This section elaborates three structurally related human resource issues, all of which have implications for CMCS, as well as OCHA's approach to CMCoord more broadly. First, there is widespread concern that CMCoord officer positions are not always staffed by personnel with the necessary background, profile, training, and expertise. Partners flagged the following as important attributes for CMCoord officers—training, experience, language skills, and contextual knowledge—but noted that these baseline requirements are inconsistently met. There have been instances where CMCoord officers lacked knowledge of foundational concepts of humanitarian action and CMCoord, such as the humanitarian principles.

Furthermore, CMCS has proved unsuccessful in strategically orienting its capacity building efforts towards building a roster of qualified CMCoord personnel. There is an insufficient pool of previously trained CMCoord personnel who could be readily available to deploy on short notice, and indeed, the current pool of applicants lacks robustness and diversity (in terms of nationality, race, ethnicity, and gender). Partners noted the predominance of North American/European men with military backgrounds in CMCoord officer roles and the need to further diversify the pool of CMCoord personnel.

A practical challenge is that CMCoord is a niche specialty, and specialists with a demonstrated track record of success in the field are likely to already hold positions that they would not be able to abandon in order to assume a CMCoord officer role. However, a strategy is needed to mitigate this challenge. The ability of CMCS to ensure that CMCoord officers fulfill the baseline requirements in terms of expertise and skills is also limited due to the fact that CMCS has no formal institutionalized role in the selection of personnel to be CMCoord officers. This process is led by OCHA's Operations and Advocacy Division (OAD) and CMCS is currently involved in personnel selection only if contacted in an ad hoc manner for technical expertise.

Second, partners discussed the lack of human resource continuity, an issue that extends beyond CMCS and relates to OCHA's broader approach to CMCoord personnel selection. In one partner's words, "Engagement with armed actors in the field is often sub-optimal, especially due to lack of adequate resources or lack of continuity of the CMCoord function. This does not allow for the establishment of trust with key counterparts at all levels of the chain of command." Another partner mentioned the lack of "succession planning" when there is staff turnover, stating, "Positions are often gapped for periods, removing any continuity and handover." There are "poor handover takeover practices" and "too much information lost in turning over staff," a different partner noted. On this point, numerous partners discussed the particular detriments of relying on short-term surge staffing mechanisms. There is a widely held concern regarding the high turnover rate of personnel, often as frequently as every three months, and its negative effect on gains made in the field. As one partner stated, "Effective CMCoord, particularly in complex and fluid environments, which is built upon trust and understanding, cannot be conducted like this."

Third, CMCoord officers also often wear "multiple hats," for example, working not only on CMCoord but also on access. Dual- or triple-hatting, by which CMCoord officers also assume roles

outside of CMCoord, dilutes the CMCoord function. For example, a practitioner tasked with both CMCoord and access, but lacking a strong CMCoord background, could inadvertently wind up de-prioritizing the CMCoord aspects of the role. There also is simply not enough time for one person to effectively fulfill these multiple roles. Various partners perceived that the practice of dual- or triple-hatting indicates a lack of prioritization from OCHA for the CMCoord function.

Gap #3: Insufficient information gathering, analysis and sharing across OCHA and with external partners

First, there is insufficient transparency between CMCS and external partners. There have been instances when a partner organization sought basic information—for example, contact information for CMCoord officers, where they are working, and what other roles they also hold under the “multiple hats” paradigm—that CMCS was not able to provide. This breakdown in information management and/or sharing can negatively impact operations if organizations do not know who to contact when seeking to connect with OCHA’s CMCoord officers in the field. Additionally, issues of transparency can breed mistrust between CMCS and external partners. One partner mentioned perceiving that CMCS’ inability to share information potentially reflected an effort on OCHA’s part to misrepresent the true scope of its CMCoord capacity, making capacities seem more robust than they actually are by hiding the extent to which CMCoord officers simultaneously hold other roles.

Second, CMCS has historically not facilitated information sharing amongst CMCoord officers themselves, for example, working in the same region but in different countries. Although, a welcome development is that CMCS, over the course of this re-assessment process, began pursuing efforts toward this end by convening CMCoord officers on biweekly calls by region and planning webinars to share best practices and brainstorm about how to grapple with particular issues.

Third, partners have a need for support in stakeholder mapping, including mapping and sharing CMCoord capacities internally within OCHA and with the broader humanitarian community. Although CMCS is well-placed for this activity due to its role as the focal point in the UN system and its extensive relationships with external organizations, this need remains unmet. The request in this regard is for not only a descriptive explanation of stakeholders and capacities but also an analytical assessment of how stakeholders relate to one another, how relationships can be leveraged, and how different stakeholders can be engaged and influenced.

Fourth, partners expressed a desire for greater transparency with regards to ongoing discussions and negotiations across the humanitarian-military divide. A particular gap in this regard is the need for greater outreach to, and inclusion of, NGOs in these efforts, including efforts to build relationships with, garner trust from, and solicit feedback from NGO partners. Conversely, there is a need for CMCS to cultivate and maintain its situational awareness of the numerous NGO efforts to engage with military actors on a wide range of humanitarian issues to influence militaries’ policies and practices.

Gap #4: Lack of clarity, guidance, and support regarding CMCoord engagement with NSAGs

Partners debated two key questions related to NSAG engagement. The first question is: in what ways is NSAG engagement for humanitarian purposes relevant to CMCoord? The current thinking within CMCS and across various—although not all—partner organizations is that NSAG engagement is essential for a wide range of humanitarian purposes linked to CMCoord, including humanitarian access, security, and the protection of civilians. Various partners cited OCHA’s original mandate—UN General Assembly resolution 46/182, which references engagement with “all parties concerned”—when articulating a rationale for CMCoord engagement with NSAGs.

Indeed, CMCoord officers and partner organizations engage with NSAGs in many operational settings. However, CMCoord officers sometimes lack clear direction about whether they should or should not engage with NSAGs at all. Multiple partner organizations and interviewees asserted that OCHA has unnecessarily shied away from engaging with NSAGs, sacrificing neutrality in an effort to manage relations with host governments. CMCoord officers—as well as operational partner organizations—who do engage with NSAGs have noted that they lacked sufficient guidance and support from CMCS and OCHA writ large.

The second question is: when CMCoord officers do engage with NSAGs, what role, if any, should CMCS play in supporting those efforts? On this question, there was widespread agreement that CMCS should not engage directly with NSAGs as it does with militaries. Whereas CMCS builds direct relationships with military actors—discussed in greater detail below in Section III on “Capacity Building and Strategic Outreach”—there is an acknowledgement that NSAG engagement should not be undertaken directly by CMCS but rather should be led by actors in the field. Partners also agreed that, as OCHA considers its broader strategic approach to NSAGs, the locus for these efforts—including developing strategies for engagement, making decisions about whether and how to engage, and preserving institutional memory—should fall outside of CMCS.

The rationale for this perspective is that engagements with NSAGs can entail various dimensions that fall outside the scope of CMCoord, including indirect engagement through third parties and broader efforts to develop and implement acceptance-based strategies. Furthermore, it is difficult to discern the added value that CMCS could provide as a direct negotiating party with NSAGs. It would require a significant investment in building up capacity. Other organizations—including the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva Call, and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue—already possess in-depth experience and expertise in this area. CMCS presently lacks a unique angle that would complement other organizations’ activities, as well as the necessary expertise and field capacity, and has no established legitimacy as a leader in this area. Situating CMCS as a leader in negotiating with NSAGs would require a drastic scaling up in a new area for CMCS at a time when partners are seriously concerned about CMCS’ ability to fulfill its originally intended functions.

Although there was consensus that CMCS should not be the primary focal point for NSAG engagement, partners envisage a supporting role for CMCS. For example, CMCS can maintain awareness of humanitarian access and other CMCoord issues and/or function as a subcomponent of OCHA’s broader NSAG engagement efforts. Several partners view support from CMCS along

these lines—including capacity building activities on NSAG engagement—to be essential. In the words of one partner, “To neglect NSAGs in the field of civil-military coordination would be to create artificial distinctions, further entrench partisan positioning by international humanitarian actors, and miss opportunities for operational and strategic coherence as well as robust organizational learning.”

Nevertheless, despite the need from the field for support on this area, there was still disagreement among partners about how CMCS should prioritize meeting this need, especially given the wide breadth of persistent gaps that CMCS faces in meeting its strategic objectives, as the rest of Part 3 of this report describes in detail. The issue is thus that, although a definitive gap exists between the needs of the field and the support received from headquarters, there is a lack of consensus about who should assume responsibility for closing this gap; how CMCS, through a supporting or coordinating role, can and should plug into these efforts; and how CMCS should prioritize this issue area.

II. Guidance and Policy Engagement

This section identifies three gaps related to CMCS’ efforts on guidance and policy engagement. CMCS has played an integral role in leading the development of guidelines at the global level over the past two decades. Partners noted that there is no political will to re-open these fundamental CMCoord guidelines—including the Oslo and MCDA guidelines, as well as the IASC non-binding paper on armed escorts—for updates, but rather stressed the importance of directing efforts toward operationalization, including dissemination, translating guidelines into formats more likely to be digestible for field officers, and supporting the creation of context-specific guidelines. Partners flagged humanitarian notification systems as an area that must remain on CMCS’ policy and guidance agenda. Partners also highlighted the importance of CMCS adopting a proactive, forward-looking approach to policy engagement and strategic thinking on emerging issues, as well as the important role that CMCS can play in driving the discourse on these issues.

A. Summary of Identified Gaps

Gap #5: Existing CMCoord guidelines inconsistently operationalized

Gap #6: Lack of guidance or support for humanitarian notification systems

Gap #7: Lack of robust global policy leadership

B. Gaps in Guidance and Policy Engagement

Gap #5: Existing CMCoord guidelines inconsistently operationalized

Existing guidelines articulate core CMCoord principles, including the concept of last resort, the importance of retaining the civilian character of humanitarian operations even when they rely on MCDA, and the centrality of humanitarian principles. However, a divide persists between principles and concepts on the one hand and practices in the field on the other. Group discussions and interviews revealed examples of humanitarian actors, including CMCoord stakeholders, lacking an awareness of guidelines, not knowing how to access the documents, or misunderstanding them. Guidelines have also not always been available in the languages necessary for them to have practical use in operational settings. In one partner's words, "While agreed guidance seems sufficient, there are clear gaps in its implementation: certain humanitarian organizations, and in certain contexts and timings, may not fully respect agreed procedures, especially regarding the use of armed escorts, due to lack of awareness of their provisions—which points again towards gaps in training and sensitization."

Nevertheless, there is no appetite to initiate a process that would re-envision these core principles, in part due to concerns that doing so would further erode them. On the contrary, the appetite is to salvage these concepts, revitalize them, and enhance efforts to actualize guidelines through dissemination, developing context-specific guidance, monitoring the extent to which guidelines are put into practice, and working toward operationalizing them when guidelines are not successfully put into practice. A concern in this regard is the digestibility of existing guidelines. There is a need to distill existing guidelines into a more concise format that would increase the likelihood that field officers—especially those lacking a strong CMCoord background—with limited time and capacity would actually read, internalize, and operationalize them.

Gap #6: Lack of guidance or support for humanitarian notification systems

Partners overwhelmingly flagged one area in need of policy and guidance attention: humanitarian notification systems.¹⁴ The vision is that humanitarian notifications systems should be one component of a process of trust- and relationship-building with militaries, potentially opening up a broader dialogue on IHL and principled humanitarian action. The reality, as one partner aptly articulated, is that there has been an "over-focus on processes such as deconfliction and no strike lists, and less attention to ensuring principled action has enough space, engaging for ensuring principles are understood and respected by parties to the conflict." Particular concerns include the following:

¹⁴ CMCS has adopted the nomenclature, Humanitarian Notification Systems for Deconfliction (HNS4D), to describe "the structured notification of humanitarian locations, activities, movements and personnel in both static and non-static locations to the military for the purpose of protection against attacks and incidental effects of attacks under International Humanitarian Law (IHL)." See OCHA, Operational Guidance for Humanitarian Notification Systems for Deconfliction (HNS4D), Working Paper, v.1.0, May 2018, pg. 1, <https://sites.google.com/dialoguing.org/home/resource-centre/resource-library?authuser=0>. Such measures previously were referred to as "humanitarian deconfliction" or a "No Strike List." However, in light of concerns about the appropriateness of the term "deconfliction" (which is a military concept that relates to coordination between allied forces), "humanitarian notification systems" has emerged as the preferred vocabulary.

- The process can distort combatants' views of their obligations under IHL (e.g., humanitarian notification systems are not a substitution for combatants' obligation to ensure that targets are military in nature)
- Combatants can use humanitarian notification systems as a control mechanism (e.g., when combatants delay or refuse to acknowledge receipt of notifications or require notification paperwork in order to grant access)
- Ambiguity about what types of people and facilities should fall under the umbrella of humanitarian notification systems
- Lack of transparency about why humanitarian notification systems entail engagement certain armed actors and not others (e.g., states and not NSAGs)
- Lack of clarity/guidance on how to respond if a combatant strikes a location for which notification has been provided through the system

There is a sense that, in light of the above complications—especially as they have played out in contexts such as Syria and Yemen—the unintended negative ramifications of humanitarian notification systems can lead to more harm than good. Nevertheless, the system appears necessary and can usefully fulfill its intended aim of bolstering humanitarian workers' security in the field if reset, standardized, and implemented in a transparent manner. Partners noted the lack of training and guidance on humanitarian notification systems and highlighted the need for CMCS to invest in this area.¹⁵ Indeed, partners emphasized that CMCS has a role to play in offering guidance to field officers engaged in this area, beyond the working paper that CMCS produced in 2018.¹⁶ There is a need to ensure that field officers are equipped to manage the process in a responsible manner, informed by the challenges that previous experiences have illuminated.

Gap #7: Lack of robust global policy leadership

There is an opportunity for CMCS to assume a greater leadership role in CMCoord policy discussions and network-forging at the global level. CMCS currently leads one annual event in this regard: the Consultative Group of Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination, which CMCS convenes each year in Geneva at HNPW. This week-long consultative group meeting is structured as panel presentations and discussions. However, CMCS could restructure portions of the Consultative Group meeting to allow for more interactive exchanges in a group format, more in line with the community of practice model (to be discussed in greater detail in Section III on “Capacity Building and Strategic Outreach”). Additionally, there are strides that CMCS could take toward owning

¹⁵ See also “Summary by the Secretary-General of the report of the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry into certain incidents in northwest Syria since 17 September 2018 involving facilities on the United Nations deconfliction list and United Nations supported facilities,” https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/NWS_BOI_Summary_06_April_2020.pdf, which offered the following recommendation in April 2020: “OCHA should develop a comprehensive and publicly available guidance document to clarify its role and responsibilities in relation to the humanitarian notification mechanism and to provide clear and detailed guidance on its implementation process.”

¹⁶ OCHA, Operational Guidance for Humanitarian Notification Systems for Deconfliction (HNS4D), Working Paper, v.1.0, May 2018, <https://sites.google.com/dialoguing.org/home/resource-centre/resource-library?authuser=0>.

the CMCoord dialogue at the policy and strategic levels by leading similar events in other fora, especially in drawing connections between conversations happening within CMCoord-focused circles and the broader humanitarian sector, including on issues such as humanitarian access, protection, and security. There is indeed unclaimed leadership space for CMCS to seize by creating additional opportunities for CMCoord stakeholders—including CMCoord officers, focal points, partner organizations engaged in civil-military coordination, and military actors—to convene and exchange on current and emerging policy and operational issues, with CMCS driving the agenda for the discourse.

Additionally, several partners' inputs highlighted the need for CMCS to adopt a more forward-leaning approach to thinking through guidance and policy on emerging issues. CMCS' approach in this regard has been more reactive than proactive. Anticipatory strategic thinking can inform the relationships that CMCS needs to cultivate. Moreover, all of the emerging issues discussed in Part 2 of this report—including increased climate-induced humanitarian vulnerabilities, the potential return to peer-to-peer conflict, and urbanization—require anticipatory strategic thinking informed by perspectives from the field and enriched through professional exchange.

III. Capacity Building and Strategic Outreach

This section discusses five gaps related to CMCS' capacity building and strategic outreach activities. CMCS undertakes a wide range of efforts related to training, sensitization, and strategic outreach.¹⁷ However, as this section details, the cumulative effect of these efforts has not been the cultivation of a robust community of practice composed of CMCoord personnel within OCHA, across partner organizations, and spanning both sides of the humanitarian-military divide. Addressing the gaps discussed in this section will help synchronize CMCS' capacity building and strategic outreach activities toward the end of promoting a community of practice. These efforts should entail capacity building for CMCoord officers, since there currently is no standardized training or accreditation process that CMCoord officers are required to complete before deployment. Capacity building efforts should also target civil-military coordination practitioners from partner organizations. Furthermore, partners discussed the importance of diversifying CMCS' outreach to military actors—including with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO)—as well as engagement in joint training with humanitarian and military actors. Additional issues include the need to continually update CMCS' curriculum in response to emerging issues, as well as engagement in intensive and ongoing information gathering and analysis of operational experiences to ensure that capacity building efforts are aligned with the needs from the field.

¹⁷ CMCS' training efforts include the UN-CMCoord Course, the UN-CMCoord Skills Course, the UN-CMCoord e-course, as well as engagements in military training efforts. For more information, see CMCS, "Training and Partnership," Humanitarian // Military Dialogue, <https://sites.google.com/dialoguing.org/home/training-and-partnership?authuser=0>.

A. Summary of Identified Gaps

Gap #8: Lack of a robust community of practice

Gap #9: No standardization for CMCoord officer capacity building

Gap #10: Limited responsiveness of CMCoord curriculum to evolving operational needs

Gap #11: The need to expand outreach with militaries

Gap #12: Insufficient information gathering, analysis, and dissemination of challenges encountered and lessons observed

B. Gaps in Capacity Building and Strategic Outreach

Gap #8: Lack of a robust community of practice

The overwhelming sense from partners is that a strategic conception of forging a community of practice should frame CMCS' approach to capacity building. In one partner's words, illustrating the central importance of this issue, cultivating a community of practice "should be considered the baseline from which all other CMCS activities occur." Building on CMCS' training activities, the objective for CMCS should be to assume a leadership role in creating a network of CMCoord stakeholders—including CMCoord officers, as well as civil-military coordination practitioners from partner organizations—and providing opportunities for them to share information on best practices, lessons observed and learned, and approaches to grappling with challenges faced in their operational experiences.

CMCS took a valuable step in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic by convening the CMCoord Strategic Advisory Group, which has brought together selected partners for discussions on the

COVID-19 response. This group has served as a forum for relationship-building and information sharing. Additionally, over the course of this re-assessment process, CMCS also initiated a standing meeting for an operational group composed of humanitarian partners for thematic discussions. Nevertheless, there remains a need for engagement with a wider array of stakeholders—including those from the field—as well as opportunities for more in depth, reflective professional discussions about how to surmount common challenges.

Partners emphasized the importance of online accessibility, including an updated CMCS website, which includes contact information for CMCS personnel; a regularly updated and disseminated schedule of CMCoord courses; easily accessible guidance documents; an online repository of lessons learned; and an online platform that members of the civil-military community can use to share information with each other. CMCS has begun to address these issues, in particular, by launching the Humanitarian // Military Dialogue website.¹⁸ However, the Humanitarian // Military Dialogue site does not align with UN protocol because the website is hosted by a third party. CMCS opted to create and host the website in this way due to technical and procedural obstacles that in the past have hindered CMCS' ability to update its UN website with agility. CMCS' past efforts to forge an online community of practice were not successfully sustained over time.

Partners also called for CMCS to cultivate a community of practice at the regional level, including outreach to regional organizations, relevant militaries, and think tanks. Asia-Pacific is an example where this model has been pursued. The Regional Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Asia and the Pacific is a robust platform that has garnered support and buy-in from relevant stakeholders. A partner also discussed outreach undertaken with ASEAN and militaries from the region, although it was noted that gaps in implementation of CMCoord principles and concepts in the region persist. Nevertheless, partners highlighted the benefits of making a robust investment in regional and local CMCoord capacity building. The importance was mentioned of ensuring that local actors are targeted for CMCoord training and integrated into fora for exchanging on their operational experiences, in line with the community of practice model.

Gap #9: No standardization for CMCoord officer capacity building

Partners expressed widespread concern that CMCS' training efforts have not led to the cultivation of a qualified roster of potential personnel to which OCHA can turn when the need for CMCoord capacity in operational settings emerges. As already noted in this report's earlier discussion of recruitment, this is an issue for OCHA more broadly, relating to the synchronicity between CMCS' capacity building efforts and the CMCoord officer personnel selection process.

There is a lack of standardized qualifications and training curriculum to certify CMCoord officers and a historical disconnect between curriculum and the needs in the field. Currently, CMCoord officers are not required to complete CMCS training offerings—such as the UN-CMCoord Course, the UN-CMCoord Skills Course, and the UN-CMCoord e-course—as a minimum qualification prior to deployment or after they are placed in their post.¹⁹ As a result, there is no assurance that

¹⁸ CMCS, Humanitarian // Military Dialogue, <https://sites.google.com/dialoguing.org/home>.

¹⁹ For more information on these training offerings, see CMCS, "Training and Partnership," Humanitarian // Military Dialogue, <https://sites.google.com/dialoguing.org/home/training-and-partnership?authuser=0>.

those deployed have the capabilities and expertise required for the job. One partner called for the development and identification of “performance requirements for CMCS/CMCoord positions to ensure staff placed in civil-military coordination roles are trained and qualified to certain performance standards and civil-military competencies identified by CMCS.”

As already mentioned, interviewees and partners revealed numerous instances when people were placed in CMCoord officer positions even though they lacked sufficient background on CMCoord, had received no CMCoord training, and even lacked appreciation for the humanitarian nature of role. Partners agreed on the importance of ensuring that CMCoord officers meet pre-determined performance standards and learn key competencies.

Gap #10: Limited responsiveness of CMCoord curriculum to evolving operational needs

CMCS curriculum has not been updated with agility in response to evolving needs and challenges faced in operational settings. Historically, CMCS’ curriculum focused on civil-military coordination in natural disasters, thus opening a divide between what the curriculum has been and how the field of CMCoord has evolved to encompass, and even be dominated by, complex emergencies. Partners noted the importance of revising CMCS’ CMCoord curriculum to close this gap, and in particular, prioritizing the concept of CMCoord as an enabler of humanitarian access and protection. Partners also flagged the importance of preparing CMCoord officers for grappling with the myriad difficulties of humanitarian notification systems, as already discussed. CMCS is in the process of updating its training products to include sessions with a particular focus on access and protection, which is indeed a welcome development. Nevertheless, CMCS should be in a position, on a perpetual and ongoing basis, to continually update its curriculum in response to the issues and challenges that CMCoord officers and the broader humanitarian community face moving forward.

Gap #11: The need to expand outreach with militaries

CMCS’ engagement with militaries spans efforts geared toward educating military actors on principled humanitarian action and CMCoord concepts; building trust and relationships necessary for operational effectiveness; and providing input into military planning at the strategic, operational, and field levels. Partners underscored the importance of incorporating CMCoord guidelines and policies into military doctrine and military training curricula, including at senior levels.

There are four key ways that CMCS can expand its outreach to militaries. First, CMCS could expand and enhance its outreach with non-Western governments. The point was raised that CMCS has very strong buy-in from Western governments and militaries but lower buy-in from key non-Western states, including states that are combatants in ongoing armed conflicts. Multiple partners commented on the need to invest in further relationship-building efforts with all military stakeholders.

Second, engagements with militaries must be proactive and strategic. As already noted, proactive engagements with militaries will help CMCS better understand the emerging trends that will inform what relationships are necessary to forge in order to confront future CMCoord challenges. A truly strategic approach requires long-term engagement with emerging powers outside the ambit of immediate crises.

Third, CMCS could expand its outreach to and coordination with the DPO, with the aim of contributing to peacekeeping doctrine, in particular relating to planning, training, and support to HA/DR. A partner noted of engagements with DPO, “CMCS does not seem to be contributing with CMCoord input (or at least this is not visible enough and not shared with the civ-mil community of practice). In some instances, at tactical level, CMCoord Officers seem to be participating in UN mission planning, but little information is shared with the humanitarian community and donors, and effectiveness is difficult to assess.” There is a need for guidance for CMCoord officers on QIPs, and overall, a role for CMCoord officers in engaging with peacekeeping missions to communicate about existing gaps in humanitarian response in order to influence the planning of QIPs.

Fourth, there is a lack of CMCS participation in joint training, exercises, and simulations in which humanitarian and military communities both participate. As one partner mentioned, the objective of such engagements is that “both communities understand each other other’s mind-set, language and planning procedures and capitalize on each other’s strengths in a principled manner.” Moreover, joint engagements can create opportunities for humanitarians to discuss more nuanced topics with military actors, such as civilian protection or the challenges that arise for humanitarian actors when a party to a conflict engages in relief efforts.

Gap #12: Insufficient information gathering, analysis, and dissemination of challenges encountered and lessons observed

Key to cultivating a successful community of practice and situating CMCS to be able to continually update its capacity building curriculum is the ability to capture and document experiences and circulate lessons observed and learned to the broader CMCoord community. On this point, partners flagged CMCS’ limitations on information gathering and management, noting that operational experiences and best practices have not been systematically documented, examined, and circulated.

Existing obstacles are systematic and practical. The systematic issue for OCHA and CMCS relates to the lack of an established procedure for conducting after action reviews (AARs). Interviewees noted that AARs are not routinely undertaken and that AARs should be expected after each operation or deployment. CMCS can subsequently translate AARs into a learning opportunity internally within OCHA and then externally for the broader humanitarian community. The practical issue is that AARs depend on relevant stakeholders’ willingness to share information—including governments, for which classification of documents presents an obstacle—as well as a genuine willingness of stakeholders for self-reflection and self-criticism. Actors in the CMCoord space have not always exhibited these qualities in past AAR efforts.

Still, partners issued a resounding call for capturing information about lessons from past experiences. Beyond AARs, there is a need to undertake monitoring and evaluation on an ongoing basis to continually assess operational activities and experiences. In order for capacity building and guidance efforts to be meaningfully informative, this feedback loop is essential to build.

Part 4 presents a conceptual vision—and identifies concrete next steps—for CMCS to address the gaps discussed in Part 3. The conceptual vision seeks to ensure that CMCS is oriented toward responding, on an ongoing basis, to needs that arise in the field and proactively adapting its guidance, policy engagement, capacity building, and strategic outreach accordingly. The purpose of the recommended steps is to bring CMCS to a point where it can fulfill its core mandate.

This part of the report is divided into five sections. Section I presents a conceptual vision for operationalizing the community of practice model. This section emphasizes the importance of linking together the three key areas of CMCS’ activities (operational support, guidance and policy engagement, and capacity building and strategic outreach). Sections II through V present a roadmap, consisting of concrete recommendations, for operationalizing this vision and fulfilling CMCS’ core mandate. This proposed plan is divided into three phases to be implemented, at a maximum, over the course of a five-year time period:

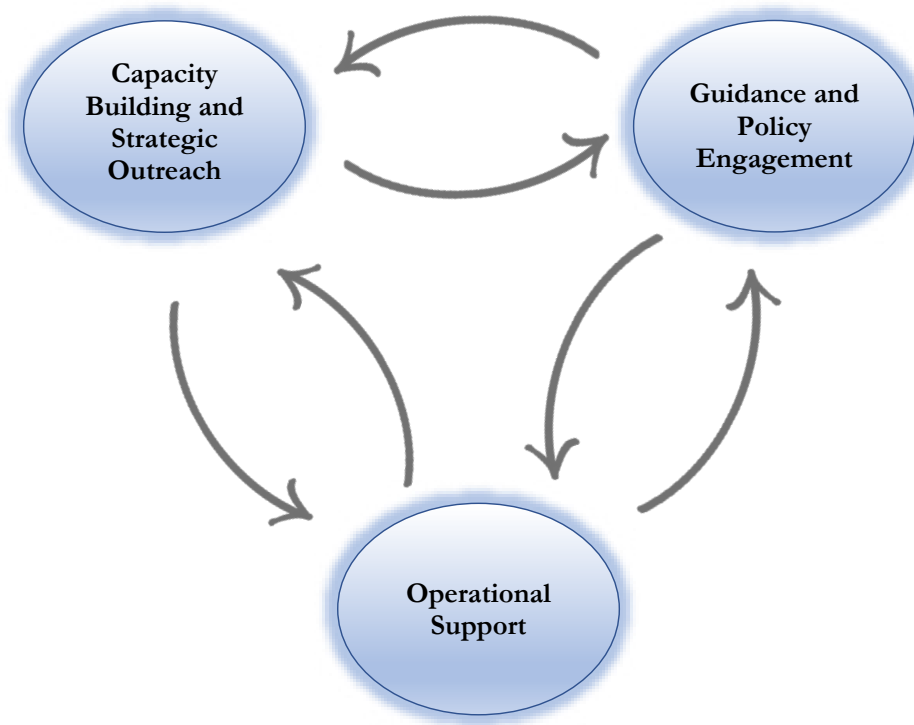
- Phase 1: Re-invigorating Relationships and Feedback Loops
- Phase 2: Systematizing and Sustaining the Community of Practice
- Phase 3: Expanding and Deepening Engagement

These sections offer six recommendations relevant to Phase 1 (recommendations 1-6), three recommendations relevant to Phase 2 (recommendations 7-9), and four recommendations relevant to Phase 3 (recommendations 10-13). A final section presents three recommendations for OCHA senior leadership.

I. A Conceptual Vision for Operationalizing the Community of Practice Model

As noted in Part 3, partners definitively emphasized the importance of rooting future planning for CMCS in a community of practice model. Operationalizing this model will entail not only closing the gaps identified in this report but also connecting and synchronizing all three areas of CMCS’ activities—operational support, guidance and policy engagement, and capacity building and strategic outreach—in order to empower CMCS to adopt an iterative and adaptive approach to meeting the needs of the field. To successfully operationalize the community of practice model, CMCS will need to build and sustain organizational feedback loops between different areas of its activities in order to consistently inform and update its approaches. CMCS will fall short if even one of these links remains weak.

Figure 3: Forging and Sustaining Organizational Feedback Loops



- **Link #1: Capacity building/strategic outreach and operational support**
Capacity building and strategic outreach efforts must be informed by lessons observed or learned in operational contexts. If this feedback loop from the field is not strong, then capacity building efforts will not actually be linked in a meaningful way to the needs of current and future response contexts.
- **Link #2: Guidance/policy engagement and operational support**
As response contexts evolve, the needs and requirements in terms of guidance and policy evolve as well. Similar to capacity building and strategic outreach, CMCS' engagement in guidance and policy must also be responsive to the needs of the field environment to ensure that practitioners in the field find available guidance to be digestible and useful.
- **Link #3: Capacity building/strategic outreach and guidance/policy engagement**
Guidance naturally must feed into capacity building, and the converse is also true. Capacity building efforts—including training, as well as efforts to cultivate a community of practice—should not simply be a one-way imparting of information but rather a venue for CMCS to learn from different cohorts of participants, to enhance CMCS' understanding of obstacles around dissemination and implementation of guidance at the field level.

Two aspects of this conceptual vision are important to emphasize. First, CMCS' future orientation, and the operationalization of the community of practice model, should be field-centric. The feedback

loops from the field to capacity building and strategic outreach (Link #1) and to guidance and policy engagement (Link #2) are essential. Without forging and sustaining these linkages, CMCS will not be adequately situated to support needs identified at the field level.

Second, implementing this conceptual vision will require a sustained organizational investment in information gathering, analysis, and management. This element requires attention, especially in light of the gaps that this report has highlighted regarding CMCS functioning as an information conduit across OCHA and with external partners, as well as shortcomings in capturing and assessing experiences from the field.

II. Phase 1: Re-invigorating Relationships and Feedback Loops

This section, as well as the two sections that follow, presents a three-phase roadmap for forging and sustaining these feedback loops and closing the gaps discussed throughout this report. In Phase 1, CMCS should focus on re-invigorating relationships with key partners with the aim of forging feedback loops across its key areas of operation. Building on the re-assessment process that led to the creation of this report—as well as its stakeholder engagement in the context of COVID-19, in particular, the creation of the CMCoord Advisory Group and the operational group composed of humanitarian partners—CMCS should pursue outreach toward CMCoord officers, existing military partners, and a broader array of external CMCoord stakeholders. CMCS should also reconfigure the format of the Global Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination to be a more interactive event, more in line with the community of practice model. Efforts to promote greater transparency, by publishing regularly updated information about CMCoord developments in operational contexts, will further support these efforts. During this phase, CMCS should also work promptly to systematize humanitarian notification systems.

A. Summary of Recommendations for CMCS

#1: Convene CMCoord officers to facilitate information sharing on challenges, needs, and lessons observed

#2: Convene existing military partners with the aim of ascertaining challenges, needs, and lessons observed

#3: Convene interested CMCoord stakeholders for professional exchanges to better serve the aim of cultivating a community of practice

#4: Publish and circulate information on current CMCoord officer deployments

#5: Publish regular updates on CMCoord activities and developments

#6: Systematize approaches to humanitarian notification systems

B. Recommendations for Phase 1

Recommendation #1 for CMCS: Convene CMCoord officers to facilitate information sharing on challenges, needs, and lessons observed

CMCS' long-term aim—as already noted—should be to sustain linkages between CMCS and the field, enabling CMCS to provide useful operational support and to ensure that its guidance and capacity building efforts are responsive to the field. Toward this end, CMCS should convene CMCoord officers with the aim of facilitating information sharing on challenges, needs, and lessons learned. The purpose of this engagement should be twofold. One aim should be to connect CMCoord officers to one another, an important activity in light of this report's finding that these connections have not been consistently forged. A second aim should be to re-establish a connection between CMCS and the field, bridging the gap in this regard that this report has highlighted. CMCS should consider this engagement to be one step in an ongoing process of cultivating a community of practice, which has yet to be adequately forged in a sustainable way. It will also be important to connect CMCoord officers with one another, on an ongoing basis, to improve CMCoord officers' and CMCS' situational awareness and to facilitate opportunities for peer support.

Next steps in this engagement could assume a form similar to the process that led to the production of this report. This process could entail convening CMCoord officers for discussions with one another, facilitated by CMCS or an external partner, via a series of in-person or virtual group exchanges; gathering information about their operational challenges and needs; and the production of a report that documents the findings of the process. CMCS should leverage this process to plan its operational support, guidance, and capacity building activities, ensuring that they are in line with the needs that CMCoord officers articulate.

Recommendation #2 for CMCS: Convene existing military partners with the aim of ascertaining challenges, needs, and lessons observed

Complementing the process of convening CMCoord officers, CMCS should also convene its existing military partners with the aim of ascertaining challenges, needs, and lessons observed. As this report noted in Part 1, this re-assessment process involved primarily key humanitarian partners who already engage with CMCS, with only limited military involvement in the process. CMCS should close this gap by undertaking a similar exercise that focuses on its military partnerships. This measure will be another essential step in cultivating a community of practice that spans both sides of the humanitarian-military divide. This process could entail group and/or bilateral in-person or virtual engagements, with the possibility of producing a final report that will frame CMCS' next steps in further cultivating relationships amongst this community.

Recommendation #3 for CMCS: Convene interested CMCoord stakeholders for professional exchanges to better serve the aim of cultivating a community of practice

CMCS should convene interested CMCoord stakeholders for a series of professional exchanges on current and emerging thematic issues relevant to CMCoord. This step would build on discussions amongst CMCS and partners undertaken at the annual retreat that CMCS convened in Sigrisvil, Switzerland in fall 2019, as well as throughout this re-assessment process. Additionally, drawing on insights garnered from CMCS' engagements with CMCoord officers and military partners, this step will enable CMCS to explore possibilities for pushing the CMCoord policy discourse forward. The aim will be to sustain and build out relationships and partnerships—thus further supporting efforts to cultivate a community of practice—and to lay the groundwork for tilting CMCS from reactive to proactive policy engagement. These engagements will also allow CMCS to gain a clearer picture of partner organizations' capacities and needs, informing how CMCS can most effectively support and complement partners' ongoing or planned efforts in operational support, guidance and policy engagement, and capacity building and strategic outreach.

As part of this effort, CMCS should revamp the format of the Global Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination, convened annually in the context of HNPW, to better serve the aim of cultivating a community of practice. Toward this end, CMCS should integrate more interactive sessions into the event, rather than structuring the event solely around panel discussions. Such sessions, which could complement panel presentations at the event, could include roundtable and/or working group discussions intentionally structured to facilitate group conversations. The event should prominently feature field-oriented sessions, offering CMCS—and the broader community of practice of CMCoord practitioners in attendance—to capture and understand the field-based realities that the community of practice ultimately aims to support.

Recommendation #4 for CMCS: Publish and circulate information on current CMCoord officer deployments

CMCS should collate, publish, and circulate information about current CMCoord officer and focal point deployments to partners. This information should include names and contact information of CMCoord officers and focal points, as well as how many other roles CMCoord officers hold under the “multiple hats” paradigm. This measure would address the finding that partners have been unable to locate basic information about field deployments. CMCS should update this information on an ongoing basis as changes in field deployments occur to ensure that the data reflects the current reality in the field.

Recommendation #5 for CMCS: Publish regular updates on CMCoord activities and developments

In addition to publishing basic information about field deployments for CMCoord officers and focal points, CMCS should regularly publish updates on CMCoord activities and developments that have occurred at the field and headquarters levels. This publication could assume the form of a quarterly newsletter or briefing report published by CMCS and circulated across OCHA and with humanitarian and military partners. CMCS should ensure cross-population on other OCHA-managed information websites—including Relief Web, which should have a CMCoord topic that collates all CMCoord information that CMCS releases—to ensure that the information reaches a wider humanitarian audience. This activity will address partners’ calls for greater transparency regarding developments relevant to CMCoord, including the desire for CMCS to play a robust role in promoting situational awareness in this regard.

Recommendation #6 for CMCS: Systematize approaches to humanitarian notification systems

Given the demand that partners articulated for systematization and guidance on humanitarian notification systems, CMCS should continue its work in this area with the aim of promptly meeting this need. Building on the concerns articulated in this report—as well as its future engagements with CMCoord officers, military partners, and a broader pool of CMCoord stakeholders—CMCS should ensure that CMCoord practitioners are well-versed in the potential adverse consequences and knowledgeable about how to mitigate unintended effects. This process should entail: 1) systematizing the implementation of humanitarian notification systems across different response contexts, with the understanding that there will need to be a certain degree of context-specificity; 2) ensuring that this issue is integrated into CMCoord training offerings; and 3) producing more concrete guidance that builds on the working paper that CMCS has previously produced on this issue.

III. Phase 2: Systematizing and Sustaining the Community of Practice

The focus of Phase 2 should be to systematize and sustain the processes of engaging with humanitarian and military partners. The purpose of this phase is to ensure that CMCS can continue to manage, propagate, and adapt crucial feedback loops forged in Phase 1. These efforts should entail establishing ongoing processes of gathering information about challenges and lessons observed in the field, standardizing the capacity building process for CMCoord officers, and producing and disseminating digestible guidance documents.

A. Summary of Recommendations for CMCS

#7: Establish an ongoing, standardized process of gathering information about challenges faced and lessons observed in the field

#8: Standardize professional prerequisites for CMCoord officers

#9: Produce digestible guidance documents

B. Recommendations for Phase 2

Recommendation #7 for CMCS: Establish an ongoing, standardized process of gathering information about challenges faced and lessons observed in the field

CMCS should establish an ongoing, standardized process of gathering information about challenges faced and lessons observed in the field. This measure will address the general finding that the feedback loops from the field to CMCS have been deficient, and additionally, will serve the aim of ensuring that CMCS is well poised to adapt its guidance and curriculum to needs in the field as they emerge. The engagements in the near-term that CMCS should undertake to gather data from a wide array of partners, including from the field (recommendations 1-3), will lay groundwork for implementing this recommendation. However, in the medium-term, CMCS should formalize these efforts through a combination of regularly instituted AARs, as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities.

Recommendation #8 for CMCS: Standardize professional prerequisites for CMCoord officers

CMCS, and OCHA more broadly, should standardize professional prerequisites for CMCoord officers. This measure will be oriented toward addressing the finding that CMCoord officers deployed are not required to undergo CMCoord training, and as a result, have lacked the experience, expertise, and basic knowledge of and appreciation for CMCoord concepts and humanitarian principles. The goal will be that, as a prerequisite for personnel to be deployed to the field, all practitioners will need to undergo a standardized accreditation process—which will entail completing predetermined CMCoord training—to ensure that they are equipped to effectively and responsibly undertake their role.

Recommendation #9 for CMCS: Produce digestible guidance documents

CMCS should adapt existing guidance documents to formats deemed digestible by actors in the field. This recommendation will address the finding that there is a gap between, on the one hand, the appreciation that partners expressed for existing guidance, and on the other hand, the lack of consistent operationalization of this guidance. Implementing this recommendation will ensure that guidance is available in languages necessary for implementation in the field, such as French and Arabic. Also essential will be ensuring that guidance is digestible, likely entailing the adaptation of guidance documents to one-page formats. Nevertheless, CMCS can leverage its intensive near-term engagement with partners and CMCoord officers to inform the specifics of how this recommendation should be implemented.

IV. Phase 3: Expanding and Deepening Engagement

The focus of Phase 3 should be to further expand CMCS' relationships and deepen the aims of partnerships forged. Ultimately, at the end of this phase—with feedback loops established, processes systematized, and relationships cultivated—CMCS should be poised to adapt with agility to new needs and challenges of operational contexts as they arise. In particular, during this phase, CMCS should focus on cultivating relationships with a wider range of military partners, as well as DPO. Additionally, CMCS should explore the possibility of integrating joint training (involving both humanitarian and military actors) into its capacity building efforts. CMCS should also pursue additional opportunities to lead and drive the policy discourse on CMCoord at the global level.

A. Summary of Recommendations for CMCS

#10: Expand outreach to a broader array of military actors

#11: Engage with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

#12: Pursue joint training opportunities for humanitarian and military actors

#13: Seek opportunities to lead discussions on CMCoord in other fora at the global level

B. Recommendations for Phase 3

Recommendation #10 for CMCS: Expand outreach to a broader array of military actors

CMCS should expand its outreach to a broader array of military actors. This measure will address the concern that partners expressed that CMCS' relationships with militaries are dominated by Western or Western-aligned actors and that CMCS has not been proactively cultivating relationships with an eye toward the needs of future response contexts. In the near- and medium-term, CMCS should identify gaps in its existing partnerships with military actors, informed by its engagements with partners and actors from the field. Based on gaps identified during this period, CMCS should also initiate engagements that would expand CMCS' networks of partnerships, oriented at first toward relationship building and information sharing. In the long-term, CMCS should aim to leverage these relationships toward: 1) sensitization on CMCoord concepts and humanitarian principles, 2) influencing doctrines and approaches, and 3) bolstering CMCS' operational support capabilities.

Recommendation #11 for CMCS: Engage with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

CMCS, as part of its expanded engagements with military actors, should establish regular engagements with DPO. This measure would help address partners' concerns about the paucity of interactions between CMCS and DPO and the challenges to CMCoord stakeholders that integrated peacekeeping missions can present. As with its broader outreach efforts with military actors, in the near- and medium-term, CMCS can initiate these engagements, at first, with a focus on relationship-building and information sharing. Additionally, through its engagements with partners during this initial time period, CMCS can further clarify needs that this engagement would serve. In the long-term, CMCS should aim to shift the nature of this relationship to one that aims to influence doctrines and approaches.

Recommendation #12 for CMCS: Pursue joint training opportunities for humanitarian and military actors

CMCS should aim, in the long-term, to pursue opportunities for humanitarian and military actors to jointly train, exercise, or simulate HA/DR or CMCoord processes. Through implementing this measure, CMCS can cultivate the benefits of joint training that partners discussed, including

building trust and relationships across the humanitarian-military divide; sensitizing military actors on CMCoord concepts and humanitarian principles; and ensuring that both humanitarian and military actors understand one another's approaches, capacities, and limitations. CMCS can also use joint engagements to facilitate dialogue between humanitarian and military actors on nuanced topics, such as civilian protection in future warfare scenarios or the challenges that arise for humanitarian actors when a party to a conflict engages in relief efforts. CMCS should consider holding these engagements at non-humanitarian or non-military venues, such as academic institutions, to help promote open dialogue.

Recommendation #13 for CMCS: Seek opportunities to lead discussions on CMCoord in other fora at the global level

CMCS should seek additional opportunities to lead discussions on CMCoord at the global level. Building on CMCS' leadership in convening the Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination, CMCS should ensure that it has an active presence in other conferences or meetings convened to address issues of humanitarian policy and practice that are relevant to CMCoord. Implementing this measure will position CMCS to address the concern that there is a lack of policy leadership in the CMCoord space. In particular, this recommendation is oriented toward: 1) promoting the visibility of CMCoord on the broader humanitarian policy agenda, 2) situating CMCS to drive CMCoord discourse at the strategic level in a forward-leaning manner; and 3) further expanding the community of practice by offering opportunities for CMCS to connect with a broader array of partners.

V. Overarching Recommendations for OCHA Senior Leadership

This section offers overarching recommendations to OCHA senior leadership that are relevant to CMCS' success. These recommendations address: 1) the extent to which OCHA embraces CMCoord as a core competency across the organization, 2) the role that CMCS should play in the selection of personnel for CMCoord officer roles, and 3) OCHA's strategic approach to NSAG engagement, and the role that CMCS should play in these efforts.

A. Summary of Recommendations

#1: Embrace, invest in, and support CMCoord as a core competency across OCHA

#2: Formally integrate CMCS into the selection process for CMCoord officers

#3: Situate the locus of OCHA's NSAG engagement strategy outside of—but linked to—CMCS

B. Recommendations for OCHA Senior Leadership

Recommendation #1 for OCHA: Embrace, invest in, and support CMCoord as a core competency across OCHA

Crucial for CMCS' success will be a more robust and enduring effort from OCHA to embrace, invest in, and support CMCoord as a core competency across the organization. Although the specific focus of this re-assessment is CMCS, OCHA senior management must endow CMCS with sufficient stature on the OCHA policy agenda; support the crucial role of CMCoord in effective humanitarian coordination by OCHA; and cultivate their own situational awareness of the issues, challenges, and developments within the CMCoord space, in particular, based on voices from the field.

Two particular aspects of adequate resourcing are essential. First, OCHA should ensure that CMCS is adequately resourced to implement the myriad recommendations presented in this section. Clearly discernible throughout partners' inputs to this re-assessment is a clarion call to reinvigorate CMCS to undertake its core functions. This process will entail ensuring that the capacity and constitution of CMCS is fit for this purpose. Second, OCHA should ensure that sufficient human resources are directed toward the field. As this report discussed, OCHA's CMCoord field presence falls short of meeting the needs of the field, especially given the lack of human resource continuity in many field contexts, as well as the dual- or triple-hatting of CMCoord officers. Unless OCHA addresses these issues, any reforms made to CMCS will have only limited efficacy.

Recommendation #2 for OCHA: Formally integrate CMCS into the selection process for CMCoord Officers

OCHA should formally integrate CMCS into the selection process for CMCoord officers. This process of integration should have two dimensions. First, CMCS should have an institutionalized voice in decision-making about personnel selection. Second, a CMCoord officer accreditation process—as proposed in Recommendation #8 for CMCS—should frame personnel selection. Implementing these measures will address this report's finding that CMCoord officers do not always have the appropriate professional background, expertise, and pre-existing knowledge of CMCoord concepts.

Recommendation #3 for OCHA: Situate the locus of OCHA's NSAG engagement strategy outside of—but linked to—CMCS

As OCHA proceeds with developing its organizational strategy for NSAG engagement, OCHA should situate the locus of these efforts outside of CMCS. The rationale for this choice is that numerous aspects of NSAG engagement (e.g., implementing field-led acceptance-based strategies) fall beyond the scope of CMCoord. Nevertheless, CMCoord officers and partner organizations have expressed a demand for support in this regard. Partners agreed that CMCS has a supporting role to play—although not through direct engagement with NSAGs—in this area. OCHA should ensure that its NSAG engagement strategy is synchronized across different relevant branches of OCHA, so that any CMCS support to field-led NSAG engagements is a part of a coherent OCHA-wide organizational strategy.

5

Concluding Remarks

This re-assessment process offered CMCS' key partner organizations an opportunity to document and discuss their needs with regards to humanitarian civil-military coordination and expectations from CMCS. As this report documented, partners' needs from CMCS are urgent and extensive. Partners resoundingly agreed that CMCS' effective engagement in each of its core activities—operational support, guidance and policy engagement, and capacity building and strategic outreach—will lead to success not only for CMCS but also for the broader humanitarian community. This re-assessment has illuminated various areas for which CMCS has historically failed to meet partners' expectations. However, the converse finding is equally important to highlight. Partners have great enthusiasm for the possibilities of CMCS functioning as a “one-stop shop” for humanitarian and military communities on CMCoord policy, guidance, training, and operations. CMCS finds itself surrounded by a community of partners eager for the service to succeed.

Serving one's partners effectively requires intensive efforts to discern their needs, strengths, and limitations. This re-assessment has been one component of what should be a long-term process continually oriented toward this end. The 16 recommendations offered in this report—13 for CMCS, 3 for OCHA senior leadership—offer CMCS a roadmap for doing so. As laid out in the report, this process will entail reinvigorating partnerships and feedback loops; systematizing and sustaining a community of practice; and finally, expanding and deepening this engagement over time. The ultimate aim is to enable CMCS to nimbly adapt and respond to the needs of current and emerging response contexts.

The stakes are high for CMCS. As this report has noted, current response contexts present a host of vexing challenges for CMCoord, and the landscape of CMCoord is likely to grow increasingly complex in the coming years. Indeed, at the heart of all of the issues discussed throughout this report is the scale of humanitarian needs prevalent across the globe today, and the increased vulnerabilities—arising from a confluence of natural and human-made factors—that the future appears likely to herald. Meeting these needs will require an immense effort, including from the various actors and organizations that populate the CMCoord space. This report, by identifying persistent gaps and proposing steps for addressing them, has aimed to illuminate the role that CMCS—and OCHA more broadly—can and should play in this process.

Annex I

Re-assessment Participants

Representatives associated with the below organizations participated in the process that led to the production of this report. This report does not necessarily reflect the views of any of these organizations, and the below list is not indicative of an organizational endorsement of the report. Rather, the report reflects the analysis that the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies conducted of inputs received.

- Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, U.S. State Department
- Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, United States Agency for International Development
- Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre
- European Commission Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
- European Union Military Staff
- Humanitarian Response Program, U.S. Naval War College
- InterAction
- Mercy Corps
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- RedR
- Save the Children International
- United Kingdom Department for International Development
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- World Food Programme

The people listed below offered inputs during this process in their individual capacity. As with the organizations listed above, the below list is not indicative of an endorsement of the report.

- Alex Angogo | International Peace Support Training Centre, Favour World International Limited
- Anthony Craig | Conflict Analysis Network, Geneva Centre for Security Policy
- Ken Hume | International Committee of the Red Cross
- Peter Scott-Bowden | World Food Programme, Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation
- Ruben Stewart | Independent Expert
- Jesse Wolfe | Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance

Annex II

Framing Questions

The below questions framed the written submissions that partners delivered as part of the process of producing this report. The questions were adopted by consensus by the Civil-Military Coordination Service (CMCS), key partner organization representatives, and the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies (CHRHS) at an on-site meeting convened in Geneva, Switzerland on January 15-16, 2020.

Part I: Civil-Military Coordination Functions, Capabilities, and Needs

1. Status of current issues and capabilities:
 - Globally, what are the humanitarian civil-military coordination issues in the field and at headquarters?
 - What are the civil-military coordination priority issues to your organization? (please highlight high, medium, or low priority for each)
 - What are your organization's in-house capabilities to address your priority issues?
2. Matching civil-military coordination skills to the emerging environment:
 - What are the characteristics of a future emergency environment (for example: climate change related events, pandemics, etc.) that are relevant to civil-military coordination?
 - What does this mean in terms of civil-military coordination, including skills and tasks required to address emerging issues that shape civil-military coordination?
3. Current civil-military coordination gaps and concerns:
 - What gaps or concerns exist regarding external engagements with armed actors? (for example: policy, guidance, training, information sharing, personnel)
 - What gaps or concerns exist regarding civil-military coordination with humanitarian actors? (for example: policy, guidance, training, information sharing, personnel)

Part II: CMCS Operations

4. Current and future actions from CMCS:
 - To what extent is CMCS currently addressing/not addressing the priorities, gaps, and concerns identified in Part I?
 - What civil-military coordination activities is CMCS best placed to—and must—undertake? Why?
 - What additional activities should/could CMCS start undertaking?
5. Surmounting obstacles: “blue sky” questions:
 - What would CMCS look like if your agency/you could make the decisions on:
 - Placement within OCHA?
 - How OCHA would be staffed?
 - Skill set and major areas of work (for example: field staffing? training? engagement with member states and impact on policy and doctrine?)
 - CMCS' role in negotiations with Non-State Armed Groups?
 - Any other thoughts?