SUMMARY REPORT

2024

CIVILIAN–MILITARY HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION WORKSHOP

EVENT DATE: 29–31 MAY 2024
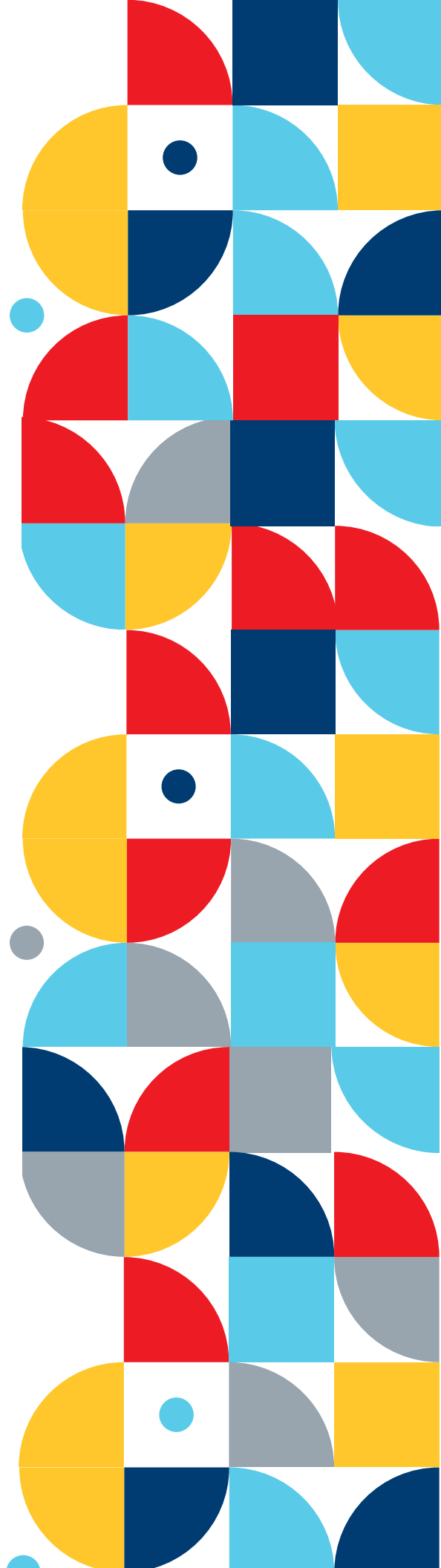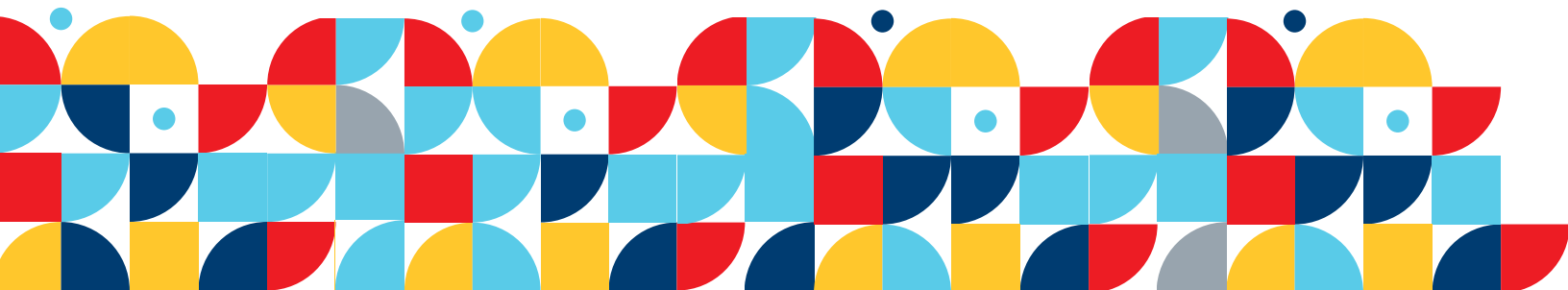
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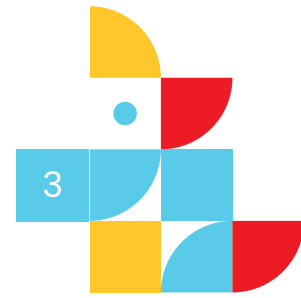OCHA

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FOREWORD

On behalf of the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies (CHRHS) at the Brown University Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, the Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Program (HRP) within the College of Maritime Operational Warfare at the U.S. Naval War College, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) Civil-Military Coordination Service, and the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), we are delighted to share the final summary from the 2024 Civilian-Military Humanitarian Coordination Research Symposium and Workshop.

The eighth annual symposium took place from 29-31 May 2024 at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. Our research symposium on 29 May was the largest in the series yet, featuring nine presentations of recently completed empirical studies and over a dozen poster presentations analyzing a range of contemporary challenges in global humanitarian action. This year's presentations cover several timely topics, including civilian-military coordination during large scale combat operations,humanitarian access in complex emergencies, climate change and coastal resilience, and public health emergencies.

The theme of this year's workshop was ""Civilian-Military Humanitarian Coordination in Large Scale Combat Operations." This event brought together 110 international leaders and representatives, from UN agencies, humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Governmental Organizations (IGOs), the U.S. Armed Forces and allied militaries, and academia to explore current and future challenges in humanitarian response. There was representation from every continent except Antarctica.
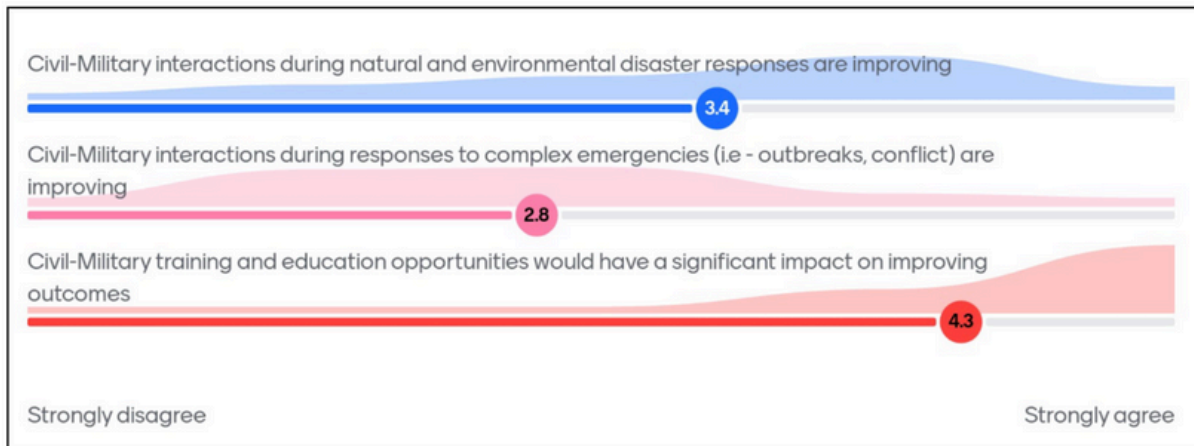
Five working groups met over the course of the two-day workshop, focusing on substantive topics in civilian- military humanitarian coordination: Aid Worker Security, Climate Change and Coastal Resilience, Protection of Civilians, Humanitarian Access, and Outbreaks. Their insights, outputs, and recommendations are summarized in this report.

Finally, on behalf of the leadership of Brown University and the U.S. Naval War College, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the R. Dudley Harrington, Jr. Charitable Foundation, the U.S. Naval War College Foundation, the Widgeon Foundation, and UN WFP for their generous support of this year's Civilian-Military Humanitarian Coordination Research Symposium and Workshop.

STRAW POLL
RESULTS

For the second time, attendees were invited to participate in a realtime 10-question straw poll as a concluding exercise. The straw poll was designed to encourage dialogue, help summarize participant experience of the event, and tentatively gauge the attitudes of a purposive sample of the civilian-military humanitarian community on a variety of topics related to the theme of the event.

The first question asked of participants was what three issues were important to consider in future civilian-military humanitarian interaction:
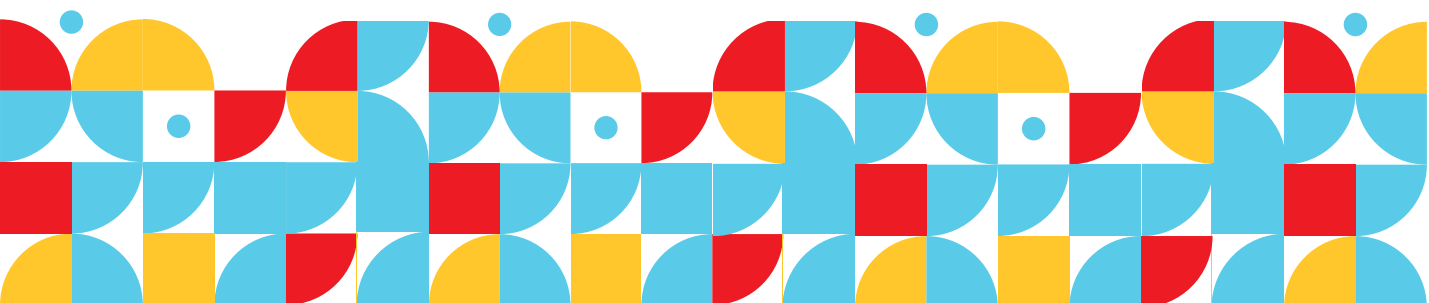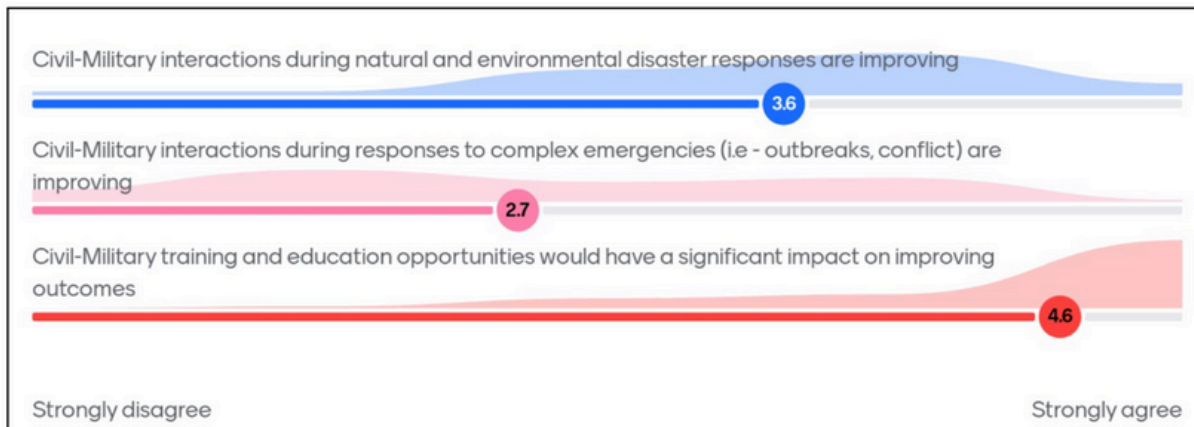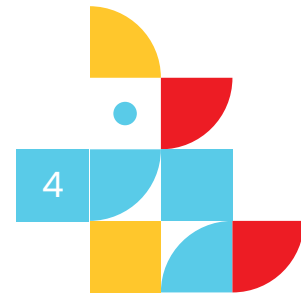
The second question attempted to gauge participants' perceptions on the trajectory of civilian-military collaboration. Results from the straw poll from both years showed that participants from both military and civilian backgrounds agreed that civilian-military interactions in environmental disasters were improving. On the other hand, participants do not perceive an improvement of civilian-military collaboration in conflict settings.

2024

Civil-Military interactions during natural and environmental disaster responses are improving
3.4

Civil-Military interactions during responses to complex emergencies (i.e - outbreaks, conflict) are improving
2.8

Civil-Military training and education opportunities would have a significant impact on improving outcomes
4.3

Strongly disagree   Strongly agree

2023

Civil-Military interactions during natural and environmental disaster responses are improving
3.6

Civil-Military interactions during responses to complex emergencies (i.e - outbreaks, conflict) are improving
2.7

Civil-Military training and education opportunities would have a significant impact on improving outcomes
4.6

Strongly disagree   Strongly agree

The third poll question, "What concerns you most about the future of humanitarian-military interaction?" was an open-ended inquiry designed to identify the specific issues participants were most worried about. Below are a sample of answers from to 2024 poll, in no particular order:

International Norms and Legal Concerns

Erosion of international norms and IHL

Targeting of civilians

Security and Safety Concerns

Harm and targeting of humanitarian workers

Security of female staff

Geopolitical and Conflict-Related Issues

Great power conflict

Regional-scale combat operations

Operational Challenges and Coordination

Balancing coordination with neutrality

Access to vulnerable populations

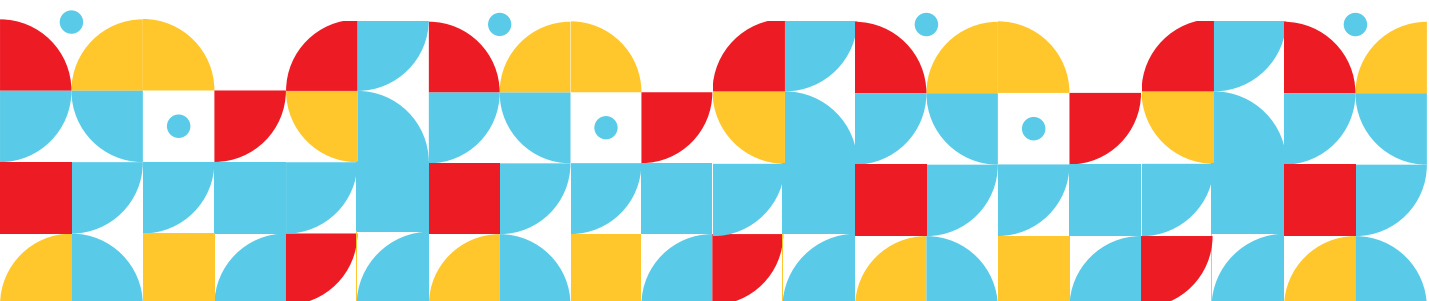# Funding and Resource Issues

Resource shortage to meet increasing need

Mismanagement of funds, supplies, and talent

Technological and Future Challenges

Weaponization of mis-/dis-information

Growing prevalence of artificial intelligence

The concerns of the previous year's poll overlapped but differed in key ways, as can be seen below:

| Failure to Reach People in Need Because of Lack of Resources or Will | Loss of Communication & Cooperation Between Militaries & Humanitarians | Loss of Distinction Between Military & Humanitarian Action | Lack of Preparedness for Strategic Competition & Large-Scale Combat Operations |

The fourth poll question asked: "What could the other side do better to make humanitarian-military interaction easier in future humanitarian responses?" The following broad themes cut across both CIV and MIL respondents:

- **Ideological Flexibility and Broader Perspectives**
- **Mutual Understanding and Collaboration**
- **Reduction of Bureaucratic Barriers**
- **Respect for Humanitarian Principles**
- **Understanding Roles and Responsibilities**
- **Transparency and Trust**
- **Coordination and Communication**
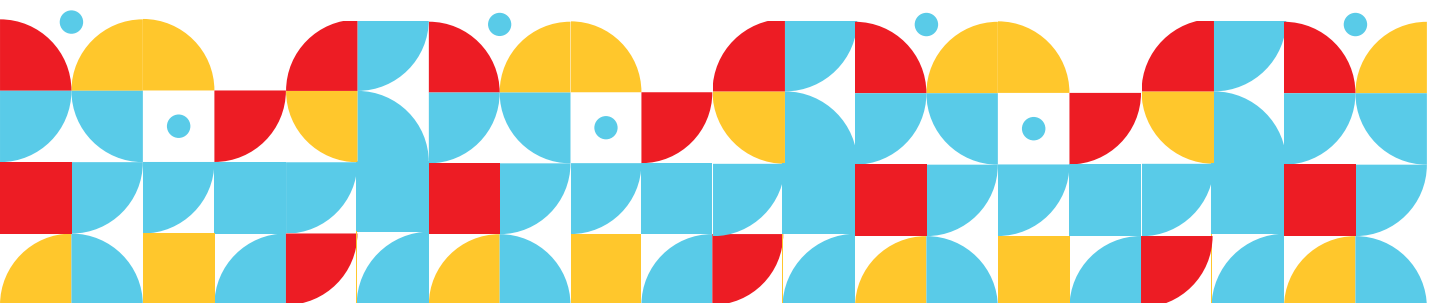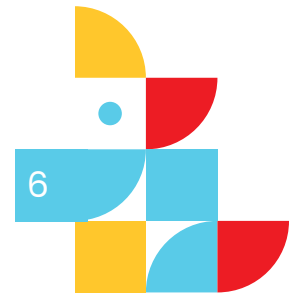
This is similar to last year's responses. The responses from 2023 highlighted the importance of improving proactive communication and education to better understand and appreciate each other's capacities, constraints, and cultures. There was a strong emphasis on enhancing information-sharing between humanitarian and military sectors, with a notable suggestion to move from a 'need to know' approach to a 'need to share' mindset.

In both years' data, there were calls for increased joint participation in training, exercises, and education. Many respondents recommended inviting more humanitarians to military exercises and more military personnel to humanitarian training. The use of scenario-based exercises and tabletop simulations was also suggested as a way to improve interaction and understanding between the two sectors. Overall, there was more of a focus on ideological flexibility in the 2024 results.
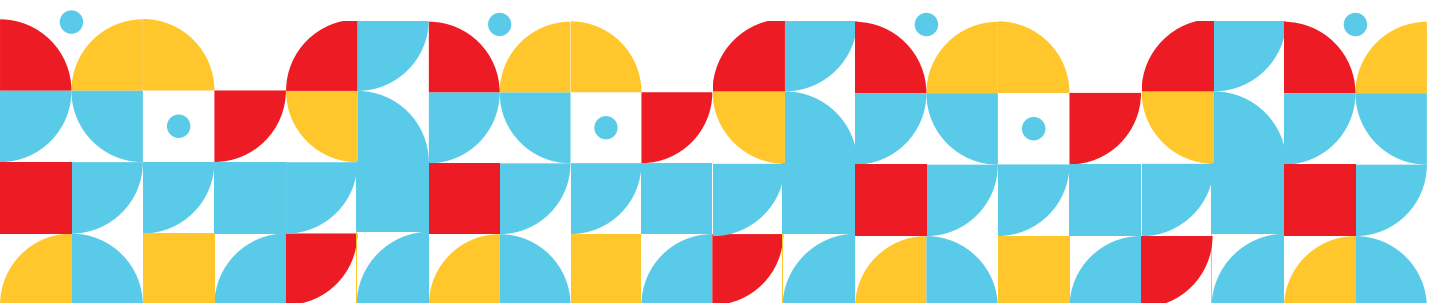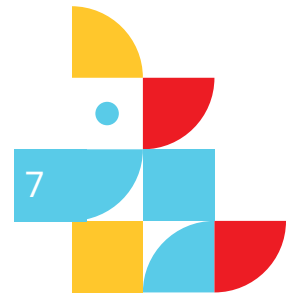
OUTBREAKS

**Leads: Bernard Owusu Agyare and Emily Chapman**
Rapporteurs: Hannah Reale

Summary of Outputs

The Outbreak Working Group continues to identify good practice and emerging issues for the practice of humanitarian civilian-military coordination during pandemics, outbreaks, and other public health emergencies, both in conflict and peacetime. Since 2016, this working group has sought to develop action and research plans, foster transatlantic growth and cooperation, and foster a community of experts in the field. Participants in this year's working group included representation from academia, the medical field, civilian governmental, transnational, and intergovernmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and military.

The focus of this year's working group was twofold. Firstly, to continue discussions from previous workshops to further develop guidance for practitioners, titled 'Practical Considerations for civil-military interaction during outbreaks and public health emergencies.' Secondly, to identify and discuss emerging issues, lessons learned, constraints, limitations, and opportunities within this stream of civil-military coordination practice.
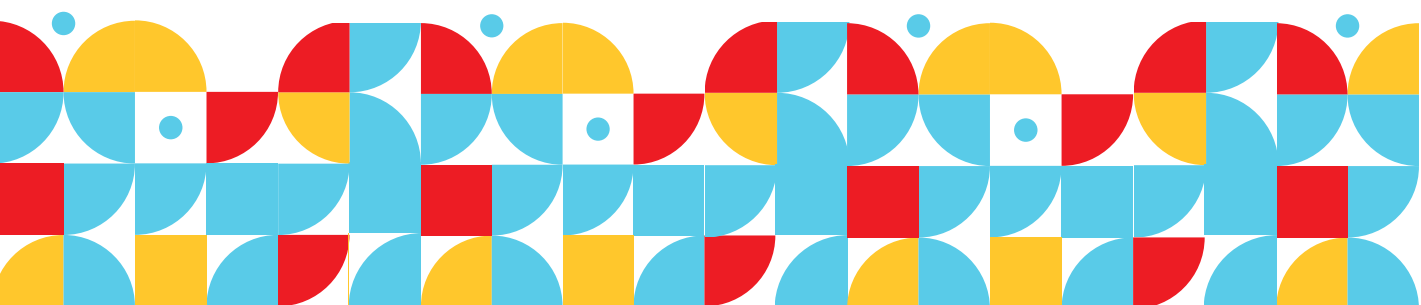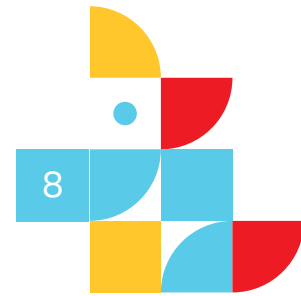
Practical Considerations for Civil-Military Interaction during Public Health Emergencies

Participants of the working group were introduced to the ongoing project to develop guidance for practitioners, provisionally titled 'Practical Considerations for Civil-Military during Public Health Emergencies.' The definition of 'public health emergency' used within the document is drawn from the World Health Organisation, and the document focuses solely on these responses. It does not cover where a natural hazard causes a public health emergency because existing guidelines are noted to cover these settings.

The document brings together guidelines, standards, and good practice into a single source with the aim of facilitating safe, principled, and pragmatic civil-military interaction in public health settings. It aims to amplify existing guidelines for domestic militaries during public health settings. The thematic taxonomy it uses to frame activities is based on plausible military contributions to activities within preparedness and readiness; coordination and operational; public health; security and enforcement; logistics and operational support; and social cohesion. In practice, the document is intended for use as a 'decision tree' whereby readers are provided with pros, cons, and good practice of interacting with militaries to conduct necessary activities during a public health emergency response.

General points for the Practical Considerations document were that it would benefit from including nuance for practices between national and international military involvement in public health emergencies; to bring clarity to activities where defense department civilians contribute; and to include the major points of military deployments being command relationships, country-specific structures and linkages, and situational overview. In general, civil-military interaction good practice is informed by context and trust of community members receiving assistance.

Good Practice of Military Involvement in Public Health Response Activities

To further develop the Practical Considerations document, the working group focused on identifying good practice for civil-military interaction during public health activities. Participants' experience and insights assisted to focus discussion on granular and detailed insight of public health activities, and corresponding military assets and capabilities that may support these activities.

Insight from participants note how interaction may exist on a spectrum that includes: a national outbreak; a national outbreak outside the capacity of the health system that might require input from national militaries; a complex area that becomes a national health emergency of international concern; and an outbreak of international concern that occurs in a conflict zone. Another area of discussion was planning, with experience from COVID-19 responses reflecting that pandemic plans existed but were not followed. Timing of military contributions was identified as a learning point from experience in the United Kingdom, where the military was called upon late and there was a missed opportunity to assist the national health service. Timely support allows for conduct of a needs assessment, consultation, and collaboration.

Clinical Care (outbreak related)

Military involvement in outbreak-related clinical care is connected to crisis principles and standards, with military medical teams only used to augment where the situation is dire, and they have the specific skill sets and necessary medical countermeasures to respond to the specific infectious disease. Participants noted that in all clinical care and healthcare settings, military contributions should augment public health systems, not supplant them. Reasons for this practice is that military aims may differ from civilian health aims, and militaries are not best placed to make health and resourcing decisions. When deployed, good practice is militaries working under the auspices of civilian guidance, and actors having clear understanding of health aims, and who is setting and updating them.
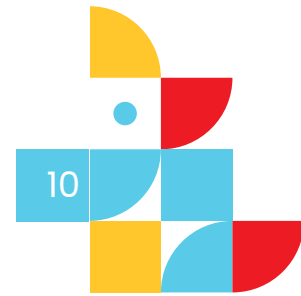
Participants reflected that foreign military support to public health emergencies should be based on the principle of last resort, with practices amply supported through current request systems, such as demand signal. However, there is also situations where a foreign military may be the better suited entity to response to an infectious disease followed by training of domestic militaries. This may be due to their capabilities, technology, doctrine, and skills. Where this occurs, it is important for foreign militaries to communicate the reason they are present and their roles, especially when their role includes clinical care, and have a clear vision and mission from the outset.

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)
Participants observed that IPC is a core activity during public health emergencies, and to optimize civil-military interaction, processes and practices are necessary. Good practice includes understanding any inconsistencies in practices between civilian and military actors because differences overtime creates IPC risk (e.g., different procedures and personal protective equipment); identifying the mode of transmission to inform educational and clinical practice; and working towards shared IPC standards.

Emerging Issues, Lessons Learned, Constraints, Limitations and Opportunities
Public Health Emergencies, particularly Infectious Disease Outbreaks (epidemics and pandemics) have become one of the key existential threats to humanity. Although national civil health authorities are constitutionally mandated to respond to these outbreaks in most jurisdictions, for the past 20 years, we have seen an increasing willingness of governments in both low and middle-income countries (LMICs) and high-income countries (HICs) to deploy their militaries in outbreak response operations. The COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect illustration of the activation and deployment of military assets in outbreak response.

Military response to outbreaks is acknowledged and articulated in several frameworks including the; International Health Regulations (IHR, 2025),
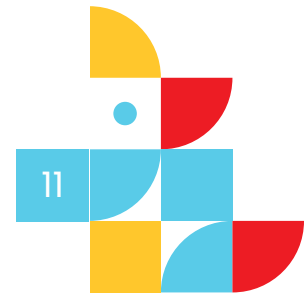
slo Guidelines (2007), Sendai Framework (2014), UNHCR Emergency Handbook, WHO's National Civil-Military Health Collaboration for Strengthening Health Emergency Preparedness (2020). Guided by these frameworks, participants shifted to scanning the landscape to identify and discuss emerging issues that can impact current and future Civil-military interaction during public health emergencies.

Mis-and-disinformation

Participants were of the view that despite the extraordinary capabilities at the disposal of militaries to support outbreak response, their direct involvement in outbreak response can be subjected to misinformation and disinformation. This is especially true for countries where the military has historically had bad publicity and strained relationships with civilian establishments. Messaging against military use can come not only from the general civil populace but also from health authorities who might feel the encroachment of the military on their domain of primary responsibilities. It was agreed that to foster coordinated civ-military outbreak responses, there is the need to recognize the potential threats of misinformation and disinformation and pre-emptively counter/debunk them through regular communication, health literacy programs, and civ-mil simulation exercises. Finally, participants highlighted the growing involvement of private military security contractors (PMSCs) in outbreak response and recommended that their specific roles in public health emergencies space should be outlined to counter mis and disinformation.

Technology/Cybersecurity

Participants acknowledged that sophisticated technologies such as drones, remote sensing devices, Telehealth, and machine learning platforms such as Artificial intelligence (AI) are revolutionizing outbreak response operations. Indeed, military or civilian-operated drones can play an important role in rapidly assessing outbreak areas, locating difficult-to-reach areas, delivering medical supplies and essential aid, and providing real-time situational awareness to emergency personnel.

Geospatial analytics can also support timely outbreak response by helping epidemiologists visualize, map, analyze, and detect outbreak patterns and disease diffusion. However, some constraints attendant to these technologies were deliberated upon. Cyber-attacks and system vulnerabilities were the primary constraints discussed. Cyber-attacks can lead to data breaches, disrupt the utility of these technologies, and undermine outbreak response operations. Participants recommended that to maximize the benefits and minimize the threats to these novel technologies, there need to be continuous risk assessments and the development of robust cybersecurity architecture to protect outbreak response operational centers, hospital systems, and data chains.

Surveillance and Data Collection

Although surveillance and data collection remain an important component of outbreak response, participants shared diverse views on how this important epidemiological tool can be differently viewed by different stakeholders. This can lead to data fragmentation and siloed outbreak responses. A participant shared an experience from the West Africa Ebola Outbreak, specifically in Sierra Leone, where three headquarters were separately collecting and presenting surveillance data.

Certainly, for an efficient outbreak response, it is imperative to coordinate surveillance and data sharing for optimum public health decision-making. Participants suggested using technological tools such as data mining and trend tracking on social media, pharmaceutical sales, geospatial analyses, and biosurveillance systems to complement active surveillance during public health emergencies for a timely response. Finally, participants discussed the unintended possibility of outbreak responders acting as "neglected" vectors of infectious disease. Indeed, there are documented evidence of foreign military forces and humanitarian actors introducing deadly pathogens into a host country with devastating consequences. It was suggested that foreign and domestic responders should be actively and periodically screened.
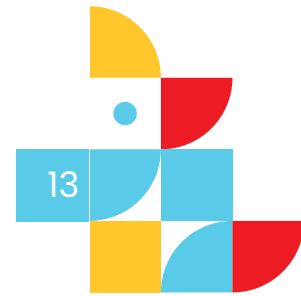
Process of requesting foreign military support.
The deployment of national military assets to support domestic outbreak response is largely a sovereign decision. However, when countries' response capabilities are limited or overwhelmed as was the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone during the West African Ebola outbreak, foreign militaries have been authorized to support such countries. At some point in the discussion, participants had several questions about the process of requesting foreign military assistance. These questions were discussed; is there a universal process for making such requests? What diplomatic channels exist for making such requests? Should such requests be based on geostrategic alliances, soft power projection, and economic capital? Also, as a "Legacy", should assisting foreign militaries leave equipment behind to support the local health system? Participants proposed that a more universal process should be considered for requesting foreign military support for outbreak response. In addition, there should be a demand signal system that drills down specific requirements for the foreign military. Furtherance, existing bilateral and multilateral military cooperation need to be strengthened to facilitate future outbreak response operations.

Trust-building
The theme of trust-building emerged at several points during the discussions. Participants unanimously agreed that establishing and nurturing relationships between civil health authorities and military actors will ensure a seamless civil-military coordinated outbreak response. It was discussed that policy evolution for effective outbreak response at the civil-military interface should be based on multisectoral/whole government/whole of society approaches. Participants reiterated the importance of communication and the need for civilian and military actors to speak the same language for outbreak response purposes. To achieve this, participants recommended the establishment and integration of common definitions, lexicons, mutual understanding, and accepted frames of reference. Furthermore, the use of social anthropology strategies such as locally-led approaches, and community empowerment programs were identified as effective strategies in building synergy between diverse groups.

Logistics and supply chain demand

Logistics and supply chain challenges remain an albatross for current and future outbreak responses. Some identified logistical challenges are related to forecasting, planning, supply, manufacturing, storage, transportation, and the sharing of accurate information to support decision-making. In outbreak response, especially during the acute phase of health emergencies, supply chain issues can completely bog down response operations. Participants agreed that the military, by its operational mandates, has developed extensive expertise in tracking and stockpiling logistics through the supply chain. However, this stockpiling expertise can undermine civilian logistical demand during emergencies.

For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, both civilian hospital systems and military hospitals were stockpiling non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI) and ended up competing for the same supplies. This contributed to national shortages of NPIs and undermined COVID-19 response efforts in many places. An important question that emerged from this discussion was How do we deal with stockpiling of resources in the age of overlapping public health emergencies? Eg. COVID-19, and Climatological Shocks. In the end, participants recommended that national emergency operations centers should proactively coordinate logistical and supply chain demands during outbreak response.

Future Action

The Working Group progressed the development of an evidence base for context-specific civil-military interaction guidance for outbreaks. There are opportunities to continue growing this evidence base through research partnerships, such as the United States Department of Defence Global Health Engagement program, and engagement in other forums, such as the Global Health Security Conference. Opportunities for future research include understanding the limits of using foreign militaries in public health emergencies, good practice around the use of armed actors to enforce quarantine and isolation measures during public health emergencies, and compounding events where a natural hazard causes a public health emergency in the aftermath.

An enduring theme is the need to progress shared training and education for public health emergencies covering preparedness, readiness, and the operational space. Participants reflected that these activities enable response actors to develop plans and policies that consider the complexities of public health emergencies including community demographics, culture, perspective and acceptance of military forces, and the environment. Plans are critical for any future responses, with participants reflecting during the Workshop how plans did not survive during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Individuals interested in learning more about the Outbreaks Working Group can contact the team leads at bo200@georgetown.edu and emily.chapman@defence.gov.au.
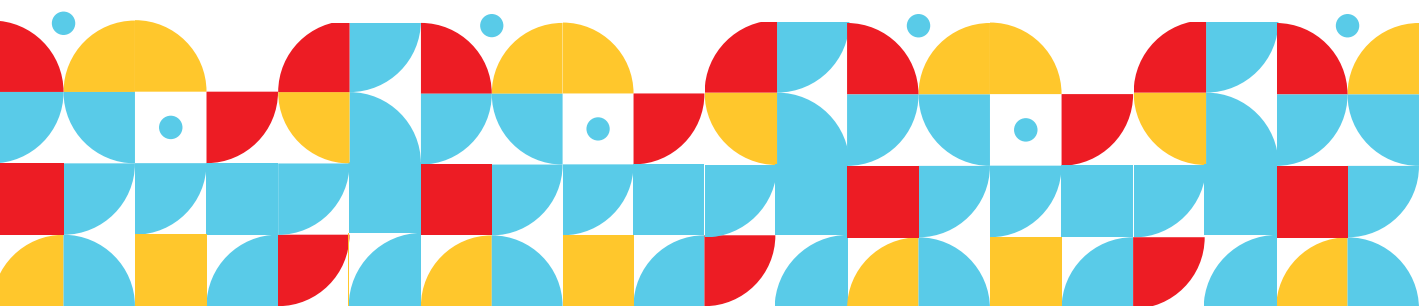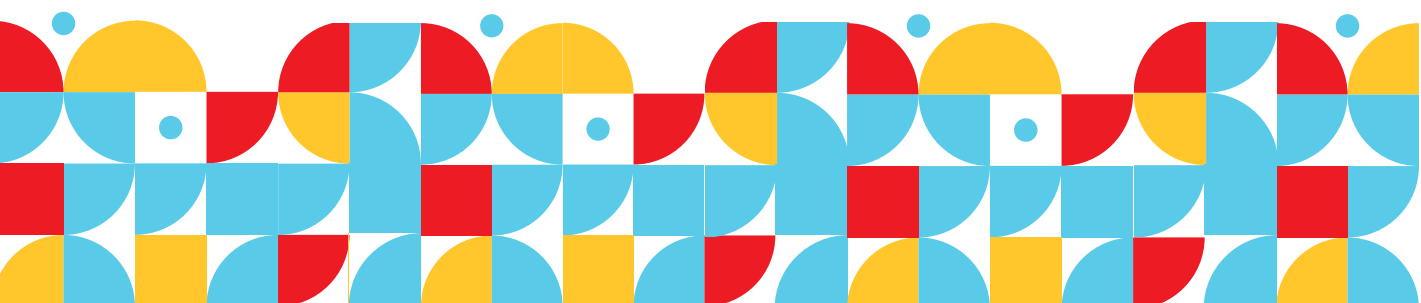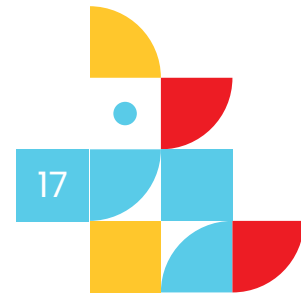
AID WORKER SECURITY

Leads: Jonathan Robinson andJohn Nonnemake
Rapporteurs: Andre Van Vollensteen

Summary of Outputs

On 30 and 31 May 2024, the aid worker security working group convened an in-person meeting at Brown University, Providence, RI. The group drew together military, academic, humanitarian, and other civilian practitioners to discuss key operational challenges and responses in aid worker security applicable in large scale combat operations (LSCO). The format of the group began with open discussions before presenting a fictional tabletop exercise (TTX) simulating a LSCO to discuss, as well as conducting a focus group discussion on the topic of best training practices for aid worker security. The aim of the working group is to provide a snapshot of the current state of aid worker security, strengthen collaboration between a network of practitioners, and suggest areas of future research. This document summarizes key observations made during nearly six hours of discussion.

Key Trends That Could Impact Aid Worker Security During LSCOs From Open Discussion Session

Following a summary of outputs from previous working groups 2020 - 2023 and providing an overview of the history of and trends in aid worker security since 1990, the open discussion began that brought to light five key concerns for aid worker security in LSCOs. These have been presented below in no particular order.

Concerns Around Growing Bureaucratic Impediments Affecting Aid Worker Security

Participants highlighted concerns around growing bureaucratic processes emerging in the aid worker security field that could play a significant cooling effect on humanitarian operations in the future, especially LSCOs.

In particular, the influence of how compliance with insurance conditions or internal policies for some humanitarian groups can constrain, slow, or even prevent operations, something that was felt would be exacerbated in LSCOs. There was concern that in a LSCO fought over a large area, the speed of requests from humanitarians to insurance companies may not be met in a timely way. In addition, it was felt that insurance companies would likely lack an appreciation of the nuance of conflict a particular region and therefore apply general restrictive policies over the area.

In addition, there was a concern that aid worker security policies were resulting in a practice of compliance and risk aversion that constrain humanitarian efforts. In a LSCO flexibility and adaptability were identified as key factors in responding effectively in such an environment, something that bureaucratic processes may limit. Participants noted that there were often no voices from insurance companies in discussions about aid worker security.
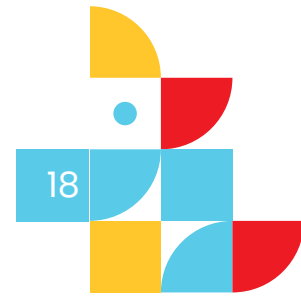
Concerns Around the Erosion of Operating Norms by Military Actors Affecting Aid Worker Security.

Participants discussed at length concerns around the growing disregard of key principles or laws that provide protection to humanitarians and civilians by parties to a conflict. It was felt that in a LSCO, this disregard would likely increase as parties to a conflict seek to prioritize military objectives over civilian / humanitarian harm. Two concerns that armed actors would likely constrain or prevent humanitarian access and consider humanitarian groups as combatants rather than neutral actors were specifically highlighted. Recent examples in Gaza, Ukraine, and Syria were also used to highlight the growing transfer of risk for aid workers to emphasize and manage their own safety in a conflict, rather than the burden being on parties to a conflict (as per International Humanitarian Law). It was also questioned that in a politicized environment that a LSCO would create, would aid groups need to adapt their principles to be able to deliver aid but at the same time compromise on their neutrality. Participants also spoke about the need for a stronger and timelier accountability or repercussion actions for bad faith actors who break the rules or appear to act with impunity. One comment noted that when militaries fail to follow norms or not consider the humanitarian dimension, they are in danger of loosing strategic goodwill or narratives in the long term. The threat posed by automated systems on aid worker security was also highlighted.

Concerns Over the Challenges of Working Within Current Aid Worker Security Architecture.

Participants noted several concerns of existing aid worker security processes not being met during a LSCO. This included if duty of care policies can be realistic in an environment where organizational risk tolerance may have changed to accept significant casualties; if risk assessments can be nuanced enough to respond to an environment with widespread extreme risk; if decision making about risk tolerance can be timely and proactive in an environment where everything is a priority;
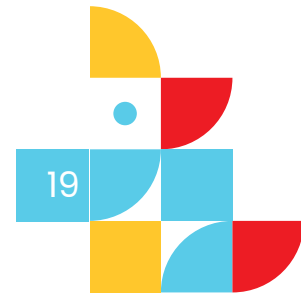
if accurate information can be collected to inform security management in an environment where mis/dis information may be high and/or there may be an absence of information in other areas; if key coordination entities (e.g. UNDSS, UNCOHA or WHO) are able to meet aid worker security obligations in an environment where these entities may be overwhelmed or have become politicized by one party to the conflict; of aid worker security training is currently fit for purpose in responding LSCOs; and if humanitarian notification systems for deconfliction (HNS4D) are an effective tool for enhancing humanitarian security in a LSCO.

Concerns Around How Aid worker Security is Considered by Different Types of Civilian Actors.

Participants noted concerns related to how private security / military companies may be impact aid worker security in future conflicts like LSCOs. A specific concern was the use of private military companies in peacekeeping-type roles and how this could impact aid worker security. In addition, it was questioned about what specific support with aid worker security to smaller humanitarian or grass roots civil society organizations would look like? These organizations often make up a large portion of the humanitarian ecosystem in a conflict situation as they are willing to accept higher risks and are more adaptive in responding to needs, but they may not have the resources to keep up with changing dynamics, to meet duty of care obligations, or evaluate risks in the same way that larger organizations can. In addition, the ongoing challenges of coordinating between these different entities were also mentioned.

Concerns Around Lack of Information Sharing and Communications Regarding Aid Worker Security

Participants had discussions around concerns of how timely information sharing would likely be a factor impacting aid worker security during LSCOs. It was expected that due to the intensity of the conflict, receiving and needing high volumes of information would likely have a limiting factor on aid worker security. In addition to this, it was felt that parties to a conflict would likely seek to exploit or politicize this information environment that could affect understanding the true nature of the conflict.
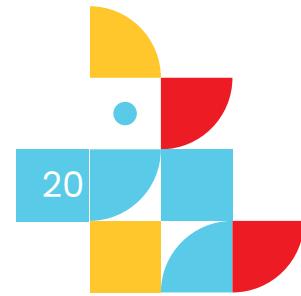
It was also expressed that the prioritization of military objects in a LSCO by parties to the conflict would likely reduce communications between military and humanitarian actors regarding aid worker security. Some participants noted that they already felt few within the military planning processes were thinking about communicating or coordinating with humanitarian groups on aid worker security. The example of HNS4D in Yemen becoming an access approval mechanism was discussed as something that could be seen in a LSCO. As was the perceived disconnect in communication and information sharing (especially about humanitarian notification) between the operational and tactical levels within the Israeli Defense Forces in Gaza was also highlighted. The growing legal restrictions, such as counter terrorism laws or sanctions, and how these impact humanitarians being able to communicate with designated groups was also noted as a challenge for aid worker security in the future as these groups remain influential in humanitarian settings.

Key Trends That Could Impact Aid Worker Security During LSCOs From TTX Discussions

Following open group discussions, a fictional TTX scenario was used to compel participants to reenforce or reconsider key concerns of aid worker security in LSCOs raised in their earlier discussions. These four concerns have been presented below in no particular order.

Concern Around the Influence Larger Entities Can Have on the Aid Worker Security Ecosystem

Participants discussed what the role and influence of larger entities in humanitarian responses (like the WHO, UNDSS, and OCHA) have in framing the aid worker security culture in the scenario, especially for smaller non-UN humanitarian groups. It was noted that smaller organizations often wait for larger humanitarian groups to establish aid worker security mandates, policies, and procedures in conflict settings to rely on for their own planning or missions.

Some expressed frustration in real-world examples like Gaza where it was felt these larger organizations also inadvertently encouraged the transfer of risk to smaller non-UN entities by communicating high volumes of urgent needs to smaller responding organizations without much security guidance or appreciating that these organizations often had few resources, specialist security positions, or time to conduct robust risk assessments. It was felt that this would increase the likelihood of these smaller organizations conducting riskier practices to meet the need, especially local organizations or those with inexperienced staff, who often have a culture of prioritizing addressing humanitarian needs over security. It was also discussed this second order effect could be exacerbated if UN agencies have withdrawn from an area due to the conflict.

Concern Over Inability to Adapt and Sustain Aid Worker Security in LSCOs.
Participants questioned from the scenario their ability to rapidly shift personnel and resources to adapt to the security needs arising from the sudden onset of a LSCO, both within the context but also from other global contexts. Participants noted that the shift in conflict would likely heavily rely on national staff to provide security perspectives on local dynamics in the country, understanding historical and cultural trends, in addition to supporting ongoing operations on the ground. Ensuring staff are not overburdened was noted as being key in this context. Participants also noted that in an intense LSCO, sustaining aid worker security staff ability to remain operational would also require serious consideration, something that would also likely require an overreliance on national staff.

Concerns Over Lack of Community Acceptance and Perception of Neutrality in Future Conflict.
Participants discussed from the scenario concerns around how the profile of an in-country team could affect aid worker security during a LSCO. This included understanding the national level staff's acceptance in certain communities as the conflict could change local dynamics especially between different ethnic or religious groups; understanding how existing

security practices can be adapted to national level staff's likely higher risk tolerance for operating in the conflict; understanding if the appropriate team members with experience in conflict are sent to the context and can respond effectively to the identified needs; and understanding if groups should brand or advertise their aid efforts, especially if one party to a conflict views humanitarians as not neutral. Indeed, participants wrestled with how to engage the bad faith actor or coordinate with humanitarians that may operate in opposition areas over concerns that such actions could impact their neutral profile. Indeed, it was questioned at what point does trying to meet the perception of neutrality impact the security of (or threat to) aid workers?

Concerns Over Accurate, Timely, and Relevant Information Sharing & Communications

Participants shared their concern with information sharing on aid worker security in the scenario. This focused on concerns that the information environment was compromised by a bad faith actor that could see sensitive information (such as on beneficiaries or local aid workers identities) being stolen and exploited to impact an organization's operations or arrest / detain personnel. Concerns also centered around whether secure communications could be used or not and how much information would UN clusters could share in such an environment, especially if there is a lack of capacity or if there is self-censoring to give an appearance of neutrality. Participants also noted that in LSCOs, communications and information sharing between different levels (ground, operational, and strategic) may be disjointed. Again, it was noted that were would likely be an over reliance on national staff to share information or enact plans related to aid worker security. Participants with a military background also noted that in such an intense context humanitarians should not assume military forces know what they are doing, where humanitarians were, or how they could communicate with them given the competing priorities of military objectives over understanding the humanitarian context.

Key Opportunities to Explore to Improve Aid Worker Security in LSCOs
Following the open discussions and the TTX discussions, participants highlighted four areas to explore that could address aid worker security concerns identified in these previous discussions.

Map to identify the strategic, operational, and tactical level tools allowing for militaries and humanitarians to communicate between each other. It was identified by participants that humanitarians must have more direct communication with military actors about aid worker security. By understanding existing forums and tools for communication, it could help encourage each side to share their best practices or lessons learned with each other to better strengthen and support aid worker security in the future.

Encourage more civilian-military forums to focus on aid worker security. The purposes of these forums should be to discuss real world issues and concerns between sides and develop opportunities to address these or share lessons learned. This should not only occur more than once a year but be a continued conversation throughout a year. Participants suggested that could a reddit style forum be established online to support this.

Explore how to best encourage senior military leaders appreciate aid worker security concerns. Participants noted that if senior decision makers, especially from the military, were more vocal on aid worker security this may help set a culture around considering aid worker security in operations, encourage more military personnel to receive humanitarian focused training, and help expose the military to a wider set of groups that they may coordinate with in the future. Participants noted that identifying the right and relevant personnel open to this, with the right experience, and are empowered to do this would be key for these efforts. Efforts should be made researching the best methods to do this as well as how to best share findings from the strategic to the tactical levels.
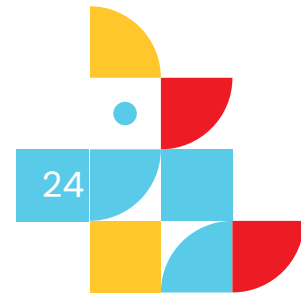
Explore how to better utilize the aid worker security group meeting to support practical outcomes. Participants discussed the purpose of the current working group, its focus, and make up. In particular, it was noted that although general discussions were useful at the strategic level, it was unclear how the group provided value to other levels or to certain audiences, especially on the ground. Potential ideas of utilizing the group for more practical outcomes including the group being used as a focus group to formally review policy papers; provide inputs or recommendations for other high-level documents; use the group to measure what progress or impact has been made in aid worker security following the implementation of policies; create year long research topics to explore in the group.

Key Question To Spark Discussion About Aid Worker Security Planning Considerations for Future Crisis Following discussions, participants created four closed questions to explore asking the wider group of event participants during the plenary session at the end of the conference that focused on acceptable risk. These were:

1. How should we clearly define "staying and delivering" aid safely?

2. What is deemed an 'acceptable risk' in aid worker security?

3. What is the acceptable loss of life on the humanitarian side for delivering aid?

4. At what point does your organization's risk appetite hinder your ability to deliver aid?

The group eventually unanimously decided that question 5 would be used to encourage discussion about aid worker security concerns in LSCOs in the plenary session at the end of day two of the workshop.

Focus Group Discussion:

During the second day of the workshop, a session was used to demonstrate a proof of concept for the aid worker security working group that it could be used as a focus group to add to policy documents on an aid worker security topic. This year's focus group discussion explored what appropriate training and resources are available for emergency medical teams (EMT) operating in conflict settings to be added. After initially receiving an introductory briefing on key concepts, such Civilian Military Coordination (CMCoord), the WHO EMT 'Red Book',[4] and a case study on the challenges of conducting aid worker security in Gaza by Global Response Medicine,[5] the diverse group of military and civilian practitioners shared their experiences. The following five types of training were identified from those discussions:

- *Hostile Awareness Environment Training (HEAT) – Several participants highlighted the value of HEAT courses to better prepare humanitarian workers for conflict settings by focusing on best practices and operating procedures to follow. However, participants also noted that there remain gaps in HEAT courses officered, such as there being no common standards for HEAT courses, that there are few culturally or gender appropriate or focused HEAT courses, and that there is few specific conflict (e.g. Gaza, Syria, Afghanistan) focused HEAT courses. The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) online Stay Safe Courses were specifically mentioned as a highly relevant safety focused course.*

- *CMCoord Training – Several participants, both military and civilian, highlighted the value of UN CMCoord training to better understand key actors in the field, coordination methods, as well as how to communicate between actors. However, some participants noted that more nuance is needed in CMCoord training to understand how CMCoord systems vary from country to country.*

- *Gender advisor training – A number of participants noted that more training should focus on understanding gender in aid worker and CMCoord training, especially the experiences of women, training deploying teams to have gender advisers to help with team security but also situations that require a focus on GBV, as well as add anti bias training to existing aid worker security courses. Some participants noted there would be an increased responsibility for team or project leaders to encourage this type of training within teams.*

- *Mental Health Training – Participants noted that aid worker security training should contain more aspects of psychological first aid and wellness to better prepare responders in being mentally resilient to what they could fact in conflict setting.*

- *Intelligence preparation of the environment training – Several participants noted that aid worker security training could be strengthened by incorporating more understanding of culture, society, language and other aspects of the environment.*

Individuals interested in learning more about the Aid Worker Security Working Group, joining next years in-person discussions, or desire to use the working group as a focus group to review or examine aid worker security related policies or documents can contact the team lead at jonathan.robinson.ctr@usnwc.edu.
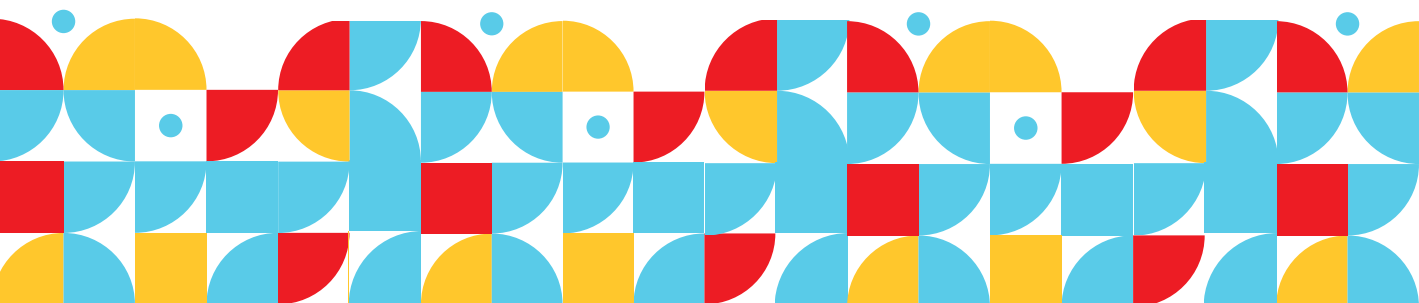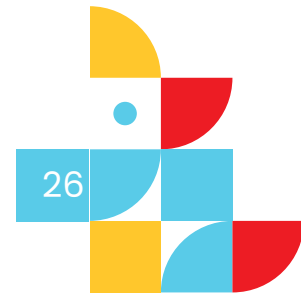
CLIMATE CHANGE & COASTAL RESILIENCE

Leads: Col. Theodore Shanks and Carinnes P. Alejandria
Rapporteur: Congruo (Olivia) Wang

Summary of Outputs

On 30-31 May 2024, the Climate Change & Coastal Resilience Working Group met for its seventh iteration to continue vital discourse surrounding the impact of climate change and coastal resilience on the workings of civil-military humanitarian assistance. The working group endeavored to continue discussion and research from previous iterations of the workshop. This year's working group consisted of experts from academic institutions worldwide, defense and governmental representatives from 8 nations, members of non-governmental humanitarian agencies, medical professionals, and several members from the commercial and banking industries. Col Theodore Shanks, USAF Air University Dean of Air & Space Force Fellows, and Dr. Carinnes Alejandria, Assistant Professor, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, co-led this working group. They began the working group with an overview of past working group reports, reviewed major themes and lessons learned, and laid out a series of discussion points to facilitate advancing subject discourse. Using a deliberate and grounded approach to solicit perspectives and experiential narratives, participants were first asked to describe how climate change has impacted their work, and what actions (if any) their organizations have taken to address the challenges.
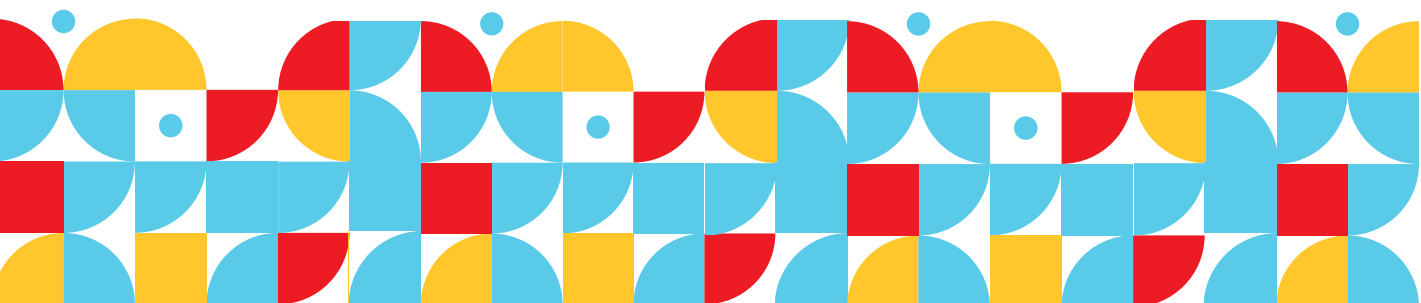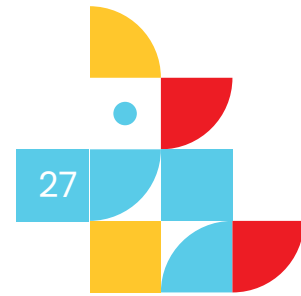
The following themes draw from the alignment of discussion points among the participants. Each theme covers the operational, tactical, and strategic aspects of civilian-military humanitarian coordination. Several key themes emerged as common to nearly all spheres of experience, revealing the universal nature of climate change impacts, regardless of organizational structure or mission. The working group first recognized how climate change is and will continue to impact humanitarian operations, and will unquestioningly have similar impacts on how the civil-military relationship unfolds.

Project Goal and Methods

Due to this year's notably diverse Working Group membership, the discussion design was intentionally multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary, maximizing the impact of the wide spectrum of background, training, and experience.

Session I: Based on known research and/or professional experience, how has climate change impacted specific areas of military and civilian humanitarian responses?

Session II: How have global socio-political shifts concerning climate change shifted the narrative and/or the vocabulary of climate change? How has this forced civil-military humanitarian actors to alter their methods, policies, or strategies?

Session III: Where are the intersections between climate change, gender equality, and humanitarian crises, highlighting the disproportionate impact of climate change on women? How can the civ-mil humanitarian community

Key Ideas and Issues

At the conclusion of each session, working group members summarized key takeaways and thoughts from each discussion. As summary of those key ideas, comments, and issues are summarized below:
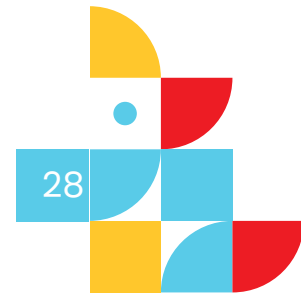
Climate Change Impact on Humanitarian and Military Responses: The key risks and threats related to climate change's impact on humanitarian response and coastal resilience include: sea level rise, port shutdowns, infrastructure vulnerability, urban density near coasts, and generational threats resulting to/from migration and refugees, as well as logistical challenges in climate-affected areas such as area access and regional port/hub availability. Additionally, climate change poses specific operational challenges such as extreme heat, which the working group identified as affecting vital air, land, and sea mission sets. Furthermore, the challenge of convincing decision-makers to prioritize climate action due to coordination and financing priorities complicates efforts to adequately resource responses to–and within–climate crises. Military actors often act as intermediaries in humanitarian efforts, amplifying the need for continued discussion and collaboration on climate change impacts. Participants highlighted the importance of integrating climate change considerations into military operations and planning.

Governance and Institutional Responses to Climate Change for Humanitarian Action: There are local and international efforts in place to generate institutional knowledge on responses to climate change. The working group members recommended that the civ-mil humanitarian community encourage humanitarian organizations to publish on the impact of climate change on their work. Furthermore, localized responses of climate change-driven responses require more community-based disaster mitigation and local ordinances for resilience. The climate-driven increase in the frequency and severity of significant weather events requiring humanitarian action amplifies the need to further develop mechanisms for collaboration with local governments, NGOs and communities to provide humanitarian aid.

Additionally, increased coordination between humanitarian and military personnel was recommended to avoid worsening environmental impacts in the performance of humanitarian action.
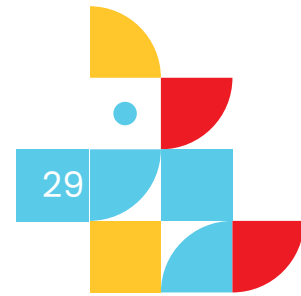
These gaps should be addressed via establishment of organizations within civilian and military institutions (i.e. U.S. Department of Defense) to focus on climate change impacts on humanitarian response, which would likely promote innovative decision-making within the organization.

The development of partnerships and capacity building among stakeholders could promote effective climate change resilience and stabilization efforts. This could include expanding climate literacy in civil-military contexts, early warning systems, locally-relevant resilience plans, and integrated coastal defense. The working group concluded there was also a need to explore the roles of non-traditional actors in humanitarian response which include community members, private sector, police, and educational institutions.

Funding and Resource Allocation

The working group noted that several climate financing organizations generate hyper-specific grants, creating funding issues for implementing organizations, emphasizing the benefits in investing in strategic foresight for flexible response. Monitoring and understanding the allocation of funds for humanitarian response could mitigate duplications in resource use and competitions in resource access between civilian and military organizations.

The working group also strongly recommended that both governmental and non-governmental humanitarian actors involve insurance companies in climate change discussions, including potential for mitigation and adaptation efforts. This highlights the need to explore the potential benefits of intermediary groups (commercial, insurance, banking, etc.) to bridge the gaps between humanitarian and military communities.
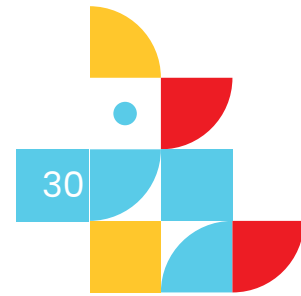
Socio-Cultural and Political Challenges

Political influence and ideologies frame all facets of the operational and tactical space for civilian and military organizations' humanitarian response, and climate change has become particularly impacted by socio-political influence. As a result, the working group noted the significant challenge of finding "champions" for climate change-driven policies. As such, there is a significant need to incentivize actors and States to mitigate resistance to sustainable energy development.

Gendered impacts of climate change on humanitarian response include unequal access to services and resources. It also highlights the limitations on capacities and participation of some sectors of society due to gender-based prescription of roles. Documenting the evolving language and approaches to addressing climate change could be beneficial in communicating with various stakeholders.

Summary

The discussions highlighted the multifaceted challenges and strategies in addressing climate-driven crises through humanitarian and military coordination. Key themes include the impact of climate change on operations, the necessity of effective coordination and collaboration, funding and resource allocation issues, socio-cultural and political challenges, and the importance of anticipatory measures and resilience building. Furthermore, the discussions on the nexus of humanitarian coordination, climate change, and coastal resilience revealed a complex landscape of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths include data-driven decision-making and established partnerships, while weaknesses involve coordination and funding challenges. Opportunities lie in establishing dedicated entities and leveraging the private sector, whereas threats encompass the escalating impacts of climate change and political barriers. Prioritizing resilience and anticipatory action, alongside strategic foresight, emerges as critical for effective future responses.
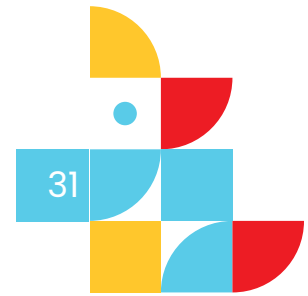
Strengths

1. Data-Driven Decision Making: Emphasizing the importance of data in driving military and humanitarian responses ensures more effective and informed operations.

2. Established Partnerships: Strong collaboration with local NGOs and communities enhances the effectiveness of humanitarian aid.

3. Focus on Resilience and Anticipatory Action: Prioritizing resilience building and anticipatory measures over mere response to crises strengthens long-term preparedness.

Weaknesses

1. Coordination Challenges: Difficulties in coordinating between military and humanitarian personnel and convincing decision-makers to prioritize climate action.

2. Funding Issues: Hyper-specific grants and funding challenges can limit flexibility and responsiveness in humanitarian efforts.

3. Political Influences: Political considerations often divert military resources from humanitarian responses and pose significant challenges.

Opportunities

1. New DOD Entity: Establishing a DOD entity focused on climate change impacts on humanitarian response could enhance strategic planning and coordination.

2. Leveraging Private Sector: Engaging the private sector, including insurance companies, can offer new avenues for mitigation and adaptation efforts.

3. Strategic Foresight: Investing in strategic foresight can improve the ability to respond flexibly to climate-driven crises, enhancing overall preparedness.

Threats

1. Climate Change Impacts: Increasing severity and frequency of climate-driven crises can overwhelm current humanitarian and military response capacities.

2. Political and Ideological Barriers: Resistance to sustainable energy development and political challenges can hinder effective climate change adaptation.

3. Resource Diversion: Military resources being diverted from humanitarian efforts due to political considerations can weaken response capabilities.

Individuals interested in learning more about the Climate Change and Coastal Resilience Working Group can contact the team leads at theodore.shanks@us.af.mil and carinnes.alejandria@ubd.edu.bn
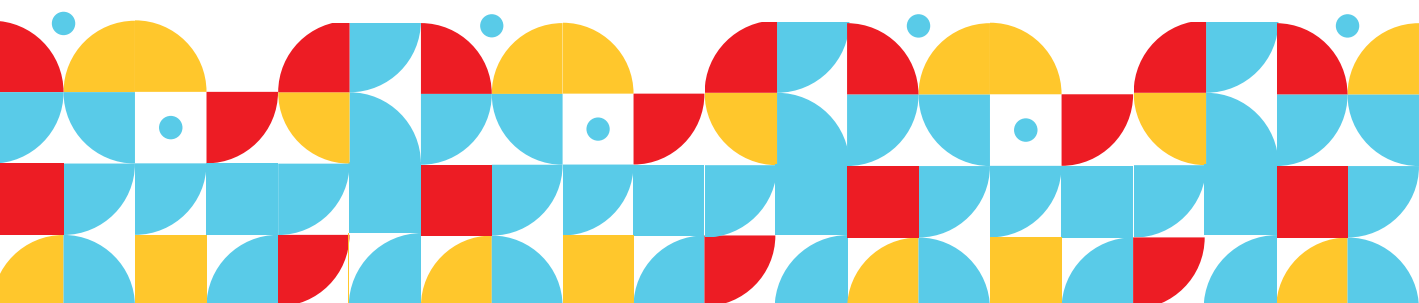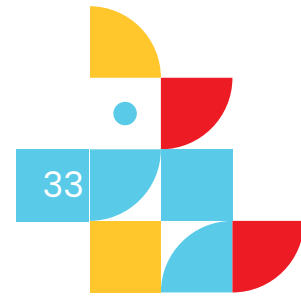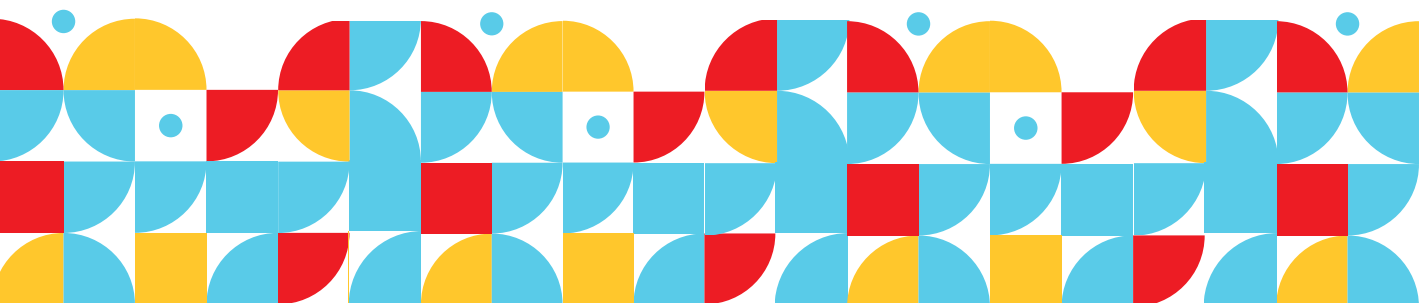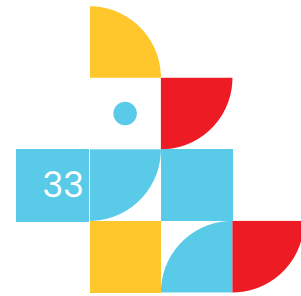
HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Leads: Jules Frost and Michael Marx

Rapporteur: Jessica Reale

Summary of Outputs

The humanitarian system continues to be challenged by access constraints in conflict settings generally, and particularly in large-scale combat operations, as demonstrated in current contexts, including Ukraine and Gaza. The Humanitarian Access Working Group started with an overview of current access challenges across a range of political, security, informational, and logistical constraints. The Working Group focused on critical aspects of humanitarian access, examining various challenges and successes faced by humanitarian actors in conflict and crisis areas, as well as identifying the existing tools and systems used to facilitate humanitarian access. Discussions on the evolution of technology, with an eye towards the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning into the analysis and monitoring of humanitarian access led to the formulation of several potential academic research questions, including how can AI and machine learning be integrated into efforts to negotiate, influence, and sustain humanitarian access? The Working Group also looked at real-time challenges to humanitarian access, including how humanitarian access is impacted by the withdrawal of peacekeeping and peace missions; counter-terrorism legislation and policies; the increased use of private military/security companies; and the role of militaries in facilitating or constraining humanitarian access. Effective and coordinated civil-military engagement was identified as critical to supporting humanitarian access efforts and to mitigating constraints to effective and principled humanitarian assistance.

Key Themes:

The Humanitarian Access Working Group touched on a wide range of issues that impact sustained humanitarian access. The concept of "meaningful access" was scrutinized and deserves further consideration—merely having access to a geographic space does not guarantee effective nor equitable service provision. The following key themes are representative of the discussion – although the following list is not in any order of priority or importance. As a foundation, the Working Group used the humanitarian access constraints from the OCHA Access Monitoring and Reporting Framework (AMRF) to attempt to frame the issues. Of the nine identified constraints, military and structured armed actors (SAA) can significantly impact on six humanitarian access constraints. The Working Group attempted to address the intersection of effective humanitarian civil-military engagement and the facilitation of humanitarian access.

1. Political and Security Constraints

Humanitarian Notification Systems (HNS): Currently, there remains wide disagreement about what HNS is and is not within the humanitarian system. This lack of coherence of purpose, combined with the recent rise in the use of HNS across conflict settings, has made HNS a tool that can both facilitate, but more commonly, can constrain humanitarian access. At its most basic form, HNS is simply a notification to parties to the conflict about the location of humanitarian static sites and the location and timing of humanitarian movements. However, in multiple contexts, this simple act of notifying has been construed as requests for permission for humanitarians to provide assistance – by military, government and security actors – posing a challenge to both humanitarian access and a needs-based approach to providing assistance.

Counterterrorism and Sanctions: Across numerous humanitarian contexts, counter-terrorism legislation and policies, as well as sanction regimes, employ restrictive measures that can hinder negotiations with
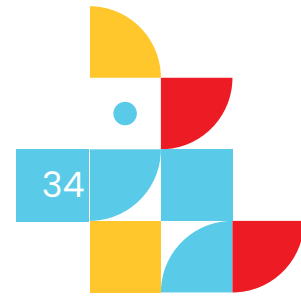
select parties to conflict and can create a chilling effect on the provision of aid and advocacy efforts, making it difficult for humanitarian organizations to operate and speak publicly about their challenges.

Bureaucratic Impediments: Administrative barriers and complicated procedures can delay or obstruct humanitarian efforts. This includes bureaucratic red tape, including the denial of visas and internal travel authorizations that impact the timely delivery of aid.

Security Risks: Humanitarian workers continue to face threats from violence, kidnapping, and attacks in conflict zones. The security environment can also change rapidly, affecting analysis, decision making, and risk appetite of humanitarian organizations. This has been a critical issue in large-scale combat operations (LSCOs), which are proving to be a major impediment to principled humanitarian response and aid delivery.

Armed Escorts: While armed escorts are a tool that is sometimes employed by humanitarians to access populations affected by conflict, the use of armed escorts remains controversial and divisive across the humanitarian system. While necessary in some contexts for safety and movement, it can also erode perceptions of a principled approach and can increase risks for aid workers.

Withdrawal of Peacekeeping and Peace Missions: The current withdrawal of Peacekeeping forces (both UN and non-UN mandated) is creating a security vacuum in multiple contexts and this trend is projected to continue in the near term. In many contexts, peacekeeping contingents have provided support to humanitarian assistance, the protection of civilians, and overall security which, for better or worse, humanitarians have become reliant. In many cases, there are not suitable or sustainable replacements for this assistance, which will further erode humanitarian access and will require considerable effort to address.
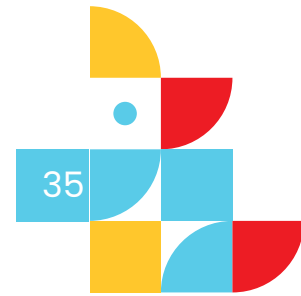
2. Blurring of Lines, Distinction and the Need for Advocacy

Civilian and Aid Worker Distinction: The distinction between civilian and military objects are increasingly blurred in conflict zones, especially in large-scale combat operations where civilians are increasingly targeted. Urban areas of conflict, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA), and fluid combat operations in a geographically confined space complicate efforts for humanitarian personnel to access populations in need.

Private Military Companies: The increasing use of private military/security companies (PMSCs) in humanitarian contexts raises concerns about their knowledge of and adherence to humanitarian principles, and the impact on humanitarian access and legitimacy of these actors in many conflict contexts. As PMSCs are always employed by at least one of the parties to the conflict, special consideration should be given to their use in providing security on behalf of humanitarian organizations, their use in armed escorts, and their support to humanitarian assistance operations. Humanitarians should analyze whether training on humanitarian principles, humanitarian access, IHL and other relevant subjects is possible and/or useful.

Advocacy and Influence: Efforts to advocate for adherence to IHL, the humanitarian principles, and sustained humanitarian access face challenges, especially as traditional avenues for engagement become less effective. Humanitarians should identify influence levers to support humanitarian access, especially with military leaders and planners.

Humanitarian Awareness: The misuse of the term "humanitarian" can undermine efforts to support sustained humanitarian access, particularly when describing humanitarian corridors, humanitarian pauses, etc., which are often used for political and not humanitarian purposes. Additionally, military actions described as humanitarian can conflict with humanitarian principles, impacting access and legitimacy, further reducing the distinction between military and humanitarian actors.
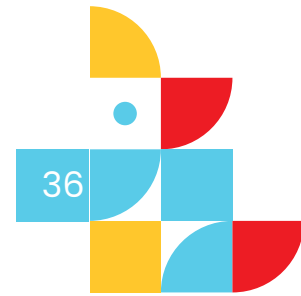
## 3. Information and Technological Challenges

Communications Issues: Assertive states and authoritarian regimes are increasingly limiting access to information, the internet, and specific tools (WhatsApp, Signal, Facebook, etc.) that humanitarians and civilians may use to convey information about needs and humanitarian access. These states may also cut communications (either technically or by denying access to critical hardware – radios, satellite equipment, networks, etc.), impacting the ability of humanitarian organizations to coordinate and deliver aid effectively.

Technology and Mis/Disinformation: Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and the increasing prevalence of drones in operational spaces present both opportunities and challenges for humanitarian access and for humanitarian organizations more broadly. While these tools can potentially enhance assessment and response capabilities, they also introduce risks related to data accuracy and misuse, as well as potentially denying areas of need, especially in urban contexts.

Addressing Constraints

The Humanitarian Access Working Group identified numerous ways to address the humanitarian access constraints identified above. Many of these issues can be addressed, in whole or in part, by effective humanitarian civil-military engagement. Therefore, additional and sustained humanitarian civil-military capacity (CMCoord, HMI, CMR, etc.) must be established across the humanitarian system. In addition, the Working Group discussed the following opportunities to help facilitate humanitarian access.

Increased Advocacy and Humanitarian Diplomacy: Engaging in coherent advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy to strengthen efforts to address political restrictions and influence decision-makers can help improve access. Common, coherent, and consistent messaging, especially amongst humanitarian leadership is required to move this forward.
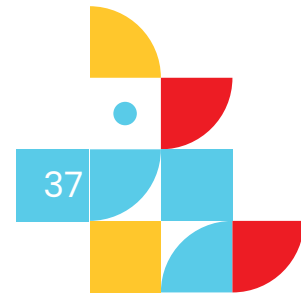
Enhanced Security Measures: Implementing robust security protocols and training for aid workers can mitigate risks, although care must be taken to ensure that security protocols do not inadvertently constrain humanitarian ability to access populations in need. In addition to the efforts of humanitarian security staff in developing contingency plans and protocols, military planners should be engaged and, when possible, influenced by humanitarian civil-military officers to assist in developing courses of action supportive of humanitarian operations, as well complying with IHL and targeting obligations.

Infrastructure Identification and Prioritization: Humanitarian engagement with military and SAAs to identify critical infrastructure that supports effective humanitarian access can enhance logistical capabilities and significantly improve access to affected areas.

Improved Coordination: Strengthening coordination mechanisms among humanitarian organizations and military/SAA can improve response efficiency through better understanding of roles and responsibilities, IHL obligations, humanitarian principles, and humanitarian intentions. Information sharing, as appropriate, through clear and deliberate communication channels is essential.

Utilizing Technology: Leveraging emerging technologies such as AI for data analysis, machine learning and other technology advances to support logistics and operational planning can significantly enhance humanitarian access. However, careful consideration of data accuracy, data security, and potential information bias is necessary.

Technology Integration: Integrating technology into humanitarian operations requires evaluating its impact on access and ensuring that it aligns with humanitarian principles, data protection requirements, and improving aid delivery to affected populations.

Defining Meaningful Access: A key theme throughout the Working Group was the critical need to define what constitutes meaningful access – for individual humanitarian organizations and across the humanitarian system.
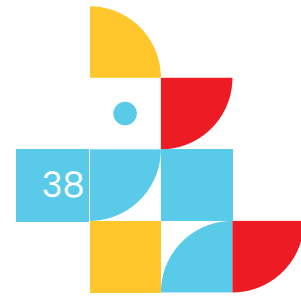
Access to certain areas, like a capital city, does not necessarily equate to comprehensive access across a country. The ability to access a geographic area may not automatically translate into being able to provide services. Meaningful access must be linked to providing tangible outcomes.

Spectrum of Access: Developing a spectrum to categorize and localize access levels can help in understanding and managing access challenges. This includes evaluating the barriers to access and adapting strategies accordingly.

Continuous Evaluation: Regularly assessing and adapting access strategies is necessary to respond to the constantly changing context of humanitarian crises.

Case Studies and Examples

The Working Group also discussed several case studies where humanitarian access constraints are a significant issue. Participation of both military and humanitarian participants in the discussion led to the sharing of good practice and potential opportunities for future engagement.

Cameroon: Various regions face different challenges, including conflict with Boko Haram, separatist violence, and logistical barriers. Recommendations include improving communication, training on humanitarian principles, and adapting strategies based on regional needs. Significant discussion of military intentions, objectives and constraints enabled the sharing of effective humanitarian civil-military coordination and potential avenues for future engagement.

Yemen: Humanitarian organizations face significant challenges due to ongoing conflict and political dynamics, as well as the current evolving dynamics, particularly in the Red Sea. Prioritizing humanitarian principles and adapting to the evolving situation and new actors is essential.
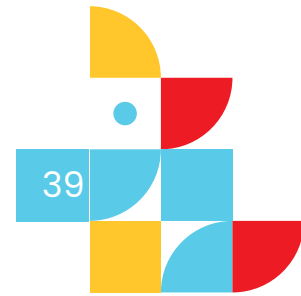
East Timor (1999): Lack of timely response and cultural barriers highlighted the need for effective negotiation and the understanding local contexts. However, it was difficult identifying new government actors and who had influence. It also demonstrated the difficulty in establishing trust, especially in a context where there was initially very little trust of foreign humanitarian actors.

Sudan: Access issues including paying for access and the impact of donor involvement were discussed in an effort to identify potential options to the current crisis in Sudan, which highlight many of the humanitarian access constraints faced by organizations. Recommendations emphasize identifying influence levers with those controlling and restricting access to territory, accountability and upholding IHL and other legal obligations, and improving overall understanding of access impediments at the field level.

Conclusion
The Working Group underscored the complexity of humanitarian access and the importance of developing and sustaining relationships and networks – highlighting the interplay between humanitarian actors and political/military, security, logistical, and technological factors. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including more effective advocacy and coherent messaging; improving and sustaining humanitarian civil-military capacity and engagement; improving training, especially for humanitarian national staff (who do the majority of humanitarian access negotiations); improving existing tools and analysis to support humanitarian access (AMRF, HNS, Armed Escorts, etc.); and utilizing technological innovation and integration to enhance the quality and speed of decision making. The discussions emphasized the need for a nuanced understanding of meaningful humanitarian access; the identification of appropriate influence levers; the continuous development and evaluation of strategies and plans; and engagement between humanitarian actors and military/structured armed actors to effectively secure humanitarian access to populations affected by conflict.
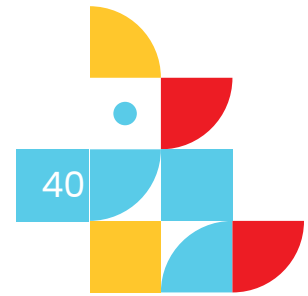
Future Action - Potential Research Agenda

The working group identified the following to support potential research agendas:

1. What is/what will be the impact of the withdrawal of peace operations (peacekeepers, foreign deployed contingents) on humanitarian access in select conflict settings?
2. How can Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning tools support humanitarian access (analysis, negotiations, monitoring, reporting, etc.)?
3. Evaluate current humanitarian access tool kits to understand what has worked and what has not. Identify opportunities to integrate military planning processes and emerging technology to improve those systems.

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PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

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Rapporteur: Rachel Pastore

Summary of Outputs

The 2024 Protection of Civilians (PoC) working group sought to develop precise themes and recommendations centered on challenges in humanitarian and military coordination for PoC in large-scale conflict, with a focus on developing actionable proposals for research and exercises aimed at improving doctrine, policy, practices, and coordination. Considering the participants' diverse experience and lessons learned, the working group produced several recommendations for international organizations, militaries, and humanitarian groups. These include specific topics for table top exercises; areas for information sharing both before and during conflict to improve preparation and practices for PoC in large-scale conflict; and research to advance understanding and forecasting of anticipated requirements and challenges for PoC in large-scale conflict.
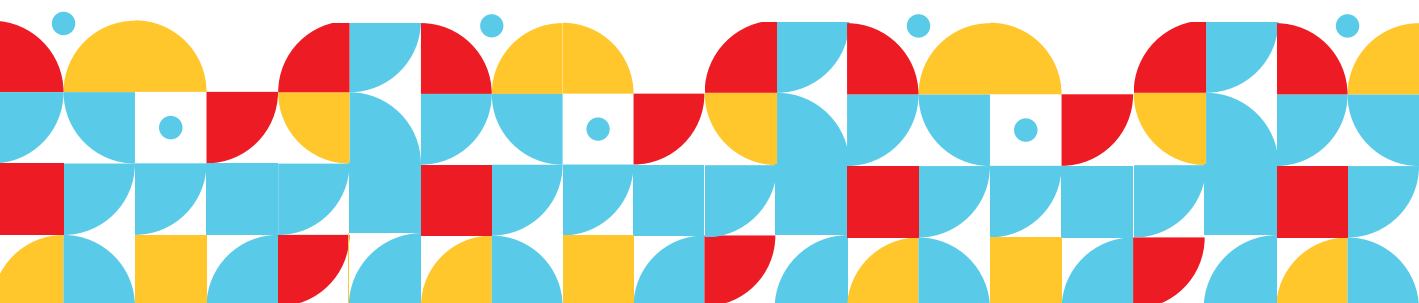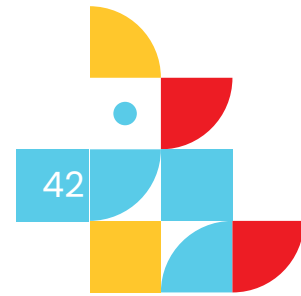
Key Themes

Barriers to information sharing:

Participants reported that high levels of classification within military structures hindered humanitarian actors' abilities to plan movements and gather data about a given conflict, degrading PoC outcomes. Conversely military participants found that humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality often make those organizations reluctant to participate in deconfliction mechanisms and alert armed actors to their movements, fearing being perceived as affiliated with one armed group or another. Similarly, while armed escorts may be necessary for humanitarian actors to deliver aid in some contexts, this can undermine these actors' perceived impartiality and neutrality. Moreover, militaries and humanitarian groups can regularly misunderstand the other's role in PoC. For example, militaries may presume humanitarian groups have primary responsibility for PoC (especially as relating to broader matters of Civilian Harm Reduction), thereby failing to adequately plan and resource for PoC in operations; and humanitarian organizations may presume militaries have lacking mechanisms or organizational structures for PoC thereby reducing possibility of effective coordination.

Recommendation:

To improve coordination among and between armed actors and humanitarian organizations participants agreed a more intentional, rather than ad hoc, communications system is required within the humanitarian ecosystem to distribute information and lessons learned. More unclassified table-top exercises and simulations, incorporating armed actors, multinational coalitions, and humanitarian representatives would help better identify gaps in common understanding. To the greatest extent possible this should be developed in unclassified, pre-conflict settings to avoid barriers to information sharing stemming from classification and humanitarian principles once conflict is imminent or underway. The U.S. Civilian Protection Center for Excellence and Civilian Harm Mitigation policy bodies, NATO, the African Union, UN peacekeeping actors, the U.S. Naval War College and similarly situated institutions, and military policy organizations should all conduct unclassified games, simulations, and table top exercises (by virtual means if necessary) to allow the more holistic incorporation of humanitarian perspectives.
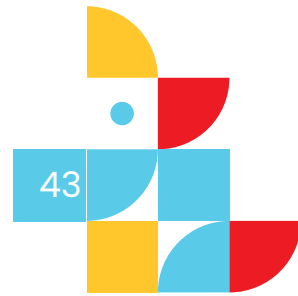
Additionally, smaller-scale informal interactions like small-scale role-playing exercises and direct people-to-people contacts, of the kind facilitated by the Brown University Watson Institute, would help humanitarians and armed actors "learn how the other thinks" to help reduce negative impacts from persistent barriers to more comprehensive information sharing.

Challenges in civilian harm tracking mechanisms and gaps in data:
Participants offered examples from their own experiences with challenges in identifying the composition of a civilian population, as well as problems in the accuracy and consistency of tracking mechanisms to account for civilian harm. Information sources are subject to both potential biases due to age, sex, ethnicity, region, and so on, while political pressures may impede the collection and publication of accurate data. Notably, participants identified that children (and their unique needs as distinct from adult populations) are especially poorly tracked and understood.

Recommendation: Civilian harm tracking mechanisms should be better standardized. Tactics, techniques, procedures, and lessons learned should be shared among organizations with different mandates and missions. When planning operations, researchers for all actors should consult a range of local interlocutors, addressing unique considerations of different groups depending on their sex, age, ethnicity, and region to better understand the composition of the civilian population and plan accordingly for PoC requirements.

Historical relationships and mistrust
Often, the UN or other international institutions' perceived alignment with Western nations, many of whom were former colonial powers in a given conflict zone, undermines the protection mandate's efficacy and acceptance among a population. This may result in host nations refusing aid or other PoC activities / interventions, though other factors may also inform such refusals.

Recommendation: Humanitarians and armed actors alike should examine host countries' history and cultural context when engaged in any planning. When possible, actors should review past international operations or interventions to find "lessons learned," with a particular eye towards understanding populations' views of international aid and international armed presence in the host country.

This should not only inform operational plans for militaries and humanitarian groups, but should also shape communications and information shared with the host nation, and help define areas for coordination among armed and humanitarian actors.

Population Movement

Participants shared several examples of unexpected civilian movements leading to poor protection outcomes, complicated armed actors' operations, or impacted access and aid delivery. Participants identified that armed actors have used forced displacement as a combat tactic (and likely will again, potentially on even larger scales), further complicating planning efforts and threatening PoC outcomes.

Recommendations: All actors (including both military and humanitarian) should research historical patterns of civilian migration, particularly in times of conflict. Actors should conduct predictive analysis of mass population movement or transfer, integrating these predictions into operations planning and protection mandates. When designing unclassified tabletop exercises or simulations, forecasting and responding to civilian population movement should be incorporated as a key component. These analyses and exercises and simulations should consider armed actors deliberately forcing population displacement as a conflict tactic.

Large Scale Combat Operations

Participants discussed that PoC practices in small scale conflict or counter-insurgency conflict may not be "scalable" for effective PoC in large scale or near-peer conflict. This discussion spanned resources including materiel, aid supplies, and personnel; access for humanitarian groups; geography and considerations of time and distance; availability of air assets; and resiliency of computing and electronic systems, among other factors. Participants identified that whether or not existing practices could be scaled for PoC requirements in large-scale conflict was often at best built on assumptions, in some cases inadequately considered, and likely would suffer from the lacking experience and skill sets of many actors for large-scale conflict. However, participants pointed out that there are examples of recent or ongoing conflict that may meet the definition of large scale, but which at least could provide lessons learned for analysis and incorporation into planning.
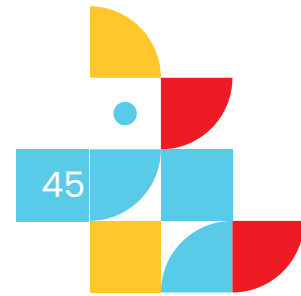
Recommendation: Actors should carefully examine existing practices to assess whether they can be effective in large scale conflict, and identify where significant changes in policy, doctrine, training, and resourcing may be needed in order to be prepared for PoC requirements in large-scale conflict. As discussed elsewhere in this report, table-top exercises, simulations, and research should be tailored to examine and address this concern.

Recommended Research Questions Moving Forward

The working group proposed several recommendations for further research and analysis to better inform understanding and preparation of PoC requirements and challenges by humanitarian groups, international organizations, and militaries. In relation to the themes and recommendations identified above, these issues are framed as research questions, as follows:

Large-Scale Combat Operations and Near-Peer Conflict
- What lessons learned from the last thirty years of regional conflict, counterinsurgency, and protection during "long wars" can be scaled up for a peer-to-peer confrontation with large scale combat operations?
- What gaps are there in the existing coordination mechanisms between humanitarians and armed actors? How should these structures and mechanisms be adapted in the event of large scale combat operations?

Sovereignty and International Institutions
- How do PoC considerations change if an armed actor is operating in their own country, versus another? How do relationships between armed actors, humanitarian organizations, and host countries affect adherence to tactics, techniques, and procedures to protect civilians? How does historical context of a host nation or region affect such relationships and PoC activities?
- When a UN protection mandate has expired or been rejected, how should the international community act to protect civilians? When a state fails to protect its own civilians, what are the legal rights and obligations of state and humanitarian actors?
- Why do states reject UN missions? Are there frameworks or approaches in protection mandates that can ameliorate tensions between international institutions and their host state?
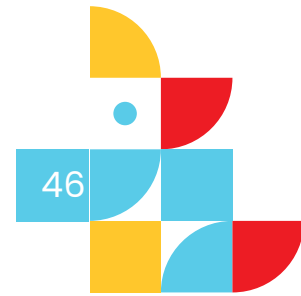
Novel and Emerging Technologies

- Social media has often stoked violence in conflict. How can humanitarian and armed actors better operationalize social media tools to communicate with impacted populations? How could social media be effectively used when triggering early warning systems? How can social media be used to improve access, and possibly make available information about PoC requirements during conflict?
- How do state and non-state actors' deployment of emerging technologies, like lethal autonomous weapons, unmanned aerial vehicles, and potentially artificial intelligence, impact protection outcomes? What shared norms governing the use of these technologies should be promoted? How can consideration of these emergent technologies be incorporated into PoC planning and operations?

Conclusion

The working group recommends that key actors for PoC should conduct internal doctrine and polity review and table top exercises, and should also coordinate to share information and hold exercises with other actors. These actions are intended to improve outcomes for PoC by better forecasting and preparing for PoC requirements and challenges, and better mutual understanding of responsibilities and practices for PoC to enable planning and coordination. Several actors were identified which could benefit from such actions, including but not limited to the U.S. Civilian Protection Center for Excellence, United Nations, NATO, U.S. Center for Naval Analysis, U.S. Naval War College, the African Union, the European Union, and the policy arms of national militaries.

These actions should be supported and informed by academic research, making available better information in support of PoC plans and operations, and also helping to overcome barriers to information sharing and coordination stemming from classification, humanitarian principles, and lack of understanding among actors of each others practices and constraints.

Actors with regional expertise on civilian populations should identify and share key risk factors for PoC, such as anticipated human migration patterns and resource and geographical constraints.
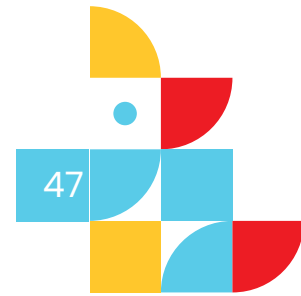
Militaries, international organizations, and humanitarian organizations should incorporate such information into planning, resourcing decisions, and development off doctrine and practices/procedures. All actors should clearly understand and communicate their roles and responsibilities for PoC. In light of barriers to information sharing such as national/military classification and neutrality principles, to the greatest extent possible actors should use table top exercises (including by virtual means) and other existing opportunities for coordination such as conferences, international engagements, and academia to develop mutual understanding of PoC requirements and organizational practices. The specific themes and recommendations in this report should be used to shape these activities whether conducted internally or multi-laterally among PoC actors.

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THANK YOU

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