



U.S. NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Workshop

September 9–10, 2021

Summary Report



SEPTEMBER 2021 CIVILIAN-MILITARY HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE WORKSHOP – SUMMARY REPORT

On September 9-10, 2021, over 100 participants – including humanitarian practitioners, academicians, and military leaders – engaged in two, half-day, virtual workshops hosted by the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies (CHRHS) at the Brown University Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs and the Humanitarian Response Program (HRP) at the U.S. Naval War College to explore current and future challenges in humanitarian civilian-military coordination including natural and technical disasters, complex emergencies and pandemics.

The first day's activities occurred on September 9, 2021. During this period CHRHS and HRP hosted the second Research Symposium on Civilian-Military Humanitarian Coordination, featuring five presentations of recently completed original research studies from a variety of disciplines. The research questions covered in these studies were selected by the working groups at previous Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Workshops after being identified as some of the most pressing and important topics in the realm of civilian-military coordination during humanitarian emergencies. This includes research on best practices in civil-military coordination in conflict settings; civil military engagement in public health emergencies; humanitarian assistance in great power conflict; humanitarian leadership in urban emergencies; and humanitarian notification systems for deconfliction.

Beyond the research presentations on day one, on September 10, 2021, in collaboration with United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) Civil-Military Coordination Service (CMCS), CHRHS and HRP hosted the Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Workshop. This was the fifth in a series of workshops designed to explore current and future challenges in humanitarian response. The theme of this year's workshop was *Civil-Military Coordination in the Next Pandemic*. Participants were grouped into a series of working groups that met prior to and after the workshop to discuss and refine an agenda for six major themes within the civ-mil humanitarian space.

As a follow-on to the four previous Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Workshops, this event aimed to improve humanitarian coordination by supporting a Community of Practice in civilian-military issues and promoting information sharing that can inform policy and processes during crises; highlight opportunities for professional education, training, and development for key decision makers to identify the best practices associated with overcoming cultural, policy, technical, and legal challenges to coordination and information sharing; and continue to develop and refine a

comprehensive research agenda in order to build the evidence base for this field and better inform practice.

Each working group approached their area from a slightly different perspective and developed the following synthesis and summary papers to continue to stimulate thinking, encourage an ongoing exchange of ideas, and ultimately help drive research, education, simulation, and other innovative efforts that can improve humanitarian civilian-military coordination and engagement in the future.¹

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone who took part in this workshop – for their willingness to explore critical issues so important to humanity – and for their passion and commitment to help the world’s most vulnerable people. We are committed to ensuring that this event will continue as a vibrant conversation that can help to advance trust and confidence with key actors in the humanitarian ecosystem, allowing for more effective collaboration that can save lives and alleviate suffering around the globe.

On behalf of Brown University and the Naval War College, we would like to thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the R. Dudley Harrington, Jr. Charitable Foundation, the Naval War College Foundation, The Widgeon Foundation, and UN OCHA’s CMCS for their generous support of our 2021 Research Symposium on Civilian-Military Humanitarian Coordination and our 2021 Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Workshop.



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¹ DISCLAIMER: The views and opinions expressed in this summary of proceedings are those of the workshop participants and editors, and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Navy, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

AID WORKER SECURITY WORKING GROUP

SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

On August 31, 2021, the aid worker security working group convened a virtual meeting with military, government, academic, humanitarian, and civilian experts to provide a snapshot into key operational trends in aid worker security during the COVID-19 pandemic and to strengthen collaboration between actors in these fields. The working group built on previous Brown University / U.S. Naval War College Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Workshops in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2020 that focused on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and attacks on aid workers.

The specific objectives of 2021's working group were to identify and record how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted aid worker security, before suggesting areas of collaboration or research that could begin to address some of these challenges. This document summarizes key observations made during the working group meeting and was presented at the 5th Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Workshop on September 10, 2021.

KEY TRENDS IMPACTING AID WORKER SECURITY DURING COVID-19

Nine key trends were identified through the course of discussions as impacting aid worker security during COVID-19. These have been listed in no particular order below:

- 1. COVID-19 has raised the visibility of aid worker security within humanitarian organizations.** This is especially the case at the leadership level. While positive in certain regards, participants noted that this added attention complicated decision making on security issues related to COVID-19 and how risk is understood and prioritized within organizations. The ongoing and evolving threat posed by COVID-19 makes for difficult discussions with decision makers about risk tolerance, mitigation, and other security measures, as they often want clear and precise solutions to address these areas that may not always be available.
- 2. Humanitarian organizations have become more insular when considering security during COVID-19.** Participants noted that organizations during COVID-19 became more focused on internal processes rather than on external, collaborative actions. This shift was described as “a circling of the wagons.” On the military side, force protection has been prioritized during COVID-19. On the humanitarian side, the impact of COVID-19 on staff members has often been considered with greater priority than the risks or threats that those who receive aid are facing. Communication between entities was perceived to have reduced, and COVID-19 discussions have sometimes taken priority over other activities and processes within an organization.
- 3. The threat of COVID-19 against aid workers has sometimes overshadowed other threats organizations face.** Participants indicated that COVID-19 has become an outsized specter of

concern within many organizations' leadership. Indeed, it was noted that COVID-19 often ranked higher on the list of concerns during discussions about risk assessment and security, with less attention being placed on other threats that were present before the pandemic and persist to this day. One participant noted that "dealing with the global pandemic should not mean humanitarians ignore other threats or give up dealing with them." Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were given as key examples of this phenomenon. The former saw COVID-19 being the least of people's concern after experiencing a magnitude 7.2 earthquake in August 2021. In a parallel comparison, participants noted that during the Ebola crisis in the DRC, more people died of measles than of Ebola.

4. **There was no notable change in donor funding related to aid worker security during COVID-19.** Participants noted that despite increased budget requirements for aid worker security during COVID-19 — stemming from additional training, the need to quarantine, personal protective equipment (PPE), and medical support if staff are infected with COVID-19 — donors have often failed to address these new requirements with additional funding. Participants also noted that there was little donor appetite to fund new indirect ways of working within aid worker security, such as virtual training.
5. **COVID-19 has impacted localization of aid worker security in both positive and negative ways.** Participants noted that the nature of the pandemic caused an increased reliance on local teams to continue operations and security on the ground. However, despite this increased reliance on local actors — which is positive — participants nonetheless noted that international organizations' desire to be seen responding directly to crises persisted during the COVID-19 pandemic. This need for visibility by international organizations was identified as a key obstacle limiting local responses and the wider issue of decolonizing aid. In addition, security resources during the pandemic heavily prioritized international staff, as they had been before the pandemic. Haiti was offered as a specific example, where one NGO had eight local teams and one international team responding after the earthquake. Only the international team was deemed eligible for security resources, receiving a private security detail, an armored vehicle, and ballistic vests thus vividly demonstrating the unequal treatment received by local and international teams. Still, on a more positive note, the increased use of virtual environments has increased local level access to remote training and advisory support.
6. **The rise of misinformation related to COVID-19 and its potential impact on aid worker security was highlighted as a key issue during the pandemic.** While misinformation was present before the pandemic, participants noted that the use of misinformation as a mechanism to erode trust between humanitarians and communities receiving support has significantly increased during COVID-19. Some participants even stated that they were more concerned about misinformation's potential impact on aid worker security than they were about other forms of violence against aid workers. Participants also recognized that misinformation had complicated one's access to credible information related to COVID-19 for aid worker security

purposes. While some attempts have been made to identify misinformation early through technology – such as Semantic Visions – this technique appears to still be in its infancy. In any case, participants mostly agreed that the increased threat posed by misinformation will remain a feature in the future. Attacks against polio vaccinators in Pakistan due to suspicions about their connections to western intelligence – spread through misinformation – were given as a good analogy seen during COVID-19. As humanitarians will likely continue to be relied upon to deliver COVID-19 vaccines in the future, misinformation and the dangers it creates are expected to continue to complicate humanitarian missions.

7. **A rise in interpersonal violence against health workers in some contexts was mentioned as a specific issue during COVID-19.** Violence against medical personnel during COVID-19 in Columbia was given as an example of this, although it was acknowledged that this case may result from circumstances that are specific to that country (such as a legacy of interpersonal violence against doctors and nurses seen prior to COVID-19). Participants also recognized that initial expectations of violence against health workers in certain contexts during COVID-19, such as at vaccine distribution sites, did not materialize as severely as expected.
8. **The threat of oppression posed by government level responses to COVID-19 was mentioned as an issue.** Participants noted in some contexts, COVID-19 responses have been highly militarized, with governments implementing newer, vague laws – and, in the case of the Philippines, even anti-terrorism bills designed to limit free speech – to establish control. These measures have added new risks for aid workers, especially in remote areas. This new dynamic has affected humanitarian access and required humanitarian organizations to consider threats from military personnel that were not previously present. One such example includes the military enforcement of lockdown measures.
9. **The impact of COVID-19 on aid worker security is not yet fully known.** Most participants agreed that the impact of COVID-19 on aid worker security will remain an ongoing challenge in the long term. This makes it hard for humanitarian organizations to plan security and best practices around ever-changing dynamics.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Four potential research areas were identified during the discussion that could be helpful to identify lessons learned and best practices in response to COVID-19 and aid worker security. However, due to the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainty about future impacts, definitive solutions may be difficult to identify in the short-term.

- Compare violence against Covid vaccinators and violence during other vaccination campaigns in the past (e.g., Polio).

- Compare violence against health workers in conflict and non-conflict zones during COVID-19.
- Explore how government and humanitarians have worked together and coordinated with aid worker security during COVID-19 in order to identify lessons learned and best practices.
- Explore how many humanitarian workers have been infected with or died from COVID-19 to help understand the nature of risk posed by COVID-19 as well as potentially help address the some of the mistrust directed towards aid workers being seen a source of infection.

The working group will continue organically collaborating on issues related to aid worker security in the coming year.

Individuals interested in learning more about the Aid Worker Security Working Group are encouraged to contact the leads at Jonathan.Robinson.ctr@usnwc.edu / megarhodes@gmail.com

CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

On September 1, the climate change working group met for its fourth time to further last year's discussion and explore how climate change is affecting humanitarian assistance and disaster response. The two-hour meeting fostered dialogue between civilians, military personnel, and humanitarians and built upon the project "Civil-Military Climate Change Issues in Humanitarian Response: Setting the Agenda and Developing the Discourse" which evolved from the 2020 working group meeting. This project, led by Christopher Stockdale-Garbutt, aims to establish key issues concerning the impact that climate change will have in the humanitarian domain and among both civilian and military response communities in the Indo-Pacific region by 2050. The results of this project, in turn, will guide a wider discussion of the challenges facing response organizations and affected communities. It will also postulate ways in which these actors can coordinate to anticipate the impacts of climate change — such as rising sea levels, frequent tropical storms, and flooding.

PROJECT GOALS AND METHODS

The first section of the meeting explored the goals of this project, which include: 1) generating new knowledge and understanding for stakeholders and decision-makers involved in humanitarian response processes and 2) illustrating how disaster management and pro-active long-term resilience planning and mitigation policies require greater CIV-MIL cooperation, commitment, and revision. The study's research methods were then introduced, which include: 1) semi-structured interviews with academic, military, and civilian subject matter experts, and 2) a literature review of government publications, CIV-MIL doctrine, conference reports, after-action reports, and academic publication.

Participants then split into two breakout rooms, one that was predominantly composed of military officials and one that was predominantly composed of humanitarian actors. Each group discussed and reviewed the project's interview questions, which are as follows:

1. What do civilians and military actors perceive that they need to do to prepare for the humanitarian consequences of Climate Change related disasters within the INDO-PAC region?
 - a. Who are the most like actors to be involved? Why?
 - b. Do civilian and military actors have different perceptions of their involvement and commitments?
 - c. What are perceived to be the most significant operational challenges in terms of communication, logistics, planning, resourcing, coordination, etc.?
2. How would you assess the current relationship between civilian and military actors in this area in the wake of the 2019 disbandment of the USN Climate Change Task force?

- a. What impact had this had on CCA/DRR initiatives and humanitarian assistance/disaster response planning and leadership?
- b. Who, or what, is filling the gap? (In terms of scientific information/measuring, information gathering, planning for future impacts and events, provision of resource and capability and coordination of future operations).
- c. What are the predicted short-term and long-term impacts of this policy change?

KEY IDEAS AND ISSUES

Afterwards, the two breakout groups reconvened and shared their discussions with the larger group. An abbreviation of the key ideas, comments, and issues raised by working group participants is included below.

1. Participants recommended speaking with State Department representatives, country teams, and embassy representatives in country to best understand how resilience might be improving across the region.
2. Some participants stressed the importance of water and agriculture in the context of long-term resilience, encouraging the researcher to consider who the questions are being addressed to so that the researcher can then assess how agricultural and water access are being impacted by a given event.
3. Some participants noted the need to include more local perspectives during the interview process.
4. Several participants raised concerns that the second interview question was too specific and no longer relevant, suggesting that it might be more effective to instead ask about more recent policy changes.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Comments and recommendations that participants made during the working group meetings have been incorporated into the Interview Instrument. Changes regarding the selection of interviewees and the interview process have also been made. The next steps are to:

- Revise the Interviewee selection criteria and use this to better identify and directly contact a representative range of people who can best assist and develop the project using their knowledge and experience.
- Interviews will be conducted via video conferencing platform, recorded, transcribed, and coded prior to their inclusion (all interviewees will receive an Information Pack and will be asked to sign a Consent Form)

- Interviews will be held alongside literature research with a range of documents being consulted and reviewed for their inclusion in the project
- Both the White Paper and Journal Article are expected to be submitted in 2022

FUTURE RESEARCH

Working group members also discussed ideas for potential future research projects. These include:

- Exploring heat casualty: Is there a way to do mass cooling with existing technology that is feasible? Is there a way for humanitarian and military actors to participate in this effectively?
- Are there potential projects that could quantify climate change mortality? Is there a way to take a disaster and, through modeling, quantify a projected mortality increase that is the result of climate change?

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HUMANITARIAN ACCESS WORKING GROUP

SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

This August, the humanitarian access working group met for the second time to build upon last year's findings, discuss access challenges affecting aid workers in both conflict and natural disaster settings, and explore how COVID-19 has further exacerbated these challenges. Three meetings were held to foster dialogue between civilian, humanitarian, academic, and military actors on August 17, 18, and 19. Members were asked to attend only one of the three meetings, and each meeting was designed to be an open discussion led by the various participants with minimal facilitation from group leads. During these meetings, six key themes emerged as factors currently affecting humanitarian access. Several areas for further research were also identified. This document summarizes the key observations that were made during these working group meetings and that were presented at the 5th Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Workshop on September 10, 2021.

KEY THEMES

Six key themes were identified through the course of discussions as impacting humanitarian access during COVID-19. These have been listed below in no particular order:

- 1. Do different contexts require different approaches?** One participant noted that humanitarian organizations are much more willing to cooperate with military entities to secure access in natural disaster settings than in complex emergencies because it is easier to maintain neutrality in these types of responses. Another agreed, noting as an example that, for example, when access is hindered by road damage during a natural disaster, they are comfortable leaning on military entities to secure such access. During complex emergencies, however, they would be much more hesitant to cooperate with the military, because doing so in the long term might ultimately lead to further access restraints. On the military side, active conflict may make physical access easier to establish, but physical access is relatively insignificant when it comes to aid distribution without local or NGO cooperation. Other participants questioned how useful this divide in the framework is, noting that humanitarians are often operating in contexts where there is some form of conflict, even if they are responding to a natural disaster. Instead of subscribing to this dichotomy, one participant advocated a “golf bag approach” to access negotiation, stressing that each context is unique and that one needs a number of tools to secure access.
- 2. COVID-19 has negatively affected humanitarian access.** Several participants recognized that COVID-19 made humanitarian access constraints worse. While there was an initial adjustment to the constraints caused by the suspension of flights and the closures of borders, participants noted that these were the “easy” challenges for humanitarians to overcome. However, in areas where there have been protracted crises — such as in Myanmar and Yemen — preexisting

limitations on access have worsened. Yemen was offered as a specific example, as humanitarians must follow COVID-19 procedures when going to the field which, in turn, “makes [them] strangers in the community” and creates a “stigma.” Other participants also noted how armed groups — including criminal and secessionist groups — have leveraged COVID-19 as a means to gain legitimacy, through their efforts to manage the crisis, including by facilitating humanitarian access.

3. What is the role of the humanitarian principles in today’s conflicts — are they still relevant?

Participants noted that there is a current dialogue pushing back on humanitarian principles, as some contend that they no longer support — or perhaps even restrict — humanitarian access. One participant disagreed, noting that the humanitarian principles offer a means to an end, that being access. Still, others question how useful humanitarian principles are given changes in the current geopolitical scene, citing the situation in Afghanistan as a particular example. Some of the questions raised include: How can humanitarian actors engage with different authorities and maintain humanitarian principles? How can humanitarian principles be operationalized effectively? What are acceptable compromises? In one meeting, participants added that the humanitarian space has become increasingly more restricted by bureaucratic impediments. Some participants seemed to suggest that the changing nature of conflicts may require a revision of the humanitarian principles; others felt that adhering to the current humanitarian principles is necessary. Almost everyone stressed the important of neutrality. It remains unclear what a revised framework for new humanitarian principles should look like.

4. How to approach localization during response efforts?

Linked with the second theme mentioned above, some participants noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need for response to be led by local actors, especially when people are in need of one forms of relief or services that international humanitarians are not delivering. Still, one participant highlighted how localized responses can be especially complicated in certain contexts. The collapse of the Government of Afghanistan was offered as a particular example: How does one go about localizing one’s response when there is no clear government or mechanism of authority in place? Before the collapse, “There were administrative processes one could follow, but now, if the Secretary of Defense of the US has no way of getting US citizens out of Kabul, then what are humanitarian actors going to do?”

5. The need for communication in response efforts.

The need for greater communication between civilian and military entities during both the initial response and during the development/recovery phase was emphasized during working group meetings. One participant noted that it is essential to conceptualize civil-military engagement from a local perspective — how does it apply to local organizations and domestic militaries? How do local civilian and military perspectives differ in distinct contexts regarding how actors should approach humanitarian civil-military engagement?

6. **Access, needs, and the importance of understanding the situation on the ground.** Working group members noted that operators within the humanitarian space can sometimes try to ‘fix’ situations before they fully understand them. Participants stressed the importance of defining humanitarian access — which, in the third meeting, was described as being “all about humanitarian need and consensus.” It was noted, however, that humanitarian access is sometimes required in order to understand the full extent of humanitarian need. Still, participants stressed the necessity of understanding the environment in which one is operating and ensuring that aid workers are appropriately equipped, which again connects to the fourth theme about localization.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Several areas for further research were identified during these working group meetings. These include:

- Case studies (exploring successes, NSAG engagement, humanitarian advocacy, transitional contexts)
- Analysis of short-term and long-term consequences of different types of compromises during humanitarian access negotiation.

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OUTBREAK WORKING GROUP

SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

It is the mission of the outbreak working group to explore challenges and identify good practice in humanitarian civilian-military coordination during pandemics, outbreaks, and other public health emergencies. 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. The focus of this year's working group was on reflections and emerging observations related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and establishing a roadmap for contributing to new guidance on humanitarian civil-military engagement during disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies as a specific domain (that is, as distinct from natural disaster response). Specifically, working group members discussed the strengths and limitations of current humanitarian civil-military engagement policies and guidance documents as they apply to disease outbreak response, as well as the necessary considerations for the development of future policy or guidelines specific to this operational space.

Participants in this year's Outbreak Working Group included representation from academia, the medical field, civilian governmental, transnational, and intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and military.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Due to the format of this year's workshop, two conference calls of between one and one and a half hours were conducted on 23 August and 03 September. Brief summaries of the meetings are below:

Meeting 1, 23 August 2021 (90 minutes)

The first meeting of the outbreak Working Group dedicated a portion of time to outlining the objectives of the working group and for general conversations surrounding the trajectory of the working group meetings prior to the conference. A brief presentation of past working group outputs was given to begin the meeting, to complement the pre-brief document which was released to participants prior to the first call. The pre-brief included a short summary of current literature surrounding civil military engagement in public health emergencies, along with an annotated bibliography of key readings which were gathered by the working group leads. The subsequent discussion on preliminary consideration of gaps in existing civil-military guiding documents was fruitful—and despite the diversity of perspectives, participants were able to find consensus on a number of important issues:

1. The lack of a sufficient evidence base for understanding the nuances and effects of civil-military engagement during outbreaks.

2. The ambiguous distinction between a 'public health' and 'humanitarian' perspective, especially as relating to potential policy/guidance.
3. The intersection and relative elevation of a 'duty of care' versus 'do no harm.'
4. The balance of approaches between a utilitarian-, humanitarian principle-, relativist-focused response with respect to engagement with armed actors.
5. The need to consider sub-national (and even hyper-localized) diversity in relation to civil military engagement, particularly concerning perceptions of armed actors by crisis-affected populations.
 - 5.1. The case study of the Ebola response North DRC Kivu province was discussed at length, given the challenges of the Ebola response and engagement with armed actors.

Ultimately, there was consensus that there is a clear need for civil-military guidance during public health emergencies as a distinct domain.

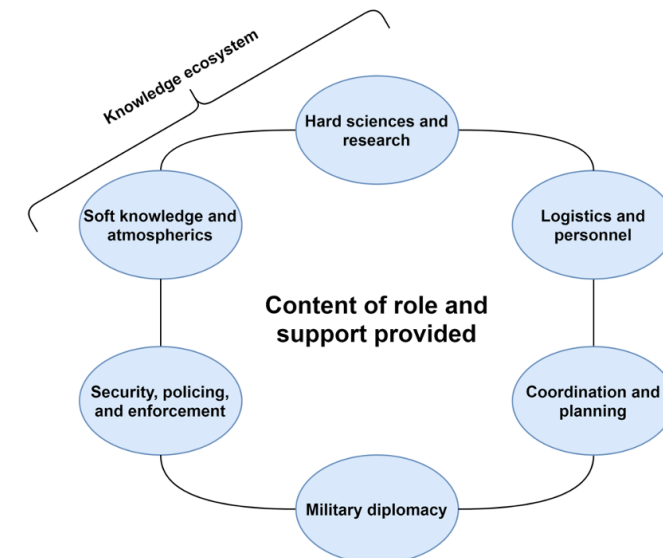
Meeting 2, 03 September 2021 (60 minutes)

The second meeting of the outbreak working group began with a short introduction and summary of the *National Civil–Military Health Collaboration Framework for Strengthening Health Emergency Preparedness*, a guidance document recently published by WHO. The strengths and weaknesses of the document were discussed at length. Participants concluded that though the document suffices as technical guidance for convening civilian and military actors at a strategic national level, it does not fulfil the previously identified critical need for operational civil-military guidance that might be applied to inform civil-military relationships and interactions during public health emergencies. Accordingly, the conversation then continued to discuss the factors which would need to be addressed through any development of appropriate principles or guidelines. Important considerations for future works are below:

1. The need to differentiate between armed actors directly providing aid (such as medical care) and armed actors supporting the logistics and coordination of local actors.
2. The need to integrate the knowledge and expertise of crisis-affected actors and populations in developing guidance.
3. The challenges of creating global guidance/guidelines given the variety of actors and contexts at work in humanitarian operations.
 - a. Including the designation between non-state armed actors, local militias, regional militaries, or foreign militaries within current policy.
 - b. Including the differing adoptability of principles, guidance, and guidelines within the humanitarian sector, and how to gain humanitarian support given the variety of perspectives.

4. The need for further research investigating the role of national militaries' support in research and manufacturing, such as PPE and vaccine development.
5. The need for specific guidance regarding humanitarian engagement with armed forces using coercive force in outbreak settings, specifically in enforcing quarantines or guarding medical facilities.
6. The need to design guidance around specific spaces that militaries might contribute to, distinguished by whether militaries have direct interaction with crisis-affected populations and built around the identification of boundaries. Examples given were 1) logistics, 2) direct aid, and 3) the use of force to ensure public health compliance (i.e. the limits of exploitation).

Below is a diagram of the different areas/roles within civil-military engagement which may need to be addressed within future guidelines or principles:



FUTURE ACTION

Throughout the course of the meetings, the following action points were identified by the participants:

- Develop/refine roadmap for contributing to new UN OCHA civil-mil guidance specific to outbreak response
- To continue work on the development of a training curriculum for militaries and humanitarians alike, applicable to public health emergency settings and utilizing the lessons being learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Specific attention was given to the role of simulations and of revisiting the results of the 2019 Urban Outbreak Simulation.

- Synthesize and circulate key takeaways from the 2021 OWG session
- Follow-up consultation call(s) through the CM-PRN network this autumn to discuss and map the principles/considerations further
- Identify and support ongoing research in civil-military engagement that can likewise contribute to this process and these considerations

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PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS WORKING GROUP

SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

The Protection of Civilians (PoC) working group was created prior to the 2020 workshop and has continued with the goal of examining the unique challenges, opportunities, and risks regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Our goal is to explore the range of challenges that prevent parties in armed conflict from more effectively recognizing the dignity and rights of civilians, including through preventing and mitigating civilian harm, protecting civilians caught in conflict, and responding to harm when it occurs. We aim to help armed actors and civilians in conflict develop and implement solutions to prevent, mitigate, and better respond to civilian harm.

The working group serves four purposes:

1. To identify the most pressing research questions/needs facing the humanitarian community and policymakers, and to match them with existing resources, institutions, or opportunities to address them in the future
2. To serve as a forum for sharing new research and insights that can help address practical challenges faced by organizations engaged in the protection of civilians
3. To serve as a repository of knowledge and insight for other groups and individuals in the protection of civilians or related fields
4. To strengthen connections (and connectivity) between and among the groups participants, through convening and information sharing, in order to promote *ad hoc* and active collaboration

Pre-Workshop Meeting, August 24, 2021

Due to the virtual format of the 2021 workshop, the PoC working group convened a virtual meeting with participants to discuss current research and ongoing work by group participants. Participants in attendance were from various academic, U.S. government, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The meeting was co-chaired by Brittany Card (Brown University), Dan Mahanty (Center for Civilians in Conflict), and Dave Polatty (Brown University).

The meeting provided dedicated time for group members and other colleagues to present recent publications and ongoing critical research on the protection of civilians. First, a NATO representative discussed *The Protection of Civilians Allied Command Operations Handbook*,² which supports the

² <https://shape.nato.int/resources/3/website/ACO-Protection-of-Civilians-Handbook.pdf>

integration of the NATO Protection of Civilians approach in the planning and conduct of NATO operations and missions. Second, a ICRC representative discussed *Protecting Healthcare: Guidance for Armed Forces*,³ which provides practical guidance that can be taken by armed forces to protect health-care workers and to limit the impact of armed conflict on access to, and delivery of, health-care services. Finally, Dr. Paul Wise from Stanford University discussed his ongoing research on the reverberating and indirect effects of conflict.

Following these presentations, group members provided updates on their ongoing work relevant to the protection of civilians. Key work being done by group members includes ongoing research regarding humanitarian notification systems for deconfliction, mitigation strategies against civilian harm, and the development of protection of civilians training materials and briefs. Group members discussed the possibility of involvement within UNOCHA's 'PoC Week' and providing inputs for the annual Protection of Civilians Report to the UN Security Council. There was consensus that the group should make every effort to collaborate and use the expertise of working group participants to support ongoing initiatives.

Next, the working group co-chairs provided an update on the status of the development of the "PoC in Great Power Conflict" tabletop exercise, which is a collaboration between Center for Civilians in Conflict, U.S. Naval War College, Brown University, Stanford University, and the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance. The exercise is currently slated to take place in the spring of 2022. Group members discussed possibilities of future iterations of the exercise, which could include different coalition forces as the armed actors in the simulation.

Finally, the group identified and discussed the following as possible action points for future work: create a comprehensive online database of PoC resources and guidelines; continue work in developing simulations/tabletop training exercises specific to PoC; and establish a regular scheduled of meetings and/or calls to gather working group participants for a discussion of current research in the PoC sector.

Individuals interested in learning more about the PoC Working Group are encouraged to contact the leads at brittany_card@brown.edu / dmahanty@civiliansinconflict.org / david_polatty@brown.edu

³ *Protecting healthcare: Guidance for the Armed Forces* (2020) 1 December. International Committee of the Red Cross. Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4504-protecting-healthcare-guidance-armed-forces>.

URBANIZATION WORKING GROUP

SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

The mission of the urbanization working group is to improve the coordination between civilian and military actors given specific challenges and opportunities presented by the urban environment in conflict and natural disaster settings. As urbanization forces a shift in traditional humanitarian operations towards long-term, locally driven aid, the urbanization working group seeks to optimize opportunities and mitigate challenges in delivering effective humanitarian aid in urban contexts. Since 2016, this working group has worked to explore the challenges and opportunities associated with civilian-military humanitarian preparedness and response in urban environments by convening practitioners and researchers who wish to advance research, education, and training for actors working within the humanitarian space.

The areas of focus for the working group are to:

- Develop curriculum and materials for joint civilian-military education and training for urban disaster response.
- Utilize the working group as a forum to produce research ideas and proposals that advance the understanding of urbanization in civil-military coordination for humanitarian response to inform future engagements.
- To create a diverse knowledge exchange network comprising practitioners and researchers focused on the issues facing civil-military coordination during humanitarian response in urban contexts and foster collaboration.

Meeting 1, 07 September 2021

This year's urbanization working group convened virtually for a two-hour discussion. The meeting began with a short presentation by working group co-lead, Dr. Maria Carinnes Alejandria, seed grant recipient from the 2020 workshop of urbanization working group. The presentation of her work, "*Humanitarian Response in Urban Settings: Exploring the role of Community Leaders to Crises,*" presented the Philippines domestic case study as a microcosm of the international context. Much of the subsequent discussion focused on the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) and their disengagement by the police and military leading the response. Important points of discussion were:

- The endurance of civil society organizations between humanitarian responses and the implications of this in disaster response.
- Campaigns for government reform by civil society organizations and the importance of bottom-up guidance within government response systems.

- The importance of academics and professional organizations as neutral intermediaries between CSOs and military/police units, especially within complex political environments where engagement with armed actors may put CSOs at risk.

KEY THEMES

Following the presentation by Dr. Maria Carinnes Alejandria, there was further discussion surrounding the challenges of urban response in complex emergency settings. Key themes from the discussion are included below:

1. **The need for training and engagement of CSOs:** The critical role of CSOs necessitates the engagement of these organizations in all aspects of humanitarian response, especially given the current disconnection between most CSOs and government sponsored, top-down interventions. Additionally, future work is needed to develop training and guidance for CSOs surrounding technical aspects of the humanitarian response and understanding the roles and responsibilities of all the other actors to help them best engage. This conversation was inspired by ongoing work by Dr. Maria Carinnes Alejandria and colleagues to conduct this training within the Philippines context.
2. **Challenges of response during COVID-19:** This includes travel/mobility restrictions, government restrictions (e.g. mandatory curfews in the Philippines), and limited access to individuals and groups within urban contexts. These restrictions have highlighted the importance of CSOs and community leaders in responses where outside humanitarian responders would not otherwise have access. Additionally, responding to COVID-19 in these contexts has reaffirmed the importance of cash-based transfer programming. Finally, it necessitated a rapid shift towards more locally-led disaster response with international actors unable to send staff and goods as usual compelling them to live up to the best practice of empowering local actors.
3. **The diversity of preferred communication platforms and implications for communication in humanitarian response:** Significant discussion was given to the communication gaps that occur between actors within humanitarian response based on the communication platforms most preferred. For instance, within the Philippines context, face-to-face communication was preferred which had implications for the COVID-19 response. Additionally, there were discussions surrounding communication gaps within the cluster system as a result of these different communication platforms, and the potential need for a standardized system. There was also recognition by participants representing the military that communication with specific marginalized populations, specifically women, is challenging for military actors. Engaging CSOs as well as leveraging novel communication channels could represent a pathway to overcome this gap.

- 4. The intersection of the built environment and disaster vulnerability:** This includes ongoing work by many participants in sustainable building styles and housing interventions in disaster response, including in developing community-based participatory processes in determining appropriate housing design for disaster risk reduction.

Finally, participants discussed their own ongoing work and potential for collaboration between members of the working group, as well as the availability of seed grant funding. The working group plans to continue these discussions leading to the March 2022 workshop.

Individuals interested in learning more about the Urbanization Working Group are encouraged to contact the leads at lilianbui@gmail.com / rbpatel@gmail.com / mcalejandria@ust.edu.ph