



OI Policy Compendium Note on United Nations Integrated Missions and Humanitarian Assistance

Overview: Oxfam International's position on United Nations Integrated Missions and Humanitarian Assistance

This policy paper overviews United Nations peacekeeping operations and/or humanitarian operations where the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Political Affairs (DPA) are present. There is a complementary OI policy note on Multi-Dimensional Military Missions and Humanitarian Assistance, which focuses on interventions initiated by external national, regional, or multinational forces, often without initial UN approval.

The United Nations is increasingly bringing together its different functions in single 'Integrated Missions' in those countries that are in transition from war to peace. Integration, however, creates its own risks, including that of associating humanitarian workers with one side of a conflict, and the consequent risks of attacks on humanitarian workers and the people they are assisting. Customised integration, good co-ordination, political will, and adequate means are key elements in achieving the best results for people in need of protection and assistance.

Oxfam will constructively engage with UN Integrated Missions, and propose a series of benchmarks to help ensure that those missions maximise their impact in saving lives, thereby improving the welfare of affected populations and enhancing their access to humanitarian assistance – without unacceptable risks to humanitarian workers and beneficiaries.

Oxfam will distinguish itself from, and remain outside, the direct management of the UN and its Integrated Missions, to maximise our impact and to contribute to meeting humanitarian imperatives.

Our proposed benchmarks include:

- The UN's humanitarian function should never be fully integrated into a peacekeeping mission, especially when there are still acute humanitarian needs or where armed groups perceive the UN as hostile.
- The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) should have a separate physical presence from the UN political arm (DPA) and peacekeeping mission (DPKO) in every country.
- Whether or not the UN Integrated Mission directly manages UN humanitarian operations (which we do not recommend), the mission's mandate should take account of accepted humanitarian principles, including that assistance should be impartially targeted based on people's need, not any other criteria. It should take account of the principle of Responsibility to Protect to ensure human security.

1. Definitions

A **United Nations Integrated Mission** is 'an instrument with which the UN seeks to help countries in the transition from war to lasting peace, or address a similarly complex situation that requires a system-wide UN response, through subsuming various actors and approaches within an overall political-strategic crisis management framework'.¹ Integrated Missions are a form of civil-military structure utilised in the UN's strategy for peacekeeping and peace enforcement, which are intended to promote coherence between the political, military, humanitarian, and development elements of UN operations.² They have been used in Afghanistan,

¹ E.B. Eide, A.T. Kaspersen, R. Kent, and K. von Hippel (2005) 'Report on Integrated Missions: Practical Perspectives and Recommendations', Independent Study for the Expanded UN ECHA Core Group.

² United Nations, 2000, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, UN Document Ref. A/55/305-

Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, East Timor, Haiti, Iraq, Kosovo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The whole of a mission is associated with the deployment of peacekeepers when the UN presence in a country takes on military operations. The perception of the mission is therefore intrinsically linked to the inclusiveness and/or legitimacy of any ongoing peace process.

Humanitarian assistance must be delivered impartially to those in need, irrespective of who they are. It must be independent of military or political interests. Work that has primarily political or military objectives should not be designated as 'humanitarian', because of the risk that one side of a conflict will see it, and potentially all other relief, as part of a military strategy, and take action against it.

'**Humanitarian space**', for Oxfam, refers to an operating environment in which the right of populations to receive protection and assistance is upheld, and aid agencies can carry out effective humanitarian action by responding to their needs in an impartial and independent way. 'Humanitarian space' allows humanitarian agencies to work independently and impartially to assist populations in need, without fear of attack or obstruction by political or physical barriers to their work. For this to be the case, humanitarian agencies need to be free to make their own choices, based solely on the criteria of need.³

2. Background

UN Integrated Missions are not headed by a military commander, but by a political appointee, generally the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for that country/region.⁴ The organisational structure of the Mission, however, is generally established by and under the control of the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Traditionally, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, who heads the team of specialised UN humanitarian agencies in a country, has been outside the UN's peacekeeping structure. In Integrated Missions, however, he or she reports to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General. The Humanitarian Coordinator role is combined with the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG), and he or she often continues to combine the other roles of UN Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative. They are also the head of the UNDP, the UN agency charged directly with engaging with the government, often risking perceptions of being directly associated with a party to a conflict. This person maintains a secondary reporting line to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, the head of OCHA, in New York.⁵ (Where there is an OCHA office, it is usually located separately from the main UN Mission, to facilitate access by other humanitarian actors.)

These 'multi-hatting' multiple functions do not help the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) perform his or her role of advocate for humanitarian principles and humanitarian agencies in the country, because the same person is also deputy head of the whole Mission, with responsibility for its entire political and military success.

As integrated missions are presently constructed, there is no systematic way to ensure that the humanitarian perspective will always be prioritised in decision making, when military action is planned by a mission. Such decision-making is directly linked to the role of HC as advocate, in contradiction to his/her role as DSRSG with politico-military decision-making power. In DRC, at the beginning of 2005 the DSRSG determined that military force was needed to deal with the perpetrators of violence. Humanitarian organisations regarded such action as endangering the lives of civilians, but also those humanitarian workers who could have come to their assistance. In the DRC instance, the communication channels between the Force Commander and the DSRSG responsible for humanitarian activities were clear, and the decisions that were taken to use the military to protect civilians were taken openly within the mission. While this fact did not fully satisfy humanitarian critics, it reflected at least a transparent approach in which the UN civilian authority had overall responsibility.

S/2000/809, New York: United Nations, August.

³ L. Sida (2005) 'Challenges to Humanitarian Space – A Review of Humanitarian Issues Related to the UN Integrated Mission to Liberia and the Relationship Between Humanitarian and Military Actors in Liberia', study facilitated by the Monitoring and Steering Group, the main INGO co-ordination body in Liberia.

⁴ Integrated Missions should be seen within a larger context of the UN reform debate. See 'Renewing the United Nations – A programme for reform' (A/51/950, 1997); 'The Report of the Panel on UN Operations' (A/55/305-S/2000/809); 'We the peoples: civil society, the United Nation and global governance' (A/58/817); The UN Millennium Project: Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals. New York (2005); 'In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all' (A/59/2005).

⁵ Secretary General's Guidance Note on Integrated Missions 2006.

For these reasons, many non-government agencies, including Oxfam, have taken issue with the idea of Integrated Missions from the beginning. The UN's humanitarian leadership in relevant countries is subsumed into a politico-military structure. As Integrated Missions are under political leadership, they may prioritise the Mission's overarching political goals, even when this contrasts with humanitarian concerns. For example, it may direct peacekeepers to provide relief (and label it 'humanitarian') to meet essentially political or military objectives, leading to the instrumentalisation of humanitarian assistance. It may be that such relief is used to promote acceptance of peacekeepers in a community, regardless of needs.

One of the problems is that the UN peacekeepers who provide relief may not be well trained in providing assistance or aware of humanitarian concerns. Most military civil-assistance actions are, inevitably, performed by battalions from the countries that generously contribute troops for UN peacekeeping, including Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Ukraine, and Uruguay.⁶ Most of the countries that contribute troops to the UN train their soldiers in counter-insurgency warfare, and some of them are currently fighting their own counter-insurgency conflicts. Many have experience in their home countries of the military being the main responder in natural disasters. Without a conscious effort to provide them with clear policies and guidelines for assistance actions in UN peace operations, these troops will often revert to what they know best: counter-insurgency 'winning hearts and minds' campaigns. More needs to be done in pre-deployment to provide troop contributors with these policies and guidelines, and ensure that troops are trained in their application. Oxfam has assisted in the training of Gambian and Nigerian troops before they were deployed in Darfur, Sudan – highlighting humanitarian space and distinction of humanitarian action.

Little data exists that systematically proves or disproves whether UN Integrated Missions have promoted human security: saved lives, improved the welfare of affected populations, or enhanced their access to humanitarian assistance. The Missions must now be evaluated against clear benchmarks, attached below.

3. Oxfam International's position on Integrated Missions

Oxfam recognises that the UN has to grapple with its multiple mandates, in which providing assistance and co-ordinating humanitarian action is only a part. Impartial humanitarian action can complement the nation building that Integrated Missions often support. But it cannot be too close to the Mission, nor directed by this imperative, as simply operating side-by-side with the military and political components of a Mission may put humanitarian actors and actions at risk of being identified with the Mission, and therefore be targeted by those forces that may see the Mission as part of a hostile international community.

Oxfam will engage constructively with UN Integrated Missions, and with attempts to reform UN peace operations and humanitarian co-ordination (see OI Policy Note on Humanitarian Co-ordination). That engagement will be grounded in humanitarian principles, outlined in the annex below, drawn particularly from the SPHERE Humanitarian Charter and the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.

Oxfam proposes the following benchmarks to help ensure that Integrated Missions promote human security, without increasing the risk to humanitarian workers or people in need of humanitarian assistance:

- **The humanitarian responsibility of the UN should NEVER be fully integrated into a peacekeeping mission**, especially when there are still acute humanitarian needs, or where armed groups perceive the UN as hostile or partial. UN humanitarian activity, including OCHA, should be managed separately from peacekeeping and should not be part of a UN Integrated Mission.
- **Integrated Missions should NOT combine negotiations on humanitarian imperatives** (for example, to get access to people in need) with negotiations on political objectives. Political negotiations should not incorporate humanitarian provisions that are contingent on political actions or agreements. Humanitarian negotiations should be led by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator or another prominent member of the humanitarian community.

⁶ Slim, H. 2004. With or Against? Humanitarian Agencies and Coalition Counter-Insurgency. Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 9.

- **UNOCHA should not be subsumed by the military or political leadership of a mission.** There should be a separate physical space for UN humanitarian operations and co-ordination. In most places, this should be a separate OCHA office, staffed by OCHA, and supporting the Humanitarian Coordinator.
- **The process for establishing an Integrated Mission for any country must include consultation with NGOs at the earliest stages of planning and design,** and include a wide group of stakeholders, specifically key agencies and civil-society institutions in the country, through mechanisms such as the UN and NGO Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC).
- **Implementing UN Security Council resolution 1325 on the role of women needs to be highlighted in the mandates of all Integrated Missions.⁷** Women play critical roles in peacebuilding, and maintaining key aspects of society during war and conflict, but are frequently ignored in the reconstruction process afterwards. After a war, it should be recognised that special attention should be paid to those who have been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual assault. Future Integrated Missions must no longer be heavily male-dominated, with very few women in managerial positions, such as that of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General.
- **Integrated Missions should take account of and work with functioning and viable government frameworks and civil society,** as opposed to being wholly directed by the UN headquarters in New York. They need to take into account existing local and national security perspectives, structures, and peace-building initiatives.
- **Integrated Missions' mandates should explicitly recognise the importance of respecting the humanitarian principles of impartiality and independence** and at least reference UN General Assembly resolution GA 46/142 to this effect. They should also incorporate the strongest possible provisions authorising the mission to proactively protect civilians from violence.
- **Whether or not the UN Humanitarian Coordinator is subsumed within an Integrated Mission, he or she should be chosen transparently, with the involvement and full confidence of the humanitarian community.** The IASC must be engaged more fully in this process.
- **Integrated Missions must not allow the inappropriate use of military assets to provide relief.** A separate paper in this series of OI Policy Notes – ‘The Provision of Aid by Military Forces’ – offers detailed guidelines. Key points include:
 - **Military assets, armed escorts, joint humanitarian–military operations,** and any other actions involving visible interaction between humanitarian agencies and the military are only used as **a last resort.**
 - **If military personnel do provide assistance, they must clearly identify themselves as military.** Military personnel should not wear civilian clothes and, if possible, should refrain from using vehicles similar to those used by humanitarian agencies.
- **Integrated Missions should be reviewed during their life, and independently evaluated when concluded,** to determine whether they have been a cost-effective use of donors’ funds to achieve both immediate and long-term objectives, and to draw lessons from experience. There should be a strategic monitoring mechanism that allows Integrated Missions to learn ‘on the job’, assessing what works and what does not, and allowing them to change course if necessary.

4. What Oxfam International will do:

- **Distinguish itself from, and remain outside, the direct management of the UN and UN Integrated Missions.** Oxfam’s involvement with UN humanitarian reform, including testing the cluster approach, should not be seen as an endorsement of the UN’s formulation of Integrated Missions.

⁷ ‘On Women, Peace and Security’, S/RES/1325 (adopted in 2000).

- **Assist UN and international humanitarian agencies** to distinguish themselves from military forces in the planning and implementation of Integrated Missions, through mechanisms such as the IASC, training and selection of Humanitarian Coordinators, and further developing the above benchmarks for the success of Integrated Missions.
- **Support efforts to develop field-based pre-planning crisis-management exercises and training by humanitarian experts and military planners, with military forces working under the UN mandate deployed on peacekeeping missions.**⁸ These exercises should familiarise military commanders with humanitarian expertise in needs assessment and programme design within the aid community, and the potential advantages humanitarians enjoy in community relations and local geographic and socio-political analysis.
- **Conduct its operations in accordance with internationally accepted humanitarian principles, and guidelines on interaction between humanitarian agencies and military forces outlined in the OI Policy Note on The Provision of Aid by Military Forces.** As a result:
 - **Oxfam staff will not take orders from the military in normal circumstances**, with the exceptions of evacuation, rescue, or risk to life of staff. The decision to evacuate will be Oxfam's.
 - **Oxfam aid will not be provided through the military.**
 - **Oxfam will only use military resources as a last resort**, where no other means are available to save lives, and comparable civilian resources are not available.
 - **Oxfam will discourage the military from undertaking survival assistance** (health, food security, water/sanitation/hygiene, shelter) or socially connected activities like education and agriculture, which can be manipulated for military and political advantage.
 - **Oxfam will highlight the distinctive competence of the military** in security; disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration; security-sector reform; logistics; reconstruction (roads, bridges, airfields, ports, etc.); and initial phases of deployment – policing and criminal justice.
- **Oxfam will undertake practical opposition to the use of those 'hearts and minds' activities that are similar to the work undertaken by humanitarian agencies.** 'Hearts and minds' operations confuse the respective role and remit of the humanitarian agencies and militaries in the minds of beneficiaries and other observers. Force protection and stabilisation is better served by military actors abiding by international humanitarian law (IHL) and protecting civilians.
- **Oxfam will support efforts to review integrated missions during their life and encourage independent evaluation of cost effectiveness on immediate and longer-term impact of the donor investments at the end of the mission.** There should be a strategic monitoring mechanism that allows for missions to learn 'on the job', assessing what works and what doesn't, and allowing them to change course if necessary. In addition, there should be a process by which lessons are learnt systematically at the end of the mission.
- **Oxfam will oppose the diversion of donor humanitarian funding for peacekeeping or political business.** The military should not claim to undertake or report its activities as humanitarian action. Activities undertaken by the military should not be recorded as humanitarian Overseas Development Assistance.
- **Oxfam will support efforts to build awareness of humanitarian principles in troop-contributing countries** by disseminating IHL, humanitarian principles in the Code of Conduct, the SPHERE Humanitarian Charter, and the UN IDP Guidelines.

⁸ In particular: familiarisation with basic humanitarian principles in international humanitarian law, human-rights law, and refugee law; Security Council resolutions like A/RES/46/182; humanitarian agency principles such as the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, SPHERE Humanitarian Charter; and the UN IDP Guidelines; MCDA guidelines and the IASC paper on civil-military relationship in complex emergencies; and insights into the ways in which humanitarian workers operate and which familiarise humanitarian workers with the military approach.

Annex: Summary - Oxfam's Humanitarian Principles⁹

- **Humanitarian Imperative.** Humanitarian assistance must be provided on the basis of the needs of those affected by the particular emergency, taking into account the local capacity already in place to meet those needs.¹⁰
- **Impartiality.** The delivery of humanitarian assistance to all populations in need must be impartial. It must come without political or military conditions. It must be given without adverse discrimination of any kind, regardless of race, ethnicity, sex/gender, religion, social status, nationality, or political affiliation of the recipients. It must be provided in an equitable manner to all populations in need.
- **Independence.** The assessment of needs must be conducted independently. Humanitarian workers must never present themselves or their work as part of a military operation, and military personnel must refrain from presenting themselves as civilian humanitarian workers.
- **Distinction between combatants and non-combatants.** At all times, a clear distinction must be maintained between combatants and non-combatants – i.e. between those actively engaged in hostilities, and civilians and others who do not or no longer directly participate in the armed conflict (including the sick, wounded, prisoners of war, and ex-combatants who are demobilised).
- **Humanitarian Access to Vulnerable Populations.** Humanitarian agencies must maintain their ability to obtain access to all vulnerable populations in all areas of the emergency in question, and to negotiate such access with all parties to a conflict. Particular care must also be taken to ensure that access is sustainable. Co-ordination with the military should be considered to the extent that it facilitates, secures, and sustains – rather than hinders – humanitarian access.
- **Gender equity.** Humanitarian assistance must be provided in a way that responds to the expressed needs of women as well as men, girls as well as boys. It must do nothing to reinforce unjust power relations between men and women. Indeed, humanitarian assistance that is distributed equitably can help to challenge gender inequality.
- **Respect for Culture and Custom.**¹¹ Respect and sensitivity must be maintained towards the culture, structures, and customs of the communities and countries where humanitarian activities are carried out. Where possible and to the extent feasible, ways shall be found to involve the intended beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance and/or local personnel in the design, management, and implementation of assistance, including in civil–military co-ordination.
- **Complementarity.** A strong humanitarian movement is made up of distinct, independent actors. The actual roles of these actors in humanitarian response will differ, based on their core competencies and comparative advantages in a particular situation. The UN should play the central and unique role in providing leadership and co-ordination of international humanitarian action. However, the UN should lead in the direction of maximising the strengths of individual agencies in contributing to a collective effort, rather than ensuring that all actors, including NGOs, are moving in lockstep toward a particular political outcome.

⁹ See OI Policy Note on Humanitarianism for more detail.

¹⁰ A similar provision on needs-based assistance is articulated as Principle 2 in The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. The principle of non-discrimination is expressed in a multitude of human-rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, etc.

¹¹ For example, see Principles 5 and 7 of The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.