

**Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination  
(CMCoord) Support Mission to Nigeria**

April 2017

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## A. Executive Summary

At the request of the OCHA Nigeria country office, OCHA's Civil-Military Coordination Section (CMCS) deployed one staff to conduct a support mission from 27 March to 7 April 2017.

Since 2015, OCHA has developed a large network and strong working relationships with national military actors from the central level in Abuja to operational level in Borno and Yobe states. These interactions are an excellent basis for essential civil-military dialogue and humanitarian civil-military coordination (referred in the document as CMCoord) to facilitate humanitarian response in North-East Nigeria. At the time of the mission, OCHA had one dedicated senior CMCoord officer based in Maiduguri and one senior CMCoord advisor based in Abuja.

The existing structure has a great potential to further develop CMCoord mechanisms and provide the required support to humanitarian partners.

The main points to develop are:

- **Develop country specific guidelines on CMCoord** to provide practical guidance on how to interact with military and agree on a common CMCoord approach among the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and Operational HCT.
- **Discuss the use of armed escorts** for humanitarian convoys on a regular basis within the HCT, OHCT and Security Management Team (SMT) and develop a position paper on the use of armed escorts at the HCT level.
- Conduct **CMCoord training and sensitization** workshop to ensure common understanding of each other's roles, responsibilities, capabilities and requirements between military and humanitarian.
- **Need for a more robust CMCoord mechanisms and platforms** to strengthen information sharing and address protection of civilians' issues, support security strategies, improve humanitarian access and plan humanitarian activities according to evolving needs and situation.

## B. Mission Objective

The overall objective of the mission was to conduct an assessment of the civil-military operating environment in Nigeria in order to obtain a better understanding of the context and ground dynamics, and propose concrete recommendations and/or solutions that would feed into the CMCoord Strategy, a subset of the HCT's overall humanitarian coordination strategy. The CMCoord strategy will likewise guide the HCT's interaction with the Nigerian military forces and Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) component forces.

## C. Methodology

The CMCS staff member interviewed relevant humanitarian and military actors, and attended a series of meeting to observe the functioning of existing humanitarian civil-military coordination mechanisms and dynamics. Out of the 11-day mission, 1 day was spent in Abuja, 1 day in Bama, 1 day in Monguno and 8 days in Maiduguri.

A one-day workshop on humanitarian civil-military coordination concepts and principles and practical applications was held for humanitarian partners (HCT, inter-sector, NGOs) and relevant military personnel to brainstorm, analyse trends and anticipated developments and inform the modification of the CMCoord strategy to ensure currency and responsiveness to operational developments in-country.

## D. Findings and recommendations

### 1. Information sharing

The military in Nigeria are the first to reach re-captured areas, and maintain a permanent presence in the Local Government Area (LGA) capitals in these areas. As a result, they have access to primary information related to the humanitarian situation, displacement/return of populations, or security threats and incidents, air or road access, etc. All this information is key to inform the humanitarian organizations' planning process, HCT strategy, security analysis and decision making processes, humanitarian access and movements.

Part of CMCoord activities and objectives of CMCoord mechanisms are to allow humanitarian and military actors to exchange appropriate information in a timely basis without jeopardizing humanitarian principles and activities, military operations, as well as the security of humanitarian staff and beneficiaries.

In Nigeria, several mechanisms are in place for sharing of information. The OCHA CMCoord officer has established excellent liaison with military commanders at all levels, from Theatre command level to Battalion/field level through different channels (phone, WhatsApp, face-to-face meetings).

The weekly CMCoord forum held in Maiduguri should also allow on the one hand for military actors to share non-confidential information with humanitarian actors and on the other hand, for humanitarian actors to update the military on the humanitarian situation, humanitarian activities for deconfliction purposes and raise concerns or issues in specific areas including Protection of Civilians, Logistics, and Humanitarian Access. These matters are also addressed on a bilateral basis through mechanisms and relationships developed by individual organizations and sector leads.

It appears that only a very limited amount of information is shared by military entities, mainly due to the nature of the conflict and possibly to the format of the existing fora. Also, due to lack of consistency among humanitarian actors in their approach to interacting with military, one organization might get more information than others.

A lot of information could be shared by the military that would not be sensitive, particularly related to recent refugee returnees and their relocation, as well as new IDP populations resulting from clearance operations.

These fora do not facilitate the space for a frank and constructive discussion on sensitive issues, such as security measures that impact on humanitarian programmes and access restrictions to non-government controlled areas.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Re-adjust the CMCoord forum (see finding #5)
- Have the CMCoord advisor in Abuja advice on what type of information the military could share to fit requirements from the military and humanitarian sides (confidentiality, safety and security of stakeholders and beneficiaries) and sensitize military commanders on the need for better information sharing. This could also be part of the training objectives where humanitarian need to explain what type of information is useful and how it could be used without jeopardizing military operations.

- CMCoord officer should be able to share more information that would benefit the whole humanitarian community.

## 2. Armed escorts

Not all humanitarian actors met during the mission are familiar with the IASC guidelines on the use of armed escorts for humanitarian convoys. As a general rule, humanitarian actors should not use armed escorts for their convoys. However, based on specific context, situation and exceptional circumstances the DO can authorize the UN agencies to use armed escorts for their convoy on a case by case basis and limited amount of time.

Some NGOs do not use armed escort or only on exceptional cases and even military agree that in some roads, armed escorts are not necessary. Some of these NGOs have developed alternatives to armed escorts such as frequently reviewed security analysis, dialogue and coordination with local communities, low profile. The use of military or armed escorts by other humanitarian actors is therefore detrimental to the perception of neutrality and independence of humanitarian actors and can put humanitarian workers and affected population at risk.

UN and NGO agree that the reliance on military escorts for humanitarian convoys hampers movements and humanitarian access. Military are not always able to provide the escort on time and the escort itself do not always have the capacity to respond to attacks, making the convoy more vulnerable and creating additional risk for humanitarian staff. Military also agree that, for some roads, armed escorts are not necessary. According to UNDSS and other humanitarian security professionals, Nigerian military are specifically targeted by Boko Haram, thus putting the humanitarian personal and beneficiaries at high risk.

In North-East Nigeria the decision to use armed escorts has become the general rule and this decision is rarely discussed at the SMT level nor revised. It is even perceived that UNDSS imposes the use of armed escorts on UN agencies rather than it being decided by the DO based on UNDSS recommendation.

### **Recommendations:**

- Work with HCT on the development of a position paper on the use of armed escorts for humanitarian convoys. Some organization have already started such initiatives like WFP and their reference note developed in April 2016 “The Last Resort Use of Armed Escorts in NE Nigeria to Meet Critical Humanitarian Needs” could be used as a good basis for developing such position paper.
- Include a session on the IASC Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts in the CMCoord training.
- Share good practices between humanitarian organizations on alternatives to armed escorts when possible.
- Facilitate coordination between military, humanitarian security focal points and CMCoord officers to systemize sharing of security information and development of alternatives to armed escorts such as area security or military patrols.
- Review the use of armed escorts and program criticality on a regular basis according to security and humanitarian situation.
- Develop an exit strategy to decrease reliance on military escorts.

### **3. Country specific Guidelines**

Some UN organizations and INGOs have developed their own bilateral coordination mechanisms with Nigerian military and have a different approach when it comes to sharing of information, use of armed escort, humanitarian to military interaction strategy.

During the mission, it was noted that not all humanitarian actors benefits from the same amount of information that the military releases.

On the use of armed escorts, there is also a variety of approaches and practice among humanitarian actors. This creates a confusion among military actors on what is the real position of the humanitarian community towards the use of armed escorts in particular and the distinction between military and humanitarians in general. Thus, it makes it difficult for humanitarians to advocate neutrality and impartiality in their action and ensure credibility before military and Nigerian authorities.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Develop HCT position papers on civil-military interaction. This should take a few weeks, up to a month.
- For the longer term, it is essential that country specific guidelines are developed, which has also been recommended in Security Council Resolution 2349 from March 2017. The added value of the guidelines is that they allow for the promotion of humanitarian principles and humanitarian space to implement activities in safe and secure manner, thereby reflecting better provision of services to the affected population. In addition the guidelines will establish parameters for the use of armed escorts and exchange of information.

### **4. CMCoord capacity**

The need for productive dialogue and appropriate interaction with military in Nigeria is crucial to allow adapted and timely humanitarian assistance and security of humanitarian personnel, assets and beneficiaries. Nigerian military are a central actor throughout northeast Nigeria, often also playing the role of civilian local authorities and providing humanitarian support themselves.

OCHA has one senior CMCoord officer based in Maiduguri and one CMCoord advisor at the central level in Abuja. The geographical area to cover is huge and the issues to be addressed are increasing with the rainy season arriving in June, the famine and military operations ongoing.

Other actors have also their own civil-military coordination capacity and mechanisms such as the Logistics sector or the international NGO organization INSO.

All actors interviewed, both from the military and humanitarian side, as well as donors, emphasized the need for strengthening civil-military coordination mechanisms and additional capacity to enable civil-military coordination outside of Maiduguri. Training is also critically required on both sides.

Despite the tireless efforts of the 2 OCHA dedicated staff, there is a clear need to increase CMCoord capacity in-country, and to strengthen information sharing, coordination and

common engagements between different humanitarian CMCoord focal points. This is essential to address the current gaps and cope with the deteriorating humanitarian situation.

**Recommendations:**

- Define clear priorities in CMCoord activities and coordinate closely with existing civil-military focal points including the Logistics Sector civil-military focal point, security, access and protection actors from other organizations to avoid duplication, maximize efforts and make the best use of existing expertise.
- Deploy an additional experienced CMCoord personnel to support the existing team in all areas not developed and increase capacity in field locations.
- The table below lists key CMCoord activities that need further development and new ones that need to be implemented.

| CMCoord activity   | Ongoing and need adjustment | Not existing/ still to be implemented |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Establish CMCoord Forum or cell in Maiduguri (chaired by humanitarian and hosted outside of military base)                               | X                           |                                       |
| Establish CMCoord forum at Abuja level   |                             | X                                     |
| Map military actors  | To share with HA            |                                       |
| Finalize CMCoord forum ToR   | X                           |                                       |
| Update and share military focal points database and presence in the field with relevant humanitarian actors                              |                             | X                                     |
| Inform humanitarian community on key military actions and structures   | X                           |                                       |
| Facilitate development of country specific guidelines  |                             | X                                     |
| Develop HCT position paper on civil-military interaction   |                             | X                                     |
| Develop HCT position paper on armed Escorts  |                             | X                                     |
| Dissemination of CSG and position paper  |                             | X                                     |
| Develop CMCoord mechanisms and capacity in LGAs  |                             | X                                     |
| Identify and train CMCoord focal points at LGA level   |                             | X                                     |
| Provide guidance and support to OCHA sub-offices and CMCoord focal points  | X                           | X                                     |
| Identify relevant military interlocutors and platforms to support PoC actors   | X                           |                                       |
| Identify relevant military interlocutors and platforms to support access negotiation   | X                           |                                       |
| Share appropriate information with military actors   | X                           |                                       |
| Share appropriate information with humanitarian actors   | X                           |                                       |
| System for Notification of humanitarian movements/static locations for deconfliction (Logisitcs sector already notifies cargo movements) | X                           |                                       |
| Deliver training to military forces and humanitarian actors  |                             | X                                     |
| Share relevant information with MNJTF and OCHA regional CMCoord in N'djamena   | X                           |                                       |
| Negotiate and discuss CMCoord issues   | X                           |                                       |
| Monitor and report on assistance activities conducted by military  |                             | X                                     |

## **5. CMCoord mechanisms**

OCHA's CMCoord officer has managed to develop and maintain an important civil-military coordination forum that meets every Thursday. The forum is held at the Maimalari military compound in Maiduguri and gathers representatives from UN agencies, Logistics, Protection and Emergency Telecommunications sectors representatives, INSO, INGOs and Nigeria military Theatre Command CIMIC focal point.

The objective of the forum is to provide a platform for information exchange and discussions on specific civil-military issues. However several members are concerned about the lack of space for opened dialogue to raise issues related to access constraints or protection of civilians. Moreover, the location of the venue and the fact the meetings seems to be chaired by the military focal point takes away the humanitarian character that forum should keep.

Lastly, meetings are cancelled if the military CIMIC officer is not available.

### **Recommendations:**

- The existing CMCoord forum in Maiduguri should be chaired by a humanitarian focal point (OCHA's CMCoord officer or another designated humanitarian).
- The CMCoord forum in Maiduguri should be held outside of the military base. The IHP camp could be a good venue in terms of distance from each members and neutrality.
- Identify a substitute to the CIMIC focal point to attend the CMCoord forum when the CIMIC focal is not available.
- Terms of reference for the forum should be finalized and agreed among members with clear roles/responsibilities and defined contributions from each member.
- In order to allow better sharing of information with the appropriate stakeholder and ensure some level of confidentiality, it could be useful to create a separate CMCoord cell that would gather on a weekly basis and create strong network of key civil-military actors (OCHA CMCoord, Log sector CMCoord, military CIMIC, UNDSS, INSO). The existing forum could then be transformed into a venue where a larger audience would be updated on main CMCoord developments on a monthly basis.
- Develop CMCoord fora in relevant LGAs (outside of Maiduguri) chaired by trained CMCoord focal points (OCHA staff where possible otherwise INGO or UN representative).
- Ask Nigerian armed forces to assign CIMIC focal points at brigade level for better coordination at field level

## **6. Training**

It is often not clear for many humanitarian actors how the Nigerian military is structured, who the key military interlocutors are and how to contact them, what are some of the military responsibilities, capacity and limitations. Likewise for military actors, there is little knowledge of how humanitarian response is coordinated, planned, and also what are the capabilities and constraints of humanitarian organizations.

Prior to be able to have a constructive dialogue between military and humanitarian, both communities need to know each other and manage each other's expectations. Training was a key recommendation raised by both military commanders and humanitarian partners.



**Recommendations:**

- Conduct a 2-day mixed training for key military and humanitarian stakeholders at Maiduguri and LGAs.
- Include a humanitarian CMCoord module in military training curriculum
- Identify and train CMCoord focal points at key locations in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states (OCHA or non-OCHA depending on capacity and presence).

**7. Regional approach**

Many decisions have to be taken at Abuja which delays action that has to take place at the operational level in Maiduguri and other field locations. Also, information from the operational level does not always reach the capital level.

The current conflict has also repercussions in the other countries of the Lake Chad Basin. The African Union has established a regional military force, The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) which HQ is based in N'Djamena, Chad, and mandate and operations cover Cameroon, Niger, Chad and part of northern Nigeria. Some UN agencies have signed a tripartite agreement with Cameroon also to better assist and monitor refugees and returnees.

**Recommendations:**

- Some decision making processes should transfer from Abuja to Maiduguri.
- CMCoord officers and focal points should engage more with counterparts from neighboring countries in the Lake Chad Basin in order to exchange good practices, have a coherent approach among the countries and exchange information on military operations or movement of populations that have a cross-border impact.
- Use OCHA regional CMCoord officer based in N'Djamena and OCHA's Civil-Military Coordination Section in Geneva to facilitate this regional approach.