World Vision

principled pragmatism:

NGO engagement with armed actors

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World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organisation working to create lasting change in the lives of children, families and communities living in poverty. With the support of more than 30,000 staff, World Vision helps over 12.4 million people every year in 98 countries. The organisation implements humanitarian relief, long-term community development projects and advocacy that aims to address the causes of poverty and help people move towards self-sufficiency.

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Burmese soldier at sunset, taken by a World Vision staff member during the tsunami response in 2005.

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1 Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing perception among aid workers that military actors are encroaching more and more on their operations. Changing trends around funding, disaster management, availability of logistical support, the structure of peace support and policing operations, direct 'humanitarian' project implementation by the military, and increasing insecurity around food shortages have been some of the main challenges identified.

No humanitarian organisation is completely immune to the influence of military and other armed actors in field operations. Therefore, World Vision believes that it is time to be honest about interactions with such groups, to admit that policy rhetoric is out of step with field realities, and therefore to nuance our position. Without an improved understanding, and greater flexibility in our approach, we will remain impotent in the face of new civil–military (CIVMIL) challenges.

In September 2007, World Vision International embarked on a six-month initiative to assess the impact of changing trends in military and police engagement upon its operations, policy and strategy. The assessment included over 60 meetings and key informant interviews with other international NGOs, United Nations agencies and donors; attendance at five international conferences; the drafting of an Operations Manual for the field; a three-month trial of that guidance by over 20 World Vision field offices and two Support Offices; three in-depth country visits (Somalia, Sudan and Timor-Leste); and four retrospective country studies (based on first-hand accounts from staff involved).

This report provides a summary array of outputs from the research, drawing particular attention to the main challenge identified throughout the field trial: namely, how World Vision, and by association other agencies, can balance humanitarian principles with pragmatism when engaging with military and security actors.

The research suggests that this challenge is far from new. Nevertheless, growing insecurity on the ground, in addition to policy developments in 'winning hearts and minds' campaigns and aid effectiveness, are contributing to an increasingly pressing need for more appropriate NGO policies and operational guidance on how to interact with armed groups at both field and headquarter levels.

Seeking to avoid the risk of producing just another piece of literature that remains on the shelf, we have attempted to provide staff with tangible tools based on their own feedback and on a mapping of existing behaviour. We hope that in an environment which many see as over-regulated, such guidance that responds to current challenges will be a welcome step towards deeper inter-agency engagement and understanding of the field realities in complex operating environments. The importance of an inter-agency approach to CIVMIL engagement is increasingly acknowledged by both NGOs and government actors. For without agreement, there is the potential for contradictory positioning and subsequent incoherence, which is likely to perpetuate the confusion surrounding NGO approaches to military engagement.

World Vision supports the initiatives and actions taken by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in providing CIVMIL training and field co-ordination mechanisms. Crucially, however, many of these measures are dependent on the capacity of OCHA and the ability of NGOs to respond. If the appropriate resources are not assured, donor countries cannot expect NGOs to be effective in their use of existing CIVMIL doctrine, policy and guidelines, or to be able to feed into existing mechanisms for mutual learning and dialogue, or inter-agency fora.

Advances in some notable peace support missions, such as those in DRC and Sudan, and even now in Afghanistan, demonstrate the possibility of achieving clear context-specific guidelines that delineate the respective roles of military and civilian/humanitarian actors. Even while such guidelines are slow in the making, they challenge us to put them into practice.

World Vision has invested resources into working out how it can help its staff, and the industry more broadly, to move one step closer to bridging the gap between policy and practice. In doing so, it has had to consider its place along the spectrum of NGO positions on CIVMIL engagement. A recent inter-agency discussion paper on CIVMIL relations divides the NGO community into three schools of thought:[i]

1. **Refuseniks** – NGOs that advocate against any military contact, particularly at the field level

2. **Principled pragmatists** – NGOs that attempt to uphold humanitarian principles while also accepting that their environment forces them to make certain trade-offs in order to find the best means of operating, particularly in terms of security and logistical support. The paper argues that the balance between principles and pragmatism is not yet well defined.

3. **Ambivalents** – NGOs that are 'neither for, nor against' military engagement. This reportedly represents the largest and fastest growing group of NGOs, and includes multi-mandated agencies which are faced with the difficult challenge of meeting the development, emergency humanitarian, and advocacy needs in a particular context.

In the course of the research, while the issue of how aid workers should relate to military and other armed actors polarised many in the organisation, it has been possible to gain consensus that the most tenable position for World Vision is one of principled pragmatism. Hence, this report attempts to encourage the aid sector's 'Refuseniks' and 'Ambivalents' on CIVMIL interaction to collaborate in finding practical solutions that balance principles with pragmatism.

2 Methodology

The research took as its starting point the **workers on the ground** – arguably the most important interface between aid agencies and armed groups, due to their daily attempts to secure access to beneficiaries located in shared operating environments. In conjunction with this deliberate focus, the project's principal adviser engaged at a high level in global centres such as London, New York, Washington and Geneva to observe how the main 'influencers' debate policies that ultimately shape the ground reality for staff and beneficiaries.

From the outset, the research also aimed to align to various strategies and core priorities of World Vision. The intention was to feed into existing streams of work and thinking so that those areas could be strengthened in the process of gaining clarity on the specific issues faced here. The three core priorities were:

i) to increase access to the most vulnerable;

ii) to invest more in staff at the grassroots; and

iii) to contribute, in the spirit of the Principles of Partnership (Global Humanitarian Platform), to a genuinely industry-wide voice in this complex area.

Field approach

A significant aspect of the research involved the drafting of operational 'Guidance Notes on Civil–Military Engagement' (or Operations Manual) to complement the existing organisational policy, and the field-testing of such guidelines over a three-month period in a targeted selection of up to 20 countries where World Vision is operating. The reporting template requested that participants in the field study also record weekly events that relate to interactions with armed groups.

Countries were selected on the basis of their representation of different types of CIVMIL engagement (interaction with UN-mandated forces, occupation forces, national forces, private armed groups, home forces, and international policing contingents) and were not limited to emergency contexts. The selection incorporated a representative sample of countries from contexts where there is low social stability and medium-to-high physical need.

One of the central aims of the Operations Manual was to make existing non-binding international guidance on CIVMIL engagement more accessible to World Vision staff by drawing out what was most relevant to their operations.

This was expected to increase staff confidence in their interactions with the military, along with the ability of World Vision's Policy and Advocacy team to represent the organisation more effectively in high-level debates taking place in various global centres.

The trial began on 14 January 2008 after electronic and hard copies of the tools required were sent to the participating offices. The aim was to include 15 field offices, at best, in the trial; 19 offices agreed to participate and in some cases offered to complement the data with additional observations collected during observational visits. Others agreed to an alternative approach, which included focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Overall, World Vision personnel provided information on their experiences in a total of 32 countries, as depicted in Annex 1.

Key sources

From the outset, the aim was to select participants who are impacted by CIVMIL issues in their daily work, with the ultimate goal of making whatever guidance World Vision develops on this issue as relevant as possible from both a policy and an operational angle. Therefore, after confirmation of interest from the participating offices, recommendations for appropriate 'point people' were sought according to their level of exposure to CIVMIL issues.

Figures 1 and 2 represent the sources of the information presented throughout the field trial. The first provides a broad look at which type of office the information was coming from, while the second takes a closer look at the particular sectors represented through the 'point people'. Due to the substantial operational-level representation, sources generated at that level are divided between 'Field' and 'Field HQ' to distinguish contributions on the ground (see guide to World Vision entities overleaf).
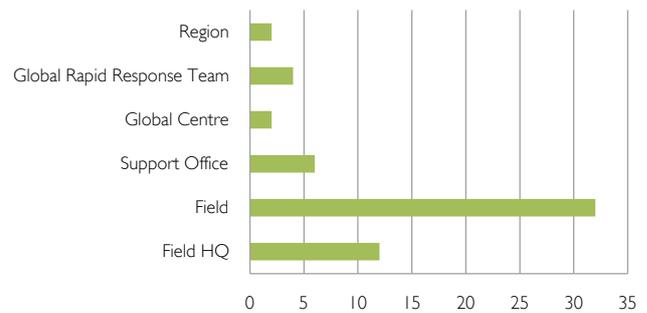
Figure 1: Representation across WV

Broken down further into sectors within offices (Figure 2), it is clear that Security features prominently as a source of field data, followed by Peacebuilding and Relief. At the start of the project it was difficult to encourage sectors other than Security to be involved because of a widespread assumption in World Vision Field and Regional Offices that CIVMIL matters are the concern of Security Officers.

It soon emerged, however, that in some areas other sectors such as Food Programming experienced the greatest interface with the military and other armed groups, because of the nature of their work. Given the emerging need for advocating to military and police in some contexts, Advocacy personnel also proved to be a significant – yet often under-appreciated – source of information.

Figure 2: Sources of field data

2 Methodology

Guide to World Vision entities

World Vision classifies its offices by function:

- **Support offices** are primarily focused on raising resources for our programmes
- **Field offices** are primarily responsible for operating our programmes
- Many offices do a mixture of both raising resources and operating programmes.

The **Global Centre** looks after certain global responsibilities as the coordinating hub of the organisation, and includes:

- *World Vision International offices*
- *Regional offices*, which coordinate our work across continents or regions (Middle East and Eastern Europe: Nicosia, Cyprus; Africa: Nairobi, Kenya; Asia and the Pacific: Bangkok, Thailand; and Central and South America and the Caribbean: San José, Costa Rica)
- *International Liaison offices* (Brussels, Geneva, New York)

The main office of the Global Centre is in Monrovia, California, USA. Together they form the **World Vision Partnership**.

Initially it was envisaged that several 'point people' within each office would undertake the reporting on an individual basis. The intention was to include as many sectors as possible across World Vision's field offices, to avoid over-burdening a particular operation. The experiences of key personnel, such as the Global Rapid Response Team, Regional staff and visiting Global Centre staff, were incorporated when the World Vision field office felt that their contributions would add further insight. Some offices, however, decided to take a broader approach and involve up to four people – or at times the entire Senior Management Team – in the monthly report. This has both positive and negative implications for the research.

The benefit of having multiple perspectives recorded on the same report is that events affecting various sectors in the same locale can be contrasted. The negative implication was the risk that the individuals targeted for the study would not feel as free to record their day-to-day activities under the scrutiny of a wider audience, particularly given the sensitivities of interacting with armed groups in some contexts, and depending upon their position within the office. There is only one case where this appears to have happened; the result is a very poor data set for an important context.

Another negative implication was that it was not always entirely clear who the contributors were because the 'point person' was often the only named contact in the report. This is in line with the anonymity of the reporting procedure, however it would have helped to be able to determine the demographics of the other participants if they had at a minimum listed their sector.

Reporting method

First, we asked participants to read the Operations Manual. Then, over a period of three months beginning in January 2008, they were encouraged to record weekly events that relate to sharing operational space with armed groups in the reporting template provided, and comment on the relevance or gaps in the Operations Manual.

The reporting template was divided into monthly tables, with each column signifying a week of recording, and dates listed in the headings. In the left-hand column, there was a list of themes that the Operations Manual aimed to address:

- use of military assets
- information sharing
- demands for World Vision resources or participation in events/training
- armed security
- monitoring of abuses committed by armed personnel
- other.

Participants were provided with two options: i) filling in the boxes on an on-going basis during the week as a simple method for monitoring events that are happening, and ii) taking 10 minutes on the last day of their working week to reflect on what kinds of activities have taken place during the week that correspond to the above themes.

At the end of each monthly reporting period, the results were sent to the project manager so that staff could maintain regular contact with her and resolve any issues arising in the trial.

Participants were assured that their contributions would be used only to inform broader policy development, and were therefore encouraged to be as honest as possible in their reporting. In keeping with this, the findings in this report remain anonymous.

Where necessary, the source countries are coded according to World Vision's classification of the six 'contexts' in which it operates. (World Vision uses indices of the Human Development Index and the Failed States Index to determine the six contexts, onto which it maps its countries of operation so that it can develop appropriate programming and policy frameworks for each country.)

Staff survey

Towards the end of the research, a group of 30 staff members from a representative range of countries was invited to submit an anonymous survey so that institutional memory could be captured and triangulated with more recent field data. The questions within the survey were divided into four parts, requesting information on:

1. the **types of armed groups** with which staff have interacted during their tenure at World Vision

2. the **World Vision context** (i.e. views on the appropriateness of CIVMIL engagement, different experiences within sectors, reporting mechanisms for witnessing abuses committed by armed groups, and general implications of having to represent an NGO)

3. the **ethical foundations** that underpin humanitarian work (including opportunities to inform military/security actors of these principles, instances where they have been jeopardised, and examples of efforts made to understand local perceptions of World Vision engagement with armed groups)

4. past interactions with armed groups in **other NGO/ humanitarian contexts** that were not captured in the survey.

The survey added further depth and context to the information collected during the field trial, so in this report it is presented at times alongside the field data when corroborating certain findings.

2 Methodology

Limitations

The main source of primary data came from World Vision staff members, which is not necessarily reflective of the sector as a whole. Nevertheless, with a representative sample of the 33,000 staff working for World Vision, which is the world's largest non-government humanitarian organisation, we aimed to capture as wide a range of perspectives as possible from both the field and those in desk or policy roles.

While the results of the field trial indicate that, on the whole, offices felt comfortable with the reporting format and the anonymity provided to them throughout the research, there was at least one known case where staff did not appear to be reporting accurate information. The office reported that it considered questions around CIVMIL interaction 'not applicable' to its context, despite its location in a country where there are multiple layers of engagement with armed groups (military, police, guerrilla, civilians and at times foreign troops). It is also a country where World Vision has reportedly achieved huge success through a long-term community-driven peace-building initiative. During the reporting period, the following email from a visiting staff member demonstrated that there were multiple CIVMIL issues in the context that were not being reported:

I'm sitting here in a week-long training of middle managers in [xx]. There's a bunch of staff who are either still in emergency mode or have been in emergency situations. There are stories afoot about military engagement now in [yy] and [zz]. I just wonder if you have been able to capture these stories e.g. being punched by military for not offering a vehicle; having to negotiate for military to move out of our child-friendly tents (because we had been given military coloured tents), etc.

Despite the fact that there was insufficient data available on this context as a result of the inaccuracy of the field reports, there were certain lessons that could be learnt from the discrepancy between the obvious reality facing staff in this context and the reticence to admit that these interactions were taking place. Furthermore, due to the richness of data from the other field operations, it did not appear that the problem of under-reporting was replicated elsewhere.

The white elephant

A deliberate decision was made not to narrow the research focus onto the popular topics of the moment – namely how international NGOs should relate to forces such as the US military and Coalition Forces in Iraq or Afghanistan.[ii] This means that the research is not particularly focused on policy developments in 'winning hearts and minds' campaigns and stabilisation missions. We realise that this runs the risk of the present research not attracting the level of attention it ought to, given that the reality it depicts is the lion's share of what humanitarian agencies face in their daily operational work.

We found that our approach enabled World Vision to 'unpick' the types of CIVMIL (and police) relationships forged by staff in the more protracted, low-intensity conflicts that reflect the working environment of most international humanitarian NGOs better than do the highly politicised wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, we believe that the attempt to incorporate the broader scope of engagement with armed groups into the research uniquely places it to contribute at both a policy and an operational level in this field, particularly as Northern governments expand their focus on 'reconstruction and stabilisation' missions in other fragile contexts.[iii] This is not to say that the research has ignored the influences of the 'War on Terror' and the instrumentalisation of aid; these are clearly crucial components of a revised policy or strategy, particularly in the areas of funding and disaster management.

3 Who are NGO staff engaging?

Question:

List the different types of armed groups that you have come across during your time at World Vision, the kinds of interactions you have had with those groups, and the challenges that these interactions presented.

Response:

Types include national police, army, international forces, and militia in country Contexts 1 and 4. Interactions and challenges include:

- Several Context 1 army & police: Provision of armed escorts.

- Context 4 police: Demands for payment and serious disruption to operations, resulting in constant emotional stress on staff. A shipment of metal sheeting that would normally have taken six hours took 25 hours instead.

- Context 1 army: Staff confined to team house during much of the non-working hours to avoid shooting incidents with drunken army personnel.

- Context 1 militia: Poorly qualified privately-hired armed security staff.

— Staff survey, Apr 2008 (reporting period 1985–1995)

During the research, it was possible to monitor the particular types of armed group that staff engaged in their daily work. The same information was captured in a wider sample of staff who participated in a survey on the length of their tenure with World Vision or their deployment to relevant World Vision operations. While a balanced comparison is not entirely possible due to the different timeframes, it is nonetheless interesting to note similarly high numbers of references to engagement with host militaries, UN and regional forces, foreign militaries, and local militia (see Figure 3; Series 1 data refers to the field reports, Series 2 to the survey data). In some contexts, staff might encounter all forms of these military actors.
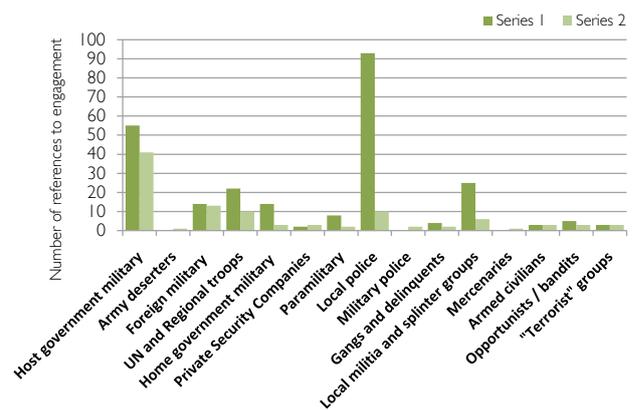

Figure 3: Types of armed groups

With both sets of data taken into account, engagement with regular security actors accounts for 80 per cent of all interactions. The remaining 20 per cent consists of engagement with irregular armed actors, such as gangs, local militia, and groups deemed by some to be 'terrorist' in origin.

3 Who are NGO staff engaging?

Police

Importantly, the most significant number of references is to engagement with local or national police. Pakistan registered the highest number of instances (22) where staff engaged with national or local police over the three-month reporting period; other references ranged from 16 down to single mentions from Colombia, Nepal and Southern Sudan. Overall, 93 references were made to interactions with the police throughout the field trial.
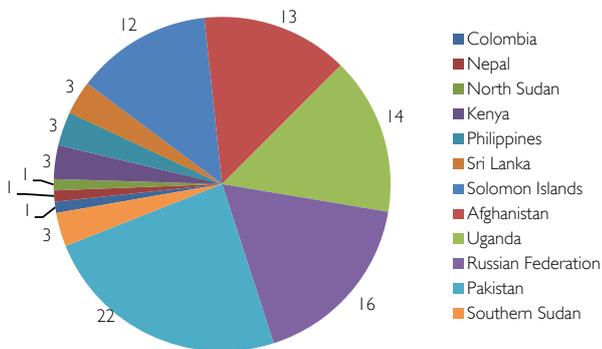

Figure 4: Spread and number of references to police engagement

While this provides just a snapshot, it is possible to conclude from the research that in all country contexts World Vision staff have to interact with, at the least, **national or domestic police forces**. This prevalence raises the question of how to include police more deliberately in discussions of NGO engagement with military and security actors. One academic suggests that the term CIVMIL should be adapted to CIMPIC, or 'civ–mil–pol' engagement, to recognise the important transitional role that police play in moving a situation from militarised conflict to socialised law and order.[iv]

The research revealed that the nature and degree of interaction with police varies depending on location or context. For example, at the local or community level the police commander may control checkpoints or roadblocks where NGO staff pass daily – this may be the case even in the most benign of contexts. While there may be a national command structure, in reality the level of autonomy at the local level may be such that there is a disconnect between national command and local-level decision-making. This needs to be understood by NGO staff operating at both levels.

While interactions with local and national police were common across many contexts, the most relevant example of interactions with **international policing contingents** appeared in Timor-Leste, which is documented comprehensively in the report by an external consultant commissioned as part of this research. Given the context of Timor-Leste, which provides a unique example of a police-led integrated UN Peace Support Operation, there has been some form of CIVMIL and police engagement since World Vision began operations there in 1999. To highlight the policing element in the research, the report focuses on the period of unrest that was sparked in April and May 2006.[v]

The report indicates that the competing layers of national security actors, international police, foreign military and domestic forces has led to ongoing confusion on the part of NGOs, because there are effectively two parallel security systems operating: the international and the national. Notably, there is also confusion around the mandates of the particular actors – something that is often an issue for NGOs in other contexts. The findings suggest that this confusion is making engagement with these groups all the more problematic.

In a context such as Timor-Leste is it therefore critical to understand the dynamics of a police-led intervention as opposed to a military one, because inevitably they will have very different mandates, capacity, and constraints.

*Top – UN Photo: 187039/Martine Perret (2007), Location: Baucau, Timor-Leste
Female United Nations police officers of the United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT)*

Left: US Marine securing an area in Iraq

Right: Government troops in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Host militaries

The second most notable set of interactions took place between staff and host militaries. As the defence sector becomes more engaged in national-led responses to disasters, it is only natural that aid agencies will find themselves increasingly occupying the same space, as well as engaging on a more frequent basis and potentially in new ways. This underlines the need to redress the lack of guidance available to NGOs regarding how they should engage with such entities. At present, the bulk of existing international guidance refers to engagement with foreign militaries in disaster settings, while only a few pieces of guidance refer to complex political settings, with little comment on host military interaction.

One recent positive development is the IFRC-led work on International Disaster Response Law (IDRL),[vi] which aims to provide guidelines for use by NGOs, donors and governments in national contexts. Already a number of militaries have expressed interest in IDRL training; some have begun training and are looking at how to integrate the concepts into their manuals and procedures. The US DoD Centre for Excellence in Disaster Management based in Hawai'i conducts education and training with military forces from the Asia–Pacific region and its courses now include specific modules on IDRL.

4 What is the scale of engagement?

The research revealed that World Vision currently implements programmes in many and diverse environments where CIVMIL relations are critical to its operations, security and policy. This issue is not, however, restricted to field-level operations. With the increasing role of regional peace-keeping forces and Western militaries in relief operations, the relationship between offices in non-operational contexts and national defence forces is also key.

Reporting trends

Within the field trial, it was assumed that the early phase of reporting would demonstrate a low level of recorded activities because of the time it might take participants to become accustomed to reporting interactions that seemed natural to them. On the contrary, however, we received the highest number of reports in the first month. Of course there was also a lot of work involved in following up with people throughout the process, but this was mainly due to staff turnover, communication issues within the country office, or absence of staff on field trips when the reports were due – an inevitability given the types of people we targeted in the trial.
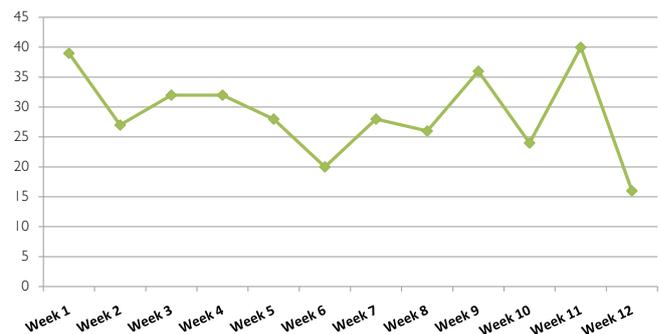
Figure 5: Total number of activities recorded each week

Figure 5 shows the aggregate number of activities recorded by offices each week over the three-month reporting period. The range of activity is 16–40 activities per week,[vii] which averages 1.6 activities per week across the participating offices, or 6.4 activities per month. This appears significant given the wide representation of offices in the trial, and highlights the need for NGOs like World Vision to gain clarity on how to support staff in these situations.

Top: During the tsunami response in 2004-5, the Indonesian military (TNI) and Indonesian Red Cross Society (PMI) were two of the main organisations involved in recovering bodies from the wreckage. This important process ensured that victims could be provided with a dignified burial.

Left: UN Photo 126928/P Sudhakaran (1992), Location: Pochentong, Cambodia Soldier of the Japanese SDF arriving in Cambodia to participate in their first peace-keeping mission on behalf of the United Nations.

Right: Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, www.ramsi.org/node/13

Geographical spread

The table in Annex 1 shows the distribution of countries, marked in bold, that were included in the research across World Vision's matrix of contexts. Figure 6 depicts this breakdown of contexts in an alternative manner, indicating that the reports from all data sources represent a good spread of World Vision operating contexts. While approximately half are predictably from Context 1 – with the lowest stability and highest physical needs – the other half are dispersed across the other contexts.
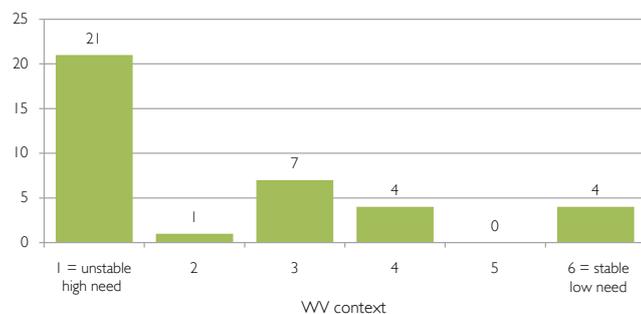
Figure 6: Breakdown of contexts (all data sources)

One clear reality to emerge across these different locales is that CIVMIL engagement is not limited to unstable countries with high physical needs. Staff across most of World Vision's operating contexts come into contact with armed groups of some kind, whether they be youth gangs through peace-building initiatives; national armies in natural and technological disasters, or planning for disasters; armed police units; or peace-keepers in stable contexts. In these situations, CIVMIL relationships can mean a far more diverse range of interactions than those that occur with (foreign) Western forces. Japan (see Case Study) provides an interesting counterpoint to other stable contexts where the military is gaining a more prominent role in disaster response.

Case Study: World Vision Japan (Context 6)

The Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) are unique in that, constitutionally, they must only possess the minimum defence capability necessary to face external threats. Strong pacifist sentiments post-World War II led to the Japanese public's acceptance of the country renouncing war, the possession of war potential, the right of belligerency, and the possession of nuclear weaponry. The JSDF must also ensure that it remains under civilian control.

As a result, the JSDF tend to participate only in small non-combatant roles overseas, which leads to a very different CIVMIL dynamic than that in other major donor government contexts. While the Japanese parliament passed a bill in May 2007 that sets out steps for holding a referendum on revising the strictly pacifist constitution, the JSDF are still likely to take non-combatant roles in the near future.

World Vision's research revealed that it was actively engaged in the Japan Platform ('JPF'), a consortium of Japanese NGOs, private sector, and government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) that aims to optimise the respective sectors' characteristics and resources in humanitarian emergency response. JPF itself is a funding NGO and provides approximately USD 10 million in grants annually. To date, 26 Japanese NGOs that have the capacity to respond to major emergencies are members of JPF. World Vision Japan is on the board, and until 2003 was the chair of the NGO wing.

In early 2008, NGOs and JPF agreed to form a Civil–Military Relations Study Group, where different stakeholders could share their experiences and develop a more substantial dialogue. In March 2008, JPF held a three-day workshop to finalise a mapping of the various standpoints so that they could develop a common platform for information sharing and better mutual understanding. Since this time, however, funding has not been extended for a second year, and NGOs have become more hesitant about sharing a common platform, so the initiative has ended.

5 How are they engaging?

"There are four ways to engage with the military: front door, back door, UN and the bar!"

— Staff interview, April 2008

When we are hiring, we have to be very sensitive about clan balance because almost every man has a gun.

— Staff survey (Context 1), April 2008

These two comments represent very different parts of World Vision. The first comes from an international emergency response logistician, the second was made by a local staff member who co-ordinates a development programme in one of World Vision's most unstable country contexts. The contrast between the pro-active approach of the logistician towards engagement with the military and the precaution necessary in the local staff member's context reveals the very different operating environments of staff within a multi-mandated and multi-national organisation such as World Vision.

In the complex environments of many contexts it is impossible to ask staff to be completely immune to their surroundings. Many staff themselves come from the regions where World Vision operates, and thus share the ethnic, religious or political persuasion of one or other party to a conflict.

International staff are not immune to their context, either: the research demonstrated that it is common for them to seek out interactions with those of a similar cultural background. These people can include military personnel from one's own country of origin, and thus involve out-of-hours socialising with members of armed groups. The field data revealed that this provides a source of good information sharing, but also has ramifications for how NGOs are perceived, particularly if the socialising occurs at a non-neutral location such as at a barracks or embassy.

The results from the field trial in Figure 7, therefore, should be viewed in light of the fact that militaries and other armed actors can be equally the source of potential security or insecurity in a given context. Local populations would be the first to testify to this: in one context, they may welcome the assistance of their government military, such as in the recent case of China (see Case Study), while in another, they might live in fear of the troops.

For example in northern Uganda, the rule of law is generally weak due to a lack of police officers, judges and court personnel, and the relationship between civilians and government security forces is certainly contested – some civilians have experienced forms of protection and rescue by the same troops who are also reportedly responsible for committing serious human rights abuses (see Case Study).
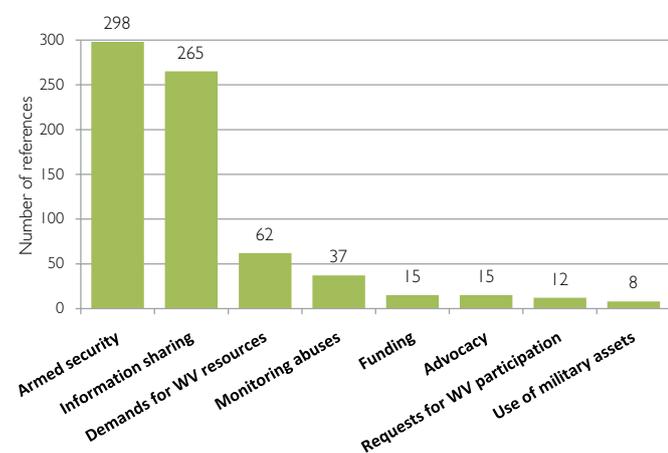
Figure 7: Themes reported against in field trial

Armed security

Armed security, including the need for close protection of both staff and assets, featured most prominently in the research. The high number of references to information sharing in the field trial related largely to security also. This was interesting in light of the anecdotal feedback that the UN and non-World Vision NGO staff provided, which indicated in a number of key contexts that World Vision is weak in the area of inter-agency co-ordination around security issues.

Case Study: China earthquake

A helicopter from the provincial military in Qingchuan County, Sichuan, assesses the quake-affected area in 2008, giving much hope to the disaster victims.

Case Study: Children of War Rehabilitation Centre

Two orphan babies found by government soldiers after battles with the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) killed the parents. The military brought these babies (18-month-old girl; 1-year-old boy) to World Vision along with rescued child soldiers. Staff cared for them while they made every attempt to identify them and locate living relatives.

5 How are they engaging?

The use of private security contractors or companies (PSCs) did not feature as much as expected. It was, however, possible to glean information from field visits and a survey conducted by the Humanitarian Policy Group, in cooperation with OCHA, in which 24 World Vision staff in 19 countries participated during the research. From this information, World Vision mostly appears to employ local, informal security providers for static security; in rare cases, this extends to route security and close personal protection. Not a single respondent indicated that World Vision's use of PSCs had declined in the past five years; in fact, approximately 40 per cent indicated that its use of PSCs has increased.[viii]

The breakdown in Figure 8 of the demands for World Vision resources that were taking place over the course of the field trial is helpful in providing some background as to why this might be the case, and also why engagement with military or other armed actors featured 'security' so prominently.
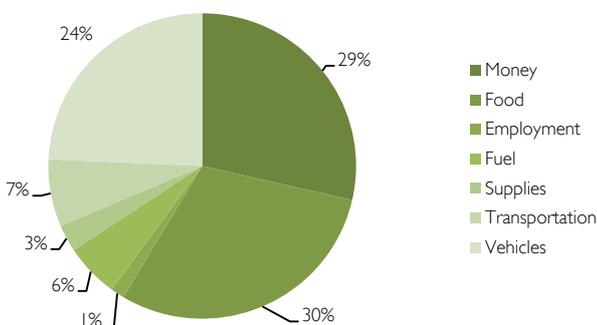
Money, food, and vehicles were the three most regularly demanded assets between January and March 2008 across the countries involved in the trial. There were 20 instances where money was demanded of staff, either at a checkpoint or distribution site. In one case, staff were threatened by an armed group unless World Vision provided them with employment, while in another instance, staff were faced with the difficult task of refusing to take military and police personnel who were without transportation.

The response of one team in a Context 1 field office to the demand for World Vision vehicles by the host government's Ministry of Interior demonstrates the type of natural ingenuity that staff often deploy when dealing with the unexpected and immediate problems facing them in the field:

The question … was handled by quickly dispersing vehicles to the field, then responding to the Ministry that we only had a couple small cars which were being used to transport key personnel such as the Country Director and visitors.
— Field report, Feb 2008

While this response neutralised the problem facing the office in this instance, more sustainable approaches have been developed to help staff in such situations.

The widespread level of demands for World Vision resources suggested by the field trial is corroborated by similar findings from other key sources in the research. This underlines the importance of providing staff with proper guidance and perhaps a re-evaluation of current approaches to threats in the field, particularly in a global organisation where decisions made in one location are likely to affect the organisation as a whole, other NGOs, or importantly, the communities with whom they work. This issue is explored in more detail in Section 8.

Figure 8: Demands for World Vision resources

- Money — 29%
- Food — 30%
- Employment — 1%
- Fuel — 6%
- Supplies — 3%
- Transportation — 7%
- Vehicles — 24%
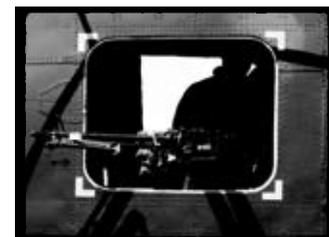
In a very small number of cases (see Box 1), staff referred to instances where they offered resources to military and police, rather than had resources demanded of them. The reasons were mainly due to the military or police's lack of resources and ability to perform their duties.

> **Box 1:**
> **NGO support to police and military**
>
> *"As for police and military personnel requesting tents, stoves, etc this move has been more one of charity than anything else, since these troops are fairly poorly equipped. They have received similar donations from other NGOs in the community, and this really isn't seen as a move directly aiding military or police forces but more an act of charity to help a group of individuals, who happen to be police or military personnel."*
>
> — World Vision field report (Context 1), February 2008

Joint training, dialogue, and advocacy

Less threatening requests for World Vision resources came in the form of invitations to mutual learning (or 'joint training') seminars and events at the national, regional and global levels. The field trial registered 12 such opportunities, including several circumstances where World Vision conducted training or briefing sessions to official security forces, for example in the areas of child protection, domestic violence, anti-trafficking and other human rights-related topics. Some opportunities had to be missed, however, due to lack of resources or lead-time provided to World Vision by the host military, government agency or UN department.

Where training is involved, the research established the importance of articulating clearly, both internally to staff and to representatives of the armed group, the nature of the relationship. Nowhere is this more evident than in contexts where there is evidence or suspicion that military and security actors are responsible for abuses.

For this reason, World Vision's policy is to accompany all engagement with the military in joint training sessions with an intensive advocacy effort that addresses three concerns: adherence to human rights instruments, post-conflict planning in emergency response, and advocacy against the instrumentalisation and politicisation of humanitarian aid. Depending on the context, special efforts will be made to inform the military/police actors concerned of the basic humanitarian operational principles and ethical foundations in order to improve their understanding and garner their acceptance of NGO *modus operandi* and procedures.

The importance of remaining independent yet still in dialogue with security actors in a given context was evident in a number of operations where police forces provided security within camp settings. In one example (Context 1), police who were mandated to provide protection for the internally displaced were allegedly committing violations and encouraging vulnerable groups of females to engage in prostitution, in exchange for certain essential goods. The World Vision field office did a remarkable job in adapting its programme to suit the needs of those women, and reporting these instances while advocating to the police to change this practice, and maintaining the necessary relationship to preserve humanitarian access.

Use of military assets

In the field trial, there were only eight references to the use of military assets. This did not tally with the frequent number of instances where it arose in discussions with staff. Nonetheless, where it was identified, the examples related either to the offer of military assets by donor governments, or staff requests for armed security and escorts in-country. As will be seen in Section 8, a significant number of further references to escorts arose in the field trial, but they were classified as a sub-group within 'armed security'.

In natural disasters, militaries often are able to mobilise significant resources and manpower; the international response in early 2005 to the Asian tsunami included what was perhaps the greatest level to date of engagement by foreign military forces in the facilitation of humanitarian assistance.

5 How are they engaging?

While many in the aid sector argue that such operations signal an unwelcome encroachment of the military into the humanitarian sphere, the research participants engaged in logistics believed that military assets are being used increasingly to fill crucial gaps where the urgency, scale and required capabilities cannot be met by civilian humanitarian responders. The Pakistan earthquake in 2005 was a case in point.

Despite their apparent support for the use of military assets, most World Vision staff were unaware of the 'Oslo Guidelines' (1994, updated in November 2006), which aim to provide an international framework for a systematic and consistent approach to the deployment of foreign military civil and defence assets (MCDA) in international disaster operations. On examination, staff expressed the need for more user-friendly advice and prompts as they respond to crises 'on the run'.

An increasing number of academic studies is improving our understanding of the various nuances involved when deploying military assets in a disaster. Research by Tufts University revealed the important distinction, for example, between host-country public acceptance of international aid agencies and US or NATO militaries during the rescue and emergency response phase, and public acceptance in the reconstruction phase: "…following the transition from rescue and relief efforts to longer-term reconstruction efforts, there was a very noticeable increase in anti-aid agency and anti-army sentiment, and an increase in security incidents targeting aid agencies".[ix] In the context of Afghanistan, one recent report encourages more investment in acknowledging local perceptions of outside interventions: "Policy and practice of both the military and civilian agencies need to be more informed and inclusive of Afghan perspectives. Military operations are inadequately attuned to the importance of…social and cultural norms…Donors and humanitarian agencies need to invest more in cross-cultural translation of the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and in access negotiations with all parties in the conflict."[x]

Some of these same themes emerged out of the research in the five field offices that agreed to an alternative approach to the field trial. These offices included Timor-Leste, which hosted an external consultant to review the programme and past practices there; Sierra Leone, which held two discussion groups with long-standing staff members on past practices; Haiti, which offered to answer semi-structured questions in a written survey format based on past experiences; and Angola, whose National Director has engaged on several occasions in an interview format. The benefit of engaging these offices through an alternative approach was clear from the types of retrospective learning that could be brought to bear on the research process, including a confirmation that the various types of engagement that were captured in the field trial are not new.

Case study: Pakistan earthquake

Helicopters offer the advantage of being able to transport tonnes of food and other aid items to extremely remote locations in a matter of minutes, while trucks can take days to reach the same locations, if at all. As a result, NGOs often use the airlift capacity of host government and international militaries in large-scale disasters.

6 Why is it difficult for NGOs to confront this?

Question:

From your experience, do you feel that the ethical foundations of World Vision have ever been jeopardised or threatened by engaging with armed groups?

Responses:

Yes – we are not certain where the line is between being practical, and therefore liaising with the local power base, and taking a principled stand.

— Staff survey, Apr 2008 (Relief)

Having armed actors to enable us to do our job has always had me debating the pros and cons of where World Vision should position itself with respect to this important matter, for which I am still not sure I have a clear-cut answer (if there is one).

— Staff survey, Apr 2008 (Security)

This section explores what accounts for the reluctance of NGOs to admit that they share, either by circumstance or choice, the same space as military and other security actors. The research suggests that the problem lies in a fundamental question NGOs must face when confronting this topic: is it possible for aid workers to remain principled when they engage with military and security actors in the field and at home?

Principles

World Vision field staff displayed a good understanding of the fundamentally different principles by which humanitarian and military actors operate, and the important role that perceptions play in CIVMIL and police engagement. Because militaries are instruments of government policy, they have a very different perspective of what constitutes 'humanitarian assistance' than that of independent NGOs. While the type of activity considered to be humanitarian assistance may be similar, the 'motivations' behind it, and the 'method' or process of delivery, inevitably will diverge.

The motivation for aid agencies is the primacy of the 'humanitarian imperative' to serve a person's right to assistance, according to need alone, while their process for delivery aims to adhere to certain operational standards and principles agreed by the international humanitarian community. These include independence and impartiality of action. Under the International Red Cross/Red Crescent and NGO *Code of Conduct*,[xi] established in 1995 as a result of inadvertent negative impacts of humanitarian assistance, agencies are permitted to implement programmes in conjunction with governments, but only if the humanitarian imperative is respected, or co-aligned naturally, as is often the case in disaster response.

6 Why is it difficult for NGOs to confront this?

As part of the military mission of peace support operations, there is a trend among UK, US, NATO and other military forces towards undertaking 'relief operations', which may appear to be 'humanitarian'. Militaries view such undertakings as key to enhancing their force protection, and stabilisation more broadly. Their motivation is to win the 'hearts and minds' of local communities to enhance specific military and political objectives; their method is the implementation of 'quick impact projects' (QIPs).

Contributing to this dynamic is the evolution of 'integrated missions' within the UN system and 'whole-of-government' approaches within donor governments, which seek to improve co-ordination in difficult contexts by combining the efforts of defence, diplomacy, development and other relevant constituents. Within government, defence and aid departments (such as those in the US) now aim to collaborate in all aspects of foreign assistance activities where both are engaged, including joint planning, assessment and evaluation, training, implementation, and communication (see 'USAID Civilian–Military Co-operation Policy', July 2008). This raises concerns that aid is becoming 'securitised', more 'politicised', and even 'militarised'.

Parallel to this are the claims of various donor governments and academics that NGOs can and should be used for intelligence-gathering purposes, due mainly to their access. One paper, published by the US Joint Special Forces University, argues in particular that special forces and government intelligence agencies should enhance their collaboration with NGOs, for reasons of mutual interest. In a chapter entitled 'A Marriage of Convenience – NGOs and US Intelligence Agency Cooperation', the author argues that ''NGOs should be willing collectors of information for intelligence purposes where Al-Qaeda is presently recruiting, training, and operating or will be likely to do so in the future'', due to the fact that such terrorist groups do not recognise the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.[xii]

Accusations that major NGOs provide such intelligence, not related solely to humanitarian purposes, are increasingly widespread. In October 2008, for example, *Le Monde* published an article in which the French foreign minister stated: ''Officially we don't have contacts with the Hamas, but unofficially, international organisations in the Gaza strip, and in particular French NGOs, provide us with information''.[iii] Along the spectrum of NGO positions on CIVMIL engagement, French NGOs tend to fall at the 'Refuseniks' end, so such claims about their collaboration with the French government are likely to push them further away from a position of principled pragmatism.

In light of recent developments, it should come as no surprise that NGO staff feel that maintaining an identity that is distinct[xiii] from governments and armed groups is critical for preserving independence and impartiality – key principles that enable humanitarian agencies to function, especially in politically sensitive environments.

Throughout the field trial, saving lives and improving the quality of life for affected populations were the most widely cited reasons for engaging with armed actors. This is often attempted in very trying circumstances and at great personal cost to individuals.
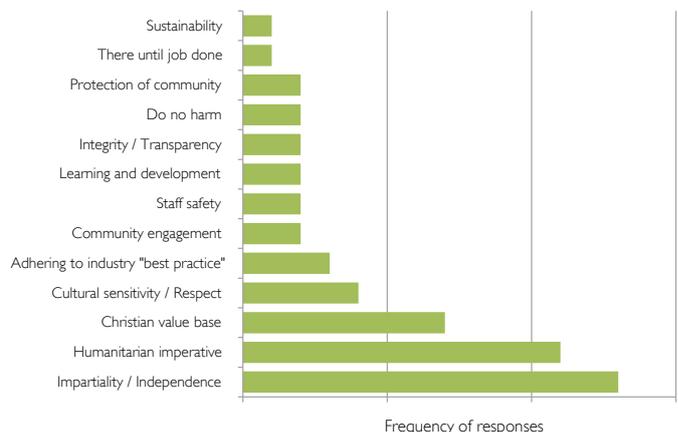

Figure 9: Most important principles
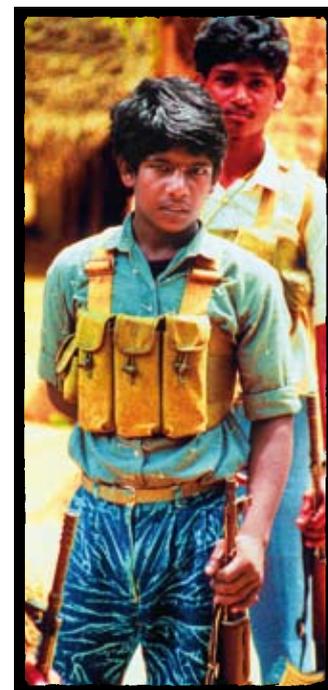
A striking characteristic in some of the reports was the extent to which staff connected their success in meeting humanitarian objectives with their ability to remain impartial and independent. In some cases, the ability to act impartially was used interchangeably with remaining neutral, but this often demonstrated a blurring of concepts rather than an understanding of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) distinctions. Interestingly, the survey submitted by staff not included in the field trial revealed similar results (see Figure 9).

On the whole, it tended to be those operating in 'development' contexts, where there is low-level intensity but protracted internal conflict, who appeared more reticent to interact with armed groups due to the longer-term potential impact on their impartiality. World Vision staff operating in humanitarian 'emergency' contexts, which are more fluid and unpredictable due to fluctuations in the intensity of conflict, were more 'pragmatic' in their approach to CIVMIL engagement in the short-term. Of course there were exceptions, such as in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, where staff generally appear accustomed to routine engagement with various military actors in their day-to-day operations. For multi-mandated agencies such as World Vision, which must balance operational needs with advocacy concerns, these parameters can sometimes limit options for 'speaking out' effectively.

Box 2 illustrates the striking contrast between such attitudes when confronted with the issue of protecting civilian populations. While certainly extreme, examples like these offered throughout the study reflect the wide range of views on the limits and opportunities presented to World Vision in advocating for the rights of children, in particular, in its areas of operation. The extent to which staff believe they should engage with armed groups is a clear determinant of such decisions on the ground.

Box 2: Protecting civilians

"There are some communities that are more affected [by CIVMIL interactions] because they need to protect their children, which are often taken by the guerrillas and paramilitary to be part of their armed groups. For example, in some programme areas, there are attacks by the guerrillas in the villages. The [World Vision] offices there need to close and wait until the attacks pass. The staff do not have anything to do with the armed groups (they do not contact them nor are they contacted by them)."

— Staff survey, April 2008 (Context 3)

"Children enrolled to man road blocks in [yy] region, by militias. No action taken as we observed this on our way to [uu] and back, and we are not in a position to question this despite the fact that children are enrolled as child soldiers. This is abuse of child rights."

— Field report, January 2008 (Context 1)

"One of the biggest issues I have had to face in my work with World Vision when engaging with military, police or other armed actors is when we have negotiated with military officers for the release of Children Associated with Army Forces/Groups."

— Staff survey, April 08 (Context 1)

Perceptions

In a humanitarian agency, the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence are central tenets of what staff like to think is their identity. These principles are, however, constantly being challenged, and there is a need for agencies to interrogate how they are projecting that image; while they may claim to be one thing, it is ultimately the perception of others that counts. As with the idea of principles, there is no doubt that perceptions and how they are constructed, understood and acted upon are a critical element of CIVMIL and police engagement.

6 Why is it difficult for NGOs to confront this?

Significant aspects of the research found that World Vision staff tend to *assume* favourable local perceptions because of the absence of active opposition to its operations.[xiv] Passive acceptance or co-operation does not, however, imply a favourable perception. More specific to the issue of CIVMIL, one of the most striking findings arose from answers to a question on local perceptions in the staff survey: what efforts, if any, have been made to understand local perceptions of World Vision's engagement with armed groups?

All respondents except two believed that World Vision either made no efforts or that the question was not applicable. One long-standing staff member identified that in his experience there had been "some, but usually minimal" efforts made to understand local perceptions, and claimed "We are not very good at overtly articulating the power dynamics in a context. Therefore, we are left to speculate both as locals and foreigners." (Staff survey, April 2008).

This comment should be balanced, however, with the more explicit investment that World Vision has been making over the past decade in organisation-wide initiatives promoting analysis of its role in conflict settings (notably through the use of Local Capacities for Peace / Do No Harm framework, championed by Mary Anderson, and World Vision's own 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' model). There is potential to expand these tools to examine who might determine or define neutrality and impartiality in a particular setting.

Overall, in the case of World Vision, an answer to the question regarding NGO reticence to confront the issue of operating alongside military and security actors is mainly related to the need to preserve humanitarian principles and guard against negative associations. The reaction is apparent at two main levels: first there is the institutional reaction to various external policy impacts, such as the implementation of 'whole-of-government' approaches in fragile contexts, or the use of NGOs for intelligence gathering, and second, there is the individual-level response to engaging one-on-one with armed actors.

At the individual level, the research found that staff felt it is counter-intuitive to interact pro-actively with armed actors who are at times the very perpetrators of injustices suffered by those they serve (see Box 3); however, they also understood that the military or police are often the source of the necessary logistics and information to reach people in need.

The admirable focus of World Vision staff on neutrality and impartiality, which came out in the early stage of the field trial, initially shielded the need to discuss important interactions they have, and to share experiences that can be used to guide better policy. The research helped to encourage such dialogue, and reinforced the need to reflect on external perceptions of staff conduct.

Box 3: World Vision counsellor with rescued LRA 'wife'

A World Vision Uganda staff counsellor holds the hand of 'Maria', 18, who spent ten years in captivity as one of the 'wives' of the Lord's Resistance Army's second-in-command. World Vision has separate housing for girls who gave birth to babies after they were abducted by LRA or who are at risk of being forced back into captivity.

7 What can we do about it?

"Neutrality, independence, impartiality…that is difficult if you have an army involved in humanitarian areas."

— Louis Michel, EU Development Commissioner, September 2008 [xv]

By now, two points should be clear from the research: i) that NGOs like World Vision operate in an exceptionally complex space, shared by very different types of armed groups with various mandates and styles of discipline, and ii) that, as a result, CIVMIL engagement presents one of the most challenging aspects of the current humanitarian landscape.

From the outset, the research recognised that 'one-size-fits-all' approaches to CIVMIL do not work. Of course certain parameters can be prescribed, however there needs to be room to allow for context, and changes over time within each context. Recognising this, the research set out to explore ways to address the question that was recently put forward in an inter-agency discussion: what can be done if CIVMIL collaboration requires policy and practices that risk contradicting humanitarian principles? [xvi]

A helpful place to start is existing guidance on CIVMIL engagement. As stated in section 2, World Vision drafted an Operations Manual in view of wider humanitarian community policy and guidelines and tested it in the field. The approach explicitly connected principles to action, and had the following list of intended targets or outcomes:

- **Beneficiaries** – better and safer access to the target groups

- **Local actor engagement** – better understanding of the operating environment

- **Basis for advocacy** at different levels – if there is an agreed standpoint

- **Backing for staff** confronting difficult decisions at both the field and HQ level.

In addition to condensing available international non-binding guidance in the CIVMIL area, the manual included context-specific information on Peace Support Operations, Host Government military interactions, Private Armed Group engagement, and so on. The aim was to equip staff with an understanding of the available guidance which should serve as the basis for also explaining this rationale for engagement to others, including beneficiaries, UN partners, governments, peace-keepers, combatants, and other NGOs.

7 What can we do about it?

Also developed in the course of the research was a decision-making tool called HISS–CAM, which offered teams on the ground support in analysing or deciding the fluid day-to-day CIVMIL interactions that potentially compromise their key operating principles.

The ultimate aim of the tool is to equip staff with the ability to determine appropriate levels of interaction with armed actors in areas that are considered to fall within the category of 'exceptions to the rules'. In other words, exceptional and often unpredictable circumstances in which either military engagement in a traditionally humanitarian activity seems necessary to save lives and alleviate suffering, or else the environment obliges interaction with armed groups, often at the risk of jeopardous security implications for staff, or negative public perceptions of the organisation.

As a starting point, the tool uses the 'continuum of engagement' that OCHA has developed to describe the spectrum of possible interactions between humanitarian and military operations. These can range from **co-existence** to **co-ordination** and **co-operation** in some instances. The research included a fourth 'C' – **curtail presence** – to provide entities with the option to suspend engagement altogether.
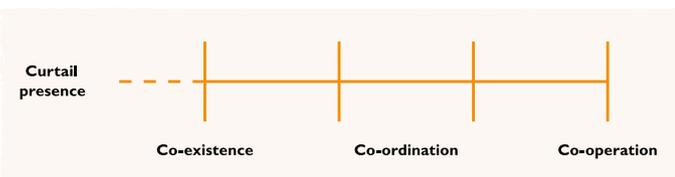
Listed below are the three main types of interaction, along with scenarios which help illustrate these types of interaction.

- **Co-existence** determines a situation in which active engagement between humanitarian and military actors is either inappropriate or impossible, but interaction is unavoidable.
  Scenario: Shared operational space with military actors (i.e. state forces, rebel groups, paramilitaries) where it is deemed inappropriate to co-ordinate, other than to stay aware of the other's movements.

- **Co-ordination**, involving dialogue between humanitarian and military actors, is deemed appropriate in situations where it is possible to promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, and minimise inconsistency in a relief operation, often in conjunction with other agencies and via a neutral, third-party institution.
  Scenario: Active sharing of information with armed actors regarding plans and procedures, to ensure mutual understanding. Most common examples include instances where there is a UN-mandated force.

- **Co-operation** tends to occur only in situations where military involvement in a traditionally humanitarian activity is required in order to save lives and alleviate suffering.
  Scenario: Use of military assets for protection, delivery of relief in extreme circumstances. Examples include the 2004 Asian tsunami response and the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, where both national and international military assets were used.

The research found that one country programme can have interactions at numerous points along the spectrum, so context must be continually re-assessed.

Once the proposed level of CIVMIL interaction is determined, staff are encouraged to consider their key principles and concepts of operating before making a decision on how to proceed. Feedback from World Vision personnel established that the following principles form the ethical foundations that should shape their approach to dealing with armed groups at the field level:

- The **humanitarian imperative** insists on seeking to promote the well-being and dignity of civilians in a way that also supports a sustainable, self-directed, and long-term future. Guiding this imperative is a commitment to the UN *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*, the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and the ICRC–NGO *Code of Conduct.*

- **Impartiality of action** places a high value on ensuring that programmes do not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, political affiliation or social status. Relief must be guided by an assessment of needs, while the priority is given to the most urgent cases of distress. Connected to this in the context of complex emergencies is the need to appear neutral in the provision of aid.

- **Independence** underscores a commitment to the humanitarian imperative and not to the agenda of governments, political groups or military forces. Because advocacy is a central part of humanitarian action, and the military is a potential target of advocacy, organisations must not act in a way that surrenders this responsibility. Core aspects of independence include freedom of movement for humanitarian staff, freedom to conduct independent assessments, freedom of selection of staff, freedom to identify beneficiaries on the basis of need, and the free flow of information between humanitarian agencies.

- The **'Do No Harm'** principle commits agencies to developing context-specific approaches that prevent, to the best of their ability, any unintended negative consequences of humanitarian assistance in a given context. Success in achieving this assists in the provision of **security** for staff, local partners, beneficiaries and other humanitarian agencies, and in the prevention of the furtherance of conflicts in-country as well as in the region.

- **Sustainability** ensures that agencies assist communities to overcome poverty and injustice over the long term; hence any engagement with the military must have a view beyond the immediate. The 'Do No Harm' principle certainly applies here, because it is only through clear context analysis that agencies will be able to prevent any unintended negative impacts in a context, particularly in complex situations. The sustainability aspect of humanitarian or development work must not be compromised.

Summarised under the banner of HISS, these are the **humanitarian imperative** (i.e. the obligation to respond to a crisis or need), the principles of **impartiality** and **independence**, the imperative of **staff security** and **beneficiary protection**, and the importance of **sustainability** (in terms of assisting communities in the long term to overcome poverty and injustice). Therefore, all interaction should be measured against these four touchstones.

H umanitarian imperative

I mpartiality and Independence

S ecurity and Protection

S ustainability

7 What can we do about it?

It is emphasised that, while all principles remain important at all times, there is no strict order of priority between the first three: their relative priority or level of relevance may change depending on the military, political and humanitarian circumstances. In the trial, it was proposed that the deliberate deviations from 'Do No Harm' – which incorporate the **safety** of all stakeholders and sustainability of a response – clearly require the highest level of justification so far as limitations are concerned, due to the long-term perspective that underpins all development work in assisting communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Therefore, we argued that it should be considered a non-negotiable principle that cannot be forfeited knowingly in any area.

In terms of establishing the validity of this proposal, the most concerted effort in the research was undertaken by staff in Sierra Leone, based on their experience in the late 1990s. The group discussed their past need to draw support from military actors in responding to crises (i.e. for infrastructure, logistics, security, telecommunications) and explained that their operating environment was populated with a mix of formal national forces (military-SLA and police), irregular rebel forces (RUF), private security companies (Sandline), and international hybrids (ECOWAS, UK army).

When asked a series of questions regarding the ethical foundations and guiding principles that might help World Vision engage better with military and security actors in the field, they presented a comprehensive picture that included reference to various humanitarian principles. The facilitator asked whether they thought those principles and ideas could be grouped roughly into four categories, summarised by HISS. While the facilitator reported that it was not a 'clear-cut' case of the principles fitting in the suggested categories, it was agreed that they certainly cut across the four key elements of the HISS banner. In response to the question of whether any of these principles are non-negotiable (i.e. you can never deviate from any of them), the facilitator records their reaction as follows:

The group initially felt all were non-negotiable, but after some discussion, they saw that sustainability should be the key principle that is non-negotiable, due to World Vision's philosophy of serving local populations through longer term programming.

— Focus Group Discussion, March 2008 (Sierra Leone)

It is interesting to note that references to sustainability do not feature highly in the responses from the field trial data. This may be worthy of further reflection, as it appears to indicate that when sustainability is raised as an issue people agree with the concept however it is not an instinctive response or reaction when confronted with dilemmas in the field.

Returning to the tool itself, staff were advised in the guidance that it is expected that tensions will emerge in the decision-making process between some of the other operating principles guiding action. When considering what level of engagement is permissible with a military or armed group, they were encouraged first to identify which of the principles is at risk of being compromised.

Once the principle/s most at risk were identified, a compromise could only be justified if three steps are considered and answered positively in the decision-making process. Questions to be considered within each step incorporate the CAM process:

C ompelling aim

A ppropriate, Adapted, Adequately informed

M inimal negative impact

- Is it in pursuit of a **compelling** or legitimate **aim**? The desired outcome should not be general, but 'specific', and have a 'compelling' or important purpose. Is it, for example, aligned with the organisation's strategic aims (including global, regional, and national aims)? Financial considerations in and of themselves should never constitute a compelling aim or justify a deviation from one of the key operating principles.

- Is it **appropriate, adapted, and adequately informed** to that aim? The compromise should be appropriate to its purpose; in other words, it should reasonably and by evidence be connected to the aim. Evidence must include existing context analysis and assessments as well as any new information available.

- Is there **minimal negative impact** on the fundamental principles guiding CIVMIL interaction, and have all other means been exhausted in attempting to achieve the aim? This can be broken down into three areas for consideration – 'when, who and how': **when** refers to time (immediate and longer-term implications), **who** refers to impact of the decision on other stakeholders (communities, industry peers and entities within the organisation), and **how** refers to the method or approach for achieving the compelling aim.

If all of the first three **HISS** principles are measured positively against each of the **CAM** considerations, the proposed CIVMIL engagement can be justified.

This approach to how aid personnel can achieve the necessary balance between principles and pragmatism explicitly connects the HISS–CAM tool with OCHA's continuum of CIVMIL engagement. As the diagram below demonstrates, these form two ends of an equilibrium, with integrity obtained through the CAM process as the pivot.

The key, therefore, is to balance the **HISS principles** with the **tactical choices** to curtail presence, co-exist, co-ordinate or co-operate.

Principles	Pragmatism
Humanitarian imperative	Curtail presence
Impartiality and Independence	Co-existence
Safety	Co-ordination
Sustainability	Co-operation

CAM
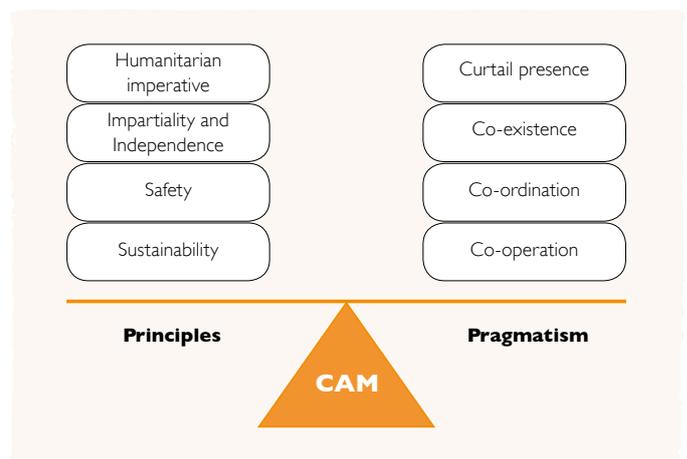
Box 4: HISS-CAM

World Vision has successfully piloted HISS–CAM in a number of emergencies in 2008, including **Georgia** and **Myanmar**. Staff found that the tool not only facilitated an analytical due diligence process, but also provided a way for offices to communicate on-the-ground decisions to other entities in the organisation at peak periods of activity, when field staff may not necessarily have the capacity to respond to disparate requests for information.

It is highly recommended that each office install an accountability and reporting mechanism so that decisions are appropriately recorded, particularly where the action may affect operations in an organisation more broadly. In recent responses to the emergencies in Georgia, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, staff have reported that this is a very useful method. In fact, it is worth noting that there was not a single negative response to the need for a principled yet flexible approach like that attempted in HISS–CAM.

7 What can we do about it?

During the research, it was encouraging to see one staff member in a country visited by the project manager thinking through his situation of using armed escorts in a more nuanced way as a result of the tool. He expressed his discomfort during the visit, however did not feel there was an adequate reason why he could object to using an escort due to the insecure operating environment. A month later, this same staff member decided that he would write a letter in conjunction with his Security officer to the senior management team to address the issue of discomfort. The following extract of his letter reflects a new confidence in the principles that were discussed during the visit:

1. *World Vision is the only agency reaching [xx] population because we are using escorts for our security.*

2. *The use of [UN DPKO] Escorts to the [yy] area, is making the majority of World Vision staff uncomfortable, and even makes them fearful, especially on the erosion of their Humanitarian principles of Neutrality and Impartiality.*

3. *The [UN DPKO] Escorts is not sustainable – in the sense that they only escort us, and when we reach in the field, say [yz], they can't stay with us, if our duration is more than three days.*

4. *The closeness of World Vision and [UN troops] can be a cause of insecurity from the [Government] who may use it to blacklist World Vision.*

5. *That [UN Force] is unpopular in the communities where we are delivering service, and that may increase risk to our staff, if our association with them is continued.*

6. *That there is also the threat from [terrorist operatives] in [zz], which, if we continue associating with [UN troops], we may make ourselves a legitimate target.*

— Email correspondence, March 2008 (Context 1)

The above example raises the need for agencies to support senior management teams in the field in decision-making processes such as these that require a deliberate and continuous assessment of principles versus pragmatic concerns. It also raises the question of duty-of-care considerations: staff need to know that while operating in remote areas they are not alone, but rather provided with a robust support mechanism. Throughout the research, it seemed clear that staff were providing honest information on their activities because they are seeking to be heard in this respect.

CARE International has recognised a similar issue and is identifying ways to overcome it – a proposed solution for agencies is to interpret and apply the intended principles to each specific country context where it works in the same operating space as military forces. This could be extended to other contexts, such as urban poor settings where gangs are present, or countries where the military also acts as the political authority.

It is important to remember, however, that the common theme underlying all contexts is the obligation of NGOs to respond to humanitarian need. There are numerous ways to do this within the contexts that this paper covers – the stories opposite demonstrates several of the approaches that World Vision and other NGOs take when addressing the most vulnerable, as they interface with military and other armed actors.

Box 5: Meeting our humanitarian imperative

Ex-child soldier "Sarah" rests on a bundle of corn meal, which will be given to children returning to their families. The background writing says, in Luo language, the Scriptural assurance, "Don't mind, I am with you." Sarah lost her limb to a grenade during a battle between rebels and government soldiers, and her twin was also abducted and killed.

World Vision works with child soldiers at every stage of the recovery process; from receiving them after being released or having escaped, to helping them reintegrate back into their communities. For months after liberation, these children are provided with accommodation, food, and clothing, and given psychosocial support to help them recover from their ordeal.

Music, drama, and counselling are part of the rehabilitation process that equips children to begin healing. Family tracing and reunification is also a usual component of these programmes. At the same time, World Vision works with communities to pave the way towards understanding and forgiveness of child soldiers, so that they can return to their homes with acceptance and support.

World Vision works on peace-building activities around the world, including through our advocacy as well as through conflict recovery and prevention programmes.

A child peers through plastic sheeting at a distribution of Non-Food Items (NFIs) in the war-torn North Kivu region gets underway. This distribution took place in the Shasha IDP camp, about 30 km southwest of Goma. The camp is currently sheltering a large pygmy population that has been hit severely by the fighting around Goma. Pygmies constitute about 1.5% of the population of DRC. Traditionally nomads of the forest, they are often marginalised and excluded from society. In many places, the pygmy community has been exploited by rebel factions and forced to act as porters, scouts or hunters. They are particularly vulnerable to attacks because their land rights are not recognised and they often have to beg for work and money.

8 Why focus on security?

"At our supplementary feeding stations we have about 300 mothers. Incidents keep increasing in the places where we operate; for example, at our food distributions, we had three major incidents in the last two months alone:

1) Two mothers were killed and we lost food in the confusion around the shooting.

2) A private militia/local security person shot in the air on the periphery of our distribution, then there was looting. One child was killed and a mother injured.

3) There was a scuffle among beneficiaries. A man died. Militias shot in the air.

It is a very dangerous environment. There are many roadblocks on the distribution passages, and we have to negotiate all the time."

— Interview with staff member, Nov 2007 (Context 1)

This is the response of a World Vision staff member who was asked during a field visit what the CIVMIL project could bring to his team. He currently manages food distributions in a Context 1 country. Further discussions with local food distribution staff confirmed the fears around conducting the work. One man had just lost the tip of his thumb to the bite of an angry female beneficiary, while another received a fatal shot to the chest as he took his lunch break at a distribution site.

Their stories present a sobering view of the challenges that field staff can face, particularly those operating on the front line of food distributions, where they negotiate with armed groups at checkpoints, placate local militia as they provide perimeter security, and relate to hungry beneficiaries.

Types of threats

Of the themes that emerged throughout the field trial, security constituted over 40 per cent of all comments. A breakdown of themes can be seen in Figure 10. The need for, use, or offer of armed escorts registered the highest number of activities related to security. Targeting, which denotes instances where staff felt at risk due to their identification as an aid worker, also features heavily. This corroborates available evidence that points to a disturbing trend of deliberate targeting of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, including harassment, intimidation, abduction and assassination, in a number of countries.

Indeed, the overall security of UN staff and humanitarian personnel continues to deteriorate significantly. In a recent survey of all NGOs, the UN Department of Safety and Security collected information on 63 deaths of international and national NGO staff, resulting from malicious acts during the period from June 2007 to July 2008, which is the highest figure thus far recorded.[xvii]

Humanitarian workers can even find themselves targeted by people from within the very communities they have come to serve. Faced with this increasing level and changing nature of security risk, the safety of staff and how security arrangements are managed in the field are now major concerns for humanitarian agencies.
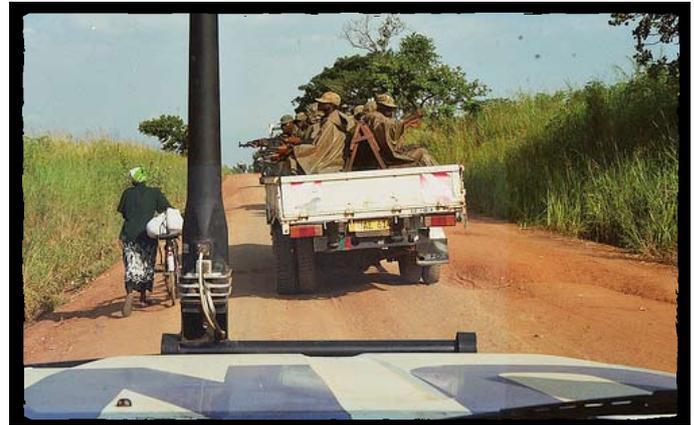
Top: Tim Judah (2007), Location: Northern Uganda
The Ugandan army (UPDF) escorting a WFP convoy, northern Uganda.

Right: Guarding the food aid, Southern Sudan.
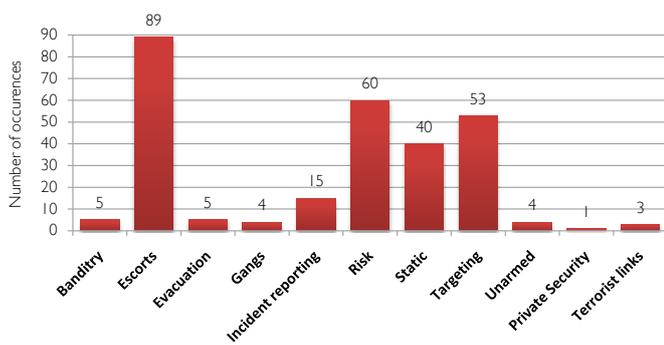
Figure 10: Presence of security themes in field trial

This reality is not, however, often reflected in the priorities of donors and organisations themselves, which continue to insist that agencies lower 'overhead' costs to the 'benefit' of the target population. As a result, a lack of consideration is given to the reality that in order to meet the needs of a population, staff require protection; moreover, organisations have a responsibility to guard against negligence by providing *all* staff with proper duty of care.[xviii]

Host government responsibility

The security requirements of aid workers are meant to be provided by the host government. In fact, governments are mandated under the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols to ensure that relief aid reaches those who need it within their territory, in the event that the responsible authorities cannot provide for the survival of their population. Article 70 of Additional Protocol I specifically states that the parties shall in no way whatsoever divert relief consignments, equipment, and personnel, nor delay their forwarding, and that offers of relief ''shall not be regarded as interference in the armed conflict or as unfriendly acts ... even if the assistance is destined for the civilian population of the adverse Party.''[xix]

This remains problematic in areas where the government is a party to conflict or instability in the region, and agencies are deemed partial if associated with a certain group, or in areas where the government is hostile to an international aid presence.

The European Union (EU) has recently announced that it will be committing to an 'action plan' that aims to push countries, including those where aid workers are stationed, to ensure they adopt international humanitarian law in national legislation.[xx] This is one positive step towards instituting these governments' responsibilities, and redressing the impunity with which some governments have acted in recent years.

NGO approach to security

Another complexity lies in the way aid agencies treat security. Often, it is seen as a technical issue and the focus is mainly on minimum operating standards. In the external survey referred to in section 3, the main motivation cited for hiring PSCs was heightened concern due to a prior incident. This illustrates a reactive approach to security, which is not the preferred way to manage risk, or to driving the appropriate demand for the services that staff require.

World Vision's research suggests that the most serious impediment to effective security policies and procedures, especially during reconstruction, is the limited understanding of local politics and power dynamics, especially the political economy of aid (see the Somalia case study).

An additional issue relates to resource constraints. At the time of the research, there was only one Regional Security Advisor at World Vision who was pre-positioned to provide advice on the security aspects of 26 African countries – this number, however, is expected to rise to four within the next financial year.

The lack of resources leads to an inability to respond to certain security challenges. Evacuation is a case in point. While most NGOs maintain that their staff should never accept transport in a military vehicle, the research revealed several instances where it was impossible to uphold

8 Why focus on security?

the official default position in the event of major security incidents. Conversely, World Vision and other aid staff appear to be dependent on foreign militaries for evacuations in some countries.

The research also raised awareness of issues related to the sequencing of Peace Support Missions and the manner in which responsibility is transferred from international to national elements, or military to civilian law and order. Military peace-keepers are traditionally deployed ahead of a policing contingent, however they are not necessarily trained or equipped to handle civil unrest and law and order problems. As a consequence of the 'deployment gap' between military and police actors, there is often an 'enforcement gap', where proper security sector functions are suspended or significantly weakened.

International police are also often ill-equipped to manage the level or type of civil unrest found in countries outside of their domestic environment. In the case of Timor-Leste, for example, it is widely believed that the International Stabilisation Force handed over the responsibility for public security enforcement to the Australian Federal Police (and subsequently UNPOL) too quickly. The AFP was neither equipped nor trained to deal with the nature of civil unrest, and particularly urban conflict, that is found in such a context.[xxi]

As mentioned in section 3, it is becoming increasingly important for the NGO community to articulate its relationships within operations where police are being introduced to different roles in the peace enforcement / peace support operation environment. There is likely to be change in both the nature of NGO engagement with security actors, and also in the way security is managed in 'post-conflict' or democratic transitions.

World Vision welcomes the recent decision of the EU to consult with aid groups and UN agencies to draw up possible guidelines for the 27-nation EU bloc, in an attempt to improve the situation of aid workers. The EU's development aid chief has admitted that donors such as EU countries should also work to ensure a better distinction between military personnel providing aid and independent and impartial aid workers.[xxii]

Case Study: Hiring local security in Somalia

As part of the United Nations Development Programme's wider rule of law and security programme (ROLS) in Somalia, it is providing security sector reform (SSR) support to national police force development. Included in this are the police Special Protection Units (SPU) of the Puntland Police Force (PPF), whose main function is to provide security to staff of international missions, UN and NGO agencies.

In late 2007, on an observational visit to South Central Somalia, World Vision met with the national Police Commissioner who is working in conjunction with UNDP to roll out the new strategy. He was in the midst of a national 'roadshow', rallying support for the strategy among the village private militias. The aim is to incorporate those who are currently engaged in 'protection' activities into the national police training programme by 2009. As organisations operating in this space, World Vision and other aid agencies need to have a clear understanding of the potential impact for their programmes and perceptions of them as humanitarian agencies.

9 What is the role of donors?

"World Vision policy must adapt to the trend of most Western governments to merge their development, democratic, and diplomatic objectives under a broader defence objective. Whether in the form of 'Human Security' or the 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrines, the biggest aid donors now subjugate their humanitarian strategies under a broader security umbrella, sometimes as part of the 'Global War on Terror' but usually as a national security interest. This poses enormous challenges to the large international humanitarian NGOs whose doctrine mostly follows in some form the classic Red Cross tradition of total humanitarian independence from national interests. In particular the open-ended Global War on Terror…poses significant challenges for World Vision specifically as a Christian organisation with its largest base of support in the United States. In a world where very few NGOs are perceived to be neutral by the beneficiary population, the urgency of good policy thinking cannot be overstated."

— Staff survey, March 2008

One of the greatest challenges for an international aid agency today is how to avoid becoming, and even to avoid the appearance of becoming, an instrument of governments' political or ideological objectives. The ICRC–NGO *Code of Conduct* stipulates that 'donor governments should provide funding with a guarantee of operational independence'. In light of recent trends, however, it seems that the reality is quite different.

Box 6:
World Vision policy on accepting funds related to militaries and defence

- World Vision advocates that activities undertaken by the military should not be recorded as **humanitarian Overseas Development Assistance** because of the need to distinguish between military and humanitarian action.

- Under no circumstances will a World Vision entity seek or accept **funds directly** from any defence/military actor.

- World Vision may accept **pass-through/conduit funds** from a national defence/military source to a civilian agency if it undergoes the due diligence process of **HISS–CAM**, using the pass-through funding risk matrix as well as the Grant Risk Management tool as part of the process. There must also be assurance that the **lead agency is civilian** and has **independence of action**, which is verified through a signed Letter of Understanding with the civilian agency.

- WV will use HISS-CAM to assess pass-through/conduit funds where the **donor government has (direct or proxy) military combat operations and/or a peace-enforcing role in that country**.

- Similarly, World Vision National Offices will not seek or accept pass-through/conduit funding from their **host or donor government when it is party to a conflict within its own borders or with neighbouring countries**.

9 What is the role of donors?

Increasingly, aid has been viewed by key governments as part of their repertoire for tackling states that present a national security threat,[xxiii] and militaries are engaging more in aid delivery and rebuilding of infrastructure as part of 'whole-of-government' or 'comprehensive' approaches to 'stabilisation and reconstruction' missions in fragile contexts.[xxiv] This is reflected in the funding trends of key donor governments, where some Departments of Defence are becoming an increasingly large conduit for official aid or Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). Between 2002 and 2005 in the United States, for example, USAID's share of ODA funds reportedly decreased from 50 to 39 per cent, while DoD's increased from 6 to 22 per cent.[xxv]

Anecdotal evidence and NGO reports indicate that there is also a bias within the funding streams towards countries that are political allies in the fight against terrorism. Refugees International uses a comparative analysis of US support to security sector reform in Africa to demonstrate that this is the case with one major donor. They observe that, despite allocating USD 49.65 million for reforming a 2,000-strong Liberian army to defend the four million people of that country, the US plans to spend USD 5.5 million in 2009 to help reform a 164,000-strong army in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is a country with 65 million people, protracted war, and extreme poverty.[xxvi] The report goes on to warn that progress in fragile contexts is sure to be compromised when short-term security objectives are prioritised over longer-term poverty reduction goals.[xxvii]

Section 8 highlighted the extent to which aid agencies operating in increasingly insecure environments are in the front line of the dangers that emanate from these blurred understandings of what constitutes 'humanitarian' action and military intervention. We argue that donors can choose to become part of the solution: by way of example, through providing resources to aid agencies who need to provide increased support for staff in understanding security and CIVMIL relationships. World Vision's conflict analysis tools, combined with HISS–CAM, provide staff with a better understanding of these relationships. However, often it has had to fund such work from its private resources due to a lack of funds available from donors.

If humanitarian agencies are to meet peoples' needs in a way that helps protect communities and their staff, donors must increase money for such initiatives, and no longer view them as 'overheads' or discretionary costs. More generally, donors also need to prioritise CIVMIL functions and training within their own work.
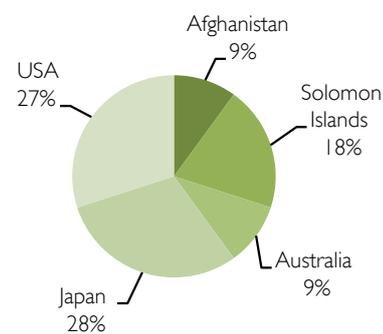
Figure 11: References to funding

Figure 11 depicts all references made to funding in the field trial. Somewhat predictably, the majority of references to DoD funding arose in World Vision Context 6 countries (Japan, USA and Australia). Several examples refer to instances where World Vision was effectively reimbursed, paid or subsidised (e.g. with airfares or accommodation costs) to attend joint trainings, seminars and the like. In one case captured outside the field trial, World Vision actually pays for the services of the German defence force to provide World Vision staff with security training. The training takes place at the Infanterieschule Bundeswehr (Infantry School) / GE United Nations Training Centre, and is used by UN personnel for international mission exercises.

A noteworthy trend came in the form of DoD solicitations at the field level. During the period of the trial, two examples of such solicitations arose. In the first case, the DoD offered to transfer the funds through a civilian federal agency, however the World Vision office determined that the offer should be refused due to concerns around independence and impartiality, and that there was an urgent need to establish clear guidance.

In another case, potential consortium partners of a World Vision Support Office asked the organisation to consider a sub-grant opportunity for a Saharan counter-terrorism/job creation programme in which the DoD was involved along with several civilian government agencies. The sub-award was not pursued based on a similar assessment, in addition to the fact that it was linked to an overarching terrorism-prevention objective. Because such opportunities are likely to continue to arise, World Vision developed a set of internal guidelines on funding sources that are now incorporated into its CIVMIL policy (see Box 6).[xxviii]

An analysis of one particular case that was raised outside of the field trial demonstrates the potential usefulness of such guidance. In a context one country, World Vision is implementing a project funded by the host government's Institute for Socio-Professional Reintegration of Ex-Combatants, whose goal is to support the re-integration to civilian society of demobilised soldiers.

While the institute is an inter-ministerial cabinet, its Director General is a military general. In post-conflict countries where the reality of war is not too-distant a memory, it is crucial for NGOs to remain vigilant about its associations with certain military figures and institutions. In this case, a proper assessment has been undertaken, and it is clear that the funding mechanisms are independent from the Department of Defence (rather, they include World Bank, European Commission, and Multi-Donor Trust grants, plus financing from the other government ministries), and that the DDR (disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration) activities are aligned with World Vision's strategy and the needs of the local population. It is therefore clear that World Vision has maintained its crucial independence, irrespective of the fact that the institute has connections with members of the defence force.

The contrast between the different pressures and opportunities facing World Vision offices reveals how diverse the experience of a global aid organisation can be – from receiving solicitations to become involved in terrorism prevention programmes, to implementing support programmes that address past conflicts and the reintegration of former combatants – and therefore how important it is for NGO staff to consider the context carefully and not to act in isolation.

The parallel need for vigilant advocacy, both private and public, is also apparent in cases where donors are disconnected from the field realities, or are biased towards a particular political objective. Those interacting with decision-makers in global centres can provide key advocacy outlets for operational staff and beneficiaries who recognise the disparity of donor commitment on the ground; they can also jeopardise those operations if insufficient sensitivity is afforded to the given context.

Case Study: South Sudan

Many of the children and youth in the Upper Nile region of South Sudan have been forced to fight in the militia, and have returned to their homes with few skills other than those acquired during the war.

World Vision's Child and Youth Protection Project assists these children to recover and reintegrate into their communities, by providing them with literacy, numeracy, and vocational training, promoting a culture of peace, and building community capacity to ensure the protection of vulnerable groups.

Community-based 'protection committees' are now equipped with a good understanding of how to protect vulnerable groups and introduce methods of non-violent conflict resolution. World Vision supports these committees to pass their acquired knowledge and skills onto their communities through trainings and awareness-raising sessions, and also monitoring and follow up on individual cases requiring further support.

10 Conclusion and recommendations

Anecdotal evidence suggests that NGO engagement with military and other security actors is common in both field and headquarter locations, however there is very little data to substantiate this. Few, if any, UN agencies or NGOs have collected detailed information on this day-to-day interface, and even fewer have made this information publicly available. The fieldwork in this study suggests that the relationship has significant implications for staff, operations, and of course beneficiaries. Most of the information provided by NGOs on the topic, however, focuses on the need both to 'preserve humanitarian space' and 'educate' the military on how to behave in complex environments.

While the research certainly corroborates these important points, it also highlights the need to nuance the debate through more **self-reflection** and better understanding of **'the military'**, which is far from monolithic in the contexts where NGOs operate. Confusion around terminology is often the first barrier to such mutual understanding. For example, military actors interviewed in the research expressed a lack of understanding of what comprises 'humanitarian space'. They tended to view it as physical operating space, and thus were unable to comprehend why NGOs would argue for their own bubble of operations, given that in reality the 'humanitarian' and 'military' or 'security' spheres of action necessarily overlap and are barely distinguishable in some cases.

The research indicated that as a humanitarian organisation, World Vision is simply, by virtue of its presence, one factor among many competing for influence in complex environments. It was therefore more useful to refer to the **'humanitarian operating environment'**, and emphasise to military and government actors that within such an environment, NGOs expect to be able to operate independently and impartially, without fear of attack, in the pursuit of the humanitarian imperative. In other words, to maintain their ability to assist populations in need, not constrained by political or physical barriers to their work – the true original meaning of 'humanitarian space'. Military actors are sometimes an important contributing factor to enabling such an environment, so it seems important to emphasise that we do share the same 'space'.

Despite the trend towards militaries conducting 'humanitarian' work, a welcome development is the increasing recognition by some donor governments that civilian capacity needs to be built in order to meet the daunting challenge of stabilising fragile contexts:

The [US] Department of Defense has taken on many of [the] burdens that might have been assumed by civilian agencies in the past ... [Forced by circumstances, our brave men and women in uniform have stepped up to the task, with field artillery-men and tankers building schools and mentoring city councils – usually in a language they don't speak. ... But it is no replacement for the real thing – civilian involvement and expertise.
— Robert Gates, US Secretary of Defense, November 2007 [xxix]

This report concludes that there are **three important gaps** in existing efforts to manage the CIVMIL conundrum.

1. **Safeguarding humanitarian action** – Major stakeholders, such as donor and host governments, are demonstrating either an unwillingness to respect, or lack of understanding around, the need for NGOs to maintain the necessary independence and impartiality for humanitarian work to be undertaken.

2. **Field mechanisms** – Major actors, such as donor governments and the UN, have not committed adequate resources to assisting NGOs in their liaison with military actors and ability to find solutions to insecurity in the field.

3. **Coherence** – Aid agencies remain inconsistent in their approach to CIVMIL engagement, complicating efforts to harmonise aid delivery and to ensure that it remains as unpoliticised as possible. Peak NGO bodies are failing to incorporate the smaller NGOs that are necessary to building such coherence.

The importance of **context analysis** was a recurring theme across much of the data. It is of particular relevance and importance when considering strategies and guiding principles for engaging with host government forces and police functions. An understanding of not just the external operating context but also the internal staffing management context is fundamental to ensuring that any engagement with armed actors is strategic, appropriate and will ultimately result in increased protection for communities.

The other key finding to emerge is that some of the co-ordinating agencies – even government ones – are **aspirational** – i.e. they are not working yet as they should be. As a result, CIVMIL engagement relies on relationships, or the **'people factor'**, which is why exercises during peacetime become so important. Engagement with security actors in such an environment enables NGO staff to build the relationships necessary for smoother co-existence, co-ordination, or co-operation in theatre.

The following recommendations seek to respond to these challenges:

To the international community

- **Promote and encourage dialogue** between militaries and humanitarian actors in all circumstances, but always with the clear objective of protecting civilians, meeting the humanitarian imperative, and enhancing mutual understanding of roles and mandates.

- **Support the appropriate mechanisms for dialogue**, such as that provided by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to fulfil this role wherever it is present.

- **Ensure OCHA's independence from political and military dimensions**, by not placing it under the authority of a UN official who serves a dual political/military and humanitarian role.

- **Establish international guidelines on how humanitarian actors should relate to international and domestic police forces.**

10 Conclusion and recommendations

To donors

- **Provide the necessary resourcing (through funding and training)** to reflect the importance of CIVMIL coordination.

- **Consult the NGO community more widely** in the development of whole-of-government approaches to fragile contexts.

- **Encourage OCHA to develop guidelines** for humanitarian agency interaction with **host country militaries in disaster response**.

To NGOs

- **Engage more systematically on issues of policing** because of the critical transitional role that police play in transforming situations of militarised conflict to socialised law and order.

- **Prioritise the need for improved context analysis** when making decisions around CIVMIL engagement.

- **Explore ways to collaborate with other agencies**, through open information sharing, so that the humanitarian community can reach a more robust position of 'principled pragmatism' in its CIVMIL engagement.

Annex 1:

World Vision country offices included in the study, by WV context assessment

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Physical Need	High	High	Medium	Low-Medium	Medium	Low
Social Stability	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	High	High

1	2	3	4	5	6
Afghanistan	**Angola**	Haiti	Albania	Chile	**Australia**
Bangladesh	Cambodia	**Iraq**	Armenia	Costa Rica	Austria
Burundi	India	**Jerusalem WBG**	**Azerbaijan**	Mongolia	Canada
Chad	Laos	**Kenya**	**Bolivia**	Montenegro	Denmark
DR Congo	Mali	**Lebanon**	Bosnia-Herzegovina	South Africa	Finland
Ethiopia	Mauritania	North Korea	Brazil		France
Liberia	**Mozambique**	**Solomon Islands**	China		Hong Kong
Malawi	Rwanda	**Sri Lanka**	**Colombia**		Ireland
Myanmar	Tanzania	Uzbekistan	Cyprus		**Japan**
Nepal	Zambia	**Zimbabwe**	Dominican Republic		Netherlands
Niger			Ecuador		New Zealand
Pakistan			**El Salvador**		Singapore
Sierra Leone			**Georgia**		South Korea
Somalia			Ghana		Spain
Sudan			Guatemala		Switzerland
Timor-Leste			Honduras		Taiwan
Uganda			**Indonesia**		**United Kingdom**
			Iran		**United States**
			Kosovo		
			Lesotho		
			Malaysia		
			Mexico		
			Nicaragua		
			Papua New Guinea		
			Peru		
			Philippines		
			Romania		
			Russia		
			Senegal		
			Swaziland		
			Thailand		
			Vanuatu		
			Viet Nam		

Endnotes

i
Rana, Raj & Frank Reber (2007) 'CIVMIL Relations: Discussion Paper for NGO VOICE Seminar on Civil-Military Relations,' 7.

ii
Commissioned research to date has tended to centre on CIVMIL challenges in Afghanistan – due to the scale of the emergency there and controversial attention it has received through the presence of military-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and the issue of private security companies (PSCs) sharing the same space as humanitarians. See BAAG-ENNA (2008) 'Aid and Civil-Military Relations in Afghanistan: BAAG and ENNA Policy Briefi ng'; Save the Children (2004) 'Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian- Military Relations in Afghanistan'.

iii
In a recent briefing to the NGO sector in Nairobi on the US military's new Africa Command (AFRICOM), USAID Executive Civil Military Counselor (CENTCOM) announced that USAID's new CIVMIL guidelines and policy considers recent inter-agency experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq as 'aberrations', and instead uses Kosovo, Colombia and the Trans-Sahel Counter-Terrorism Partnership as models.

iv
Apthorpe, Raymond (2007) 'Submission to the Inquiry into Australia's Involvement in Peacekeeping Operations (Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade),' p.5, accessible at http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/ Committee/FADT_CTTE/peacekeeping/submissions/sub32.pdf

v
Powles, Anna (2008) 'World Vision and Civil-Military-Police Engagement in Timor-Leste,' *World Vision International* (embargoed).

vi
Refer to www.ifrc.org/idrl

vii
The quietest week where a total of 16 activities were recorded was the final week of reporting when participants also spent time in submitting their Final Reflections on the process.

viii
Notes prepared by Anna Walmsley.

ix
Wilder, Andrew (2007) 'Perceptions of the Pakistan Earthquake Response: Humanitarian Agenda 2015 Pakistan Country Study', Feinstein International Center, pp.26-30.

x
BAAG-ENNA, 'Aid and Civil-Military Relations in Afghanistan'. See also larger report – Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, Sippi, Mirwais Wardak, Idrees Zaman and Annabel Taylor (2008) 'Afghan Hearts, Afghan Minds: Exploring Afghan perceptions of civil–military relations,' Research conducted for ENNA and BAAG.

xi
Howard, Russell D. (2007) 'Intelligence in Denied Areas: New Concepts for a Changing Security Environment,' Joint Special Forces University Report 07-10 (December), 28.

xii
English translation of an extract in the French text: 'Devant la presse israélienne, dimanche 5 octobre, le chef de la diplomatie française, Bernard Kouchner, n'a pas démenti que la France ait des contacts officieux avec le Hamas. *"Officiellement, nous n'avons aucun contact avec le Hamas mais officieusement, il y a des organisations internationales qui entrent dans la bande de Gaza, en particulier des ONG françaises qui nous donnent des informations",* a affirmé le ministre. M. Kouchner.' *Le Monde* (2008) 'Le chef du bureau politique du Hamas demande l'intervention de Paris' (6 October).

xiii
While looking at issues of corruption was outside the scope of the research project, these were recognised as having definite impacts on staff and operations on an on-going basis, and as a further reason for an NGO to distance itself from the authorities in question.

xiv
See WV consultant report on Timor-Leste, April 2008.

xv
Brand, Constant (2008) 'EU to look at improving aid worker safety,' *Associated Press* (16 September).

xvi
Rana & Reber, 'CIVMIL Relations: Discussion Paper for NGO VOICE Seminar on Civil-Military Relations,' 15.

On 14 November 2008, World Vision delivered boxes of ready-to-use therapeutic food to the World Vision-supported "Rwanguba Nutrition Centre" near Ruthshuru in North Kivu, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (EDRC) – a region that until this same day was cut off from aid due to fighting north of Goma. The aid delivery required World Vision to enter rebel-held territory. This picture shows one WV vehicle passing a rebel soldier while en route to Ruthshuru. Just a couple of days earlier there was heavy fighting along this road.

xvii

UN DPI (2008) 'Press Release: UN Secretary General's report on safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel' (24 September).

xviii

The UK recently passed a law that requires organisations like WV to ensure that there is a duty of care system in place for UK citizens travelling to insecure areas and countries – at this stage, many aid agencies fall well short of this requirement.

xix

For a comprehensive assessment of the role of IHL in disaster response, see Grombach, Johanna (2005) 'An IHL/ICRC perspective on 'humanitarian space,'' *Humanitarian Exchange* 32 (Dec): 24-26.

xx

Brand, 'EU to look at improving aid worker safety'.

xxi

From WV consultant report on Timor-Leste, April 2008.

xxii

Brand, 'EU to look at improving aid worker safety'.

xxiii

This trend predates the post 9/11 world, as illustrated by Mark Duffield in his analysis of the 'security-development nexus'. See Duffield, Mark (2001) *Global Governance* and the *New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (Zed Books).

xxiv

This is despite the commitment by those same donors to the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship.

xxv

Walker, Peter & Kevin Pepper (2007) 'The State of Humanitarian Funding,' *Forced Migration Review* 29: 33. Similar figures are presented in Malan, Mark (2008) 'U.S. Civil-Military Imbalance for Global Engagement: Lessons from the operational level in Africa,' *Refugees International*, 7.

xxvi

Ibid., 1. Furthermore, the report estimates that the US government now provides 'over half of its global aid to 10 countries alone, in contrast to the 5 percent it allocates among the world's poorest countries'.

xxvii

Ibid., 10.

xxviii

Due to the increasing trend in pass-through funding within different branches of the US Government, World Vision US has developed a policy regarding US DoD funding, which is aligned with the WVI policy but provides more pointed guidance for this specific context.

xxix

Gates, Robert M. (2007) 'Landon Lecture (Kansas State University), 26 November 2007, http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199

A tribute

Adan Quresh, World Vision food monitor, died in Somalia on 12 August 2008. Adan will be remembered for his dedication, hard work, and beaming smile which dissolved all boundaries.

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