

An Integrated Approach to Peace Support Operations Overview of UN and International Humanitarian Agencies in Liberia

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INTRODUCTION

Every major humanitarian emergency has its unique method of turning the international searchlight on itself, and Liberia is no exception. Situated in West Africa, Liberia is Africa's oldest republic. However, since the 1990s it has become a preoccupation for the region, the UN and the international community, as a result of its prolonged civil war that claimed the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and displaced a million others within and outside the country.

In August 2003, the departure of former president Charles Taylor into exile in Calabar, Nigeria, brought a re-commitment of the international community to restoring peace and security. This goodwill is reflected in the millions of dollars pledged by donor countries and institutions for Liberia's reconstruction.

The Liberian government, rebel groups, political parties, and civil society groups and organisations signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra, Ghana, on 18 August 2003. In that agreement the signatory parties reached consensus over the formation of a National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), which became effective on 14 October 2003. In September 2003, the CPA was given a boost by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, which passed Resolution 1509, establishing the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), with Chapter VII powers to restore peace. UNMIL's mandate includes supporting the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants, and assisting the NTGL to restructure the security sector and re-establish national authority throughout the country. The Security Council also

charged the mission with assisting in humanitarian work and helping to enforce respect for human rights, with particular attention to vulnerable groups. The 15,000-strong UN peacekeeping force was nearly at its full strength at the time of writing. As was to be expected, the long years of civil war gave rise to serious human rights violations and a humanitarian crisis that galvanised international response.

This chapter looks at the mandates, roles and activities of the UN agencies that are operating in Liberia, and the crucial issue of civil military coordination (CIMIC). It focuses on the impact and challenges in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. It also takes a dispassionate look at the application of the integrated mission concept, highlighting its merits and demerits. The chapter concludes with broad policy recommendations to provide guidance on future operations.

MANDATES, ROLES AND ACTIVITIES OF KEY UN AGENCIES

Pursuant to the CPA and Security Council Resolution 1509 (2003), humanitarian agencies who had left the country during the upsurge in the conflict in early 2003 returned to Liberia in mid-August 2003 to the humanitarian crises that had been precipitated by the fighting. These agencies included the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Aided by the deployment of the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) and subsequently the UN peacekeeping troops and the completion of the disarmament and demobilisation process that contributed to significant improvements in the security situation, the operations of the humanitarian agencies have contributed to the improvement in the humanitarian situation. As a result of the enabling security and humanitarian atmosphere, hopes of a gradual return to stability after fourteen years of bitter strife have been raised.

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

The UNHCR established its presence in Liberia in 1991 and has since evolved and adapted itself to address a variety of humanitarian challenges in Liberia. The primary objective of the UNHCR's work is to ensure respect and active recognition of the basic human rights of refugees, including their ability to seek asylum, and to ensure that no refugees

are returned involuntarily to their countries of origin if they (refugees) have reason to fear persecution. The UNHCR's current role is to support the transitional government to create a positive international protection regime to safeguard the rights of people of concern to the UNHCR – Sierra Leoneans, Ivorians and urban refugees;² pursue efforts towards a durable solution for refugees through the coordinated use of voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement; and facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees who wish to return to areas with an acceptable level of security and basic humanitarian services.

The UNHCR also aimed at promoting community development and ensuring linkage between the four processes of repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction (4R) by implementing community-based reintegration activities in the areas to which refugees return. In Liberia, the UNHCR also supports the repatriation and reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and ex-combatants, under the leadership of the humanitarian coordinator within a collaborative multi-agency framework.

Facilitated by UNMIL's deployment around the country, the UNHCR has established offices in six counties in order to cover operations in all 15 counties. Transit and way stations have been established to provide relief for beneficiaries.³ As part of its concept of operations, the UNHCR purchases and pre-positions relief items for distribution as needed. It has also forged partnerships with national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to implement its programmes. Government agencies that partner with the UNHCR are the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. National and international NGOs that implement for the UNHCR include the Development Education Network Liberia, Hope International Mission, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Liberia National Red Cross, World Vision International and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Current activities include the voluntary repatriation of the more than 350,000 Liberian refugees, multi-agency collaboration to assist the return and reintegration of IDPs, who numbered about 170,000 out of an estimated number of 420,000 in January 2005, as well as the reintegration of disarmed ex-combatants. As of November 2003, there were over 330,000 Liberian refugees in West Africa alone. Of this number, some 150,839, comprising over 145,000 spontaneous returnees and about 5,500 assisted voluntary returnees had been repatriated by the UNHCR within three months as of January 2005.⁴ It is also focusing

efforts on linking community-based reintegration activities to long-term development programmes. This obviously is a result of the stability dividend of the peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)

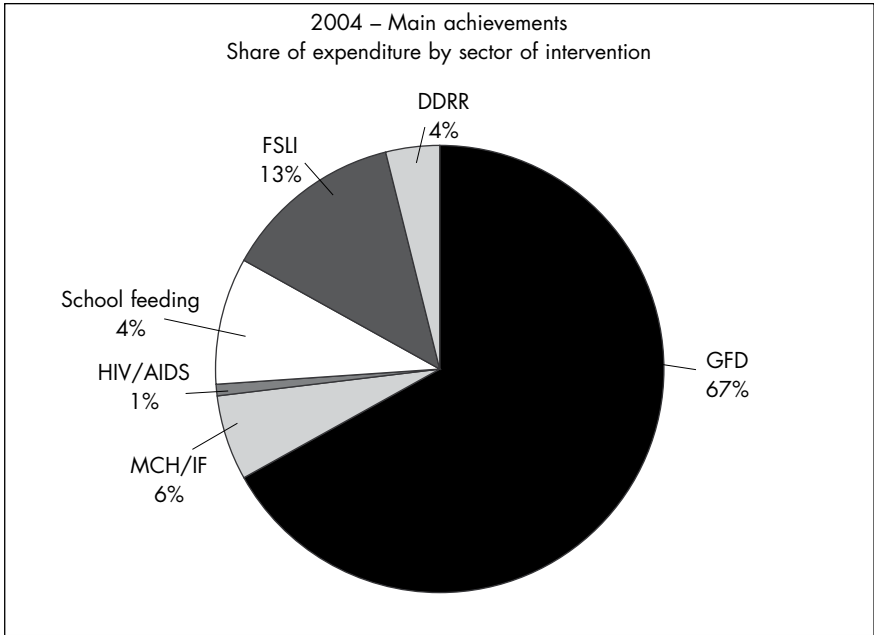
WFP assistance to Liberia dates back to the 1970s and has involved school feeding, food support to health institutions and reforestation projects. In the main, the programme utilises a two-pronged approach in the delivery of its food assistance programme by combining free general food distribution with targeted assistance to promote self-reliance and, at the same time, meet the nutritional needs of vulnerable groups.

Improvement in the security situation first created a pull factor for Liberian refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their places of origin. It also facilitated the resettlement of returning refugees and displaced Liberians, which began on 1 October and 8 November 2004, respectively. Given the improved security conditions, WFP opened seven sub-offices throughout the country in Tubmanburg, Phebe, Saclepea, Voinjama, Zwedru, Harper and Buchanan. Subsequently, its regular activities were extended to 12 of the 15 counties in the country.

Through various feeding programmes, the WFP distributed a total of over 65,000 metric tons of food to a monthly average of 650,000 beneficiaries between January and October 2004, but still requires about US\$18.7 million to avert a food shortfall between November 2004 and April 2005. Primary school children, IDPs, refugees and returnees, and people affected by HIV/AIDS, as well as orphans and clients in therapeutic and supplementary feeding centres, continue to benefit from these programmes. As part of the returnee package, the WFP provides a four-month food ration of 16.65 kg (2,100 kcal per person per day) of assorted commodities each month in two separate allocations. Support is also provided to communities with large numbers of returnees through assistance towards basic social services and agricultural rehabilitation.

As one of its main strategic priorities the WFP launched an emergency school feeding programme on 3 November 2003 to reinforce the efforts of the transitional government towards the resumption of education and rehabilitation of the education system. The feeding programme in schools alleviates short-term hunger in a period of high food insecurity and attracts more children to enrol and remain in school. For 2003/2004, the programme covered a total average of 387,630 children (201,481

Figure 10.1 Chart showing WFP expenditure by sector of intervention



Source: 2004 PRRO

boys and 186,149 girls) and involved about 8,790 metric tons of assorted food rations, costing about US\$5,274,000. This represents about 9% of the WFP’s expenditure portfolio. The WFP plans to expand this support in the 2004/05 school year to 460,000 children countrywide. The chart below shows in percentages expenditures on the various interventions in 2004.

In support of the Liberian peace process, the WFP provides food assistance to all disarmed ex-combatants within the framework of the DDRR programme. This involves three cooked meals per day, which are served to disarmed ex-combatants at cantonment sites and interim care centres for children. On completion of the demobilisation procedures, each former combatant receives a take-home ration upon departure from the cantonment site or interim care centre. As at 17 December 2004, about 102,990 former combatants had received WFP support during the demobilisation phase. WFP support for the DDRR programme constituted 4% of its expenditure (as shown in the chart above). Plans are under way to contribute to the RR process through country-wide food-for-training (FFT) activities.

WFP interventions are progressively shifting from emergency to recovery activities, such as Food Support to Local Initiatives (FSLI) and FFT to create basic conditions for resettlement and reintegration. In collaboration with various partners, WFP provides food support to assist communities to rehabilitate basic infrastructure; to engage in agricultural and income-generating activities; and to encourage vocational training. Over 71,000 people in ten counties have benefited from food assistance through participation in 100 agricultural, infrastructure rehabilitation and FFT activities in 2004. In addition, WFP provides non-food inputs, such as seed rice and agricultural tools, to farmers.

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

UNICEF was created in December 1946 by the UN to provide food, clothing and health care to European children who faced famine and disease after the World War II. Subsequently, in 1953, the UN General Assembly broadened UNICEF's mandate, thereby giving it a global mandate. In 1961, after more than a decade of focus on child-health issues, UNICEF expanded its interests to the needs of the whole child. UNICEF's efforts in protecting the child and ensuring a peaceful environment for his existence and development included the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), the Declaration of the International Year of the Child (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Say Yes for Children campaign, which was launched in 2001.

UNICEF's health and nutrition programme seeks to contribute to wider immunisation coverage and improvements in maternal and child health and nutrition. A key objective is to reduce the high levels of morbidity and mortality in children under the age of five years and women of childbearing age. Rural clinics are critical in this endeavour because they serve as entry points for the integrated early childhood development strategy. The programme also assists community organisations working to improve health service delivery in IDP camps. Moreover, owing to the potentially explosive problem of HIV/AIDS in Liberia, the programme allocates a proportion of its resources to HIV/AIDS prevention activities, with special emphasis on mother-to-child transmission of the virus. The early childhood development and basic education programmes seek to contribute to children's attainment of their cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential.

As a result of the impact of the conflict in Liberia, many children of school-going age are not enrolled at school, while attrition rates

are high. As a general outcome, there are also huge disparities in the delivery of education services in counties heavily hit during the war. The worst affected counties include Lofa, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount. UNICEF's focus therefore is to improve access to basic education for children less than eight years of age, paying special attention to girls. Thus the African Girls' Education Initiative forms a key component of UNICEF's interventions.

The child protection and participation programme aims to promote 'child-friendly' spaces as the entry point for integrated services in IDP camps, aiming to increase the visibility of children, promote integration and monitor the quality of services. The services include recreational 'corners' for children of different age groups, games, literacy and numeracy classes, and early childhood development training and psychological trauma care. The programme also supports family tracing and reunification, as well as advocacy against sexual abuse and violence among children and the youth.

Because of the fluid nature of the situation in the country, the UNICEF Programme of Cooperation has built-in flexibility to enable it to respond to the changing priorities of children. These priorities are contained in the 'Core commitments for children in emergencies'. They are mainly health and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, child protection, education and HIV/AIDS. This is a contingency plan that is expected to reduce the time lost in planning between the occurrence of a disaster and assessment to response.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOS)

The term 'non-governmental organisations' (NGO) refers to organisations, both national and international, that are constituted separately from the government of the country in which they are founded and operate. They normally engage in humanitarian activities in all parts of the world where conflict or disaster has brought unbearable hardship to the people. NGOs work under a set of rules known as a code of conduct. They are different from inter-governmental organisations (IGOs), which are constituted by two or more governments and include UN agencies and other regional organisations, such as the European Union (EU) and ECOWAS.

Over 300 NGOs, national and international, operate in various parts of Liberia. They run diverse programmes in nutrition, agriculture, healthcare, protection, food distribution, education, advocacy and

empowerment.. NGOs serve as implementing partners for the UN agencies and donor agencies such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the EU. They play a key role in the peacekeeping process, especially in the facilitation of the DD and RR programmes.

CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN THE MISSION

Civil-military coordination, or CIMIC, has become an integral part of UN peacekeeping missions. UN OCHA defines CIMIC as the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that are necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimise inconsistency and, when appropriate, pursue common goals. Basic strategies that are involved in CIMIC range from coexistence to cooperation, while coordination is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training.⁵ In its training manual, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO), on the military side, defines CIMIC as “actions – exchange of information, negotiation, mutual support, planning – we take to ensure that there is a continuous process of coordination among all the components (military, police and civilian) of the UN mission and others (UN Agencies, NGOs, local government, parties and community) in the mission area so that we can achieve an integrated and holistic peace effort”.⁶

The peacekeeping force, as well as some UN agencies, has introduced liaison as a core component of the operations of its organisations. This is indicative that the military and civil society organisations and groups have to work together if the common goal of saving lives and alleviating human suffering is to be achieved. UNDPKO missions are usually very large and tend to dwarf UN agencies and their activities prior to the establishment of the mission. These missions, with the military in the lead, seek to re-establish and maintain a secure environment for sustained peacemaking efforts and safe humanitarian activities to take place. There is thus a need to create a link between the military, politicians and the humanitarian actors. All current UN peacekeeping missions, including UNMIL, have on their establishment a G5 civil military coordination (CIMIC) branch, dealing with civil military relations and coordination. The G5 branch serves as the first point of contact with the military. The chief G5, who normally holds the military rank of colonel, serves as a link with all other branches at the force headquarters.

The CIMIC concept was introduced to African peacekeeping missions in the Ethiopia-Eritrea peace process, involving the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE). It was the brainchild of the Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG), which was deployed from its headquarters in Denmark to establish the interim headquarters of UNMEE in July–August 2000, before it was later handed over to the UN. The concept was replicated in Liberia at the inception of the mission, where SHIRBRIG augmented ECOMIL headquarters and was involved, once again, in the establishment of the interim mission headquarters.

The CIMIC concept of UNMIL by definition is the coordination and cooperation, in support of the mission, between the military commander and civilian populations, including national and local authorities as well as international, national and NGOs and agencies.⁷ In UNMIL, the CIMIC objectives are to

- support the SRSG and the force commander in their tasks;
- act as a conduit for information sharing with agencies and organisations in Liberia;
- assist and coordinate humanitarian relief efforts in the mission area through OCHA and its civil military coordinator; and
- provide CIMIC functions in areas as they become secure, down to brigade and eventually battalion level.

G5 CIMIC transitioned itself through the evolving stages of UNMIL from one officer from SHIRBRIG in October 2003 to the full strength of six officers and one non-commissioned officer by mid-November 2003. During the UNMIL evolving phases, CIMIC prepared the ground for deployment through a series of assessment missions throughout the major cities of the country. The purposes of these missions were twofold, namely to determine the state of civil infrastructure and therefore the basis for further humanitarian assistance and to develop contacts on the ground that would assist future operations.

COORDINATION AND ASSESSMENT MISSIONS

UNMIL CIMIC and UN agencies carried out joint assessment missions in the period that territories were divided among Liberia's fighting forces. The key messages carried by the teams were freedom of movement and security for humanitarian agencies, NGOs and UNMIL forces. They emphasised the need for the cessation of harassment of civilians

in rebel-held areas and the removal of unauthorised checkpoints. the local population were sensitised to helping themselves and being proactive in problem solving, thereby encouraging the delivery of aid to their communities. These assessment missions achieved a lot and, with the support of the civilian coordinators for humanitarian affairs from LURD and MODEL, helped to ease, establish and maintain access to rebel-controlled territories. Obviously, there were initial sporadic cases of harassment, but the situation improved over time as UNMIL expanded its control outside Monrovia. For instance, between October and December 2003 WFP food rations could not be delivered outside Monrovia without military escort because the food items would have been looted and the trucks vandalised. In one such instance, in early October 2003 a food convoy to IDPs in Fendell Camp on the outskirts of Monrovia was attacked along Somalia Drive and some food items were looted. The Benin Company of UNMIL had to come to the rescue of the convoy. As the security situation improved, however, reliance on UNMIL escorts reduced significantly, while agencies merely informed UNMIL of their convoy movements. By February 2004, humanitarian agencies could access areas without any escorts, given the security umbrella that accrued from UNMIL's deployment and operations.

LIAISON

Liaison between civilian and military actors sought to establish relationships among the main groups in the mission. This was achieved through the daily humanitarian briefing that brought together all the actors to review each day's activities and discuss plans for the succeeding days. The forum became known as the humanitarian operations centre (HOC), and constituted a hub for the sharing of information between civilian and military actors. UNMIL CIMIC, in a significant gesture, dedicated one officer to the HOC, who effectively represented the force headquarters. UNOCHA, WFP, UN Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC), and UNHCR also dedicated civil military liaison officers for the pursuance of their programmes and agenda.

In addition, a closer relationship was established among the key UN agencies and UNMIL through CIMIC. Together with UNMIL CIMIC, weekly meetings were held for the coordination of activities, especially convoy movement of food and non-food items to IDP camps and other distribution centres. The objective of these meetings was to synchronise the conduct of assistance. It helped to reduce waste, avoid duplication

and competition and maximise the limited resources in the mission. Above all, liaison ensured that relief items reached their intended beneficiaries without risks to staff or beneficiaries.

At the inception of ECOMIL and later UNMIL, the liaison was aimed at the physical protection of the IDPs and refugees in the camps through military patrols within camps and the escort of food convoys to the camps. With improvement in the security situation, following the deployment of additional troops and the removal of rebel checkpoints, harassment in the camps abated and with it the de-emphasising of the military patrols and escorts. Gradually the liaison shifted to coordination of the use of assets or logistics sharing in the mission, especially, the use of military assets (aircraft, vehicles and ships) by the humanitarian community. The reliance on the military's assets also was de-emphasised when the humanitarian community started to take delivery of its own assets. Liaison between the military and the UN agencies entered another phase with the opening of corridors by the military. As new corridors were opened, and the areas declared safe, UN agencies and NGOs followed the military into the interior parts of the country to fulfil their mandates. Once again, Agency CIMIC officers and G5 personnel worked closely to ensure that utmost security was provided without interfering with humanitarian space.

Perhaps the paramount role of liaison in the Liberia peace process was exhibited during the pre-disarmament phase from 21 November to 6 December 2003 and during the chaotic Camp Scheffelin disarmament phase from 7 December to 17 December 2003. During pre-disarmament phase, the ex-combatants, tired of fighting, were ready to disarm before the official commencement of the programme. WFP and G5 liaison officers facilitated the calming of the ex-combatants with WFP food. Liaison again was the invisible hand behind the calming of the ex-combatants in the turbulent days of Camp Scheffelin through the provision of WFP dry rations when they were ready to disarm without much support to care for their basic needs of water, meals and sanitation. The effective liaison between WFP and the military (G5), coupled with the provision of food items to ex-combatants by WFP, contributed immensely to the relatively smooth implementation of the DD phase of the DDRR programme.

COOPERATION

The interaction between the military and civil actors in the mission is geared to saving lives and/or significantly alleviating suffering. To this end, UNMIL CIMIC has been guided by the fundamental principles

of neutrality and impartiality in its interactions with the humanitarian agencies and WFP, in particular. The primacy of humanitarian organisations in humanitarian work has never been lost in these interactions.

Materially, cooperation between the humanitarian agencies and UNMIL takes place mainly in the areas of transport support and information sharing, as several parts of Liberia are not easily accessible by road; the only all-weather roads are the trunk roads from Monrovia through Gbarnga to the border town of Ganta; from Monrovia to Bo Waterside on the border with Sierra Leone in the west, and from Monrovia to the port city of Buchanan. Re-supply to all other parts of the country has to go through difficult terrain, which gets worse and almost impassable in the long rainy season that lasts over six months in Liberia. Major cities such as Harper, Voinjama and Zwedru, which are also border towns with substantial commercial and human activities across the common borders, are hardly accessible by road most of the year. Therefore, the quickest way to reach these cities with food rations and other relief items is through air re-supply or by sea. Because air and sea re-supply assets are controlled by UNMIL, access and protection of civilians could only be enhanced with support from the mission, and the ability to move swiftly to remote areas could be improved if the mission's transport assets were made available to humanitarian actors. UNMIL has been very cooperative, putting its assets in support of the humanitarian effort.

However, the cooperation and coordination between the agencies and UNMIL has generated considerable criticism within and outside the mission area. The humanitarian agencies are perceived to be aligning themselves with the peacekeepers, leading to the loss of their neutrality, impartiality and neutral humanitarian identity and placing limits on universal principled response. This risk of loss of principles is particularly acute as the peacekeepers have an enforcement mandate under Chapter VII.

Nonetheless, an instance of collaborative efforts is worth mentioning. The first UNMIL-dedicated ship, *HNLMS Rotterdam*, a support medical ship provided by the Dutch government, was deployed for assessment missions to Harper and Greenville in November of 2003. Later, the *Rotterdam* was used for re-supply to these and other areas along the coast, and enabled the transportation of a huge tonnage of food and non-food items (NFIs) to suffering and displaced Liberians and refugees along the coast. This was only made possible through collaboration between the UN agencies and other humanitarian organisations. The ship was also used by UNMIL to provide transportation assistance to 225 Liberian returnees who were brought to Monrovia on 10 January 2004.

The refugees had been stranded at sea for four days in Harper, Maryland County, before the ship went to their rescue at the request of UNHCR.

The air assets of UNMIL are also made available to the UN agencies, as the deplorable road conditions impede access to remote areas in the country. On many occasions WFP trucks en route with food aid have become bogged down on the impassable roads. Sometimes UNMIL air assets had to be called to airlift the food to its destination. The DDRR programme in Voinjama, for instance, had to be suspended in November 2004 because 16 WFP trucks became stuck in the mud-clogged roads between Zorzor and Voinjama between 17 October and 2 November 2004. The convoy was carrying over 150 metric tons of assorted food rations for the ex-combatants. Even with the generosity of the Pakistani battalion based in Voinjama, the trucks could not be towed from the mud and the food safely transported to its destination. UNMIL aircraft eventually lifted the food rations to Voinjama for the resumption of the programme. Military assets had to be used as a last resort to forestall unrest and ensure a timely execution of the DDRR programme. As stated earlier, the road network of Liberia has deteriorated to such an extent that the 58-km stretch of road from Zorzor to Voinjama takes a Scania truck two days to manoeuvre through. The 134-km stretch from Ganta to Zwedru is no exception. It takes the benevolence of the Pakistani battalion on the Voinjama axis and the Ethiopians on the Zwedru axis to winch the trucks through the mud for days to get to their final destinations. The state of the roads had come to this deplorable and sordid state, partly as a result of neglect and partly as a result of the impact of UN embargoes on the country. Most of the roads in Liberia had been maintained by the numerous logging companies to facilitate their own operations and by extension rendering a social service to the entire populace. Since its deployment UNMIL has been trying to adopt this role by employing its engineering assets to make the roads driveable for its own operations and as a social service, albeit with difficulties. Most of the difficulties have to do with the incessant rains that wash away bridges and render feeder roads impassable, thus making road rehabilitation projects a hydra-headed task.

In the wake of the crisis in June–July of 2003, which has become known as the ‘three world wars’, the humanitarian community lost 84 assorted vehicles to the rebels. Some of these vehicles, which were brand new, were stolen from the containers at Freeport.⁸ With the cooperation of ECOMIL and later UNMIL, WFP was able to retrieve only six of its 34 light and heavy-duty vehicles that were looted. Likewise some other UN

agencies and NGOs were able to retrieve some of their vehicles with the support of the military. One particular story illustrates the irony of the situation: one of the vehicles looted during the war served as an escort vehicle to the agency that 'owned' it.

Most, if not all, reference materials on the use of military and civil defence assets (MCDA) in support of humanitarian activities in complex emergencies mention the use of military assets as a last resort by civilian actors. The use of civilian assets by the military is not common and seems an anachronism in humanitarian assistance. Incidentally, the earlier ECOMIL peacekeeping force was logistically deficient. As a result, they deployed with the understanding that the Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE) would provide them with logistics support, including vehicles. This support, however, was slow in coming. In the interim, humanitarian agencies, in an effort to fulfil their mandate under the CPA, to save lives and reduce human suffering, had to provide the military with logistics support so that they could do their work. Various agencies and NGOs were forced under the circumstances to support the military with communication in the form of cellphones and radios, as well as vehicles, to facilitate their mobility. The realities on the ground dictated the actions of the agencies to preclude the unacceptable human suffering that was in evidence. Thus, on its part, UNHCR rented vehicles to ECOMIL to patrol the IDP and refugee camps because the rebels were harassing them, taking away non-food items and creating general insecurity. WFP did the same to enable the military to escort its convoys of food rations safely to the warehouse from an outlying pier, as its convoys were repeatedly looted and the drivers attacked en route. The only way to protect the convoys was to arrange for an escort. This was satisfactorily coordinated, and the interests of the beneficiary population were well served.

In the same spirit of cooperation, the World Health Organisation (WHO) sunk a borehole in Tubmanburg in the compound of the Pakistani battalion (Pakbatt 1) for the use of the hospital manned by the battalion. To this end, the WHO regional office in Accra donated US\$20,000, while the military provided labour and engineering services. To further support the Pakistani battalion to continue to assist the civilian population in the area, WHO provided the hospital with medical kits and a regular supply of drugs. WHO has similar plans to support the Senegalese battalion to take over Harper Hospital so that health services can be extended to the civilian population in Maryland County.

The relevance of cooperation was vividly summarised in the editorial column of the WHO Newsletter of August 2004, which stated:

“When the peacekeeping forces came to salvage the relics of social infrastructure and services from total annihilation, humanitarian agencies mobilised resources to rescue the perishing population. While the peacekeeping forces were striving to restore sanity and orderliness, humanitarian workers were concerned about providing food, water, shelter and health care.”

COEXISTENCE

Within the mission area, UNMIL Level III hospital is located in the compound of John F Kennedy (JFK) Hospital in Monrovia, where a medical block within the compound was renovated for UNMIL's use. The JFK and the Level III hospital are thus sharing the same compound and providing similar services to their beneficiaries. But this coexistence has created some problems for those NGOs that strictly adhere to the humanitarian code of conduct. Some NGOs, for instance, are reluctant to access the services of JFK Hospital because of the presence of the military and their guns. They do not feel comfortable passing by guns in a hospital. However, for various security reasons, some agencies had to locate close to the UNMIL forces or within the compound at the early stages of opening up the countryside. This co-location provided the agencies with the needed security, while the military did not have to detail men outside their compounds to perform guard duties.

Humanitarian actors see co-location or coexistence with the military as an impediment and loss of independence. Coexistence, where implemented, is immediately rejected as the security situation improves. Each conflict situation thus determines the nature and scope of collaboration between the military and the humanitarian agencies, with the common goal of saving lives and reducing human suffering.

As part of the cooperation within the mission, some of the defunct demobilisation (D2) sites were turned over to the UNHCR to be used as transit camps to receive IDP returnees and refugees into the counties. D2 sites that have been taken over by the UNHCR include those in Voinjama, Tubmanburg and Harper.

COMPETITION

Provision of humanitarian aid is the preserve of humanitarian organisations. From the perspective of the humanitarian actors, therefore, the primary aims of international military peace-support forces should

be to establish and maintain order and security, to protect civilians and to facilitate a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. Quick impact projects (QIPs) by peacekeepers, as recommended by the Brahimi Panel in August 2000, are thus seen as interference by the peacekeepers in humanitarian work for which they have not been trained. They argue that QIPs are targeted for political gain ('hearts and minds'), undermine consistency and coordination of agency programming priorities, and adversely affect relationships with the aid clientele and increase perceptions of the UN as arbitrary and influential. They contend that: "Such so-called hearts and minds operations are conducted for the sake of publicity and psychological benefits, such as ensuring community goodwill, maintaining positive media coverage and sustaining staff morale. They are partial activities intended to ensure the success of the military operation."⁹ QIPs are thus not humanitarian and should never be confused with impartial principled humanitarian assistance based on community needs and priorities. The Brahimi report refers to QIPs as a means of winning hearts and minds, and persuading belligerents to submit to a peacekeeping operation. This has attracted heavy criticism as politicisation of humanitarian activities. The situation is not made better by the report's definition of impartiality as 'fidelity' to the UN Charter and Security Council Resolution as against the definition applied by the humanitarian agencies as the provision of relief based on need, irrespective of location, race or religion.

To some, QIPs are a diversion of donor funds, particularly if projects are funded through national contingents or through the UNDPKO budget for peace operations. Most military contingents in the mission provide their communities with some social infrastructure as a way of winning their hearts and minds, and perhaps to satisfy an identified need. But Lang (2001), in a Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation paper, argued that "the use of feeding, shelter and other services to legitimise the military mission, collect information or enhance security" is not humanitarian, but motivated by political or military objectives. Looked at from another perspective, could the military in general and UNMIL in particular live in comparative affluence among a sea of glaringly deprived and suffering masses? Could UNMIL forces neglect to repair school buildings to enable children to get back to the classrooms – where teachers are available – support the locals dig a well to provide potable water, provide free medical services, especially in emergency cases, and donate used clothing collected from home countries to the people they live with in their areas of responsibility when they obviously

have the capacity for such support? The question remains whether the humanitarian community has the capacity to meet all the needs of the suffering masses.

Humanitarian actors, on a few occasions, have expressed their disaffection with military reporting on humanitarian issues. There were disagreements on the competence of the military in reporting on issues of malnutrition or the shortage or unavailability of certain social services in the field patrol reports. The humanitarian agencies believe this is their prerogative and should not be the preoccupation of the military. It is not clear whether the conflict here is the sharing of the information, who gets first access to the information or the method of its presentation or circulation. What is probably needed in the interest of the civilian population is flexibility on both sides. But this should not be interpreted as a call for either side to compromise on its operating principles.

THE INTEGRATED MISSION CONCEPT

The concept of 'mission integration' generally refers to the establishment of a UN mission where all UN actors, including humanitarian agencies, the military, civil and political affairs, electoral officers and human rights officials, work together with the SRSG as the overall head of the mission. The concept is based on the reasoning that operating under a single leadership – perhaps equal to the military concept of unity of command – would enhance the restoration of peace and security in failed states, thereby paving the way for an effective pursuit of good governance and sustainable development.

The integration of the UNMIL originates from the recommendations of the Brahimi Panel. In the mid-1990s the UN embarked on a search for greater coherence among its departments and agencies, seeking to achieve a more integrated crisis management system that is capable of dealing with the restoration of peace, security and good governance in failed states. The idea was to pool the skills and competencies of each part of the UN system, so that they could engage in peace-building in an effective and efficient manner. The result of this search is articulated most clearly in the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. The document, dubbed the Brahimi Report after the panel's chairman, Lakhdar Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister and UN envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, uncovered a weakness in the way UN mounts and sustains peace operations. As part of its conclusions, the Brahimi Report recommended a structurally integrated approach

in peace operations, harnessing all UN resources towards consolidating peace and supporting the re-establishment of a stable and legitimate central government with viable institutions. Of particular importance to the Brahimi concept of integration is the notion that humanitarian partners, who may have been used to working in a governmental vacuum or cooperating with belligerents on access issues, must be brought into the fold so that their programming supports, rather than undermines, the gradual restoration of government services, and to ensure that humanitarian priorities accord with those set by emerging legitimate authorities.

Viewed from this angle, there was consensus that continuous independent humanitarian action might undermine efforts to reconstitute the institutions of government. The Brahimi Report postulates the merging of humanitarian aid and political agenda by suggesting a need for an “overarching command and control structure that uses humanitarian aid simply as a ‘tool in the toolbox’ of conflict management”. In the light of this recommendation OCHA Liberia now finds itself subsumed in the UNMIL structure. Integration, based on the Brahimi Report, is now a requisite for all current peacekeeping missions. This position appears irreversible and every effort must be made to ensure that all the integral parts work together to achieve the mission’s mandate.

Integration means that the humanitarian arm of the UN becomes so close to the political and peacekeeping wings as to be virtually indistinguishable, totally compromising principled humanitarian action. This debate has serious ramifications for OCHA, and is one on which the OCHA itself must formulate a clear position. The conflict arising here is placing humanitarian coordination under a political authority. The danger with this arrangement within the mission framework is that humanitarian concerns will always be placed below political expediency.

NGOs, as implementing partners of the UN agencies, also have their reservations about the integrated mission concept. Some NGOs, especially the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) group, have guidelines for their field missions that include participation in UN/NGO meetings, where necessary, but not in where UN peacekeepers carry arms. MSF will not use UN aircraft and will use WFP food only when they pick it up from the warehouse in their own transport. MSF-Holland, for instance, returned a vehicle that had been loaned to them by UNICEF as an ambulance for its health services in Saniquellie, Nimba County. MSF-Holland stated that they were unable to use the vehicle because it had UN licence plates and a ‘UNICEF’ emblem emblazoned on the side. Its

informed position was that it could not use UNICEF assets that 'publicise' the relationship, because UNMIL includes a peacekeeping component and, in the perception of MSF-Holland, there is no distinction between all the UN agencies and UNMIL. In another instance, MSF-Switzerland returned an ambulance and a truck loaned to it by UNHCR for similar reasons. Despite this disagreement on perception, the MSF group, like other NGOs, continues to do business with the UN agency. It is fair to say that there has generally been an uneasy relationship between UNMIL and some NGOs, particularly those with a very strict code of conduct relating to any association with the military. This situation has been aggravated by the fusing of OCHA into UNMIL as OCHA had coordinating responsibilities that were acceptable to the NGO community when it was seen as independent.

In functional terms, integration comes with the designation of the humanitarian coordinator (HC) as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG). This gives the HC the political authority to support humanitarian activities. The dexterity with which the DSRSG/HC is able to combine professionalism with diplomacy will reflect in the mitigation of the tensions, suspicion, competition and the 'bad-mouthing' among the UN agencies and between political and humanitarian actors, as well as closing the perception gaps between the UN mission and the NGOs.

The ultimate objective of integration should be seen as coherence between its political, peacekeeping, humanitarian, and development branches so that the responses of these various elements are mutually supportive in bringing about stability within a specific crisis context, and thereby to realise the full range of objectives of the UN. Certainly, there are circumstances where humanitarian issues and concerns could influence positively the political decision-making process at the strategic level, and vice versa. An example of a humanitarian issue influencing a political decision manifested itself in the NTGL's decision to distribute rice to keep fighters from mischief as they awaited the commencement of the DDRR in their areas. The rebels were mounting checkpoints and extorting money from commuters as their source of livelihood. This extortionist form of livelihood was denied them with the insertion of UNMIL troops in the counties and the dismantling of illegal rebel checkpoints. To stop the harassment of innocent civilians, while providing some livelihood to the rebels, the NTGL and UNMIL launched the food-for-fighters (FFF) programme. Simultaneous food distribution enhanced peaceful coexistence between the rebels and civilians. WFP rations were

given to civilians, while the fighters benefited from the FFF and both parties could 'live and let live' in peace.

The integration idea is not limited to the close-to-indistinguishable working relations between the 'political peacekeeping mission' and the UN humanitarian community. Integration is taking place within the 'military peacekeeping mission'. Branches such as G4 Logistics, G2 Joint Mission Analyses Cell (JMAC), G4 Engineers, Transport Section and a few others are fully integrated at the force headquarters. Civilian counterparts of the military sit at the force headquarters and work with the military. Interestingly, while the civilians are being integrated into the military structures at the force headquarters, besides the guards virtually no military staff work in any of the offices at SRSG's outfit in Sinkor. Integration could be given a boost if some military staff officers did work there. These officers could be attached to the finance and legal departments. Hence the civilian component should realise that it is only through liaison that both sides can learn from each other, based on their comparative advantage.

A look at the UNMIL structure reveals the absence of an economic affairs section. Just as the political and civil affairs, human rights and electoral reform sections are significant parts of the mission, so there is a need to establish an economic affairs section from the start of the mission. Even though the civil affairs section has staff in most ministries and departments, this is not enough. The economic affairs department could monitor the revenue sources of the country, in particular Freeport and airport. They could also prepare the grounds for revenue mobilisation and monitoring the diamonds and timber sectors before the lifting of the UN-sanctioned export ban. The section would effectively monitor and oversee the expenditure procedures and patterns of the government and tailor appropriate measures to curb corruption and mismanagement of finances as part of the overall process of restructuring the government. A report in Liberia's *Business Digest* of 20 January 2005 epitomises the level of corruption: "The United Nations Panel on Liberia has released its findings which indicate that US\$6million is unaccounted for while another US\$3million borrowed from the Central Bank is also missing. Since economic mismanagement and corruption are at the heart of the causes of state failures, it is imperative that an independent economic section is established right at the conception of missions to forestall further aggravation of the mess."

Experience has shown that most UN missions have lifespans that stretch beyond five years.¹⁰ UNMIL had an initial 12-month mandate

that was extended to 2005 by UN Security Council Resolution 1561 of 17 September 2004. All plans in the mission seem to be executed within this short term of two to five years based on the initial mandate. With the experience of the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), in particular, UNMIL will in all likelihood last longer than five years, in order to return durable peace to Liberia and West Africa. It would therefore be advisable that the life of UNMIL should be long enough to enable plans to be made for a longer transition period of ten years and beyond.

CHALLENGES

The complexity of the humanitarian situation remains a challenge to humanitarian agencies. Prior to the deployment of UNMIL, joint assessment missions to many of Liberia's cities were undertaken. While the local populations conceded that they were hungry and needed food and non-food items, they were reluctant for the distribution of such items to be carried out for fear of being harassed by the rebels. To the beneficiaries, the relief items were going to endanger their lives.

Another challenge is perception versus cultural practices. Children normally congregate around troops either out of curiosity or for favours, and Liberian children are no exception. These children hung around the cookhouses of the peacekeepers, who, being parents themselves, at times fed the children from food that was left over. The children, after the meals, wash up the dishes and clean the kitchen compound. This phenomenon, which was associated with ECOMOG and ECOMIL peacekeepers, was termed child abuse by a child protection agency. Their impression was that the children were working for food. Typically of the military, the children were instantly banned from all their premises and the leftover food became waste, while the hungry children hung around the perimeter fences. Good intentions and decisions may have negative unintended results and impact on victims whose interest they are to serve.

Furthermore, there is the challenge relating to the use of force. There are rules of engagement for the military to guide them in their operations in the field. This is a measure to ensure that the barest minimum force is used to achieve a desired goal and avoid the misuse of military assets. In the DDRR chaos at Camp Scheffelin in December 2003, the military came under severe attack from the NGO community for failing to provide them with adequate security. The humanitarian actors were exposed to

such danger and were so terrified that they did not want to have anything to do with the DDRR programme. They became security conscious and demanded maximum protection and assurance before they resumed their duties. The tense situation manifested itself at a subsequent humanitarian coordination meeting where the military came under verbal attack for their perceived failure to provide adequate security during the fiasco. The military were accused of failing to make adequate security preparation and, when confronted with the chaos, failing to use appropriate force to bring the situation under control. The lesson was that enough coordination did not take place before the commencement of the DD programme. Hence, nobody, including the military, was prepared to deal with the chaos that resulted. Following the adoption of appropriate measures, the DD programme was restarted in April 2004.

Collaborative efforts stand the risk of a clash of cultures between the peacekeepers and humanitarian agencies. During the November–December 2003 relocation of IDPs from major public buildings in Monrovia (termed ‘irregular shelters’) to recognised camps, the culture clash manifested itself in the use of military assets to support the relocation in the early days of the exercise. Amid principled protest, military vehicles were reluctantly being used to convey the IDPs as a matter of last resort. The tensions were exacerbated when the agencies concerned with the protection of displaced persons and refugees objected to the presence of the armed men on the vehicles as escorts. Uniformed men as escorts were to be tolerated, but not with their weapons. The military’s response was that the weapon was part of the soldier’s kit, therefore doing away with it would amount to ‘disarmament’ and improper dressing.

MERITS OF THE INTEGRATED MISSION CONCEPT

Application of the integrated mission concept is best evidenced in the security set up. The Security Management Team (SMT) is composed of the UN Country Team made up of heads of all the UN agencies and their security officers, the UNSECOORD, the chief security officer of UNMIL, and UNMIL headquarters. It is chaired by the SRSG and, in his absence, by the DSRSG. As a result, a common security system is operating in the country and this makes monitoring easier, as all UN personnel have the same set of rules; though UN agency staff are under stricter minimum operating security standards. For instance, except for duty personnel, all UN personnel and vehicles are under a midnight to 05:00 curfew in the country.

Integration encourages the use of common resources such as communications, air and sea assets, and medical facilities. This removes cost duplication and facilitates standardisation of facilities. If all UN agencies patronise the UNMIL Level III hospital, it maximises the use of the facilities and staff. Likewise, the WFP Humanitarian Air Service could use UNMIL air operations facilities and vice versa. One significant outcome of integration is the ease with which humanitarian actors have access to UNMIL assets. This would have been more difficult, but for the concept and the position of influence occupied by the HC as the DSRSG.

The establishment of the CIMIC in UNMIL, UNMIL Force and UN agencies provides avenues for sharing information and coordination. Generally, integration would facilitate a common strategic vision and allow for overall direct management of UN System resources.

DEMERITS

Integration means that humanitarian decisions will be made by politicians most of the time and, at one stage, by the military when the force commander acts as the SRSG or when the military have to clear and declare areas safe before humanitarian agencies commence their activities. Some NGOs are not comfortable with the idea and practice of their humanitarian operations being juxtaposed too closely to military operations. In their thinking, integration gives the wrong signal that UN agencies are 'militarised' and this has led to a certain degree of non-cooperation.

CONCLUSION

Civil military coordination has gradually become part of peace-support operations. The importance of this alliance between military and civilian actors in failed or failing states cannot be over-emphasised. It will continue to take their collaborative effort to bring much-needed peace to the trouble spots of the world. It is therefore imperative that civil-military relations between the military and humanitarian actors are well structured and coordinated in a manner that will serve the overall interest of the beneficiaries, without creating animosity between the actors. The situation where some humanitarian actors, informed by their principles, view the military as intruders and their activities as non-humanitarian, and therefore vehemently resist any association with them, except to

seek their protection in crises, needs to be reviewed towards 'unity in diversity' rather than isolation. This relationship is achievable through the training and early deployment of professional CIMIC practitioners in the field by both the military and humanitarian organisations.

Peacekeepers undertake quick impact projects (QIPs) in their areas of responsibility as part of their contribution towards the protection of civilians and the rehabilitation of the shattered lives of the local people among whom they live. Whereas the peacekeepers see this as a responsibility to humanity and at times in direct response to requests by the local populace, the humanitarian actors regard QIPs as misplaced and rendered, not as 'humanitarian imperative', but targeted to win the minds of the population as part of their psychological operations. It is undeniable that the services provided through QIPs provide a lifeline for the local populace. As rightly argued, the military will abandon the projects once their mandate is over. It is in the spirit of cooperation and in the interest of the beneficiaries that the aid providers will have to take over the operations of the QIPs from the peacekeepers when they pull out. This could be achieved in the spirit of greater cooperation and collaboration.

The integration of the UNMIL has its origins in the recommendations of the Brahimi Panel. The concept envisions a mission where all UN actors, including humanitarian agencies in particular, the military, civil and political affairs, electoral officers and human rights officials work with the SRSG as the overall head of the mission. It is believed that under a single leadership peace and security will be restored in states with failed institutions and decayed infrastructure so that the common goal of good governance and sustainable development will be pursued and achieved more effectively. The practice of integration in UNMIL is perceived to have brought the UN humanitarian arm so close to the political and peacekeeping wings as to be virtually indistinguishable. This is evidenced in the way OCHA was collapsed into the UNMIL structure. As a result, some NGOs, with strict adherence to the code of conduct, have found it difficult to continue overt operations with UN agencies as they are seen to be becoming bedfellows of politicians and the military.

In spite of the differences, the concept of mission integration is here to stay. Consequently, there is need for flexibility, especially on the part of the humanitarian community. The benefits of a unified leadership, common use of resources, minimising duplication and competition far outweigh the costs or perception of placing humanitarian assistance under a political authority. It is important that the humanitarian

actors strategise on how to work effectively within this dispensation without compromising on the tenets of the code of conduct and the humanitarian charter.

Experience with UN missions has shown that only a few missions, mostly observer missions, last for fewer than five years, with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) being in its 27th year. Experience has also shown that the initial mandates of almost all missions are between one and two years and they are renewed every six months thereafter. This allows for only short-term planning. Thus, in order to consolidate the foundations of good governance, respect for human rights, rule of law and economic development in a failed state would require an initial mandate of no fewer than five years as a minimum

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The concept of mission integration needs to be streamlined and validated against perceptions of incongruence. NGOs and UN agencies should therefore adapt and work out flexible mechanisms on how to operate with integrated missions without compromising on basic principles. Lessons learned from integrated missions should be shared as early as possible so that they could be employed to improve on ongoing missions and to develop emerging ones. The best option of the humanitarian agencies is to analyse carefully the lessons that have been learned and advocate structures and approaches that optimise the gains.

Military force and humanitarian assistance should be treated as complementary tools. Efforts must be made at the Secretary General's level to reinforce the complementarities of the two institutions on the establishment of a mission. Additional mechanisms should be explored to enhance civil military cooperation (taught by Military Civilian Defence unit of OCHA), without attempting to restrict the military to the security corner where 'they belong.' Humanitarian agencies should discuss their agency principles with the military and develop common *modus operandi*.

An economic affairs section should be established within UNMIL (and in future missions) to reorganise the financial structures of the country. This will help to reshape the finances of the country, curb corruption and lay a solid financial foundation for the new Liberia.

Initial mission mandates should be for five years to allow for effective medium to long-term planning. Five-year initial mandates will encourage all stakeholders, donors, cooperating partners and the government to

plan better and remove the fundamental causes of the conflict in order to lay a lasting foundation for the shared vision of economic growth, good governance, rule of law and sustainable development.

NOTES

- 1 Major (Retired) Albert Fiawosime has been the civil military liaison officer of the World Food Programme in Liberia since August 2003. He was previously a World Vision International relief manager for the southern sector of Ghana, following his retirement from the Ghana Armed Forces in 2002.
- 2 Urban refugees in this context refer to refugees of different nationalities who fled their country of origin due to fear of persecution on convention (1951) or mandate (non-prima-facie) grounds and who find themselves in the capital, Monrovia.
- 3 Way stations are temporary stopover shelters for refugees en route to transit centres where they are given hot mails, medical and immigration screening and assistance package.
- 4 See relevant GIS Unit data on UNHCR Liberia,
- 5 Civil military relationship in complex emergencies, An IASC reference paper, June 2004.
- 6 DPKO Standardised Generic Training Module (SGTM) 10, UN Civil Military Coordination.
- 7 CIMIC in UNMIL at +90, CIMIC Conference dated 6 January 2004.
- 8 This is an example of theft under the 'Do No Harm' project and constitutes resource transfer that inadvertently contributed to fuelling the conflict.
- 9 Barry J and Jefferys A, A bridge too far, aid agencies and the military in humanitarian response, The Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN), 2002.
- 10 A few missions that folded within fewer than five years include: United Nations Yemen Observer Mission (UNYOM) (1963–1964), United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) (1989–1990), United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) (1992–1993), and United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) (1993–1996).