

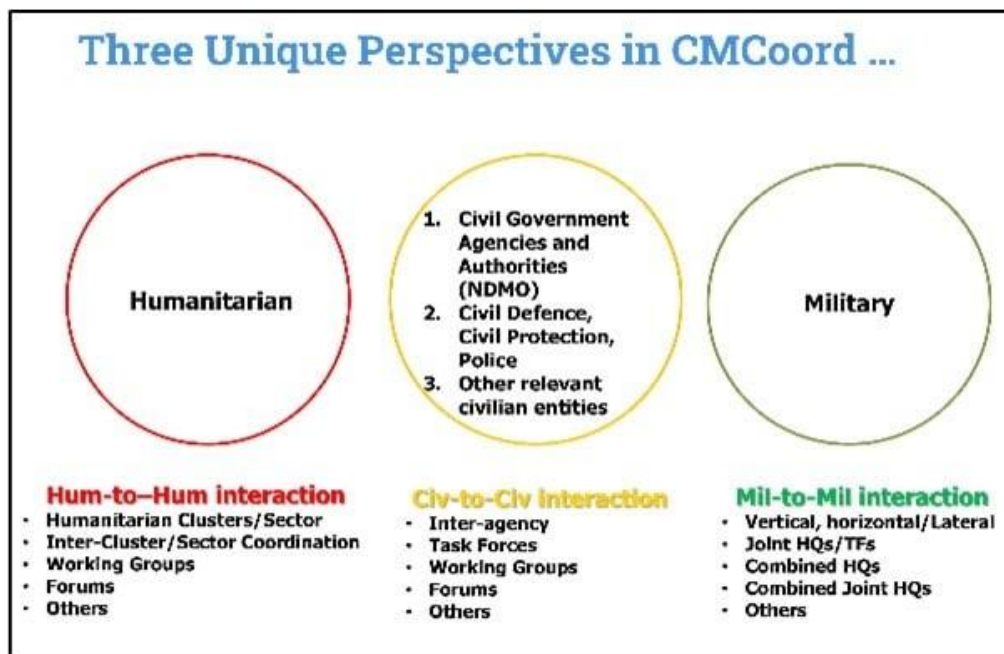
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HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION (CMCOORD): AN ESSENTIAL COORDINATION SERVICE IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

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Climate change is an existential threat that requires an “all-hands-on-deck” approach from the national to organisational and the individual level. **RONALDO REARIO** avers that mainstreaming efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination work contributes to global efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C.



A breakdown of how Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) encompass three unique perspectives. *Image by the author.*

A Snapshot of Where We Are

The world's first "global stocktake" in the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) recognised the need to cut global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 43% by 2030, compared to 2019 levels, to limit global warming to 1.5°C. COP28 noted that Parties are off track when it comes to meeting their Paris Agreement goals. GHG emissions, typically measured in gigatons of CO₂ warming equivalent (GtCO₂e), was 49.8 GtCO₂e in 2019; a 43% cut translates to a reduction of 21.414 GtCO₂e and a target of 0.0155 GtCO₂e (or 15.5 Megaton [MtCO₂e]) per country annually.

Given this enormous reduction target, how can we complement global efforts and apply the whole-of-society approach to reducing GHG emissions down at the organisational and individual level? More specifically, how can Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) contribute to these efforts?

CMCoord as a Coordination Service

CMCoord is the essential dialogue and appropriate interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies, necessary to protect and promote the Humanitarian Principles, avoid competition, minimise inconsistency, and as appropriate, pursue common goals.

CMCoord is also a coordination service that brings together the **humanitarian, civil-government, and military perspectives** in preparedness and response to natural, environmental, and technological (NEaT) emergencies where national and/or foreign military and civil defence assets could be deployed as part of the overall response. CMCoord brings all three perspectives on the same page in terms of appropriate coordination mechanisms, existing procedures and standards, and concepts and principles.

Natural hazards, particularly climate-induced weather events, create more suffering for vulnerable populations, most of whom do not significantly contribute to global GHG emissions. Contributing to reducing GHG emissions in the short- to long-term to save lives and alleviate human suffering must be a common goal by humanitarians, civil-governments, and militaries collectively and individually. At this stage, all organisations in the CMCoord domain are carbon positive; the scale of carbon footprint varies with the size of the organisation and its operations.

A carbon footprint inventory can be done using some basic figures: **one litre of gasoline combusted emits approximately 2.01 kg of CO₂; and one litre of diesel emits 2.3kg of CO₂.** The initial goal is to become carbon neutral (net-zero) from being carbon positive with an aggressive end goal to become carbon negative or climate positive — this is what is needed to contribute meaningfully to meeting Paris Agreement goals.

Convergence of Climate Change Adaptation/Mitigation (CCA/M), Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) through CMCoord

Practical CCA/M measures can be rolled out and sustained by humanitarians, civil governments, and militaries and later scaled up as more financial resources become available. Similarly, HADR-related preparedness and response activities to climate-induced hazards and DRM approaches can benefit from CCA/M measures and vice versa. The convergence of these activities can contribute greatly to the benefit of vulnerable populations and represents a bigger contribution to reducing GHG emissions.

On CCA

The use of energy-efficient LED bulbs, appliances, etc., should be implemented soonest across the board. This includes implementing a transition plan for the use of solar panels in offices in combination with clean energy sources, if available, especially for isolated offices dependent on diesel-powered generators. This transition minimises GHG emissions and cut costs on diesel and its transport. All organisations need to embark on a re-fleeting programme that invests in hybrid and electric vehicles with a medium- to long-term goal of net-zero emission.

All organisations need to maintain a carbon footprint baseline of current or future operations to maintain awareness and have a basis for carbon offset efforts. This particularly applies to militaries that emit significant GHGs in conducting their activities, including HADR operations, on land, at sea, and air. At the individual level, staff should have a corresponding family transition plan from carbon positive to carbon neutral, as a minimum. Everyone must walk the talk.

On CCM

Explore “cash for planting” modalities for able and willing displaced adults or vulnerable community members to support reforestation and/or afforestation efforts. Funding sources should be explored for tailored “cash for planting” programmes, where feasible. Civil governments should identify areas that need reforestation and prioritise the use of endemic trees. Reforestation helps mitigate the impact of potential flashfloods, flooding, and landslides, promoting resilience of nearby communities from hydro-meteorological hazards.

Idle government lands should likewise be identified for afforestation, planting endemic and optimally carbon-absorbing trees that will later serve as carbon sinks. Part of this afforestation programme is to identify custodian community/ies that could later be beneficiaries of carbon compensation schemes as a form of livelihood.

Similarly, militaries should identify camps, bases, and reservations that need reforestation and afforestation. Militaries around the world have huge reservations. Idle and vacant parts of reservations that are feasible for afforestation can serve as dedicated carbon sinks for the military. As they are huge carbon emitters, militaries need to be aggressive in creating carbon sinks. This should be an integral part of the military’s concept of climate security.

On HADR

National Disaster Management Organisations (NDMOs) and/or militaries need to

regularly organise preparedness exercises for recurring climate change-induced hazards that includes the promotion of [climate literacy](#). Humanitarians likewise need to participate and maintain climate literacy. Responding organisations need to be aware of their operations' carbon footprint to know the amount of emission that needs offsetting. It is imperative that organisations stick to needs-based HADR operations to avoid unwanted GHG emissions for non-lifesaving or unneeded activities. The dictum “right assistance to the right people at the right time, in the most appropriate way” applies to HADR operations as viewed from a CCA/M lens.

On DRM

National and sub-national DMOs need to lay down government risk reduction programmes to inform actors that are able and willing to contribute to reducing vulnerability of populations. NDMOs should lead the way in identifying areas that require structural and non-structural risk mitigation interventions, giving priority to populations exposed to recurring climate-induced hazards. Planting of [mangrove trees](#) boosts CCM and DRM efforts by serving as a natural [barrier for floods and storm surges](#). Identified interventions need to be incorporated in annual budgeting processes with clear performance indicators.

Militaries should apply a similar approach for their camps, reservations, and adjacent communities. Across the board, organisations need to consistently be aware of the carbon footprint of their DRM activities to keep track of the amount of GHG emissions.

The Current Paradigm and Choices

Climate change is an existential threat to the planet, and it will heal itself with or without its occupants' participation. This threat needs to be seen, understood, and acted upon through a holistic lens that draw complementarities, avoids duplication, and ensures consistency of the collective effort. It is likewise an urgent humanitarian, governance, and national security issue. It is now a choice for organisations in the CMCoord domain to be part of the problem or the solution. CMCoord as a coordination service is a part of the solution and strives to contribute to the collective effort.

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