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The Role of the Military in Humanitarian Crises Response: A Case for West Africa

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THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES RESPONSE:

A CASE FOR WEST AFRICA

This paper is the product of research conducted during attachment to ECOWAS as part FOREWARN Programme. Any errors contained therein are the fault of the author

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Abstract

States are increasingly following a trend of utilising military assets in responding to humanitarian emergencies across the globe. Although much of the involvement of the military has been restricted to complex emergencies, the trend has come under serious scrutiny by international humanitarian agencies as to what should be the role of the military. Traditional humanitarian actors have been wary of the level of involvement of the military, the fear being that an extension of such role into the humanitarian arena will detract from the effectiveness of their primary role of defending the territorial integrity of a state. Also, it is feared that since conventional military training and standards of conduct are different from those of civilian humanitarian workers, military involvement will compromise the values of humanitarian work, and jeopardise the safety of humanitarian workers and civilian populations.

The Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs at the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has the mandate to develop the capacity to efficiently undertake humanitarian actions that would alleviate the suffering of populations in the region and restore life to normalcy in the event of crises, conflict and disaster. The ECOWAS Emergency Response Team (EERT) was set up in 2006 for the purpose of ensuring relief of human suffering during and after emergency situations, and its work covers conflict, natural disasters, man-induced disasters and protection of refugees. Although Articles 22 and 41 of the ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (the Mechanism) of 1999 gives humanitarian mandate to the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF, formerly the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group ECOMOG), the ESF is yet to become fully operational and its engagement in this area has not been quite visible or tested.

To inform the conception, development and operation of relevant ECOWAS structures for dealing with humanitarian crises, this paper examines two crucial issues: (1) the level and extent of coordination between the military and civilian components of the inchoate ESF in the face of growing need for humanitarian intervention in the region, for instance in supporting humanitarian efforts in complex emergencies; and (2) the link between early warning by the ECOWAS Observation and Monitoring Centre (OMC) and early response by the EERT and ESF in dealing with humanitarian challenges in the region. The thrust of this research is to throw light on the existing capacities and gaps with respect to military involvement in humanitarian crises in the ECOWAS region, and potential levels of collaboration and coordination that could support effective response to disasters and humanitarian crises in the region.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPF	ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
EERT	ECOWAS Emergency Response Team
ESF	ECOWAS Standby Force
IASC	Inter Agency Steering Committee
ICRC	International Committee Of The Red Cross
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NGO	Non Governmental Organisations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination Of Humanitarian Assistance
OMC	Observation and Monitoring Centre
PSO	Peace Support Operations
UNMIL	United Nations Mission In Liberia

Chapter

1

1.0 Introduction:

1.1 Definition of key terms

It is important before proceeding to first have an understanding of key terms used frequently in this paper. The following are key terms and their definitions as outlined in literature.

- Civil-military coordination: Civil-military Coordination is a contested concept and varies according to countries and or institution.[1] Simply, to understand the coordination concept one needs to note to the combination of diverse parts to make up a unit or the way the parts work together. However, the common definition adopted and which is useful for this paper is that of the OCHA which suggests that is affairs 'it is the essential dialogue between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimise inconsistency and when appropriate pursue common goals.[2]

- Complex emergencies: are 'humanitarian crises in a country or region where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting in from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate and capacity of any single agency and or the ongoing UN programme.'[3] In such situations, there is extensive violence and loss of life, massive displacements of people; widespread damage to societies and economies; the need for large-scale, multi-faceted humanitarian assistance; prevention of humanitarian assistance by political and military constraints and visible security risks to humanitarian relief workers.

[1] De Coning, C. (2005). Civil-military coordination and UN peacebuilding operations. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution.* 5, 89-118.
[2] OCHA (2003*)Guideline on the use of military and civil defence asset to support UN humanitarian activities in complex emergenciesMarch 2003*. Geneva: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). p 5
[3] OCHA (2004) *Civil Military guidelines and References for complex emergencies*, Inter Agency Steering Committee Working Group IASC-WG), June 16-17 2004, p 5

- Humanitarian actors: these 'are civilians whether national or international, governmental or non-governmental which have commitment to humanitarian principles and are engaged in humanitarian activities.'[4]

- Military (actors): 'refers to official military forces of a state or region, intergovernmental organisations that are subject to a hierarchical chain of command whether armed or unarmed. They may include actors such as local or national military, multinational forces, regional troops and other formally organised troops.' [5]

1.2 Global practice of military involvement in humanitarian crises response and the state of affairs in West Africa

The complex nature and growing impacts of humanitarian crises in certain parts of Asia and America have constrained governments to increasingly involve the military in humanitarian situations, including responding to disasters. The reasons are more or less obvious. Firstly, the need for emergency relief often arises in areas of ongoing conflict or violence; secondly, in the context of large scale disasters occurring in difficult terrain, the capacity of civilian organisations with a humanitarian mandate is usually stretched with respect to logistics and protection of civilians. Considering the increasing complexity of humanitarian emergencies in the world today vis-à-vis the shortage of capabilities to deal with them, the use of the military has, in so many cases, been inevitable. Military involvement in emergencies and relief activities in some regions has grown since the 1990s. In 1998, military assets were deployed to respond to the hurricane in Central America; the United Kingdom used its military to help manage floods in 2007; and the military was used to conduct rapid assessment of flooded areas in the Republic of Benin.[6]

In West African states, the role of the military remains largely a traditional one: defence and security. The region is now faced with multiple security and humanitarian challenges marked by political instability and military *coups d'état*, post-election violence, a new wave of terrorism and emergencies caused by natural and man-induced disasters. This places a heavy humanitarian burden on various actors including the ECOWAS and the governments of its sovereign member states. ECOWAS has over the years responded to conflict situations in the region starting with Liberia in the 1990s. The single-formula,

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid. p.5-6.
[6] Hofmann, C. A., Hudson, L. & British Red Cross. (2009). Military responses to natural disasters: Last resort or inevitable trend?. *Humanitarian Exchange.* 44. P.29.

militaristic ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG),[7] has been modified to a multidimensional force known as the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) with military, police and civilian components. This is no doubt a step in the right direction. Although the ESF is yet to be fully operational, it raises several concerns including differing standard operating procedures, the need for coordination, and command and control structure among the different components in a joint mission.

It is important to establish a practical distinction between humanitarian response to human-induced crises and relief efforts in the wake of natural disasters. Human-induced crises (armed conflicts) often require the involvement of the military as first responders and major players. Instances of these can be found in cases of strife or armed conflict within a state or between states, multilateral intervention through peacekeeping and peace support operations, for example the United States (US) led war on terrorism and the ECOMOG operations in Liberia[8]. In such scenarios, they can also be tasked with multiple roles in supporting the humanitarian crises emanating from the conflict. The involvement of the military in supporting response to natural disaster is gradually gaining prominence considering the frequency and increasing complexity of natural disasters in recent times. Although humanitarian relief agencies are the primary responders, over time, military assets and military personnel have been used significantly to support these operations. Also, humanitarian crises, especially human-induced, rarely happen as unexpected and unanticipated events. Instead they are usually monitored by focused organisations, thereby giving adequate time to prepare and alert various actors and potential victims. Natural disasters on the other hand most often occur with little warning and lead time, thus they require well prepared structures and significance sources of assistance. Military forces are often seen as a pool of prepared, disciplined, diversified and available source of assistance that can be utilised not only for emergency response but also for stabilization in complex situations.[9] With recent interventions taking a more comprehensive and collaborative approach, humanitarian response can be well strategised and coordinated to achieve a common goal of saving lives and preventing human suffering.

Military engagement in humanitarian crises has increased significantly in the last decade. The trajectory of the involvement of the military in humanitarian assistance can be traced

[7] The Economic Community of West African States Cease fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was established in 1990 to intervene in the crisis in Liberia and this marked the first real attempt towards structured regional security cooperation. Given the extent of the humanitarian disaster, the ECOWAS Cease fire Monitoring Group was founded in 1990 and was deployed within seventeen days.

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[9] Hoff, A P. (1999) *An Analysis of Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Supply Chains*. MSc Defence Logistics Management No. 1 Dissertation, Cranfield University, RMCS, Shrivenham.

to the 1948 Berlin airlift.[10] More significantly, the Kosovo crisis in 1999 led governments, intergovernmental agencies and humanitarian actors to rethink the multiple roles the military can play in humanitarian crises. As an intervening force, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) had to take on board relief supplies for refugees in neighbouring countries. This was initially perceived as "militarization of aid", and not welcomed by organisations working on humanitarian issues. The 2004 Tsunamis and its related challenges helped increase awareness on the much needed involvement of the military to fill gaps in humanitarian response to natural disasters. Similarly the humanitarian community is increasingly facing operational challenges in addition to greater risks and threats to aid workers, and has therefore come to rely on the military from time to time. Military support and protection were sought and provided for various complex emergencies in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire.[11] Also in disaster relief efforts, two military helicopters were used to conduct rapid assessments of flooded areas in Benin in 2010. However, despite its importance and practical significance the relationship between the military and other humanitarian actors is relatively young and not fully explored especially in Africa.

Some scepticism has been expressed regarding the involvement of the military in humanitarian crises response. This stems from the risk of friction in combining different tasks, approaches, training and principles in a mission. Also, deviation from traditional roles of the military and addressing the root cause of an imminent humanitarian situation does not in any way provide assistance or relieve the burden of humanitarian aid agencies that see themselves as the core actors in response. With respect to this, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) views that the use of the military or extensive collaboration with them will jeopardise the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian agencies.

In addition, the military is seen as a specialised unit which restores order or maintains security and safeguards civilians. Their role is considered to be quite distinctive and not flexible. This tends, according to Peter Antill, to fall in line with the view 'that within the army, operations other than the traditional role of the military which are war and peace support operations are not taken very seriously by the military and is therefore not

[10] The famous Berlin airlift was one of the first major responses to international crises of the cold war. During the multinational occupation of post–World War II Germany, the Soviet Union blocked the Western Allies' railway, road and canal access to the sectors of Berlin under Allied control. Berlin was faced with starvation and in need of vital supplies. The airlift carried over two million tons of supplies in 270,000 flights.

[11] Wheeler, V and Hammer, A. (2006). *Resettling the rules of engagement, trends and issues in military-humanitarian relations.* HPG research report. 21, London: ODI.

considered as proper soldiering'.[12] Morevover it also reinforces perceptions that the traditional role of the military should not be stretched to supporting humanitarian response in crises situations. The issues is undoubtedly more contentious in armed conflict settings, where the blurring lines between humanitarian and military actors can compromise neutrality and independence, restricting humanitarian access and increasing security risks.[13]

In the case of humanitarian crises stemming from armed conflict, the major reason behind the scepticism is based on issues of principle, policy and operational challenges. However, most reports or publications point to the fact that increased military involvement enhances the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and is therefore desirable. The contention should rightly be the appropriate level of involvement. While various writers including Jane Barry and Anna Jeffreys argue that the role of the military and that of humanitarian aid agencies should be kept separate, evidence of past operations and their challenges show that the mandate of the two even though different, interlock in so many ways. The ultimate goal of protection of civilians and saving lives is a shared interest for both parties. Despite the criticisms, the military has proven to be a vital asset to humanitarian operations. [14]

In the case of humanitarian crises stemming from natural disasters, the contention has been to what extent the utilisation of military assets is necessary. There is often a lack of in-depth analysis and clear definition of the role of the military in humanitarian crises response. In spite of these shortfalls in a relatively new and largely unexplored territory, military assets have increasingly been used in the past decade and this clearly projects a future trend to response in cases of natural disasters.

European countries have deployed military assets for natural disaster responses in Africa, Central America, the Middle East and more recently Asia. The Netherlands, for example reported 18 deployments between 1997 and 2006. Disasters that have witnessed multiple deployments of foreign military assets include flood in Venezuela in 1999, the earthquake in Algeria, and the Bam earthquake in Iran 2003.[15]

The US Department of Defence has also declared such deployments as core mission.[16] The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a regional organisation also has

[12] Antill, Peter, *(2002) Military Involvement in Humanitarian Aid Operations*, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/concepts_humanitarian.html
[13] Hoffman and Hudson, Military Responses to Natural Disasters: Last resort or inevitable trend, 2009
[14] Barry, J., & Jefferys, A. (2002). *A bridge too far: aid agencies and the military in humanitarian response*. London, England, Overseas Development Institute.
[15] Wiharta, S. (2008). *The effectiveness of foreign military assets in natural disaster response*. Solna, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. P. 14
[16] BAKER JB. (2010). The doctrinal basis for medical stability operations. *Military Medicine.* 175, 14-20.

developed guidelines for the use of foreign military assets in natural disaster support operations including in joint operations.[17]

1.3 The changing role of military assets in internal crises in ECOWAS member states

With global increase in internal armed conflict especially since the end of the Cold War, the role of regional organisations in multilateral interventions such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement and preventive diplomacy has gained more prominence. More than inter-state conflicts during the Cold War, the post-Cold War violent internecine wars - and elsewhere - have however not been contained within national borders, but have had ramifications for regional security and stability. Such internal challenges in West Africa include complex security and political environment ranging from armed conflicts, arms proliferation, armed rebellions, coups and counter coups, terrorism, cross-border security threats, among others. These come with huge humanitarian burden in addition to the political and security challenges.

Given the strategic marginalisation of the African continent in the new mono-polar world, the post-Cold War African leadership was compelled to initiate intervention strategies and mechanism to address the wave of violent internal armed conflicts which engulfed some states on the continent. West Africa has experienced a fair share of internal armed conflicts in countries such as Liberia (1990-1998 and 2003), Sierra Leone (1997-2000), Guinea Bissau (1998-1999), and Cote D'Ivoire (2002-2004). These experiences culminated in regional intervention with some member states providing troops, logistics and other support which put an end to civil wars. However, it also led to the development of institutional frameworks for conflict prevention, management, resolution and peacekeeping. ECOWAS was the first regional economic community to intervene in the affairs of a member state and to seek to prevent internal armed conflict.

Alongside security challenges, the ECOWAS region was also faced with very serious humanitarian crises emanating from the conflicts in member states. Civilians were trapped behind fighting zones, huge refugee influx into neighbouring states and internally displaced persons were recorded. In addition to the threat to personal safety and security, civilians had to face hunger, disease, loss of livelihoods and support systems, and homelessness. The humanitarian dilemma also led ECOWAS to initiate a humanitarian

[17] Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations,2009

policy and programme which sought to address humanitarian crises in the region. The regional force established by ECOWAS and national armies were in some cases exposed to humanitarian issues and for practical reasons had to engage and collaborate with humanitarian aid agencies on the ground to provide relief support to civilians.

The military brings unique capabilities to the challenges in humanitarian crises response. Their indispensable role covers basic operational mandate. In an unstable situation, the military can, for example, restore public order which not only protects civilians, but also facilitates the work of humanitarian aid agencies. The military may also play an essential role in tasks such as creating safe zones for civilians during hostile situations, setting up and policing safe havens, and supervising the safe return of refugees and internally displaced people to their home regions. The following are some of the other roles the military plays in humanitarian situations.

- In both internal armed conflict and intra state conflicts, they are **the front liners and first responders**.[18] Therefore, they can provide relevant information on the humanitarian situation and also do 'first aid' response where necessary.
- Considering the striking occurrence of natural disasters, response is often not readily available and needs to be garnered. The military on the other hand usually has the capacity to deploy rapidly and respond effectively with **extensive expertise in undertaking logistically demanding roles.** Essential logistical equipments which are not readily available to humanitarian organisations are found within the military. Some equipment is interoperable and can be put to multiple uses whether to rescue civilians in combat situations or in response to disaster.
- The military also has in place a **ready pool of experienced logistics personnel** who can be utilised to conduct rapid assessments, support humanitarian operations with transportation, and setting up base camps, and provide services through various units such as health, transport and utilities, infrastructure.
- Due to their vast experience of different terrain, the military can also support humanitarian aid agencies to counter one of the recurring operational challenges which often are **difficult terrains.**
- In addition to natural elements, inaccessibility of some areas as well as security challenges, may often limit the **timeliness of much needed humanitarian response**. Collaboration with the military can help counter some of these.

[18] In Francophone West African states, the *gendarmes* operate more like military police and are relied on heavily for humanitarian assistance and operating in difficult terrain

A case in point is during and after the civil war in Liberia, whereby the majority of the humanitarian projects were implemented by multi-mandated agencies. In extension of their traditional roles, various UN national forces also engaged in numerous activities. Aside from direct assistance (through facilitation, transportation and escorts) given to aid agencies at the peak of the conflicts, the military also took on some projects to address critical areas such as setting up clinics and medical centres, transportation infrastructure, constructing schools etc.[19] In recognition of these opportunities, efforts were initiated by the humanitarian coordination section of OCHA in conjunction with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)'s civil-military coordination office to develop a policy which would outline civilian-military relations in the recovery phase of the country and in addressing humanitarian challenges.[20] Aspects of the guidelines on the use of military assets consists a definition of appropriate and inappropriate activities of the military, consultations and considerations in the areas of ownership, structure and responsibilities. This document provides a fundamental base for the involvement of the military in humanitarian assistance taking into consideration the opportunities, context, potential areas of support, mode of implementation, working groups, interests of humanitarian agencies and the civilian population, and without prejudice to the primary roles of both the military and the humanitarian organisations.

Zooming in to a case of military involvement in humanitarian response, Nigeria has an established framework for engaging relevant actors in the form of a National Disaster Response Plan (NDRP). The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) established in 1999 is the body tasked with the mandate of managing disasters in Nigeria. However, it was soon realised that several other agencies including the Nigerian army, the fire service, the police and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) also have roles to play with some having in place their own standard operating procedures for disaster response. This warranted the development of the NDRP to promote a coordinated approach to response and mitigation..

The NDRP defines the levels of disaster to include minor, major and catastrophic. It clearly stipulates that in the case of any catastrophic disaster which requires massive state and federal assistance including immediate military involvement, immediate deployment of all required support including military will be in full force. NEMA as a primary coordinating body maintains its administrative, programmatic and specialised roles. However, the NDRP also categorises response into thirteen support service areas which are headed by

[19] Liberia UNMIL guide for civil-military coordination, 2006
[20] UNMIL. (2006). Guide for civil-military coordination in Liberia. [Online] United Nation Mission in Liberia. December 2006. Available at: http://bit.ly/10A6nXd Accessed on 28 March 2013.

a primary agency designated on the basis of its authority, resources and capabilities. The support service areas are: (1) transportation, (2) communication, (3) public works and engineering (4) firefighting, (5) information and planning (6) mass care (7) resource support, (8) health and medical services, (9) search and rescue, (10) hazardous material, (11) food and water, (12) energy and (13) military support.

The Nigerian Army, Navy and Air Force are tasked with services 1, 9, and 13 as their primary responsibilities and they also have areas 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 as secondary. The Army additionally has areas 6 and 11 as secondary responsibility.

1.4 Civil-military coordination and its added value in humanitarian crises response

It has been established that the military has a crucial role to play in humanitarian crises response whether strategic, tactical or operational. Thus, it is important that policies be initiated, well defined and rules of engagement drawn up to back up and facilitate military involvement in humanitarian crises. One of the main issues in the debate is how military involvement could be carried out in a more consistent and coherent manner taking into account other actors and core humanitarian principles. Another issue is where to demarcate the frontier between humanitarian and military activities.

Firstly, it is important to have well-defined roles between the two in order to promote common understanding and adherence to varying and shared principles and concepts. This forms the bedrock of coordination and a fundamental step to involve the military without having blurred lines in terms of roles. In relation to this, it also provides an opportunity to combine interests, define policies and practices between the military, other humanitarian actors and the state. In addition, having well-defined coordination will help to identify a range of potential benefits of the involvement of the military in humanitarian crises response. It will also bring to the fore controversial and grey areas that need to be worked on, checked or avoided. This would in turn eliminate potential conflict of interests and address concerns of stakeholders who share an interest in reducing human suffering and saving lives.

Importantly, the existence of relevant frameworks and guidelines is would help to address the plaguing questions on involvement of the military in humanitarian crises response and to clarify roles. However, in cases where such are already in place, they need to be tested to prove their effectiveness or otherwise. The different scenarios, mission requirements

and mandate must be sufficiently analysed for instance in peacetime, stabilisation, peacekeeping, peace enforcement and combat.[21] Furthermore, the mandate and nature of an international mission often changes as in the case of Sierra Leone where UN forces were initially deployed to keep the peace. They later merged into a hybrid mission involving ECOMOG contingents who were earlier deployed. The mandate also changed over time to an observer mission and later to an integrated peace building mission. Although all scenarios cannot be predicted and prepared for, provisions must be clear on evolution or extension of roles of the military in cases of complex emergencies, especially on when the mandate of the military changes while they are still deployed in the field.

[21] Metcalfe, V., Haysom, S and Gordon, S. (2012) *Trends and Challenges in Humanitarian Civil coordination*.[Online] Humanitarian Policy Group, working paper. May 2012. Available at: http://bit.ly/10cCC4u. Accessed on 20 March 2013

Chapter 2

2.0 Review of Regional Policy and Practice

2.1 Policy and treaty provisions on engagement in times of war and in times of humanitarian crises

ECOWAS was established on 28 May 1975 with the primary objective to promote cooperation and economic integration among states in West Africa, through the harmonization and coordination of national policies, programmes and activities. Today, ECOWAS is composed of fifteen Member States.[22] Its leadership, however, realised that economic development and progress could only be achieved in the context of a peaceful and stable region, so there emerged a clear need to prioritise conflict prevention and management in the same way as economic development and integration.

Experiences from four major internal armed conflicts with regional dimensions from 1999 to 2004 and lessons from subsequent interventions led ECOWAS to rethink its humanitarian programmes and approach and possible means of addressing such challenges from a regional perspective. Over the years, ECOWAS has made significant progress not only in collective security but also in its engagement and re-imagination of the role of the military in humanitarian crises response. It is relevant to note two important things here. Firstly, although the following policy and treaty provisions generally endorse a humanitarian role for the military in ECOWAS, the rules of engagement by the military in each case of intervention or assistance, command and control, as well as cooperation and

[22] The Member States include: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Mauritania withdrew its membership in 2005

coordination between and among different units, are usually defined by the ECOWAS Heads of State or Council of Ministers in a precise and time-specific mandate to the mission depending on the context. In so doing, the deference is usually given to any UN resolution or mandate in each case. Secondly, the ECOWAS Standby Force is yet to be fully operational and post-ECOMOG, is yet to be put to the test in terms of the provisions below. This makes it difficult to do a case study of ESF deployment for humanitarian assistance (even if as part of a general mandate) except cases of deployment of a national contingent or the military in a member state.

2.1.1 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution Peace-keeping and Regional Security (the Mechanism).[23]

The Mechanism has served as the pivot for the evolution of a body of related normative instruments and structures which have come to form the core of the regional security architecture. In chapter 8 of the Mechanism, which covers humanitarian assistance, mandates ECOWAS to take active part in coordination and conducting humanitarian assistance.[24] Additionally, article 40 of the same chapter spells out the responsibilities of ECOWAS to: intervene to alleviate the suffering of populations and restore life to normalcy in the event of crises, conflict and disaster; to develop its own capacity to efficiently undertake humanitarian actions for the purposes of conflict prevention and management; and to take appropriate action to rehabilitate a devastated member state.[25]

Article 41 further defines the role of the military in humanitarian assistance in these words: 'the ECOMOG unit (now the ECOWAS Standby Force) shall be adequately equipped to undertake humanitarian activities in their mission area under the control of the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary (now President of the ECOWAS Commission)'. It also further states that 'when necessary, ECOMOG shall coordinate the activities of humanitarian agencies in the field'. In addition to the roles of the ECOWAS force which include observation and monitoring, peacekeeping and restoration of peace, preventive deployment, enforcement of

[23] ECOWAS. (1999). *Protocol relating to the mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace-keeping and security***.** [Online] *Economic Community Of West African States*. Available at: http://www.comm.ecowas.int/sec/?id=ap101299&lang=en. Accessed on 26 March 2013
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

sanctions and embargo, *inter alia*, the ESF has as an integral role, 'humanitarian intervention in support of humanitarian disaster'.[26]

2.1.2 The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). [27]

The ECPF was intended as a tool to operationalize previous provisions in the Mechanism and other ECOWAS treaties relating to peace and security. The Humanitarian Assistance component of the ECPF has the following objectives: to mitigate the impact of humanitarian disasters and emergencies that would result in social and political upheaval; to serve as a bridge between relief emergency assistance and medium term rehabilitation; to protect sustainable development through crises prevention and preparedness; and to foster inter-regional harmony and security through cooperative arrangement to ensure effective humanitarian crises prevention and preparedness programme. In order to fulfil the above objectives, the ECPF identified among others, the ESF as one of the structures whose capacity should be built up in terms of personnel and technical assistance so as to enable strategic planning and engagement with member states on humanitarian matters.

Humanitarian Assistance component of the ECPF further provides that:

ECOWAS shall facilitate the training and equipping of ESF standby units, particularly the civilian component, in Member States in humanitarian relief and sanitation, as well as the design and implementation of quick-impact and reconstruction projects, for their incorporation into missions wherever and whenever required.[28]

This provision not only clearly restates that humanitarian relief is part of the mandate of the ESF but also highlights the need for coordination between the civilian component and other components of the ESF, and capacity building for the civilian component. A review ofESF formation history will reveal the rationale for this. The civilian component of the ESF was conceptualised more or less as an afterthought after the military component was fairly well developed and the police component was still being formed. So in terms of capacity for operations including humanitarian relief and assistance, the provision is a form of affirmative action to

[27] ECOWAS. (2008) *The ECOWAS conflict prevention framework*.[Online] *Economic Community Of West African States*. Available at: http://bit.ly/11LZAwg. Accessed on 26 March 2013.
[28] Ibid. p. 48.

help bring the civilian component up to the same level as the others.[29] Also, the particular mention of the civilian component appears to be an endorsement of its central role in supporting humanitarian relief, but by acknowledging the need for training and equipping of (all) ESF standby units the significant and complementary roles of the military and police components are not overlooked.

2.1.3 Supplementary Act Relating to the Code of Conduct for the Armed Forces and Security Services of ECOWAS (Code of Conduct).[30]

The Code of Conduct seeks to support a fundamental shift in the way that security is perceived, managed, controlled and overseen, coupled with enabling positive change of the attitude and conduct of security actors.[31] It also seeks to enhance civil-military relations in its most fundamental ramifications as well as clarify the role of the armed forces and security services in different situations. More importantly, it not only governs the military but also to other security services including the police, *gendarmerie*, civil defence, coast guards, customs and immigration services, etc. In particular Article 7 of the Code of Conduct on Humanitarian Assistance gives responsibility to the armed forces and security services in the exercise of their duties to provide to all persons in need adequate protection, assistance and refuge.[32] In rendering humanitarian assistance, they shall also ensure that internally displaced persons, refugees, foreigners, stateless persons, minorities, women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities are not victims of discrimination. There should be no discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, age, identity, religion or political views.[33]

Article 17 seeks to regulate the conduct and operations of the military, and mandates the civilian political and administrative authority to ensure conformity to relevant provisions under international humanitarian law, national laws, the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, and the Code of

[29] This emphasis on developing the civilian component is also evident from Articles 89 to 92 of the ECPF on the ECOWAS Standby Force.
[30] ECOWAS. (2006) Code of Conduct for the armed forces and security services in West Africa. [Online] Economic Community of West African States.Ouagadougu, Burkina Fasao. Available at: http://bit.ly/10dybGM Accessed on 03 April 2013
[31] The code of conduct was adopted at the 17th Meeting of the ECOWAS Defence and Security Commission, on October, 2006, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

Conduct. This indicates a system of checks, control and oversight over military actors. The armed forces and security services are also mandated to cooperate as appropriate with humanitarian organisations.[34] The Code of Conduct envisages not only civil-military coordination but also collaboration among uniformed personnel in the context of their complementary responsibilities in times of peace, as well as during crises, social upheavals, or armed conflicts.[35] Article 29 makes it clear that in times of crises or social upheavals, the protection of life and property shall be the primary responsibility of the police and the *gendarmerie* where it exists. In exceptional circumstances, and at the request of the political authority, and in accordance with the constitution, the armed forces may intervene as a last resort.

2.2 Relevant structures within ECOWAS and their mandate as it relates to humanitarian intervention

2.2.1 Regional Peace and Security Observation System (Early Warning)

Chapter IV of the Mechanism provides for the establishment of a regional peace and security observation system (early warning system) for the purposes of conflict prevention.[36] The ECOWAS Early Warning System comprises of an Observation and Monitoring Center (now Situation Room) located at the ECOWAS Commission and housed within the Early Warning Directorate, and Observation and Monitoring Zones with four zonal bureaus in Banjul, Ouagadougou, Monrovia and Cotonou. The mission of the Directorate is to carry out data collection from the member states, analyze the data and prepare reports for the advice and use of the ECOWAS Commission leadership. The Directorate works in collaboration with the UN, the African Union, regional economic communities, research centers and civil society. The goal of the Directorate is to have a fully integrated early warning system by 2013.

[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] ECOWAS. (1999). P. 11-13.

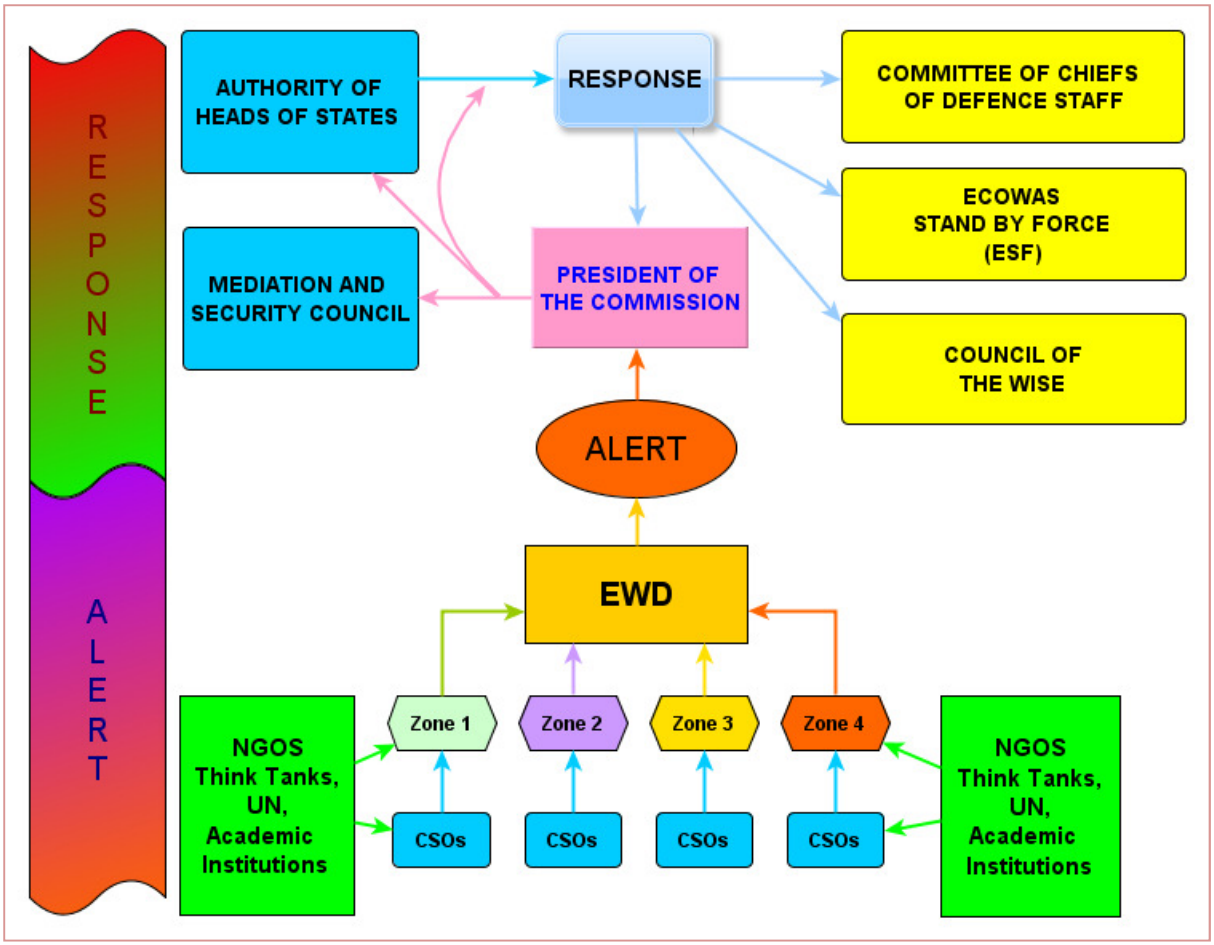


Figure 1: **Alert and response system of ECOWARN**

The diagram above shows the alert and response system of the directorate. The directorate generates its products (reports) from various sources including open sources, interaction with CSOs, National focal points, zonal bureaus and various academic institutions. The national Focal points use a web based system ECOWARN to provide information through Situation reporting and Incident reporting. They do this through a set of 66 indicators developed to cover the following thematic areas:

- Agriculture, Farming, Fishing, Livestock & Mining
- Crime, Corruption and Safety
- Economy, Trade and Manufacturing
- Governance, Political Action and the Law
- Health, Education and Social Services
- Information, Communications and Transportation

- Natural Disasters, Accidents and the Environment
- Negotiations, Mediation and Peacekeeping
- Security, Arms and Armed Conflict
- Society, Culture, Community and Religion
- Women, Children, Refugees and Gender Inequality

Information gathered is further analysed looking at the strategic conditions and trends in the given context to provide a clearer picture of the situation. The report also provides a formulation of options for response for the attention of the president of the Commission. The directorate produces the following reports:

- Daily highlights
- Situation reports:
  - Weekly situation report
  - Quarterly security situation reports
  - Annual peace and security situation report
  - Situation update report
- Monthly country policy briefs
- Incident report
- Early warning report
- Thematic reports

This provides a medium of collecting and analysing information on all the thematic areas including natural disasters like flooding, mudslides that are common to the region. However most often, reports and analysis that are produced from the Directorate are biased towards Governance Political action and Law and Security Arms and Armed conflict. Issues like Natural Disaster, Accidents and environment though sometimes reported, they lack certain technical detail and are most times not analysed despite the humanitarian and security implications.

2.2.2 ECOWAS Emergency Response Team (EERT)

The ECOWAS Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs has the mandate to develop the capacity to efficiently undertake humanitarian actions that would alleviate the suffering of the populations of West Africa and restore life to normalcy in the event of crises, conflict and disaster. The ECOWAS Emergency Response Team (EERT) coordinated by the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs was conceptualized in 2001 on the basis of a memorandum of understanding between ECOWAS and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Its establishment is provided for in Articles 2 (d) and 3 (f) of the ECOWAS mechanism for prevention of conflict.[37]

The EERT was set up in 2006 for the purpose of ensuring relief of human suffering during and after emergency situations, and its work covers conflict, natural disasters, manmade disasters and protection of refugees. Thus, the purpose of EERT is to ensure delivery and coordination of humanitarian response across West Africa. Members of EERT include social workers, engineers, communication experts, medical personnel and human rights personnel. They are recruited from among NGO and government personnel with expertise in the areas of human rights monitoring, civil-military coordination, relief and emergency assistance, peace building and peacekeeping operations, refugee camp management, psycho-social counselling, food distribution management, water and sanitation, disasters management, logistics, governance and democracy, and post-conflict reconstruction and reintegration. [38]

The EERT has intervened in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Niger. It has a focal point in each Member State and a focal institution through relevant ministries working on humanitarian issues. EERT intervenes in collaboration with the humanitarian partners on the ground[39] and the operation of EERT on ground is limited to 30 days. However, it responds to crisis on an ad hoc basis.[40] Once stability is restored, the EERT withdraws to allow the state and relevant partners to take over.

[37] ECOWAS. 1999.
[38] ECOWAS. (2006). *ECOWAS policy for disaster reduction.* [Online] Economic Community of West African States. Available at: http://bit.ly/13aX7hB. Accessed 45 March 2013.
[39] For example in Niger, EERT collaborated with the World Food Programme (WFP) to provide food to the victims of famine.
[40] They do not intervene more than 3 months.

2.2.3 Civilian component of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF)

The vision of the ESF is

"To define, build, organize, and maintain an ECOWAS standby regional capability in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance to a level of self-sustenance in the areas of personnel and logistics support in order to respond to internal or external regional crises or threats to peace and security, including terrorist and/or environmental threats."[41]

The objective of the ESF component of the ECPF, as contained in Article 89, is to "guarantee peace and security in situations of conflict and disaster through effective observation and monitoring, preventive deployment and humanitarian intervention, and to train and equip multi-purpose composite standby units made up of military and civilian components in Member States within the framework of the African Standby Force arrangement". The ESF is comprised of pre-determined regional standby units highly trained, equipped, and prepared to deploy as directed in response to a crisis or threat to peace and security. It is composed of "several standby multi-purpose modules [civilian, police and military] in their countries of origin and ready for immediate deployment". [42]

The development of the civilian component of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) started in 2005 with an experts' meeting. The civilian component of the ESF, being one of its three pillars, is further legitimized by Article 21 of the Mechanism.[43] Furthermore, Articles 89-92 of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) underscore the importance of the civilian component's contribution towards peace and security, and highlight the institutional relationship between the Civilian Planning Element and other ECOWAS structures related to Peace Support Operations (PSOs).

In drafting the ECPF, ECOWAS realized the wide disparity in terms of advancement between the military and civilian components of the ESF, and sought to highlight the importance of fast-tracking the development of the civilian component. Sections 89-92 seek to address these disparities. However, there is still the challenge of a lack of clear understanding on the roles and functions of the civilian component and the additional challenge of how to operationalise provisions of the ECPF mentioned above.

[41] ECOWAS. (2004). ECOWAS stand-by units: Proposed concept and structures. Abuja,Nigeria.
[42] Most Member States have pledged standby police and military units; however not all states have made good the pledged and not all the units are ready to deploy at short notice. The ESF is yet to embark on it's first mission
[43] ECOWAS envisages a civilian and a military component, there is now also a police component of the ESF.

In attempting to draw a line between the mandate of the EERT and that of the civilian component of the ESF, it has been argued that:

In spite of its broad mandate and purpose in terms of responding to humanitarian emergency, the EERT does not serve the same purpose as the civilian dimension of ESF. The EERT is a humanitarian emergency response mechanism and is not established to lead a PSO. Notwithstanding the different functions between the EERT and the ESF, the EERT offers an excellent foundation for the existence of the ESF and also serves as a complementary arm to the operation of the civilian component of ESF.[44]

2.2.4 Military component of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF)

The ESF is a reformed unit of the cease fire monitoring group (ECOMOG) which was established on an ad hoc basis in 1990. The ESF is still in its formative stages and yet to embark on its first deployment has undertake on 3 major multilateral and multi discipline field training exercises. The initiative of the ESF came about from the experiences in the region in the early 1990's. ESF is a multidimensional, multinational and multifunctional arrangement involving the civilian, military and police dimensions. The military wing of the ESF consists of a Task Force and a main force. The Task force comprises of a headquarters, two infantry brigade and a logistics battalion. Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, Guinea (Conakry) and the Gambia make up the West Battalion led by Senegal. The logistics battalion is led by Mali with Nigeria as second in command. The East battalion led by Nigeria, has additional membership from Benin Republic, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo. The ESF Task Force is a rapid deployment capability outfit that should be able to deploy within 48 hours. At this stage when the ESF is going through training exercises and other formative processes, attention should be drawn to its multi functional role which includes support to humanitarian crises. Training exercises should take on board these other functions of the ESF which should be planned in conjunction with the EERT and other key units within ECOWAS. This will enhance its preparedness and properly define roles and areas of support in case of humanitarian crises.

[44] ECOWAS. (2004). p. 25

Chapter

3

3.0 Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Opportunities and challenges of military involvement in humanitarian crises response

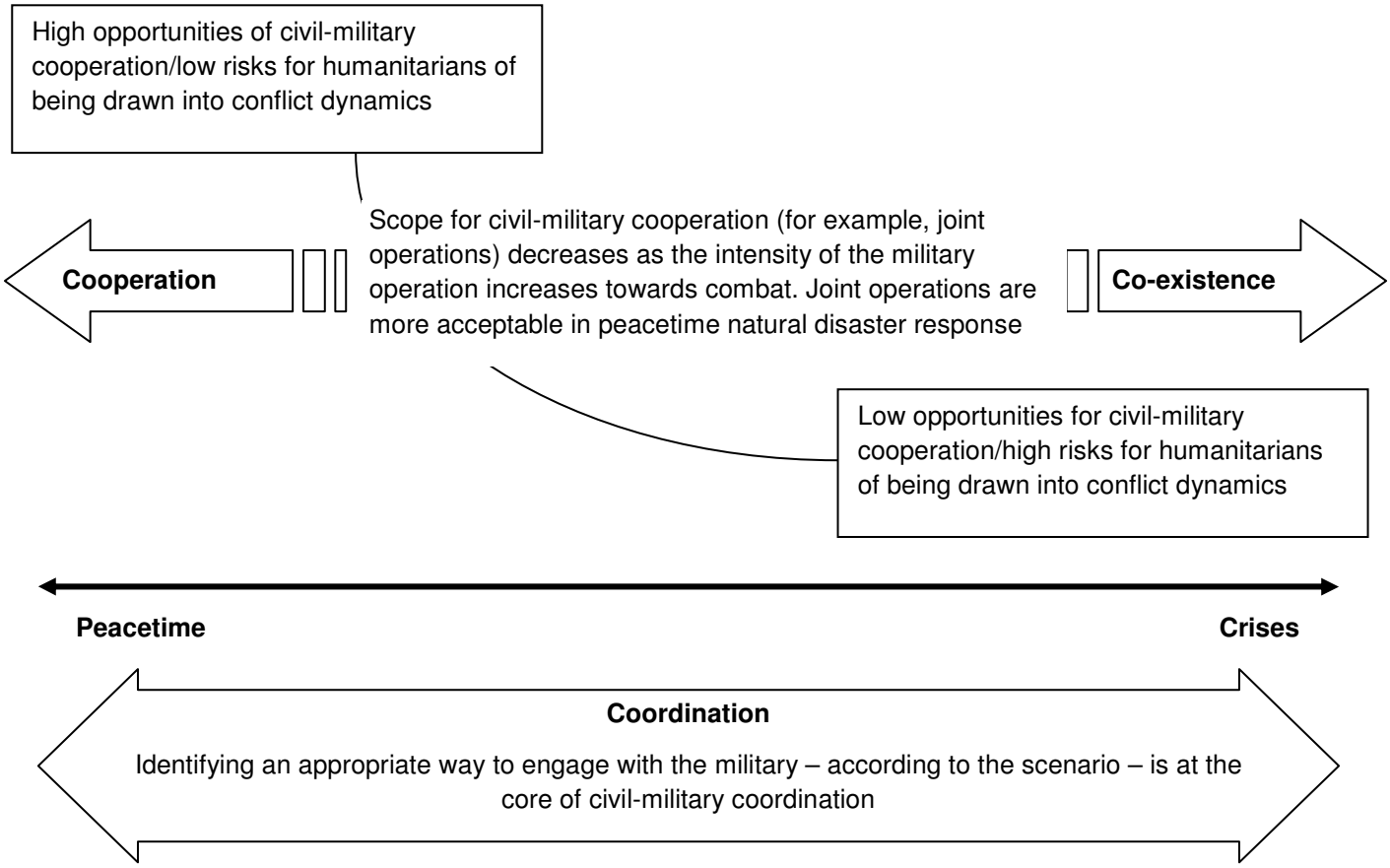
Various opportunities and challenges exist at both operational and tactical levels with response to involvement of the military in humanitarian crises response. In terms of opportunities, three key areas can be worked on to attain cooperation and coordination of activities. These are:

- Sharing of information between military actors, humanitarian actors and civilians. How the information is shared and what can be shared depends on the specific context of the situation.
- Defining roles and support areas of the military and humanitarians. Who does what, when, based on the resources and operational strength in that context.
- Prioritising joint planning, training, simulations exercises and reviews involving the various actors on and off the operational area where possible.

Information sharing is relevant both at the tactical and operational levels. Though defining roles seem to be more relevant for the operational level, for planning purposes, it enables clear understanding of the mandates and principles.. However, efforts should also be directed at joint training and simulation exercises during off crises period. The third element though it is purely tactical, its success and adaptability extend to the practical levels i.e. operations. Therefore, context and practical challenges must be taken into cognisance.

In cases of response to natural disasters leading to a humanitarian crisis, there is often a much more acceptable collaboration given the shortfalls that the operation of other humanitarian actors experience during such periods. For instance, during the flooding in Benin in 2009, an evaluation of the capacities of the military to respond to the crisis in coordination with other humanitarian actors was sought. Such should have been in place before the flooding if coordination had been prioritised. Therefore for response to natural disasters, even though the need is evident, the key elements of coordination are also important and should be considered way in advance. Unlike slow onset disasters that come with warning and lead time for preparation, quick onset disasters like flooding need to be responded to immediately for their impacts to be mitigated. This can best happen when all responding actors are on high alert and there is clarity and shared understanding on capacities, roles and mandates.

Another level of coordination that is crucial is that of joint operations. In such instances, there is either a multi state contingent mainly in the case of ECOWAS or military and civilian components deployed together. This fuses different levels of training, language, values, principles and mandate. It is essential to note that co-deployment hardly functions effectively because of the existence of parallel structures. Therefore a structured command defining primary and secondary mandate, roles and responsibilities is required.



Adapted from Inter Agency Steering Committee, 2008. The diagram above shows the degrees of opportunities for coordination between the military and humanitarian actors looking at suitability based on the scenarios that exist.

Between peacetime and crisis, and from crisis to peacetime, there are varying degrees of security situations that need to be taken under advisement in determining the role of the military. While there are two extreme situations, any emergency could also fall anywhere in between the extremes. Therefore, coordination and collaboration need not be appropriate or practical in peacetime only.

In addition, it should be noted that coexistence could be explored in ways that will be beneficial to all stakeholders including agencies and member states involved. For instance, on and off the field of operations, the various actors can align their plans, have a common understanding and deliver effectively on humanitarian response. Ultimately, the military can get involved in ensuring the security of humanitarian actors in various ways. In the spectrum of coordination strategies, the use of Military assets could happen anywhere from cooperation to a co-existence strategy. Regardless of the strategy,

coordination and joint activities need to happen between humanitarian and military actors on and off the operating zones in the areas of planning, response and implementation, and post-operational assessments. Also, it is paramount for key actors to establish minimum and varying standards of coordination depending on the context.

The default strategy for humanitarian crises stemming from natural disasters should be one of cooperation. This is evidently so due to the fact that unlike cases of armed conflicts, in humanitarian crises emanating from natural disasters, there are less complications or clashes in mandate, policy and practice. The role of the military and its assets is undoubtedly seen and needed. That role thrives in a situation where there is openness to share information, allocate responsibility and share plans. In a complex emergency, co-existence should be the default strategy. In a situation where the military plays an active role in armed conflict, the mere sight of a humanitarian actor in the company of military personnel or vice versa sometimes creates a negative perception of association with the other party. Despite this reality, coordination needs to take place in the form of information sharing – information which could prevent humanitarian actors and beneficiaries from becoming casualties.

3.2 Support areas for the military in humanitarian crises response

3.2.1 Direct assistance

This is one of the areas that the military plays a critical role in humanitarian crises response, yet the practice is almost foreign to West Africa; cases of military involvement in direct humanitarian assistance are very few and far between. Even where there are enabling provisions in the laws and treaties on the role of the military in humanitarian assistance, the military is still mostly perceived as a core defence and security actor. Direct assistance involves face-to-face distribution of goods and services including handing out relief goods such as food and medical supplies, providing first aid, relocation of people from areas of high risk to areas of low risk in cases of pollution, oil spill or wildfires, locating and relocating of displaced persons after armed conflict, search and rescue with helicopters and other equipment after disasters such as floods and earthquakes, setting up tents and temporary settlements, interviewing refugees, conducting needs assessment, etc. However, situations of high security risk like in the case of combat zones pose

threats to the obligation of humanitarian actors and the military to save humanity. Proper coordination between the military and the humanitarian actors would lead to tackling some of these security risks through setting up of safe zones and camps to facilitate humanitarian work. In situations of armed conflicts, the military can provide direct support if they happen to be the first responders either on an assessment mission in a difficult terrain or the human induced/natural humanitarian situation is a secondary problem to an already existing conflict that they are involved in. However, it should be noted that the provision of direct assistance in a conflict situation might compromise the primary function and focus of the military.

3.2.2 Indirect assistance

This is one step removed from direct contact with the population. With direct assistance, humanitarian actors fear that the military will compromise core values of neutrality, impartiality and humanity. Indirect assistance comprises of transporting relief goods, building camps and shelters, providing water sources, clearing mines and providing security/escort for other humanitarian actors, safeguarding air strips used to land humanitarian supplies, providing logistics/information on safe zones for safe passage of supplies, support to the police force in maintaining law and order in cases of emergency, protection of property against vandalism. There is more visible role for the military under indirect assistance as it covers most of the challenge areas that makes work difficult for aid workers both in armed conflict, natural disasters and other man-induced disasters like disease outbreak.

3.2.3 Infrastructural support

This provides support and a safe operating zone for humanitarian actors to do their work. It involves general services that facilitate relief, but are not necessarily visible to, or solely for, the benefit of the affected population - reconstruction of settlements and basic infrastructure after disaster, operating airfields, providing weather information, ensuring access to communications networks, etc. In all of these, a few critical points need to be made. Firstly, even though there is more visible role for the military in rendering indirect assistance and infrastructural support, training as well as joint planning, exercise, can help improve how they perform these roles. It can also help define how they support civilian actors in

giving direct assistance noting the challenges in principles mandate and context. Moreover, training and understanding shared interest can permit the military to step into the role of direct assistance in complex situations. In cases of critical life saving period, absence or limited number of humanitarian actors, high risk security situations, failure to deliver much needed goods and services could result to loss of lives, injuries and suffering.

3.2.4 Protection of civilians

The issue of protection of civilians is mostly related to conflict or combat situations where a dividing line is drawn between civilians and the military, combatants and non-combatants, and different rules of engagement apply. With other humanitarian actors, protection of civilians is considered as primary, whereas with the military it is considered collateral .[45] This however fails to take into account that the 'secondary nature of protecting civilians' by the military is to clear all imminent danger to the lives of the people. This is clearly established in the Supplementary Act Relating to the Code of Conduct for Armed Forces and Security Services of ECOWAS.[46] The Code of Conduct gives responsibility to the armed forces and security services in the exercise of their duties to provide to all persons in need adequate protection, assistance and refuge. It also gave them the responsibility to ensure that internally displaced persons, refugees, foreigners, stateless persons, and minorities are not victims of discrimination. There should be no discrimination on the grounds of race sex, age, identity, religion or political views. It further regulates their conduct giving power to the civilian political and administrative authority to ensure conformity to relevant provisions under international humanitarian law, national laws, and various ECOWAS protocols. These are guiding principles which the military should be held accountable to and which should form the basis of coordination with other humanitarian actors given shared interest. Looking at the human security dimension of it, their responsibility goes beyond just armed conflict.

For a regional organisation like ECOWAS, protection of civilians must be approached from the angle of responsibility to protect, wherein ECOWAS acknowledges the right of the state to sovereignty in protecting its population. When the state is unable or unwilling to, ECOWAS should accept the

[45] Metcalfe, V., *et al* (2012). P. 24
[46] ECOWAS. (2006).

responsibility. This should be done in view of protecting the population. R2P which is in line with ECOWAS' collective security is drawn from the Human Security approach which prioritises the security of the individual. Articles 25 and 26 of the Protocol to the Mechanism on Conflict Prevention, which sate the conditions for application,[47] provided ECOWAS with the authority to intervene in subsequent crisis situations in Côte d'Ivoire (2001 and 2010); Niger (2009); Guinea Bissau, Guinea (2003, 2009 and 2012), Cote d'Ivoire (2010) and in Mali presently.

3.3 Translating early warning to early action in the face of humanitarian crises in ECOWAS

With armed conflict bringing humanitarian issues to the fore, the ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate (EWD), the EERT and ESF have made significant progress in addressing conflict and humanitarian challenges. Much of this progress has been made individually and much remains to be done through the appropriate intervening channels to translate early warning into early action or response in the face of humanitarian crises.

Despite landmark achievements in the areas of strategy formulation and setting up of structures, there is the need to further look at how the outcomes and results of early warning feed into early response. In addition, certain mandates need to be revised and capacities need to be built to ensure effective delivery. For instance, the ECOWAS EWD was set up as a regional peace and security observation and monitoring centre for the purpose of conflict prevention. However its report and coverage of humanitarian and social issues is shallow and falls short of the substantial analysis provided for political and security issues. The ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN), through a system of 66 indicators which field reporters use to report on incidents, covers various thematic areas including humanitarian and environment issues, natural disasters, food crises, refugee influx, among others. Furthermore, EWD analysts also produce periodic thematic reports based on these indicators.

However, beyond informing the office of the President of the ECOWAS Commission on political and security issues, analysis on humanitarian and social issues is limited and collaboration with other units like the EERT or the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs appears uncoordinated. Similarly, beyond reporting on incidents and tracking structural trends, the decision making process which will convert early warning into early action is rather too slow, unstructured and at times politicised. Moreover, there is no clear

[47] ECOWAS. (1999).

model or standards to used to decided where and how to act, except in cases where there is a clear and present political danger or security threat to the region such as that occurred in Mali since March 2012. It appears that ECOWAS leadership is much at liberty to pick and choose where to respond and if to respond. More so, the decision whether and where to respond are taken by the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council action at the level of the Heads of State or the Council of Ministers. These statutory bodies meet twice a year only, except in exceptional cases where an extraordinary meeting is convened. Even with that, the logistics and protocol of convening extraordinary meetings and the attendant formal requirements to carrying out their resolutions cause extreme delays which slow down both the decision making and the response processes, especially where urgent action needs to be taken to prevent further deterioration of humanitarian crisis.

The conceptual link between early warning and early response is not practicalised as ECOWAS' efforts over the years have been more of a 'fire brigade' approach. The overall goal of the EWD of having in place by 2013, a fully integrated and functional early warning system that provide the office of the President with timely analyses and reports, should seek to cover not just conflicts indicators, but also humanitarian crises situations. In addition, integration across relevant directorates of the ECOWAS Commission on cross-cutting issues like humanitarian response is weak as evident in the low level of practical collaboration through information exchange, joint planning and technical meetings. Internal collaboration should improve flow of information and quality analysis of humanitarian response in the region. Fundamentally, there is the need to develop the ESF's military dimension (including improving the ability of its Mission Planning Cell to plan and execute peacekeeping operations) and to strengthen the non-military dimension by raising the level of the civilian component. A robust civilian component of the ESF will promote the humanitarian work of ECOWAS by serving as a bridge between the military component and humanitarian actors on various technical areas.

Chapter

4

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Summary of outcomes

One fundamental reason behind humanitarian assistance is to relieve human suffering and to save lives. However, ECOWAS as a regional organisation also focuses on the regional implications of this. The decision to support or intervene during a humanitarian crisis is driven by the mandate to ensure regional security for instance the economic, political and environmental implications of instability in one state on the region. This study was designed to inform the conception, development and operation of relevant ECOWAS structures for dealing with humanitarian crises. The paper examined two crucial issues. (1) What should be the level and extent of coordination between the military and civilian components of the inchoate ESF in the face of growing need for humanitarian intervention in the region, for instance in supporting humanitarian efforts in complex emergencies? Noting the existing capacities, gaps and potential levels of collaboration and coordination (2) The link between early warning by the ECOWAS Observation and Monitoring Centre (OMC) and early response by the EERT and ESF in dealing with humanitarian challenges in the region. In addition, it captured some areas that require the attention of ECOWAS in responding to humanitarian needs during crises in its member states.

Firstly, various provisions are made in ECOWAS treaties and policy documents including the Mechanism, the Code of Conduct and the ECPF. These documents offer fundamental principles on the role of the military in humanitarian crises especially in the area of response. However, these existing guidelines are insufficient as they fail to take on board core issues of levels of engagement. A framework to support these policies should look at developing a case by case guide on varying context of humanitarian situations to further define roles. This provides room for practical involvement that could be easily go against

certain core principles, mandate and practice in humanitarian response; and further necessitate ECOWAS to define its military involvement into humanitarian operations. Without these additional guidelines instituted into a response strategy, the role of the military may seem nonexistent.

Another important issue to be addressed is that of integration in humanitarian crises response. Considering the various structures interlinked with and complement themandate on humanitarian issues (early warning system, EERT, and ESF), it can be deduced that coordination and collaboration among these should be promoted and facilitated for ECOWAS' response to be more effective. Furthermore information sharing and joint meetings are formalised but not functional. Just like their roles are interlinked, so is the need to create leverage on the capacity to address humanitarian issues in the region.

Closely related to the above, the study reveals that joint training and simulations could be extremely useful particularly in cementing collaboration on the ground. So far both the ESF and EERT have been involved in series of simulation exercises in partnership with international organisations. However, this has been conducted in isolation from other core response units. Additionally it is critical that joint training and field exercises involving the civilian, police and military contingents from various member states be integrated into the plans and activities of the bodies. This should be done in conjunction with relevant units and directorates within ECOWAS. Such exercises should also synchronise with the roadmap for the African Standby Force which the ESF is a component.

Overall, in reviewing key ECOWAS documents on civil-military relations, ECOWAS as a regional organisation with groundbreaking initiatives on peace and security issues has failed to take on a coordinating, monitoring and reporting role in humanitarian issues in crises that it has been actively involved. This is essential for both internal and external purposes. Moreover, this depicts a rather shallow engagement which does not fully take on board provisions mentioned in the ECOWAS humanitarian policy as well as that of ECPF on capacity-building in relief of human suffering during and after emergency situations.

Finally, the most glaring gap is the inadequate technical analysis from the regional bloc that will inform appropriate guidelines on effective military role in humanitarian crises response. This can only be achieved through active engagement on the issue by all units or departments concerned and promoting cross directorate exchange on the issue.

4.2 Recommendations addressed to ECOWAS

Ultimately, a number of humanitarian actors remain sceptical on the role of the military due to issues of principles. Yet the numerous benefits of a well-disciplined and equipped force which can support or contribute to humanitarian crises response in diverse ways make the role of the military relevant.

In the case of ECOWAS, two fundamental issues should be considered. As a regional organisation, ECOWAS has the responsibility to harmonise humanitarian action by promoting a reinforcing relationship between humanitarian and security actors. Related to the above, specific provisions also guide ECOWAS' programmes to address humanitarian challenges in the region. Firstly, to mitigate the impact of humanitarian disasters and emergencies that would result in social and political upheaval, to serve as a bridge between relief emergency assistance and medium term rehabilitation, to protect sustainable development through crises prevention and preparedness. Finally, to foster inter-regional harmony and security through cooperative arrangement to ensure effective humanitarian crises prevention and preparedness programme. These responsibilities anchor the important role of the organisation in humanitarian issues within the region.

In view of the above, the following recommendations are well placed to address gaps and challenges associated with defining the role of the military in humanitarian crises response and promoting an elaborated and coordinated effort in addressing humanitarian challenges in the region.

- ECOWAS should promote and support member states to define the role of its military in humanitarian crises. This should be done on the backdrop that national armies are critical actors in humanitarian response within a state.

- The EERT and ESF should develop appropriate guidelines and undertake joint exercises to address specific scenarios on both natural disaster and man-induced humanitarian crises in relation to the role of the military.

- In promotion of the conceptual and practical link between early warning and early response, ECOWAS should seek to review the mandate of the Early Warning Directorate and the operation of the ECOWARN system so as to fully monitor, analyse and report on humanitarian and social issues. Alternatively, a system of alert for humanitarian response in the region can be set up under the auspices of the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Directorate.

- Closely related to the above, decision making on early warning reports on humanitarian situations should be prompt. Linking early warning and early response is a critical factor in boosting response on humanitarian situation in the region. Therefore, the organisation should identify and follow a well structured emergency response approach to all humanitarian alerts, reports and crises in the region. This should take into view the existing capacities in order to proffer a more realistic plans and responses.

- Inaugurate a joint committee on humanitarian response which will constitute a team of technical experts to meet regularly and proffer timely analysis on existing and potential humanitarian challenges in the region and make recommendations for action by relevant authorities in ECOWAS. This should constitute the following directorates; Early Warning, Humanitarian and Social Affairs, Environment, Political Affairs and Peace keeping and regional security. In addition, relevant structures, Divisions and Directorates of the ECOWAS Commission—particularly the ESF, EERT, Political Affairs, DPKRS, EWD and Health Systems Advisor (HSA)—should internalise and undertake joint activities including planning, information and reports sharing to promote cross-learning and common understand between military and humanitarian actors in the region.

- ECOWAS through HSA and other relevant directorates should develop strategies to increase its visibility and actual engagement in taking on its coordination and monitoring role on humanitarian issues in the region.