What is Integration?

Integration refers to the principle that wherever the UN has a presence involving political and/or multidimensional peacekeeping missions alongside humanitarian and development actors, these parts of the UN should work closely and coherently together. Integration is rooted in the belief that linking the different dimensions of the UN engagement (political, development, humanitarian, human rights, rule of law, social and security aspects) creates a greater chance of achieving peacebuilding aims. From a humanitarian perspective, UN peacekeeping and political work can aid the delivery of humanitarian assistance and promote the protection of civilians. Therefore, the aim of integration is to enable the UN to maximize its collective impact and the impact of its individual components in support of countries emerging from conflict.

When designing a UN peace operation in a context where the principles of integration will apply, a key challenge lies in creating the most effective working relationship between the political and humanitarian aspects of a UN presence while simultaneously respecting and protecting humanitarians’ need to be politically neutral. The integration approach also recognizes that UN humanitarian work needs to remain consistent with the core.

There are three main structural models from a humanitarian perspective:

**Model 1: Two feet in**

In stable post-conflict settings where a UN peacekeeping or political mission with widespread in-country support is deployed alongside a United Nations Country Team (UNCT), the UNCT is led by a combined Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident Coordinator (RC)/Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) position. In these situations, the humanitarian crisis has passed, the HC position may be phased out and there will be no identifiable OCHA field office. However, OCHA may continue to provide humanitarian support through the HC’s office.

**Model 2: Two feet out**

When a UN peacekeeping or political mission is deployed in situations of high instability (persistent and widespread conflict, lack of a credible peace process, or where the peacekeeping force is not widely accepted and/or significant spoilers are active), the HC and OCHA will remain entirely separate from the mission structure in order to preserve the independence and neutrality of their humanitarian work. Examples include UNAMID in Darfur, Sudan, and the United Nations Political Office for Somalia, where the RC/HC and OCHA remain structurally separate from the missions.

**Model 3: One foot in, one foot out**

This form of structural integration is applied to peacekeeping or political missions that are deployed to countries emerging from crisis where there is a relatively stable political process, minimal spoilers and the importance of humanitarian action is decreasing. It involves a combined DSRSG/RC/HC post within the mission, with a
clearly identified OCHA presence outside the mission structure. Examples include UNAMA in Afghanistan, MONUSCO in DRC, UNMISS in South Sudan and UNOCI in Côte d'Ivoire

In all models, a key part of OCHA’s role is to facilitate liaison between UN political and military actors and the humanitarian community.

What is OCHA’s role?

Many factors determine OCHA’s position within an integrated UN presence, i.e. which of the above models is used and what variations apply. Current policy states that the relationship an HC and an OCHA office have with a peacekeeping or political mission is best determined by a careful analysis of the political and security contexts, while also considering the views of non-UN humanitarian actors, e.g. NGOs of national authorities.

Consideration also needs to be given to how the peacekeeping/political mission is perceived by national actors, such as state and non-state actors and populations in need.

OCHA actively participates in planning processes for peacekeeping and political missions at the UN Headquarters and at field levels. In participating in these processes, the HC and OCHA advocate the appropriate structural relationship between the HC, OCHA and the mission based on the factors outlined above, and in consultation with UN and non-UN humanitarian partners, particularly in the field.

In these situations, it is particularly important that OCHA is guided by the views of the humanitarian actors (UN and non-UN). OCHA exists to support and coordinate these actors who provide up to 80 per cent of the assistance to suffering people. Perception of neutrality is vital to their operations. If the HC and OCHA are not seen as impartial because they are considered too connected to a mission that is perceived to be politically partial, the humanitarian actors may refuse to participate in coordination efforts. The result is that the HC and OCHA cannot fulfill their mandate. In this regard, OCHA is accountable to Member States, the Secretariat and the host Government. A failure of coordination may also further undermine efforts to consolidate peace.

What does OCHA say?

1. OCHA is, and always will be, absolutely committed to humanitarian principles in its own operations and in the operations of the organizations it coordinates.

2. For humanitarian agencies to function, it is crucial that all parties and local populations perceive humanitarian aid as independent from political activities. A perception of partiality can expose staff to danger, make access negotiations and delivery of aid extremely difficult, and have serious implications for organizations and beneficiaries.

3. Integration is a UN-mandated policy. OCHA believes in its intended aim of greater strategic coherence. However, we cannot allow integration to impede the effective provision of humanitarian assistance to people in need.

To find out more

- Policy Instruction: OCHA’s Structural Relationship Within An Integrated UN Presence, May 2009
- Study on UN Integration and Humanitarian Space, December 2011: www.reliefweb.int/node/465379

Contact:
Allegra Baiocchi,
Policy Development and Studies Branch,
OCHA NY
baiocchi@un.org

Lia Copeland,
Coordination and Response Division,
OCHA NY
copeland@un.org

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“An integrated mission should be about maximizing the impact for the local population of the considerable resources that the UN brings to bear.”

- Ross Mountain,
RC/HC Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2005