



Summary

“Focus on Operationality” Briefing Papers are meant for humanitarian organisations inside Iraq, supporting agencies, policymakers and donors. They provide information on current operational and policy challenges, as well as lessons learned and best practices drawn from recent field experience. They are based on ongoing consultations with a spectrum of assistance and protection agencies ranging from large international organisations with country-wide programming, to small Iraqi NGOs working on programming niches in small geographic areas. They were researched in Iraq, Jordan and Kuwait between November 2007 and January 2008.

Together, the field experience captured in the Briefing Papers suggests that the potential for operationality in Iraq is very much in the eye of the beholder. Some organisations have adapted and re-adapted their operations to rapidly-changing and complex programming environments: others have not. No aid worker in Iraq would claim that responding safely and effectively to urgent needs inside the country is easy. But together, the lessons learned collected in the Briefing Papers serve to illustrate that most operational constraints can be overcome with creativity, flexibility, innovation, assertiveness, a focus on local solutions, and sound people management.

1. ***Adapting to Insecurity in Iraq*** highlights lessons learned in Iraq about responding to acute needs in the safest possible way. Safety and access are treated holistically.
2. ***Operational Modalities in Iraq*** observes that when the activities of independent humanitarian organisations in Iraq are plotted on a map, very few parts of Iraq are truly off-limits to organisations that have found ways to work. The paper focuses on lessons learned from field experience about how humanitarian organisations have translated safer access into operational capacity.
3. ***Personnel Management in Iraq*** concentrates on lessons learned about the people upon which successful humanitarian operations in Iraq depend, and how effective personnel management has contributed to greater operationality.
4. ***Interactions between Aid and Conflict in Iraq*** surveys interactions between aid programmes and the contexts of conflict in the country, and summarizes the ‘Do No Harm’ framework for avoiding inadvertently negative impacts on conflict.
5. ***Humanitarian-Military Interactions in Iraq*** summarizes current issues and trends in the humanitarian-military interface. It surveys threats to humanitarian space posed by the assistance activities of international military actors, and describes international guidelines meant to inform the humanitarian-military relationship.
6. ***Perceptions of Humanitarianism in Iraq*** outlines the main findings of a field-based study on community-level perceptions of humanitarian actors and action conducted by the Humanitarian Agenda: 2015 project.

“Focus on Operationality” Briefing Papers are intended as living documents that will be updated and added-to over time. Readers, especially from NGOs and other operational agencies in Iraq, are encouraged to provide feedback, additional insights and experiences to the author, Greg Hansen, at ghansen@islandnet.com, and to NCCI at webmanager@ncciraq.org. We also welcome suggestions from readers for additional operationality, policy or contextual issues that could become the subject of future Briefing Papers.

We wish to thank the field workers, managers and others from participating agencies for their thoughtful reflection and generous contributions of learning and experience. We hope that these Briefing Papers do justice to the tremendous work you have been doing in Iraqi communities in response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis.



Acronyms / Glossary of Terms

CERP - Commanders' Emergency Response Program - funds available to US combat officers from the US Department of Defense budget for spending on "urgent humanitarian, relief and reconstruction requirements". CERP projects "must ensure that maximum goodwill is created". Initially funded by cash seized from Saddam's palaces, US government funding of the CERP has so far been US\$2.7bn, of which approximately US\$1.5bn has been spent as of January 2008.

Civil Affairs – activities of a military commander that establish, maintains or influences, or exploits relations between military forces and civil authorities, both governmental and non-governmental, and the civilian population in a friendly, neutral or hostile area of operations, in order to facilitate military operations and consolidate operational objectives

CMCoord – Civil-Military Coordination -essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies necessary to avoid competition, minimize conflict and, when appropriate, pursue common goals.

ePRT - Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team - small versions of PRTs at the neighborhood level. 15 ePRTs have been deployed by the US in Iraq, most in Baghdad. ePRTs are led by Brigade Combat Team commanders. They carry out "economic and capacity-building initiatives that complement Brigade Combat Team security operations".

Humanitarian principles – international norms such as humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality that guide genuine humanitarian action

Humanity – the humanitarian principle that states that human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable of the population, such as children, women and the elderly. The dignity and rights of all victims must be respected and protected.

Impartiality – the humanitarian principle that states that humanitarian assistance must be provided without discriminating as to ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political opinions, race or religion. Relief of the suffering must be guided solely by needs, and priority must be given to the most urgent cases of distress.

Independence – the humanitarian principle that states that humanitarian organisations must be independent of government policies or actions.

Large Footprint Organisation - an organisation with a "large footprint" is one whose operationality is dependent on a large physical infrastructure that will attract unwanted attention and limits its flexibility. Its security procedures compel visible protective and deterrence measures that are likely to imply or confirm affiliation with the MNF-I. Heavily dependent on international staff and international commercial service providers for effectiveness, it has a "foreign" face. The mobility and acceptance of these actors are limited. Organisations with large footprints in Iraq tend to fail.

MNF-I – Multi-National Forces – Iraq – the US-led coalition of military forces in Iraq

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation - a legally-constituted non-profit organisation created by people or organisations with no participation or representation from any government in its own governance.

Neutrality – the humanitarian principle that states that humanitarian assistance must be provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature.

PRT–Provincial Reconstruction Team - PRTs in Iraq are bases from which coalition governments, their donor agencies, military forces and commercial contractors seek to improve their interface with provincial / local governments, exerting influence on local power structures and public opinion through reconstruction and other projects. Many PRT staff are military, including civil affairs troops. There are currently 10 PRTs deployed in Iraq. 7 are US-led under the US Department of State. US PRTs received US\$792 million for operations in 2006 and 2007 for an allocated total of US\$1.8bn. However, PRTs are a major vehicle for the CERP and a US\$125 million (2007) Quick Response Fund of the US Department of State / USAID.

PST - Provincial Support Team - there are 7 PSTs embedded in PRTs. Similar to PRTs, they liaise primarily with provincial level officials.

QRF - Quick Response Fund - US Department of State / USAID funds of US\$125 million for applications similar to the CERP.

Small Footprint Organisation - an organisation with a "small footprint" is one whose humanitarian operationality is effected through acceptance, relationships, partnerships and unobtrusive protective strategies. The need for a large physical infrastructure is minimized by making use of partnerships, community support and local commercial service providers. Safe access is achieved through acceptance and unobtrusive protective strategies. It hires and contracts locally, where possible, and it has a local face.