

Practical Note: Humanitarian Aid in context of violence, insecurity, and rebellion

Introduction

This note outlines the dilemmas and risks associated with the delivery of humanitarian aid in a context of growing insecurity, such as that in North and South Kivu since January 2025. It draws on the guiding principles of Conflict Sensitivity (inclusivity, accountability and transparency) and humanitarian principles (humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality). It also explains how to apply them in precarious contexts.

This note can serve as a practical guide to reiterate certain fundamental concepts of conflict sensitivity. The aim is to minimize the risk of aid to exacerbate conflict(s) in unstable contexts and to maximize the opportunities for peace and social cohesion offered by the provision of aid. The legal framework, guiding principles and procedures for accessing humanitarian aid, as set out in framework documents, are presented in the Annex.

Context

Since early 2025, the cities of Goma and Bukavu and their surrounding areas have been occupied by the M23 and its allies. These events have led to a rise in urban crime and insecurity in several neighborhoods of both cities, as well as an increase in serious human rights violations and acts of vandalism (e.g. looting, numerous thefts, and acts of gender-based violence). In the city of Goma and its surroundings, these acts of violence perpetrated by armed individuals are believed to be linked largely to the destruction of the Munzenze central prison (from which many criminals escaped), but also to the proliferation of firearms in the city. This phenomenon has also been observed in Bukavu.

Furthermore, most of the camps for displaced people that had been set up in and around the city of Goma have been dismantled. The dismantling of the camps for displaced people has left thousands of people in utter destitution and forced thousands more to return to their communities of origin. This influx of people contributes to increased vulnerability of populations in distress and makes humanitarian needs even more critical.

In such a context, if humanitarian intervention is poorly planned, it can have harmful effects. Haphazard aid can fuel existing tensions or undermine the factors that could contribute to community resilience. It should be noted that the conflicts in North and South Kivu provinces may gradually impact conflict dynamics at local and national levels, with the risk of the situation escalating throughout the Great Lakes region.

How can conflict sensitivity be applied in the context of North and South Kivu, where many territories are under the control of the M23? How can conflict-sensitive aid be delivered, and how can the risks and dilemmas associated with aid delivery in this context be managed? Below, we offer some practical guidelines for addressing the main dilemmas and risks involved in intervening in such a context.

Presentation of the dilemmas and risks in the context of Eastern DRC since 2025

Dilemma / Risk	Orientation and how to mitigate the risk
Risks associated with targeting	
In a context of widespread vulnerability, it is critical to define the vulnerability criteria that determine access to aid. Given that everyone finds themselves in a vulnerable position, the lack of clear targeting and identification criteria can pose a risk that could create tensions between humanitarian actors and communities.	• The HDP actor¹ must ensure that targeting and identification have been defined in a transparent and participatory manner (involving local structures that still exist whilst keeping an eye on the process as a whole). • A detailed analysis of the context and needs must also guide the approach taken. A blanket approach targeting all members of a community should be considered wherever possible. • As a reminder, HDP actors must use approaches that enable them to take host communities or host families into account in the humanitarian response.
Risks related to the manipulation of aid	
In the current context in North and South Kivu, an armed group has established a de facto administration in place of the state. There is a risk that the armed group may (1) direct humanitarian aid towards villages or beneficiaries of its choosing, OR (2) influence the type of program to be implemented (e.g. certain protection-related issues might not be permitted). This risk poses a dilemma regarding the application of the principles of humanity (everyone has the right to aid), independence (the armed group decides, not the NGO), and impartiality (aid does not necessarily go to the most vulnerable). It also undermines the	Access to aid (which may require negotiation; see below) and the handling of aid are closely linked. The decision to provide aid, as DICTATED by the armed group that effectively governs the territory, is an extremely delicate one. The HDP actor must: • strike the right BALANCE in applying the principles if some are being flouted (independence and neutrality) in order to uphold the principle of humanity; this involves making the fairest possible choices given the highly sensitive context and justifying them, whilst recognizing that it is not always possible to apply all humanitarian principles AND the United Nations Security Council at the same time.

¹ Humanitarian, Development, and Peace actor. While this note is addressed to all intervening actors in eastern DRC, given the current context it highlights humanitarian interventions.

principle of inclusivity (reaching as many beneficiaries as possible). This complexity gives rise to another risk: being perceived as a party to the conflict. If the organization is perceived to have allowed itself to be influenced by an armed group, it may be assumed to be not neutral and an agent of the armed group. This interpretation of collusion may provoke acts of violence (physical and verbal) against the organization's staff, damage its reputation, and hinder access to areas not controlled by the armed group.	• negotiate/engage in dialogue with the armed group with respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. Additional notes: • Negotiation/dialogue must also consider any suspicions the armed group may have that a particular HDP actor is 'favouring' villages/beneficiaries over to the armed group; therefore, emphasize impartiality and the provision of aid to those most in need (aid being understood as a human right). • Negotiations must be conducted with the agreement of donors. • Coordinate with other actors in the area to limit the armed group's influence over humanitarian aid.
Risks related to a degrading security context	
Risks relating to the safety of HDP staff. In a context where the area of operation is entirely controlled by an armed group, this constitutes an EXTREME situation characterised by almost constant insecurity. There may be a proliferation of weapons, looting, the potential for gunfire, and uncontrolled young people and others carrying weapons. The lack of guaranteed security for humanitarian workers and beneficiaries may lead to security incidents (arbitrary arrests, violence, attacks on humanitarian convoys).	• Discuss access and routes for the delivery of aid; ensure security in consultation with the de facto authorities; maintain a dialogue with all parties to guarantee the safety of humanitarian teams and aid. • Encourage joint operations involving various HDP actors for 'field' activities. • Travel in convoys. • Monitor changes in conflict dynamics (level of violence). In the event of an upsurge in localised fighting redirect the delivery of aid. • Draw up emergency evacuation plans whilst providing psychological support to affected staff. • Adopt a phased approach: Avoid the mass distribution of aid in a single go, as this could easily be diverted or exploited by the armed group.
The risk of interference from influential actors including local authorities and community leaders may give rise to protests, grievances and tensions.	• Establish rigorous monitoring and control mechanisms to ensure transparency in the distribution of aid. Incorporate independent audits. • Ensure that the monitoring of activities on the ground promotes inclusivity and transparency. It

	is always possible to make use of local grassroots organisations that still exist in the area to ensure that inclusivity and transparency have been upheld.
Risk of exposing aid recipients to looting, theft and rape due to constant insecurity caused by the dismantling of camps and the proliferation and circulation of weapons.	• Continuously monitor security conditions in the areas where field activities are to take place. • Appoint community focal points to inspect the area/sites where activities will take place in advance. These focal points can provide real-time information on the state of security. • Ensure that activities take place during the 'safe hours', i.e. between 09:00 and 15:00. • Remain alert to changes in the dynamics of the conflict in the area and adapt schedules accordingly. • Ensure that community voices are heard and adequately responded to. • Put in place mechanisms for reporting abuse.
Risks associated with the presence of unexploded ordnance scattered throughout the intervention area may expose beneficiaries and staff of HDP organisations to unsafe conditions.	• Build the capacity of staff in relation to risk education on explosive devices. These training sessions must be delivered by specialist organisations. • Contact OCHA's Access Unit by email, which will liaise with the relevant organisations. • Preface interventions with messages to communities regarding risk education on explosive devices in the area. • Where resources permit, increase the number of initiatives aimed at educating the community about the presence of explosive devices in an area and how to respond. Various communication channels may be used depending on the circumstances in each area.
Risks that beneficiaries may become victims of vigilante justice and score-settling between members of the community.	• Incorporate messages about respect for life and human dignity, community living and social cohesion into interventions. • Raise awareness amongst communities about the use of non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms. • Emphasise the principles of humanity and accountability.
Reputational Risks	

Risk of being suspected (by communities) of supporting the armed group. Most communities expect HDP actors to denounce the perpetrators and take a stance on the situation. This may reinforce negative perceptions of humanitarian actors and interventions.	• Communicate about organisation's mandates, missions, and values. Emphasize the apolitical nature of humanitarian interventions. • Maintain clear communication with beneficiaries regarding all possible details of project implementation. • Adapt the message to be communicated based on an understanding of how the situation in the operational area is evolving.
Risk of reprisals from communities that believe NGOs are under the influence of the armed group (see above).	• Apply the principles of accountability (justifying decisions, communicating on the application of the principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality)
Risk that HDP actors are considered accomplices to and benefactors of the conflict.	• Carry out advocacy efforts in support of peace. For example, sign letters to international institutions and national and foreign governments. • Communicate that, in addition to humanitarian interventions, the organization also carries out advocacy efforts in support of peace and social cohesion. • Keep a low profile. Avoid displaying outward signs of wealth and behave modestly.
Increased risk of frustration leading to reprisals against HDP stakeholders due to their failure to fulfil the commitments they made as part of their projects due to presence of the armed group and the withdrawal of USAID funding (February 2025).	• Avoid creating unrealistic expectations and ensure that you can follow through on the statements you make. Do not make promises that cannot be kept and that risk causing frustration. • Take advantage of activities carried out by other projects in the field to clearly communicate the termination or suspension of projects. • Advocate for USAID to cover project closure costs. • Encourage HDP stakeholders to work together and complement each other's efforts to fill gaps to the extent possible. • Encourage HDP stakeholders to establish accountability mechanisms (feedback meetings, suggestion boxes, call centres, etc.) tailored to the context.

Risks of reprisals related to the importation of labour (as in the case of the Ebola response).²	• Prioritize the use of local labour. • If the local workforce lacks the required skills or is insufficient in number, communicate with local leaders to explain why labour is being brought in from outside. • Organize capacity-building sessions to enable the use of local labour in the future. • When stakeholders must rely on local labour, ensure that the local communities are included and represented.
Risks related to the presence of people carrying arms	
Risks associated with the legitimization of De Facto Authorities	• Emphasize international humanitarian law and other legal frameworks that underpin the delivery of humanitarian aid. • Distinguish between humanitarian negotiations (to secure access) and political negotiations, which do not involve NGOs. • Where a Humanitarian Coordination mechanism or an NGO platform exists, make use of these platforms before coordinating interventions in the area jointly.³ • Where there is no humanitarian coordination, rely on grassroots community structures (inter-community Barza, local peace committee, health committee, water management committee, etc.)
Limited access to conflict zones by HDP actors (i.e. the armed group controls several areas and may restrict humanitarian access or insist on aid being delivered to areas where people have returned; see above). The lack of freedom of movement could prevent an accurate assessment of needs and result in incomplete or biased humanitarian responses.	• Negotiate temporary ceasefire agreements to establish secure humanitarian corridors in collaboration with local actors, through the INGO forum and other platforms (OCHA). • Use ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) to coordinate humanitarian operations on the ground. • Conduct rapid needs assessments with the help of community focal points.

² https://media.odhpn.org/documents/FRENCH_TRANS_CCE_DRC_case_study_WEB.pdf <https://evaluation.msf.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Evaluation%20of%20MSF-OCB%E2%80%99s%20Ebola%20Interventions%20in%20DRC%20%282018-2020%29%20-%20in%20French.pdf>

³ Humanitarian coordination should set out the mandate and mission of the organisations operating in the areas under its control. It acts as an umbrella organisation for HDP actors and endorses their operations.

The risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is enormous in the current context. The climate of widespread violence, the absence of law enforcement, and deteriorating economic conditions heighten the vulnerability of women and girls who are primarily exposed to physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Although men and boys can also be victims of SGBV, such cases are less common than those involving women and girls. Limited access to health services⁴, the justice system, and psychological support makes providing care for survivors both difficult and dangerous.	• Establish safe psychosocial support centres for survivors that are staffed by psychologists specializing in war-related trauma. <u>Coordination with the “authorities”⁵:</u> • Strengthen coordination between HDP actors and de facto local authorities to improve access to protection and care services for survivors, while ensuring the confidentiality of sensitive information. • Organize regular meetings with de facto local authorities to advocate for and raise awareness about the protection of survivors and respect for humanitarian principles. These discussions must be inclusive, involving women and young people in the dialogue <u>Coordination between local and humanitarian actors:</u> • In addition to organizing regular meetings to share information on high-risk areas and the needs of victims, create a map of available protection and health services and update the information regularly. <u>Secure Management of Sensitive Data:</u> • Implement encrypted data management systems to protect survivors’ personal and sensitive information. • Organize a flexible response: quickly adapt interventions based on risk areas and changes in the context, while ensuring that the Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) is updated first.
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⁴ Risks associated with post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP): Limited access to safe healthcare facilities; Stigmatisation and risks associated with the identification of victims; Shortage of medicines and emergency treatments; Limited human resources and a shortage of trained medical staff; Risk of HIV transmission due to delays in the care of victims.

⁵ In certain situations where the population is distrustful of local authorities, cooperating with those authorities may pose a risk to victims. As a mitigation measure, work with alternative actors: identify actors who are perceived as neutral, respected by the community, and capable of providing protection and assistance while minimizing the risk of exacerbating tensions.

Risk that returnees (who were in the dismantled camps) will find their homes or land occupied, which would undermine social cohesion. Risk of being exploited by the armed group when providing assistance to displaced persons who have been forcibly returned to their area. This could compromise the neutrality and independence of the actors and make their work more difficult and dangerous. Risk that actors assisting returnees will be perceived as normalizing or legitimizing an “illegal” situation, which could encourage or inspire other forces or actors to use the same methods in other areas.	• Include returnees in aid distribution (consider “universal” aid): “aid that covers everyone.” • Urge communities to consult agencies specializing in land dispute resolution. • Ask communities to use traditional mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of land disputes. • Incorporate social cohesion activities into distribution efforts. • Emphasize the principle of inclusivity. • Document and denounce forced return and violations of international humanitarian law by collaborating with protection actors. • Reiterate that the forced return of displaced persons is a violation of international humanitarian law (violation of the principle of non-refoulement and legitimization of forced displacement).
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Annexe 1 – Rappel du cadre légal, des principes de la sensibilité aux conflits et des principes humanitaires

Conflict Sensitivity in emergency programs requires that humanitarian actors have a thorough understanding of the conflict context in which their interventions will take place.

This is essential because their interventions will intersect with factors contributing to conflict (increased poverty, proliferation of weapons, idle youth) and causes of conflict (competition over land and access to resources, misperceptions of the “other” community, reliance on armed groups for protection, state weakness, etc.) as well as actors involved in both peace and conflict (traditional leaders, armed groups, NGOs, FARDC, etc.).

These intersections can be negative or positive, as they present not only RISKS of exacerbating conflicts (increasing poverty among a group, fuelling frustrations⁶) but also OPPORTUNITIES to strengthen social cohesion (incorporating messages of peace and reconciliation activities into aid delivery, recruiting locally, etc.).

Thus, applying the basic principles of Conflict Sensitivity constitutes a strategy for mitigating the generic risks inherent in aid delivery within a fragile context of heightened poverty and ongoing conflict. Indeed, by practicing:

- **Inclusion**, we ensure that as many beneficiaries as possible have access to aid, based on criteria accepted—if not by everyone, then by most beneficiaries—by engaging legitimate leaders, to avoid being manipulated (a fundamental risk);
- **Transparency**: we ensure that vulnerability criteria have been clearly communicated and that the terms for providing aid have been discussed with beneficiaries and their leaders;
- **Accountability**: Decisions are justified and explained to both beneficiaries AND non-beneficiaries (the importance of open, positive communication) to be accountable to the populations affected by crises.

In short, the risks of causing tensions between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, of frustrating populations if aid is not perceived as fair and relevant, or even the risks that aid will be manipulated (by community leaders, politicians, or armed groups) have been recurring in the context of eastern DRC for decades but are even more pronounced today in light of recent events.

The basic humanitarian principles are:

- **Humanity**: Human suffering must be addressed wherever it occurs, with particular attention to the most vulnerable. This can also be grounded in the right to life (which can also be interpreted as the right to aid).
- **Neutrality**: Humanitarian actors do not take sides in any conflict(s) and do not participate in hostilities.
- **Impartiality**: Humanitarian actors have no “preference” for any particular group and do not discriminate in the provision of aid on the basis of race, religion, or gender.

⁶ In this regard, recent studies (2023, 2024) have revealed frustration—or even a certain level of aggression—among populations not receiving aid regarding the way it is delivered (failure to consider actual needs, provision of expired products, and exposure of beneficiaries to the risk of theft), leading to the burning of trucks and physical violence against humanitarian workers.

- **Independence:** Humanitarian actors are not influenced by other “actors” (national or international) in the allocation of aid.

These four principles can be translated into more specific policies. For example, with regard to humanitarian negotiations, a handbook produced by the United Nations provides a structured approach and guidance on humanitarian negotiations with non-state armed groups.⁷ Another area is that of civil-military relations,⁸ or security and risk management: guidance on humanitarian security and risk management,⁹ for which practical guides have been developed under the auspices of the United Nations. This practical note refers to these documents.

In addition, there are other guiding documents, such as:

- **The Humanitarian Charter**, which emphasizes the right to live in dignity, the right to receive humanitarian assistance, and the right to protection and security, as well as the rights and duties established by international law;
- The **principles of protection**: protecting the population from violence, avoiding harm (Do No Harm), ensuring access to impartial assistance, and supporting the recovery of victims of abuse;
- In the **SPHERE7**¹⁰ standards, these four protection principles have been reformulated and clarified as follows:
 - Enhance people’s safety, dignity, and rights, and avoid exposing them to harm or danger.
 - Ensure people’s access to assistance based on need and without discrimination.
 - Help people recover from the physical and psychological effects of threats or actual violence, coercion, or deliberate deprivation.
 - Help people assert their rights.
- **Basic humanitarian standards**: emphasize accountability, responsibility, and the quality of aid.

⁷ United Nations, Humanitarian Negotiations with Armed Groups: A Manual for Practitioners (New York: United Nations, January 2006).

⁸ United Nations and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Civil-Military Guidelines and Reference for Complex Emergencies (New York: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2008). <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org>

⁹ Jan Egeland, Adele Harmer and Abby Stoddard, To Stay and Deliver: Good Practice for Humanitarians in Complex Security Environments (New York: U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, February 2011).

¹⁰ Sphere is a global community that sets standards and promotes quality and accountability in humanitarian action. <https://www.spherestandards.org/fr/>

Legal Framework

The legal framework governing humanitarian access in situations of armed conflict consists of the relevant provisions of general international law (IL), international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law (IHRL), and international criminal law (ICL).

It also includes the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter, decisions and resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and other international or regional bodies (e.g., the African Union), as well as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

More specifically, under international humanitarian law, parties to a conflict are obligated to allow AND to facilitate humanitarian access to populations in need. It is therefore crucial that humanitarian workers are familiar with the normative framework governing humanitarian access.

To ensure humanitarian access, organizations must rely on the normative framework of international humanitarian law, which requires parties of the conflict to authorize and facilitate assistance to populations in need. This involves ongoing dialogue with authorities, armed groups, and local actors to negotiate access conditions while demonstrating their neutrality, independence, and impartiality. Transparency and trust are essential to prevent humanitarian actions from being exploited for other purposes.

At the same time, humanitarian actors must adapt their response strategies (local partnerships, remote assistance) when direct access is limited. They must also monitor and document obstacles, advocate with states and international institutions, and mobilize the international community to ensure compliance with IHL. Humanitarian access thus relies on an approach that combines diplomacy, negotiation, and operational adaptation.

Annexe 2 - Modalities governing humanitarian access during armed conflicts, specific access-related risks, and strategies to mitigate them¹¹

Parameters

Humanitarian access is governed by six parameters: WHO (which actor seeks access), TO WHOM (which area and which beneficiaries the humanitarian actor seeks access to), WHAT (the type of programs the actor wishes to implement), FOR WHAT PURPOSE (specifying the program's specific objective), WHO IS FACILITATING (does the organization need a third party to deliver the aid) and free passage, and WHAT (what goods will be provided).

These six parameters are used as part of a (systematic) approach to analysis and decision-making to facilitate humanitarian access. They provide a normative framework for humanitarian access and help identify the steps that make up humanitarian access routes.

¹¹ This annex is based on the Swiss Confederation (2011) document *Field Manual on Humanitarian Access in Situations of Armed Conflict*, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs: https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/voelkerrecht/Human-access-in-sitof-armed-conflict-manual_EN.pdf; for further details, consult the document.

Methodology

The humanitarian access methodology comprises four components:

Component I – HUMANITARIAN ACCESS ROUTES

- **Step 1 – Use THE PARAMETERS** to establish the direction and starting/ending points of access (who, to whom, what, who transits, of what, etc.)
- **Step 2 – Identify the types of FACTORS** affecting humanitarian access (presence of armed groups, imposition of restrictions, fighting, internal resources, means of communication, logistical constraints, violence against humanitarian workers, presence of landmines, etc.)
- **Step 3 – Group the factors according to possible access routes** (and develop indicators to monitor the factors influencing access)
- **Step 4 – Rank the factors and priority routes**; establish degrees of influence (which factors most influence which access route)

Component II – MAPPING RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCES

- Determine which actors have what influence on which factor governing access; identify the actors' motivations and their stance toward humanitarian aid (rhetoric, practice, past experience); identify their interests and supporters, etc.¹²

Component III – IDENTIFYING OPTIONS

- Determine what options exist, by factor that facilitates or hinders aid (what relationships to build with stakeholders to resolve/facilitate access to a particular village to deliver a specific type of aid, what negotiation strategy to adopt, develop alternatives, organize advocacy efforts, etc.)

Component IV – STRUCTURING APPROACH AND COORDINATION

- Identify the lead organizations, lead staff, and communication protocols among all parties involved.

Risks and Dilemmas Related to Access

Dilemmas regarding humanitarian access can be classified into three categories:

Principle-based dilemmas (how to maintain neutrality), **institutional dilemmas** (internal procedural constraints, staff safety), and **operational dilemmas** (ensuring access in the face of demands from armed groups to receive aid “in kind”).

The following actions can help resolve humanitarian access dilemmas:

1. **Use humanitarian principles and the normative framework to guide decisions.** Eliminate measures that could run counter to humanitarian principles and the provisions of international law regarding humanitarian access, particularly for PRINCIPLE-BASED DILEMMAS.

¹² This exercise is very similar to the actor analysis, a critical step to conduct a conflict analysis.

2. **Strictly adhere to a humanitarian principles-based approach** when implementing decisions and strategies regarding humanitarian access. Rather than vaguely citing humanitarian principles, interpret what these principles mean in the specific situation and use this to formulate and communicate a principles-based approach.
3. **Involve peers in resolving dilemmas** (within or between organizations). Discuss with colleagues the merits of different courses of action and other possible approaches. For example, brainstorming within the organization is particularly useful for INSTITUTIONAL dilemmas.
4. **Use decision-making tools.** For example, rank options or use a decision tree to structure and document how the dilemma was resolved (or the alternative course of action chosen). This also helps ensure consistency within the organization regarding how certain dilemmas are addressed and serves as a good starting point for newly hired staff.
5. **Identify and use technical criteria (in addition to principles) for decision-making.** Identify and use technical criteria that can provide a more objective basis for decision-making particularly for OPERATIONAL DILEMMAS.
6. **Identify best practices:** Examine the context of other armed conflict situations to compare how dilemmas have been resolved by others or in different contexts. Best practices are useful for justifying the adoption of a particular course of action.
7. **Keep other courses of action and alternative approaches open** to ensure and maintain access. This could include intervening through other humanitarian or commercial actors or suspending humanitarian activities while engaging in humanitarian advocacy.
8. **Balance potential short-term gains against long-term consequences,** particularly for OPERATIONAL DILEMMAS. For example, does agreeing to provide a percentage of aid at a checkpoint controlled by an armed group—in order to ensure immediate access for those in urgent need of assistance—compromise the humanitarian nature of the operation and encourage such practices on a larger scale in the future?
9. **Communicate the organization's decisions and policies** on how to manage dilemmas throughout the organization, particularly to those at the operational level.
10. **Be consistent in interactions with parties to the conflict** or other actors to avoid misunderstandings and communication problems.
11. **Ensure effective coordination among humanitarian actors.** Avoid situations where one organization's actions undermine those of other organizations.

An example of a dilemma—and how to resolve it—regarding the provision of aid during armed conflict and the principles of neutrality and impartiality:

Parties to an armed conflict may fear that by facilitating access to certain types of goods, they will strengthen their adversaries' military capabilities. This is particularly true in the case of so-called "dual-use" goods, which can be used for both civilian and (even indirectly) military purposes. The **principles of humanity and impartiality** require that humanitarian aid be provided solely on the basis of need, and **humanitarian organizations must therefore know, with reasonable clarity, TO WHOM the humanitarian aid will be provided**. Blindly advocating for access to supplies in a particular territory does not satisfy these principles if it is impossible to determine who will benefit from that access and the resulting supplies.

Case Study: Best Practices for Ensuring/Negotiating Access¹³

In early 2010, in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, two humanitarian organizations were granted access to areas where insecurity was high. Factors that contributed to the effective access granted to the two humanitarian organizations included:

1. the consistent and rigorous use of a structured approach to identify how the organization engaged at various levels with influential actors in priority areas of acute humanitarian need;
2. a long history of impartial humanitarian operations serving all communities in need;
3. operating in close proximity to communities in need (rather than through "remote programming");
4. a strategic approach to maintaining strong relationships with all parties, including non-state armed groups, over several years.

Examples of how this was achieved include: efforts to reduce staff turnover; the use of "handover" periods during which outgoing and incoming staff had the opportunity to visit key contacts together; and detailed documentation of interactions with key contacts, etc.

¹³ Confédération Suisse (2011) Field Manual on Humanitarian Access in Situations of Armed Conflict, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.