UN Integration is the guiding principle in all conflict and post-conflict situations where the UN has a Country Team (UNCT) and a UN Peacekeeping or Special Political Mission.

Understanding of the policies, notably the Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP, 2013), UNICEF’s global position/approach and the critical issues are crucial for effective engagement with missions to leverage UN-wide resources for children and to ensure protection of humanitarian space.

These FAQ outline key issues relevant for UNICEF and are intended for UNICEF Country Office staff. More details are available in UNICEF Technical Guidance Note (2015).

UN INTEGRATION PRINCIPLES

1. What is UN integration?

UN integration is a strategic partnership between the UN Country Team (UNCT) and the UN mission in a specific country/area. The principle of integration applies in all conflict and post-conflict situations where the UN has a UNCT and a multi-dimensional peacekeeping or a field based special political mission/office. Integration does not imply any structural arrangement.

2. What is the aim of integration?

The purpose of integration is to ensure a coherent and mutually supportive approach among all components of the UN peacekeeping/political mission and the UNCT on issues related to peace consolidation in order to maximize individual and collective impact of the UN in the country.

3. Is UN integration useful for UN agencies?

Unified strategy, decision-making structure and UN coherence brought by strategic and/or structural integration have generally yielded significant benefits for objectives such as post conflict state/peace building and the UN’s development agenda in general.

A key study on the impact of UN integration on humanitarian space acknowledged that integration had had both positive and negative effects even for humanitarian operations. The study thus emphasized the importance of mitigating and managing the negative impact.

4. What is structural integration?

Structural integration is a UN configuration whereby the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator is placed directly within the mission structure as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG), structurally connecting the UNCT and the mission. This arrangement is also known as ‘triple-hat’ (DSRSG/RC/HC).

Triple hat is the only essential element of structural integration; other organizational arrangements (e.g. joint planning cells) are possible, but optional. ‘Triple hat’ is by no means the rule, and configuration should be determined based on a careful risk assessment of the potential impact on humanitarian operations.

5. What is the difference between an integrated mission and an integrated presence?

All current policies on UN Integration refer to the UN configuration comprising the UNCT and the UN Mission as an integrated presence. The term "integrated mission" has fallen out of favour due to its association with specific structural arrangements. Some continue to use the term, especially when referring to structurally integrated presences.

6. Does not integration with UN peacekeeping missions compromise UNICEF’s neutrality in humanitarian contexts?

Neutrality of humanitarian operations was a major concern during early integration efforts, not least due to the over-emphasis on structure, which was perceived as an attempt to subsume UN agencies into the mission.

The current policy defines integration as a strategic partnership based on a flexible set of principles and focus on substance. Acknowledging tensions between humanitarian principles and integration, the policy gives room for humanitarian agencies to jointly define the right UN configuration, emphasizing the importance of risk assessment in determining the mission structure and required mitigation measures.

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1 A multi-dimensional peace-keeping mission comprises military, police and substantive civilian components, and is mandated by the Security Council not only to maintain peace and security, but also to undertake other civilian tasks such as facilitating political process, protection of civilians, assisting in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, and supporting the organization of elections.

2 The principle of integration does not apply to traditional peacekeeping missions, non-resident envoys/advisors or Special Political Missions with regional mandates. Currently integration applies in Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Liberia, Libya, Somalia, Sudan (Darfur), Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Mali, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Haiti.

3 Secretary-General’s Decision No. 2008/24 on Integration.


5 SG’s Decision on Integration (2008), IAP Policy (2013), etc.

6 For the purpose of this document, "UN agencies" refers to United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes.
7. Who decides whether the UN will be integrated or not in a specific country?

The principle of integration applies to all conflict and post-conflict set-ups where UN has a UNCT and a multi-dimensional peacekeeping or special political mission. However, structural configuration (DSRSG/RC/HC, integrated or joint structures etc.) should be determined by specific requirements, circumstances and mandates, in line with the “form follows function” principle.

UNICEF POSITION ON INTEGRATION

8. What is UNICEF’s position on integration?

UNICEF fully endorses UN Integration and proactively engages with integrated UN presences. Proactive engagement is the best means of ensuring synergies and clear division of roles and responsibilities in the areas of convergence, as well as addressing areas of tension.

9. Why should UNICEF engage with UN missions?

Not only is integration mandatory, but it can also help leverage the considerable resources of the mission for the benefit of children. Where tensions arise between humanitarian objectives and political/military mandates of the mission, the best approach is to proactively engage to ensure common understanding of the risks and respective positions, putting in place adequate mitigation measures.

10. How should UNICEF engage with UN missions?

There are several processes, defined by the IAP policy (see FAQ#12), and thematic entry points at HQ and country levels.

- At the country level, a *senior leadership forum* should be established for decision making on joint strategic and operational issues. This should bring together senior management of the mission and UNCT, including key agency heads.

- **Integrated Task Force (ITF)** – the key HQ level forum for coordination among the Secretariat Departments and UN agencies on Integrated Presences for each country. CO should engage both through HQ desk officers and UNCT/HCT and/or DSRSG/RC/HC as appropriate.

- Key processes/documents for integrated presences led by ITF, such as **Integrated Strategic Assessments, the Directive to SRSG, RC and HC, and Integrated Strategic Frameworks (ISF)** are UN-wide exercises and are important opportunities for HQ and CO engagement.

- In addition, the **Secretary General’s country and thematic reports to the Security Council** also influence Security Council Members’ decisions and missions’ mandates. Thus it is crucial for UNICEF HQ and COs to input to the reports (through UNICEF HQ, UNCT and ITF).

- Obvious thematic entry points for UNICEF are MRM, CAAC, Child DDR and Protection of Civilians.

- Missions are increasingly mandated to provide support to humanitarian action and may provide operational support - security and logistics - and good offices where appropriate. Clear understanding of expectations, and demarcation of roles and responsibilities, need to be established within the HCT and with the mission.

11. What measures can be taken to protect humanitarian space?

In high-risk environments mitigation measures may play as important a role as the decision on mission structure itself (structural integration or not). Such measures may include, but are not limited to:

- DSRSG/RC/HC with a strong humanitarian background
- Separate support structures for HC rather than an integrated office
- Joint strategies with the mission around access, protection and advocacy
- Encouraging strong dialogue between the mission and humanitarian actors
- Engaging the local population on the distinct mandate of humanitarian assistance, reinforcing humanitarian principles
- An agreed set of principles within the HCT on the use of mission assets, shared premises and other common services
- Adhering to humanitarian principles in the delivery of assistance

INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING (IAP)

12. What is the Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP) Policy?

The Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP, 2013)\(^7\) is the UN-wide policy which governs planning and assessment processes of integrated UN presences.

13. What does IAP say?

Building on the SG’s Decision of 2008, IAP sets out the following minimum mandatory requirements for all integrated UN presences: (1) joint conduct of a strategic assessment, (2) articulation of a common UN vision, priorities and responsibilities in support of peace consolidation, (3)

integrated mechanisms\(^8\), and (4) integrated monitoring and reporting.

In a shift to a more inclusive UN-wide process, the IAP requires all integrated UN presences to have a shared analytical and planning capacity and an integrated strategic framework (ISF) that sets out a joint set of results, timelines and responsibilities for tasks critical to consolidating peace.

It also requires that integration arrangements take full account of recognized humanitarian principles, allow for the protection of humanitarian space, and facilitate effective coordination with all humanitarian actors.

14. How does IAP ensure the neutrality of humanitarian operations?

IAP recognizes that integration may pose risks to humanitarian space. It includes guiding principles to ensure that humanitarian concerns are taken into account in integrated planning:

- Inclusivity – The policy ensures an inclusive process throughout the mission cycle, with agencies’ full involvement\(^9\) in key decisions and discussion of critical issues regarding the integrated UN presence.
- Form follows function
- Upfront analysis of risks and benefits
- Recognition of the diversity of UN mandates and principles

15. What is an Integrated Task Force\(^{10}\) (ITF)?

An Integrated Task Force (ITF) is the inter-agency/inter-departmental coordination mechanism at HQ level to oversee implementation of IAP in each country. The lead department of a UN Mission\(^{11}\) establishes an ITF for each country with an integrated presence.

The ITF is the main formal mechanism through which UNICEF, along with other agencies, can influence the configuration of the integrated presence and other key decisions in the planning process. NYHQ/EMOPS and DPR (for non-humanitarian countries) participate in these task forces.

16. What is the Integrated Strategic Assessment?

The Integrated Strategic Assessment presents a crucial opportunity to influence and shape a newly proposed mission and thus an integrated presence. The scope of an integrated assessment should cover the entire UN in a country, and it forms the basis of recommendations on the nature and (re)configuration of UN engagement for the consideration of the UN Secretary-General and, when required, the Security Council. These include mission mandate, mission/leadership configurations (e.g. "Triple Hat" or stand-alone Humanitarian Coordinator), as well as ISF.

17. What is the Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF)?

The Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF) is the UNCT/Mission joint framework that aims to ensure strategic level coordination on key peace building/peace consolidation priorities. It should support senior level strategic discussion about the integrated presence. It is a mandatory requirement and should encompass not only mission mandate priorities but UNCT/mission common priorities. UNICEF CO should be fully involved in development of the ISF at the country level, while HQ should be part of the endorsement process through the ITF.

18. Why do we need another planning document? Can we combine the ISF with UNDAF?

The IAP Policy recognizes other existing planning frameworks and gives flexibility for a decision at the country level to use other planning frameworks instead of the ISF, as long as the alternative framework fulfils set minimum requirements. Some countries have merged ISF and UNDAF, commonly called UNDAF+.

19. How does Strategic Response Plan (SRP) relates to ISF?

While humanitarian action can support peace consolidation, its main purpose is to address life-saving needs, thus most humanitarian interventions remain outside of the scope of integration, and thus of the ISF. SRF and ISF may complement each other, but remain distinct documents.

20. What are the pros and cons of different ISF formats?

The main perceived benefit of combining ISF and UNDAF is the reduction of processes. Experience, however, has been mixed. Drawbacks have been noted, including a reduced focus on peace consolidation and on some priorities relevant for agencies (e.g. children). Aligning the UNDAF process to the (much shorter) review cycle of the mission, which is driven by Security Council priorities and unpredictable timing, has proven particularly challenging. Combining ISF and UNDAF appears to be more practicable in a relatively stable context with a small UNCT programme.

\(^{8}\) These include HQ level ITF, country level senior leadership forum comprising SRSG, SDSRSG, RC/HC, Heads of relevant agencies and mission components, and joint analytical and planning capacity.

\(^{9}\) Inclusive process are embedded in the policy with UN agencies’ representation in ITF based on 2+4 formula, whereby in addition to OCHA and DOCO, 4 key UN AFPs participate.

\(^{10}\) Previously, a DPKO led task force was called Integrated Mission Task Force (IMTF) and a DPA led task force Integrated Task Force (ITF). 2013 IAP Policy (2013) harmonized the name to ITF. Some people continue to use old names.

\(^{11}\) Department of Political Affairs (DPA) for special political missions and Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) for peacekeeping missions.
RECOGNIZING AND RESOLVING TENSION POINTS

21. What is the UNICEF position on the use of mission air and other assets?

Using UN mission assets in humanitarian operations should be considered according to civil-military relations guidelines and only as a last resort. Their use may be considered after risk assessment if no other civilian alternatives exist, strictly on a case-by-case basis.

22. How about armed escorts by UN peacekeeping missions?

Use of armed escorts for humanitarian convoys is the last resort and should be requested only when no comparable protection measures exist and only the use of military assets can meet critical humanitarian needs. Even then, the humanitarian operation must retain civilian in nature and characteristics.

23. Can the mission be members of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)?

No. In structurally integrated missions, DSRSG/HC chairs the HCT in his/her capacity as the Humanitarian Coordinator. Peacekeeping/special political missions are military/political actors, thus they may not be members of the HCT. However, in certain cases, if appropriate, mission staff may be invited as observers to the HCT to improve coordination.

24. Are Quick Impact Projects (QIPS) by peacekeeping missions humanitarian?

QIPS’ primary purpose is to facilitate implementation of the mission’s mandate. Thus QIPS are inherently different from humanitarian assistance based on need, or from development activities with longer term objectives.

QIPS must be conducted in a manner that do not duplicate or undermine humanitarian or development activities. The head of the mission is required to set up a Project Review Committee (PRC), with a UNCT/HCT representative.

UNICEF does not support any humanitarian or development activity undertaken by uniformed personnel.

25. How about humanitarian mandates given to the mission?

Missions are increasingly given mandates to facilitate/support humanitarian interventions. This, however, means logistics, security, and occasionally good offices support, which should be provided on a request basis when other measures fail.

26. The mission in the country has a Protection of Civilians mandate. Do they become part of the protection cluster?

Relevant mission staff may be invited to the protection cluster as observers if appropriate. But a separate coordination forum may also be established.

27. What support is available to UNICEF offices operating in countries with integrated UN presences?

The Humanitarian Policy Section (HPS) in EMOPS is UNICEF’s institutional focal point for UN integration issues, and is available for guidance and technical support for application of the policies to a specific country context.

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Selected references

UNICEF Technical Guidance note on “Engaging Effectively with Integrated UN Presences” (2014) - clarifies UNICEF position in engaging with integrated presences, and provides practical pointers in identifying entry points, analysing risks and opportunities, mitigation measures, and determining the best options for UNICEF.

SG’s Decision No. 2008/24 – Integration - This marked a shift in integration policy, taking into consideration concerns and implications of UN integration for humanitarian action.

Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP, 9 April 2013) - IAP policy guides all assessment and planning processes of integrated UN presences.

Integrated Assessment and Planning Handbook (December 2013) - Inter-agency technical guidelines for implementation of the IAP.


Non-paper on Protecting Human Rights in Armed Conflict – UNICEF Engagement with the Protection of Civilians Agenda (January 2014) - Discusses UNICEF engagement in the Protection of Civilians agenda for children’s benefit, including critical issues relevant to integrated UN presences.


13 For instance, the convoy should remain under the authority of the humanitarian organization, operated by unarmed personnel in civilian apparel, the humanitarian identity of the convoy clearly apparent. Armed personnel should be in separate vehicles.

14 Policy on Quick Impact Projects (QIPS, 2013). UNDPKO/DFS.