

Facilitating the Comprehensive Approach between Non-Governmental Organizations and the Canadian Forces

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ABSTRACT

Like other militaries attempting to meet the challenges of a highly complex contemporary security environment, the Canadian Forces (CF) are adopting a more comprehensive approach to operations. While a comprehensive approach involves interaction with a variety of military and non-military players, one of the most challenging relationships for militaries adopting such an approach is that with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). While many theories regarding these challenges exist, few studies have explored the issue thoroughly from a Canadian perspective, and few studies have examined the potentially positive aspects of the military-NGO relationship. The purpose of the pilot study from which the present paper derives was to begin to explore the perspectives of NGO workers and CF members on the military-NGO relationship, in particular as it pertains to their collaboration in theatre. The present paper focused on some of the findings that emerged from this study including: participant perceptions regarding the benefits of the relationship between the CF and NGOs; the role and direction that Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) should be taking; the importance of managing optics; differences in organizational culture and structure; the lack of trust between the two organizations; and training and education. Some of the recommendations included: the further development of CIMIC; the use of joint training, education and conferences for NGOs and the CF as a means of fostering exposure and functional relationships; and the assessment of CF cultural intelligence.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive approach to military operations is now recognized by many nations as key to mission success, and Canada is no exception. The Canadian Forces (CF) promotes the ability to work effectively across joint, interagency, multinational and public (JIMP) dimensions (Gizewski and Rostek, 2007). Among the JIMP dimensions, the public aspect poses one of the greatest challenges for the CF given the variety of civilian groups that may fall under this category. The present paper centres around one of these public players, a diverse group known as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Several challenges to the relationship between the CF and NGOs have been noted, and are accentuated in particular by differences in organizational culture, values and concerns about physical security and neutrality (Winslow, 2002). Given that the CF and NGOs will continue to encounter one another in the increasingly complex security environment, further understanding of this relationship is required.

The present paper derives from a larger research project developed at DRDC Toronto entitled “JIMP Essentials in the Public Domain: Implications for the Tactical Commander.” The focus of this larger project was to provide conceptual clarity of the public aspect of JIMP capability, to identify individual differences and aptitudes that allow one to work effectively in a JIMP environment, and to integrate historical and international perspectives on the public aspect of JIMP. The current paper was inspired by the complexity inherent in contemporary crises and the multi-dimensional, coordinated missions that are encouraged and underway as a response to the changing nature of today’s complex security environment. The findings presented here are based on an interview study that explored the relationship between the CF and NGOs within such a milieu.

Of course, this is not the first paper to examine the relationship between the military and NGOs. Numerous studies have identified tensions between military and humanitarian organizations that manifest on a number of levels including the doctrinal/policy level, the operational/project level and the tactical/activity level (Meharg, 2007). While such challenges to the NGO and military relationship surfaced in the interviews conducted for this study, the purpose of the present paper was not to reiterate or confirm what has been found in previous research, but to focus on information garnered from the interviews which provide insight, from a Canadian perspective, into what currently facilitates or may facilitate the NGO and CF relationship in theatre. In particular, this paper concentrates on a handful of themes that emerged within participant discussions as potential components of effective NGO-CF relationships. Given the organizational context from within which this paper derives, the focus will be on aspects that are within the purview of the CF.

2.0 METHOD

Participants in this study consisted of 11 individuals who had been deployed internationally over the course of their careers, including 5 CF members, 5 NGO members and 1 Subject-Matter Expert in development-military collaboration. The participants' ages ranged from 30 to 70 years, and their experience in their present occupation ranged from a few years to several decades. Participant ethnicity in their own words included: Canadian, Asian, Scottish, Irish, English, Hungarian, Russian, Japanese, and Palestinian. The CF members' ranks included a Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Major and Colonel (Ret.), all of whom were Army. Agreement with the NGO participants prevents the organizations that they work for from being named in this paper. Generally speaking, however, three of the NGO participants worked for what may be classified as large and well known NGOs and international organizations (IOs), while two of the participants worked for what may be classified as smaller NGOs. The NGO and CF participants were equal number male (3 CF, 2 NGO) and female (3 NGO, 2 CF). The Subject-Matter Expert was male. It is important to note that two of the CF members interviewed had also been members of an NGO in the past and that two of the NGOs had been members of the military in their past, indicating some overlap between participant categories in terms of prior experience. All of the CF participants had interacted with NGOs over the course of their careers, the Subject-Matter Expert had interacted with both CF and NGOs, and the NGOs had interacted with the CF or other military during their careers as members of NGOs.

Participants were all residents of Canada, and all interviews took place across Canada, either in person or by phone, with the exception of one participant who was in Afghanistan at the time of the interview. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed with any identifying characteristics removed from the transcription. A content analysis was conducted on the resulting interview transcripts using NVivo8, a qualitative software package created by QSR International. Although numerous themes were identified within the data, those presented here pertain solely to aspects that may facilitate the relationship between NGOs and the CF. Excerpts presented within these themes were chosen from all excerpts coded to a particular theme and represent a "best example" of the data within that theme.

3.0 FINDINGS

The themes presented here fall under three broad categories. The first category "Development of Cultural Intelligence" encompasses examples that participants provided of the characteristics that an individual or group must have in order to facilitate an effective relationship between the CF and NGOs. The second and third categories "CIMIC's Role" and "Training, Education and Exposure," respectively, encompass examples and suggestions that participants made for achieving the characteristics discussed under the "Cultural Intelligence" category and that relate to the general goal of an effective CF -NGO relationship.

3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

Cultural intelligence is defined by Davis (2009, p. 142) as “the ability to recognize the shared beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours of a group of people and the capacity to effectively apply this knowledge toward a specific goal or range of activities.” Cultural intelligence and other similar concepts such as cultural competence are increasingly seen as key in forming effective working relationships within a comprehensive approach (Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2008; Davis, 2009). The themes discussed within this category exemplify how characteristics of cultural intelligence were present within the discourses of the participants as well as in many of the examples that they provided of relevant situations ”in theatre.“ This discussion will explore how these characteristics of cultural intelligence may allow for a better understanding of the CF-NGO relationship, where these characteristics are lacking, and where they may facilitate the relationship between the CF and NGOs.

Both NGOs and the CF participants discussed the similarity between the values held by both the CF and NGOs, such as the general desire to make “the world a better place.” These values were frequently linked to organizational culture¹. Interestingly however, the motivation behind those values and the interpretation of those values were viewed as fundamentally different, and participants suggested that these differences are often responsible for the strained relationship between NGOs and the CF. In the words of one NGO participant:

“I think that both military and NGOs, they’re often guided and influenced by the *same* value which *is*, you know, to make things right in the world whatever you view that to be. It’s just that I think NGOs and military probably view different *things*² as being right. So, I think a lot of people who are in the military are genuinely dedicated to, you know, making the world a better place, and so are NGOs... So the core values may not be all that different but as I said, it’s when you get into the interpretation of what, and the realities of what those values *mean* on the ground, that’s when I think you get into trouble.” (NGO)

The means with which the CF and NGOs achieve goals stemming from those values was also expressed as different:

“I think we differ in the sense that, how we get there might be different but I think ultimately the end goal is the same. Obviously, we want to leave the country in a safe and stable environment and so forth and the NGOs, that’s exactly what they want as well, one would hope.....So the values at the end are the same.” (CF)

One soldier expressed the view that because the values of NGOs and the CF were the same, he felt that this similarity in values could be the key to “bridging the gap” between the two types of organizations. However, he admits that this would be a challenge:

“If you go back to what it is that you’re trying to achieve, then we all value human life. We all value and respect empathy, and integrity. Treat others as you want to be treated. I believe those values are the same but, you know, at the end of the day we value human life in that we want to protect it as soldiers. The NGO community, you know, I’ve never been in it, but my association with it is that they value and want to protect basic human need. So, it’s similar but it’s different. Different trains of thoughts and different approaches. But at a core level I believe that bridging into that core level is the real challenge. “It’s not about

¹ Organizational culture may be defined as: the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration and that have worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1984, p. 4).

² Please note that an italicized word within a participants’ quote represents emphasis placed upon the word by the participant.

me. It's not about you. It's about them." You know, we call it the centre of gravity. And we haven't defined the centre of gravity in Afghanistan because everybody has their own opinion, but if you really know it, the centre of gravity is the people. So, understanding the people, working with the people and affecting the people, that's the key effect on the people and the effect with the people. If you understand that then you can bridge that gap." (CF)

While participants indicated that the values of the CF and NGOs are similar at their core they suggested that these values are enacted differently, are interpreted differently, and are influenced by different motivations. Recognizing shared values and similar goals may be a means of bridging the gap between the CF and NGOs; however, members of NGOs in particular indicated scepticism regarding CF motivations, resulting in a reluctance to form a relationship with the CF in theatre. This lack of trust represents a key barrier to an effective relationship. Participants suggested that to a certain extent, transparency of CF motivations behind forming a relationship with NGOs could begin to challenge this barrier. For example, some participants described situations while deployed where NGOs were astonished to learn that the CF do not wish to take credit for development or humanitarian projects that they support, regardless of whether the support occurs through financial means, through information sharing, or equipment sharing. Given the foundation of shared values, it is possible that transparency of motivations and actions (within reason) may demonstrate the sincerity of the CF desire to support development and humanitarian aid.

This support would of course have to be tailored to each individual NGO, given their diversity and their differences in mandates. NGO participants cited a fundamental lack of compatibility with the military, however, due to the perceived differences in mandates and a fear that working with the military could compromise those mandates:

"...NGOs are very wary of the military. And that's also because there's an underlying suspicion in NGOs that our work and our information and our relationships, which have been carefully built in many countries, you know, over 50 years and if not 50, you know 10, 15, 20 years – the reputation that we have so carefully built up over however many years, the missions are in place, the country offices are in place, that they are actually in danger of being used for purposes that NGOs would not consider legitimate...." (NGO)

"I think you cannot get past the fact that humanitarian organizations are guided by fundamental (humanitarian) principles and the decision making processes at the higher levels within the military for development work or what the military call humanitarian work are not guided by the same principles. In particular, the principle of impartiality says that assistance is provided solely on the basis of need. That clearly isn't the case when the military are providing humanitarian assistance. The principle of independence says that the organization itself makes its decisions about how assistance should be provided and it doesn't rely on government or other authorities to dictate to it how it will do its job. That clearly isn't the case for the military in the way that they execute the direction provided to them for the conduct of humanitarian work. And the principle of humanity which talks about the motivation for humanitarian work is another case of difference. The fundamental thing that the military forget is that they can't be neutral, they're a party to the conflict, if somebody deploys to Kandahar to carry a weapon and to kill the Taliban, they're a combatant. If somebody deploys to Kandahar to do CIMIC work and they wear a uniform and they carry a weapon, well they wear a uniform, even if they don't carry a weapon, they're a combatant. So, fundamentally, they're a party to the conflict and the only people that aren't parties to the conflict are military religious and medical personnel. So, for me, that's the fundamental contradiction. You can call it humanitarian work all you like, it's not possible that it is motivated in a manner which enables it to be so." (NGO)

Participants suggested a need for flexibility in how NGOs and the CF interact, specifically with respect to each NGO's unique requirements. Several NGO participants indicated that any effective interaction with the CF would require coordination that maintains NGO neutrality. Despite doubts about the feasibility of a working relationship between NGOs and the CF, participants generally felt that there was a role for the CF to take in international work, from security to first responder relief, depending on the context of the situation. As indicated in one of the above quotes, while the role of the CF can never be perceived as humanitarian work by NGOs, as this would contradict the fundamental principles³ upon which many NGOs function, the simple acknowledgement of a role for the CF may represent a point at which the two organizational communities could initiate a working relationship. Some examples of a functional relationship were discussed by participants and exemplify the latter half of Davis' definition of cultural intelligence, the capacity to effectively apply knowledge.

Speaking generally, discussions with participants focused on the high level of coordination needed for success, as well as acknowledgement of a "broad security mission," for which each set of players, be they CF, NGOs or others, are responsible for some, but not all of the mission objectives. This coordinated security mission or broad mission objective was prominent in the discourse of the participants, despite widespread acknowledgement among them that this is not necessarily the approach currently endorsed by either the CF or NGOs. Nevertheless, many recognized and promoted the idea of a certain type of "team approach" as necessary to achieve success. As one CF participant who was a member of an NGO prior to joining the CF indicated:

"I think it's advantageous on both sides ... I think there's a lot of things that the military brings to the table and I think that there's a lot of things that NGOs bring to the table, and both parties can benefit from either side. I think it's imperative....now both sides can also be harmful to the other as well, I don't want to negate that, but ultimately at the end of the day when it's working well, I think it works very, very well." (CF)

An NGO participant suggested that a successful mission is:

"...something that has to do with what people do best. So what happens, the military secures the peace ... They are in charge of the peace, this is good. They go in, they're supposed to secure the space, they make the space safe for civilians and for NGOs and for the UN. They should do that, and then the UN goes in, and then NGOs go in, and they're actually the implementing partners on the ground and actually do the work in the villages and what not. That's what a successful [mission looks like]." (NGO)

These success stories were, however, often judged to be more dependent on the individuals involved, and as reflecting these individuals' own beliefs and personalities. Again, this is an acknowledgement that this form of partnership is not a formal process endorsed by either the CF or NGOs, but is something that occurs informally, or in small pockets where the "right" people have come together. As one CF participant who was a member of a PRT suggested:

"And it worked well because the guy in charge defined very early what our job was. And that was to work in an interdepartmental process. So we knew from the get go that everything, you know, we sat at one big table every morning and we discussed what it was we had to do. And if I couldn't do it I would ... point it right out and say "Could you do it?" And the CIDA person, if I was pointing at them would say "No, that's not within ours. Who could do this?" Somebody would put up their hand. That's a team. That's a partnership right there. That worked well. But if that boss doesn't get it One of the smartest things he said was 'I didn't go to PRT school, I am learning this as we go along and I'm learning from you'." (CF)

³ According to the International Committee of the Red Cross website, many NGOs adhere to the Red Cross, Red Crescent Fundamental Principles which include Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary service, Unity and Universality ("The Fundamental Principles," 1979).

As this participant suggested, the reason for the success demonstrated in his PRT had to do with his commanding officer's endorsement of a partnership approach, one in which the commanding officer acknowledged that the partnership promoted in a PRT setting was novel and something which everyone at the table could contribute to in an equal manner. This participant mentioned later in the interview that approaches such as that taken by his commanding officer are not the norm, but lead to successful outcomes, more so he feels than a more traditional military-centric approach to working with NGOs.

As a whole, the participant interviews reported the quality and type of the CF-NGO relationship to be varied and dependent on the personality of the individuals involved and the context of the situation. However, the necessity and benefit of partnership in one form or another was recognized as not only something that is needed for mission success, but as something that is already in place, both formally and informally. While some participants want the two groups to have as little contact as possible, and others want a fully integrated partnership, they all agreed that the CF and NGOs "don't function separately on their own anyway" (NGO participant). The issue then becomes one of addressing the variety of challenges that both the military and NGOs face in establishing a working relationship. For some this may mean a form of coordination that maintains the neutrality of NGOs, while for others an integration model would be the desired approach.

Returning to the concept of cultural intelligence, while participants in this study acknowledged the shared values of NGOs and the CF and have indicated that some individuals are demonstrating the capacity to apply this knowledge toward a successful relationship between the CF and other JIMP players, they all recognized that such individuals are more the exception than the rule. The following two themes that emerged from the participant interviews represent examples of how the cultural intelligence of the CF may be further developed at both the organizational and individual level.

3.2 CIMIC'S ROLE

Although the importance of interacting with the public (i.e., aspects of the civilian world) is important for all military personnel within a comprehensive approach to operations, it is perhaps best exemplified in the work of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) personnel. According to NATO CIMIC doctrine (NATO Allied Joint Publication 9), the central functions of CIMIC are:

- Support to the Force. Any activity designed to create support for the military force from within the indigenous population;
- Civil-Military Liaison. Coordination and joint planning with civilian agencies in support of the mission;
- Support to the Civil Environment. The provision of any of a variety of forms of assistance (expertise, information, security, infrastructure, capacity-building, etc.) to the local population in support of the military mission.

These links with the public are seen as key in facilitating coordination and trust (van der Kloet, 2006). CIMIC is currently seen as a key enabler within military operations, and CIMIC officers support the mission by establishing and maintaining coordination and cooperation between the CF and civilians in theatre. CIMIC's role in the NGO-CF relationship emerged as one discussed primarily by CF members, due simply to the fact that some of the NGO participants were not familiar with CIMIC.

CIMIC is understood by participants as an essential enabler/facilitator, but according to participants, is currently viewed with dissatisfaction. Participants saw CIMIC as a "work in progress," as operating not at its full potential, limited partially by lack of career progression for CIMIC operators. As one participant from the CF indicated:

“We are so far ahead of the military curve in influence activities and civil military cooperation. People don’t know what to do with us. And it’s because nobody has, there isn’t a career path for a civil military operator.” (CF)

At present, there is no permanent full-time capacity within the CF that focuses upon and facilitates the comprehensive approach. The CF participants, as well as the other participants familiar with the role of a CIMIC officer felt that CIMIC is necessary to allow the CF to become JIMP capable, but that although developing, CIMIC has not been given significant priority within the CF. Ten years ago, the Army Lessons Learned Centre emphasized that CIMIC is “an important piece of the military efficiency puzzle and will undoubtedly be part of every mission ...” Yet, then as now, it was acknowledged as an “area that to date has been largely ignored” (Department of National Defence, 1999, p.38). Indeed, even within the CF, the role of CIMIC is not well understood, although participants acknowledged that this is changing:

“CIMIC, a lot of people in the military don’t understand what it is or what it does, or how it can help. And so you know, you’re talking about how NGOs don’t understand the military, but within our military, they don’t understand what CIMIC is. So, there’s like a double whammy there.” (CF)

“It’s developing best it can, I guess, is the best way to put it. The tempo is high ... It’s changed, I’ve seen it change from beginning to now and I have to admit there’s been some amazing changes, and for the better. I mean they’ve tried a lot of different things, you know it’s a new organization with growing pains as well. But I think what it’s produced overall is pretty phenomenal, from the days of, yeah we’re not really sure what we’re doing, to yeah, okay, these are your mandates, and more and more people within the CF even are beginning to understand what our role is, whereas before they had no idea.” (CF)

One of the main concerns that CF participants had regarding CIMIC was the selection of individuals, that is, finding the “right” person for the job. When asked if they felt that the “right” person could be trained for the position, most participants felt that a combination of innate characteristics, coupled with the appropriate training, would yield individuals with the “right” qualities. Participants felt that in order to make CIMIC a more effective enabler and facilitator, proper selection and extensive training prior to pre-deployment training is necessary:

“Yeah you need it ... You’re just parachuting guys out of the blue and they’re just going to ad hoc it. And they’re not going to have that relationship through their network with other agencies. And once you hit the ground, it’s going to show.” (CF)

“They’re recruiting guys ... a reservist [working at a] warehouse, for example, and he’s put as the advisor with CIMIC, at the PRT, to brief CIDA and DFAIT. And those guys are parachuted in. Their 6-month training ends up being overwhelmed on Afghanistan and not necessarily on the overall campaign plan.” (CF)

“So, they’re not getting a guy who went to school, has an interest, has already background knowledge ...” (CF)

While 4 out of 5 CF participants indicated that CIMIC is an important component of a coordinated and comprehensive approach, they were dissatisfied with the current state of CIMIC due to the lack of career path and lack of emphasis on recruiting the right people for the positions. Participants (mostly CF) suggested that CIMIC is an integral part of a successful mission and should be acknowledged as such, even going as far as to suggest that the philosophy behind the missions needs to be changed, from one in which the focus is on kinetic activity, to one in which the focus is on civil-military operations:

“I believe in our capability. I believe in what it is that we can achieve. Just as I mentioned before, if we go into a country with the mindset that we are going to support civil-military operations with kinetic activity, instead of support kinetic activity with civil-military operations, I believe that’s how we’ll be successful.” (CF)

Many of the CF participants in this study advocated for CIMIC to become a dedicated CF organization tasked with making the CF JIMP-enabled. According to these participants, the army needs to invest in this capability in order to achieve mission success:

“You got to select them, train ’em, and then you throw them on their pre-deployment. So you need to get these guys a year out before they start the 6-month training. Get them on the courses. Get them read on the civilian pieces. He has the army piece, he needs to be educated and brought up to speed on the civilian aspect. And you can’t do that in a 6-month pre-deployment training. ‘Cause it takes longer. Six months pre-deployment is focused on the country itself, not all the NGOs and what they’re doing and how they’re doing and all this good stuff. You do that in that one year prior. By going on those courses, going to, you know, CARE [Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere] Canada seminar on the weekend in Ottawa, or something like that. You’ve got to build that. So, right now we’re doing the ‘just in time’ qualified guy, but not experience. So the challenge is to get [an] experienced individual. And that’s investment. The army has to invest in this capability.” (CF)

CF participants indicated that currently, success in establishing connections and effective working relationships with NGOs and other potential partners in theatre depends on the senior CIMIC officer and his or her understanding of the theory and background, or the “big picture” of the current situation. Often, participants indicated, he or she has not had the training necessary to get the big picture. One participant indicated that while the army has invested in a pilot project of individuals working as CIMIC officers full time, the future implementation of a full-time program nationwide is undetermined, and should it occur will not happen for several more years. In the meantime, participants suggest that not enough emphasis is being placed upon the importance of selection and training for CIMIC officers and the results of this are being seen in theatre. From the perspective of the participants, a large component of achieving a culturally-intelligent CF that is capable of effective interaction with civilians in theatre, including the NGOs, is through further development of the role of CIMIC.

3.3 TRAINING, EDUCATION AND EXPOSURE

Not surprisingly, one of the main recommendations stemming from the interviews was the suggestion that training and education, particularly joint training allowing for exposure to all JIMP players, would be the remedy to the strained NGO and CF relationship. Participants (NGOs, CF and the SME) indicated that at present, there exists very little training and education on civil-military cooperation, either within the CF or within many of the NGOs. As an NGO participant indicated below, in the rare situation when training involved exposure of the CF and NGOs to one another, the results were immediately noticeable:

“I think Canada-based NGOs, I think that it is important to educate them in the ways of the military. And, you know, a number of years ago [name withheld] put together a roundtable on defence, diplomacy, and development in a neutral platform, brought a number of disparate players to that. And so, the first day or so there was palpable tension between the military and the tree huggers. And then as time went on, as they started talking to each other, they found that they have common things to talk about. And at the end of the third day, acknowledgment that yes, the military, you guys are good at doing this, humanitarians are good at doing this. Two publications ensued from that, promoted better understanding of the role of the military and the role of the humanitarian community. And I think that is important for the military to continue to have this outreach program...” (NGO)

Both NGO and CF participants recommended that the CF and NGO training systems need improvement to reflect the reality of what soldiers and humanitarian workers are experiencing in theatre, and to improve the potential for effective interaction with one another. Views of the types of training required, however, differed according to the organization.

For the CF, participants recommended training that increased exposure and understanding of humanitarian and development work so that CF members might be better informed when interacting with those in the humanitarian space, and better able to form effective working relationships in whatever shape they take.

“I think the military’s training system ... needs to be modified to produce officers, members that know enough about development so that they can act in an appropriate fashion when they’re into the non-kinetic aspects of what they’re doing.” (SME)

“It’s that lack of trust, lack of education. Maybe in the future it’ll develop once those relationships have been built, but at this point its relationship and trust and education. We’re extremely lacking in that...I think they received one 60-minute period at RMC [Royal Military College] on civil-military cooperation.” (CF)

NGO participants recommended training to increase the uniformity of professional competence amongst NGOs. It was suggested that training amongst NGOs currently reflects the diversity of the organizations themselves, in that some NGOs provide training, while others do not, and that this is dependent on the level of funding provided to the NGOs. In the first excerpt below, the participant suggests that professionalization and standardization of the NGO work force may foster improved relationships with the CF:

“It’s important for say CIDA or some other development branch of government to provide for the professionalization of the NGO work force. I think that’s really important because good humanitarian notions do not translate into effective humanitarian action on the ground. And there are certain things that are common in the approach of NGOs, you know, whether you are solely focused on emergency relief, or early recovery, or long-term recovery, and reconstruction and development, there [are] certain things that are common to NGOs, and if there is any sort of uniformity in that or standardization and professionalization of the NGO work force, I think that will go a long way towards reducing one of the barriers [to a] better sort of understanding between the military and the NGOs. The military are professionals, NGOs are as well, but there’s no uniformity to their level of professional competence.” (NGO)

“Periodic ... you get a lot of training with the NGOs; you get a lot of different training. So, with [name of an NGO], I got a lot of management training, time management, human resources, financial analysis, program management, project management, leadership, interpersonal skills, communication. I mean frankly if you work for an NGO that’s quite well off you get a lot of training and if you work for one that’s not, you don’t get very much.” (NGO)

As a further means of improving the NGO and CF relationship, NGO, CF and SME participants recommended training that facilitates exposure of NGO and CF members to one another and that promotes dialogue between the two groups. Participants agreed that much could be gained from honest discussion of the concerns faced on both sides of the equation:

“I think education and awareness, making the effort to reach out to NGO members. Talk about what are the goals of the Canadian Forces in humanitarian development efforts? What are the/their goals and why do they want to go there and do that? Or even, get together with some key members of the NGO community in Canada, for example, and to brainstorm. And come up with ideas, you know, and thoughts on what would this look like? What are the pros and cons of partnership? What would each organization get out of this? What are the risks? And things like that might be an even better way to sort of start ... improving relations.” (NGO)

“Where you learn enough about what the other parties are doing so that they can cross train. You become interdependent and if you’re well managed and well led and the personalities are right and the work is right, you get a really creative hybrid, which is a joy to be with. Ideally, the development/military mix ought to be like that. But, you don’t get that just by throwing people onto a plane and having them jump off somewhere and start work. You’ve got to build that. And so, you need the time before show time to develop that kind of esprit de corps.” (SME)

“How are you going to find that common ground is to have public forums, inviting people, coming up with contemporary issues that may be contentious. Or, if you want to devolve such an activity to an academic institution where the military will be a participant, rather than the organizer of an event. So, that would in turn sort of neutralize some of the animosity of the military doing something and taking over things, and being in the lead. Whereas, if it’s an event that includes the military, other institutions, and the wider NGO community and do it on a regular basis on contemporary issues, that would be a great education, not only for the military but for the NGO community and the wider Canadian public.” (NGO)

“And I think we have to make a greater effort to do joint training. So that people can see what it is we do, and ... that it’s not all about getting out there and shooting up them bad guys. It’s about seeing the bigger picture and understanding what else is going on. And so by having those other people there, you both learn.” (CF)

As indicated in these excerpts, exposure to one another, whether through academic conferences or joint training, was a common theme in the interviews. Key to the success of this exposure, however, is the opportunity for open dialogue. This suggests an openness to entering into a conversation, which as one participant suggests, could occur on a neutral ground, with neutral individuals in charge of the meetings, so that both groups could feel comfortable that they were on equal, impartial ground.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is crucial to recognize, assess and develop the current state of cultural intelligence present within the CF at both individual and organizational levels that are functioning to facilitate NGO-CF relationships in theatre. Cultural intelligence is a characteristic that differs from other approaches to instilling cultural skills, such as cultural awareness, in that it functions as a process and is not something that can simply be developed overnight, for example, through pre-deployment training. CF members and NGO members alike are already acknowledging shared values and acting upon this knowledge; however, as the participants have indicated in this study, there is much more that could be done. Building upon and improving CF cultural intelligence over time will allow knowledge about individuals and groups to be integrated and transformed into skills that will allow the CF, both as individual members and as an organization, to work effectively in culturally diverse situations (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989).

5.0 REFERENCES

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