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Towards an AU Civil-Military Coordination (CIMCOORD) Framework: Integrating Military Logistics and Social Work for Human Security in Conflict-Affected Communities

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ABSTRACT

Protracted armed conflicts in Africa increasingly produce humanitarian crises in which military insecurity, displacement, family separation, destruction of social infrastructure, trauma, poverty and weakened community institutions occur simultaneously. African Union (AU) peace support operations possess significant logistical capabilities, including transportation, engineering, medical evacuation, communications, route access and infrastructure support, while social workers possess specialised competencies in psychosocial support, protection, case management, family reunification, community mobilisation, social assessment and referral. Yet these capabilities are frequently planned and delivered through separate institutional systems. This article proposes an African Union Civil-Military Coordination (CIMCOORD) Framework for systematically connecting military logistics with professional social work within conflict-affected communities. Using a qualitative documentary research design, the study analyses AU peace and security policies, civilian protection frameworks, civil-military coordination guidance, social work literature and humanitarian practice. Human Security Theory and Ecological Systems Theory provide the analytical foundations. The article argues that military logistics should be understood not merely as operational support to armed forces but as a potential enabler of civilian protection and humanitarian access, while social work should be incorporated as a professional civilian capability within multidimensional peace support operations. The proposed CIMCOORD framework comprises joint assessment, logistics-social mapping, protected humanitarian access, civilian protection and referral, community engagement, information coordination, transition planning, and accountability and professional safeguards. The framework offers the AU a practical pathway for making peace support operations more human-centred, locally responsive and capable of connecting immediate security with long-term social recovery.

1.0 Introduction

Armed conflicts in Africa increasingly extend beyond conventional military confrontation to produce complex patterns of displacement, food insecurity, family separation, destruction of schools and health facilities, psychosocial trauma, gender-based violence, disrupted livelihoods and the weakening of community institutions. These consequences demonstrate that security cannot be understood solely through the territorial control of armed groups or the military defeat of combatants. The African Union (AU) itself approaches peace and security through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which encompasses conflict prevention, crisis management, peace support operations, post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. The AU Peace and Security Council has the authority to authorise peace support operations, while the Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) is responsible for supporting the planning and operationalisation of African peace operations. The African Standby Force (ASF) is similarly conceived as a multidimensional capability involving military, police and civilian personnel rather than as a purely military instrument (African Union, 2010, 2026a). This multidimensional architecture creates an important institutional basis for strengthening the relationship between military capabilities and civilian professional services.

The civilian dimension of African peace support operations is particularly important because conflict-affected populations experience insecurity at several interconnected levels. The AU's civilian-

dimension framework recognises the importance of civilian expertise within peace support operations, while its protection-of-civilians doctrine places the security and dignity of populations at the centre of peace-support responsibilities (African Union Commission, 2010; African Union Commission, n.d.). Contemporary AU practice has also increasingly emphasised human rights, civilian protection, gender, accountability and community engagement within peace operations. The African Union's Security Sector Reform (SSR) framework, for example, defines effective security institutions partly in terms of their responsiveness to democratic control and the security and justice needs of populations, reinforcing the principle that security institutions should serve communities rather than operate independently of them (African Union, 2013, 2023). The direction is therefore increasingly towards security governance that connects institutional capacity with human security.

Within this architecture, military logistics represent one of the most underutilised bridges between security operations and civilian protection. Military organisations possess capabilities that are often scarce in conflict environments: strategic and tactical transportation, airlift, engineering, communications, medical evacuation, route clearance, temporary infrastructure, supply-chain management, mapping and access to difficult or insecure areas. In a peace support operation, these capabilities can determine whether personnel, humanitarian supplies and protection services reach populations in need. The UN experience with civil-military coordination demonstrates that military and civilian actors may need to share information, coordinate movements and deconflict activities in order to protect humanitarian access and reduce operational friction, while maintaining appropriate boundaries between military and humanitarian functions (United Nations, 2022). The relevance of these capabilities is particularly evident in environments where roads are damaged, bridges destroyed, insecurity restricts movement or civilian infrastructure has collapsed.

However, logistics alone cannot determine whether assistance actually responds to the social realities of affected communities. Transporting food, water or medical supplies to a conflict-affected population does not automatically identify unaccompanied children, separated families, survivors of gender-based violence, persons with disabilities, traumatised populations, households facing protection risks or communities experiencing tensions with displaced populations. These are social and human-security dimensions of conflict that require professional assessment, community engagement, case management, psychosocial intervention, referral and social protection. Social workers possess specialised competencies in these areas and are therefore capable of transforming logistical reach into socially responsive intervention. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) explicitly recognises that social workers may work alongside military personnel for humanitarian purposes and peacebuilding, while maintaining the dignity and agency of affected people as their primary concern (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2018). Recent scholarship similarly argues that social work in global conflict requires ethical practice, community engagement, partnerships, policy intervention and attention to practitioner wellbeing (Boetto, 2025).

The need for closer coordination is evident across contemporary African conflict settings. In Somalia, for example, the transition from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) has reinforced the importance of sustaining operational capacity while strengthening Somali institutions and political processes. The AU has emphasised the need to consolidate territorial and security gains through institution-building and sustainable security arrangements (African Union, 2025). In other conflict-affected environments, including parts of the Lake Chad Basin, Sudan, South Sudan and the Central African region, the challenge is not merely to protect territory but to restore relationships, services and community resilience. Such environments require military capabilities to create or maintain a sufficiently secure operating space while civilian actors address the social consequences of conflict.

The central proposition of this article is therefore that the AU requires a more systematic Civil-Military Coordination (CIMCOORD) framework that explicitly connects military logistics with professional social work and other civilian capabilities. The proposed framework is not intended to place social workers under military command or to transform humanitarian activities into military operations.

Rather, it seeks to establish an institutional mechanism through which military logistics can facilitate safe access, transportation, communications, engineering and emergency support while social workers and other civilian professionals retain responsibility for social assessment, psychosocial support, protection, community mobilisation, referral and social recovery. Such an arrangement would strengthen the civilian dimension of AU peace support operations while making military capabilities more responsive to the actual human-security conditions of conflict-affected communities.

2.0 Statement of the Problem

Despite the multidimensional character of African peace support operations, military and civilian capabilities often remain operationally separated. Military components are primarily organised around force protection, mobility, intelligence, operational access, security and mission sustainment, whereas civilian and humanitarian actors concentrate on protection, service delivery, social recovery, human rights and community engagement. The separation has important advantages because humanitarian actors must preserve professional independence and humanitarian principles; however, excessive institutional separation can also produce gaps in coordination, duplication of effort and missed opportunities to use available logistical capacity for civilian protection. The problem is therefore not that military and civilian functions are different, but that their differences are not always translated into a sufficiently structured system of cooperation.

This challenge becomes particularly serious when conflict destroys or severely weakens civilian infrastructure. A community may have urgent needs but lack secure roads, transport, communications, electricity, storage or safe access. A social worker may identify a displaced family requiring urgent protection, but the family may be located in an area inaccessible to civilian agencies. A protection team may identify separated children, but family tracing may depend on reliable communications and transportation. A community may require psychosocial services, but practitioners may be unable to reach it without secure movement arrangements. In such circumstances, the absence of logistical coordination can undermine otherwise technically sound civilian interventions.

At the same time, military involvement in humanitarian environments creates legitimate concerns. The visible association of humanitarian assistance with armed forces may affect community perceptions of neutrality, expose civilian actors to security risks or create confusion concerning institutional roles. Humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence require careful protection, particularly in active conflict environments. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has repeatedly emphasised that humanitarian action must preserve its principled character and that military and humanitarian actors may have different understandings of protection, even when they share an interest in reducing civilian suffering (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 2020). Consequently, an effective AU CIMCOORD framework must avoid both extremes: the complete separation of military and civilian capabilities and the inappropriate militarisation of humanitarian action.

Another problem concerns the limited institutional visibility of social work within peace and security structures. Social workers frequently operate at the point where conflict becomes a social crisis, addressing trauma, family separation, child protection, gender-based violence, displacement, social exclusion and reintegration. Yet these functions are not always incorporated into the planning assumptions of peace support operations. Contemporary social work literature increasingly recognises the profession's relevance to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, humanitarian practice and community resilience (Boetto, 2025; IFSW, 2019). The absence of systematic social-work representation within operational planning therefore creates a gap between military security assessments and the lived social realities of affected communities.

The problem is consequently institutional as much as operational. Africa does not necessarily require another parallel security institution; rather, existing AU peace support structures require a mechanism capable of connecting military logistics, civilian protection, social work, humanitarian coordination and community participation. A CIMCOORD framework could provide this interface. The research problem addressed by this article is therefore how the AU can institutionalise civil-military

coordination in a manner that uses military logistical capacity to improve civilian protection and humanitarian access while preserving social-work ethics, humanitarian principles, community agency and civilian leadership.

3.0 Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

i. examine the role of military logistics in supporting civilian protection and humanitarian access within African conflict zones;
ii. assess the potential contribution of professional social work to AU peace support operations and human-security responses;
iii. develop an AU Civil-Military Coordination (CIMCOORD) framework for integrating military logistics with social work in conflict-affected communities; and
iv. propose institutional and operational measures for implementing CIMCOORD within AU peace support operations.

4.0 Research Questions

i. What role can military logistics play in strengthening civilian protection and humanitarian access within African conflict zones?
ii. How can professional social work contribute to AU peace support operations and human-security responses?
iii. What elements should constitute an AU Civil-Military Coordination (CIMCOORD) framework integrating military logistics with social work?
iv. What institutional and operational measures are required to implement CIMCOORD within AU peace support operations?

5.0 Conceptual Clarification

5.1 Civil-Military Coordination

Civil-military coordination refers to the structured interaction between military and civilian actors designed to improve the effectiveness of activities undertaken in a shared operational environment while respecting the distinct mandates, responsibilities and principles of each actor. The UN describes CIMIC as a military staff function that facilitates interaction between military components and civilian, humanitarian and development actors within peace operations (United Nations, 2022). Humanitarian civil-military coordination is broader than military cooperation alone because it also seeks to ensure information-sharing and movement deconfliction without compromising humanitarian principles (United Nations, 2026). For this study, **CIMCOORD** refers specifically to the proposed AU institutional mechanism for connecting military logistical capabilities with civilian social-work and protection functions within conflict-affected communities.

5.2 Military Logistics

Military logistics encompasses the planning and provision of transportation, supply, engineering, communications, maintenance, medical support, infrastructure and other capabilities required to sustain military operations. In the context of peace support operations, however, selected logistical capabilities can also facilitate civilian protection and humanitarian access. Airlift, engineering support, route opening, medical evacuation, communications and secure transportation can create the operational conditions under which civilian agencies reach vulnerable populations. The proposed framework therefore does not redefine military logistics as humanitarian assistance; it identifies circumstances in which existing logistical capabilities can be coordinated to enable civilian and humanitarian functions.

5.3 Social Work in Conflict Settings

Social work is a professional discipline concerned with human wellbeing, social justice, rights, relationships and the interaction between individuals, families, communities and institutions. In conflict settings, social work includes psychosocial support, case management, child protection, family reunification, community mobilisation, social assessment, referral, advocacy, reintegration and strengthening of social networks. IFSW recognises peacebuilding, human rights and social justice as important dimensions of social work practice in violent and conflict-affected environments (IFSW,

2019). Social work should therefore be understood as a core civilian capability rather than merely an auxiliary welfare service.

5.4 Human Security

Human security shifts the focus of security from the protection of territory and state institutions alone towards the protection of people from serious threats to their survival, livelihoods and dignity. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) human-security approach broadened security to include economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political dimensions (UNDP, 1994). Within conflict zones, this perspective is particularly relevant because military violence may be only one dimension of insecurity. Displacement, family separation, trauma, hunger, exclusion and loss of social services can continue even after physical violence declines.

5.5 Conflict-Affected Communities

Conflict-affected communities are populations whose social, economic, political or physical conditions have been directly or indirectly disrupted by armed conflict. They include displaced populations, host communities, returnees, survivors of violence, children, women, older persons, persons with disabilities and other groups whose vulnerability may increase during conflict. The concept is deliberately broader than “victims” because communities possess agency, coping strategies, social networks and local knowledge that can contribute to recovery and peacebuilding.

6.0 Theoretical Framework

6.1 Human Security Theory

Human Security Theory provides the first theoretical foundation of the study. The theory challenges state-centred understandings of security by placing individuals and communities at the centre of security analysis. UNDP (1994) identified multiple dimensions of human security, while the Commission on Human Security (2003) subsequently emphasised protection and empowerment as complementary approaches to addressing threats to human life and dignity. The theory is relevant because military logistics alone may create physical access without addressing the social consequences of conflict. CIMCOORD therefore seeks to connect physical security with protection, psychosocial wellbeing, livelihoods, family integrity and community resilience.

6.2 Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems Theory provides the second theoretical foundation. The theory views individuals as embedded within interconnected social environments, including families, communities, institutions and wider political and economic systems. Its relevance to social work lies in understanding human problems not simply as individual conditions but as outcomes of interactions between people and their environments (Siporin, 1980). Conflict illustrates this interdependence clearly: displacement affects families, families depend on communities, communities depend on services, and the availability of services depends on institutions and infrastructure. CIMCOORD applies this logic by connecting military logistics at the operational level with social-work intervention at household and community levels and AU policy at the institutional level.

Together, Human Security Theory and Ecological Systems Theory provide a complementary explanation for the proposed framework. Human Security Theory establishes what should be protected—the person and community—while Ecological Systems Theory explains the interconnected systems through which protection and recovery can be achieved.

7.0 Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative documentary research design. Documentary research is appropriate because the study is concerned primarily with policy frameworks, institutional mandates, professional standards and operational experiences rather than with measuring a single population through primary fieldwork. Documents examined include AU peace and security policies, AU civilian-dimension and protection-of-civilians materials, AU Security Sector Reform documents, UN civil-military coordination guidance, humanitarian policy materials, professional social-work standards and scholarly literature concerning social work in conflict and humanitarian environments. The analysis focuses on recurring

themes relating to military logistics, civilian protection, humanitarian access, social work, community participation, professional ethics, coordination and peacebuilding.

The study uses thematic documentary analysis to identify institutional gaps and opportunities for integration. The documents are interpreted comparatively rather than treated as direct evidence of a single operational outcome. Particular attention is given to the AU's existing multidimensional peace support architecture, the civilian component of the African Standby Force, lessons from AU peace operations and the UN experience with civil-military coordination. Contemporary developments in AUSSOM are used as an illustration of the continuing need for operational sustainability and civilian-centred peace support rather than as a stand-alone case study. The proposed CIMCOORD framework is consequently a policy model derived from documentary evidence and theoretical analysis, not a claim that the framework has already been implemented or empirically tested.

8.0 Findings and Discussion

8.1 Military Logistics Constitutes a Potential Civilian-Protection Capability

The first finding is that military logistics can contribute substantially to civilian protection when appropriately coordinated with civilian agencies. Peace support operations require transportation, engineering, medical support, communications, supply chains and access routes to maintain their own operational effectiveness. In fragile environments, however, these same capabilities may create opportunities for civilian protection. The AU's peace-support architecture recognises the multidimensional character of operations, while the civilian dimension of the ASF places civilian expertise alongside military and police capabilities (African Union Commission, 2010). Military logistics should therefore be viewed as an enabling capability rather than as an exclusively military resource.

This does not mean that military forces should assume humanitarian responsibilities indiscriminately. Rather, where civilian protection or humanitarian access is constrained by physical insecurity or infrastructure failure, established mechanisms should determine how appropriate military capabilities can be made available without undermining civilian leadership or humanitarian principles. The distinction is important because CIMCOORD is about coordination of capabilities, not transfer of civilian mandates to the military.

8.2 Logistics Must Be Linked to Social Needs Assessment

A second finding is that logistical planning is most effective when informed by social needs assessment. Military planners may identify roads, routes, population concentrations and security threats, while social workers can identify vulnerable households, protection risks, family structures, social tensions and community coping mechanisms. Combining these perspectives produces a more complete operational picture.

For example, the shortest route to a population may not necessarily be the most socially appropriate route if it exposes displaced women, children or persons with disabilities to particular risks. Similarly, establishing a distribution point without understanding community relations may inadvertently intensify tensions between displaced populations and host communities. Social assessment should therefore become an input into logistical planning rather than an activity that occurs after military movements have been designed.

8.3 Social Workers Provide the Human Interface Missing from Logistical Planning

The third finding is that social workers can provide an important human interface between operational capabilities and community realities. Social workers are trained to assess individual and family needs, identify vulnerabilities, facilitate referrals, mobilise communities and address psychosocial and social consequences of crisis. UNICEF similarly identifies social service workers as an important frontline component of child protection systems, particularly in situations where children and families face violence, exploitation, separation and loss of essential services (UNICEF, 2019, 2026).

This capability can strengthen peace support operations because the success of an intervention cannot be measured only by whether supplies reached a location. It should also be assessed by whether vulnerable groups were identified, whether assistance was accessible, whether protection concerns were

referred, whether communities understood the intervention and whether the intervention strengthened rather than weakened local coping mechanisms.

8.4 CIMCOORD Should Be a Civilian-Military Interface, Not a Military Command Structure

The fourth finding concerns institutional design. The proposed CIMCOORD mechanism should not create a military command over social workers, humanitarian agencies or community organisations. Such an arrangement could undermine professional independence and create perceptions that civilian assistance is an extension of military strategy. IFSW's ethical principles explicitly permit social workers to work alongside military personnel for humanitarian purposes but require the dignity and agency of people to remain the primary concern (IFSW, 2018).

CIMCOORD should therefore function as a coordination interface within AU peace support operations. Military personnel would retain responsibility for military functions, while social workers and civilian specialists would retain professional responsibility for social and protection functions. The value of the mechanism would lie in connecting these functions through joint planning, information exchange, referral arrangements and logistical coordination.

8.5 Humanitarian Principles Must Remain Central

A fifth finding is that effective civil-military coordination must protect humanitarian principles. Humanitarian actors may require military assistance in exceptional circumstances, particularly where insecurity prevents access or civilian transportation is unavailable. However, close association between military forces and humanitarian organisations may affect perceptions of neutrality and independence. The ICRC has highlighted the importance of maintaining principled humanitarian action and recognising the distinction between humanitarian protection and military protection (ICRC, 2020).

The proposed framework should therefore include clear rules on when military logistics may be used, who requests the capability, how it is communicated to affected populations, who remains responsible for humanitarian decisions and how civilian organisations can decline military involvement when such involvement creates unacceptable risks. This would prevent CIMCOORD from becoming a mechanism for the securitisation of humanitarian assistance.

8.6 Joint Civilian-Military Assessment Should Precede Major Interventions

A sixth finding is that joint assessment should become an early stage of CIMCOORD planning. Military assessments frequently focus on threats, terrain, movement and force protection, while social assessments examine population characteristics, vulnerabilities, social relations and service gaps. Neither assessment is sufficient on its own in a complex conflict environment.

The proposed CIMCOORD framework should therefore establish a joint assessment process involving military planners, social workers, civilian protection officers, humanitarian coordination personnel and, where appropriate, representatives of local government and community organisations. The assessment should generate a common civilian-operational picture identifying security risks, logistical constraints, vulnerable populations, essential services, community capacities and priority intervention areas.

8.7 Logistics-Social Mapping Should Become a Core CIMCOORD Function

The seventh finding is the need for logistics-social mapping. This would be one of the distinctive features of the proposed framework. Logistics mapping would identify roads, bridges, airfields, supply points, medical facilities, communication networks and areas of restricted access. Social mapping would identify population movements, vulnerable groups, social institutions, schools, health facilities, traditional structures, community networks, displacement sites and protection concerns.

Bringing the two maps together would allow military planners to determine where their logistical capabilities can facilitate civilian protection and where civilian actors can safely operate. It would also enable social workers to understand the practical constraints affecting service delivery. The resulting picture would be more useful than either a purely military map or a purely humanitarian needs assessment.

8.8 Community Participation Should Shape CIMCOORD Decisions

An eighth finding is that affected populations should not be treated merely as recipients of military-enabled humanitarian assistance. Community participation is essential to identifying actual needs, understanding local risks and preventing unintended consequences. AU engagement with civil society already recognises that local organisations possess knowledge of community conditions and can contribute to conflict management and peacebuilding (African Union, 2023).

CIMCOORD should therefore institutionalise community feedback mechanisms through social workers, local authorities, traditional leaders, women's groups, youth organisations, disability organisations and relevant civil society actors. Such participation would also help distinguish between externally perceived priorities and locally experienced insecurity. In this respect, social workers can serve as professional facilitators of community engagement without assuming ownership of community decisions.

8.9 Protection and Referral Should Connect Security Operations with Social Services

A ninth finding is that military operations can create security space without necessarily creating protection outcomes. Civilian protection involves more than preventing physical attack. It can include family tracing, child protection, psychosocial support, legal referral, support for survivors of gender-based violence and assistance to persons with disabilities. UNICEF's humanitarian protection work illustrates the importance of connecting security concerns with social service systems, family support and community-based protection (UNICEF, 2026).

CIMCOORD should therefore establish referral pathways between military protection activities and civilian social-service providers. Military personnel encountering vulnerable persons should not assume the professional responsibilities of social workers; instead, standard procedures should allow appropriate cases to be referred safely to qualified civilian actors.

8.10 Social Work Can Strengthen Early Warning and Conflict Prevention

A tenth finding is that social workers can contribute to conflict prevention by identifying changes in social relationships before they become large-scale security crises. Social workers are often embedded in communities and may observe family tensions, displacement pressures, youth vulnerability, community grievances, exclusion or emerging patterns of violence. Their observations can complement formal early-warning systems.

The AU already places conflict prevention and early warning within APSA. The integration of social-work perspectives could strengthen the social dimension of these mechanisms by adding community-level information that may not appear in conventional security reporting. CIMCOORD should therefore create structured procedures through which social observations can be communicated to relevant civilian and peace-support structures while protecting confidentiality and professional ethics.

8.11 CIMCOORD Can Strengthen Community Resilience and Peacebuilding

An eleventh finding is that the value of military logistics extends beyond emergency response when it is connected to community resilience. Engineering support may help restore access routes; transportation may facilitate the movement of displaced persons and essential services; communications infrastructure may reconnect communities; and medical logistics may support emergency health access. When these capabilities are connected to social-work interventions, they can contribute to restoring social networks and community functionality.

Social work is particularly relevant because sustainable recovery depends on relationships and institutions as well as physical infrastructure. Recent scholarship on social work and global conflict emphasises community engagement, partnerships and policy intervention as essential dimensions of professional practice (Boetto, 2025). CIMCOORD should therefore include a transition function that progressively links emergency logistical assistance with civilian recovery and locally owned resilience programmes.

8.12 The Framework Can Strengthen the Civilian Dimension of AU Peace Support Operations

A twelfth finding is that CIMCOORD is compatible with the AU's existing multidimensional peace-support architecture. The ASF is already designed around military, police and civilian

components, while the AU PSOD coordinates policies and mechanisms relating to peace support operations (African Union Commission, 2010; African Union, 2026b). The proposed framework therefore does not require the creation of a parallel peace-support structure. It requires the civilian component to be more deliberately connected to military operational planning.

This is particularly relevant because AU peace operations continue to face resource, funding, operational and transition challenges. AUSSOM illustrates the continuing importance of operational sustainability, institutional capacity and the transition from external peace support towards stronger national ownership (African Union, 2025). A CIMCOORD mechanism could contribute to this transition by ensuring that military capabilities are connected from the beginning with civilian institutions and community-based recovery.

8.13 Proposed AU CIMCOORD Framework

Based on the foregoing findings, this study proposes an AU Civil-Military Coordination (CIMCOORD) Framework built around eight mutually reinforcing pillars:

Pillar One: Joint Civilian-Military Assessment. Each relevant AU peace support operation should conduct a joint assessment incorporating military threats, logistical constraints, civilian vulnerabilities, displacement patterns, social infrastructure and community capacities.

Pillar Two: Logistics-Social Mapping. Military logistical information should be systematically combined with civilian and social information to identify where transportation, engineering, communications, medical or access capabilities can enable civilian protection and social services.

Pillar Three: Protected Humanitarian Access. CIMCOORD should establish procedures for requesting, approving and coordinating military logistical assistance where insecurity or infrastructure constraints prevent civilian humanitarian access.

Pillar Four: Civilian Protection and Referral. Social workers and civilian protection specialists should be integrated into appropriate operational planning processes so that vulnerable persons identified during peace-support activities can be referred to qualified civilian services.

Pillar Five: Community Engagement and Feedback. Local communities should participate in needs identification, prioritisation, communication and evaluation. Women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, traditional structures and community-based organisations should be appropriately represented.

Pillar Six: Information and Early Warning. CIMCOORD should establish mechanisms for sharing relevant, ethically collected information between military, civilian and community actors while protecting confidential social-work information and sensitive humanitarian data.

Pillar Seven: Transition and Resilience. Military-enabled emergency interventions should be connected from the outset to civilian recovery, social protection, livelihood restoration, local governance and community resilience.

Pillar Eight: Accountability, Ethics and Professional Safeguards. CIMCOORD should establish clear boundaries concerning command, professional responsibility, humanitarian principles, data protection, safeguarding, gender sensitivity, human rights and complaints mechanisms.

The framework can be represented conceptually as:

Military Capability → Secure Access and Logistics → Civilian/Social Assessment → Protection and Social Services → Community Participation → Recovery and Resilience

This sequence is important because it reverses the assumption that military logistics are an end in themselves. Under CIMCOORD, logistics become an enabling capability within a broader human-security chain.

8.14 Institutional Architecture for CIMCOORD

Institutionally, CIMCOORD should be anchored within existing AU peace support structures rather than established as a new standalone agency. The AU Commission's Peace Support Operations Division provides an appropriate institutional entry point because of its existing responsibilities for peace-support policy, planning and operational coordination. The civilian dimension should include

appropriately trained social-work, protection, humanitarian, gender, human-rights and community-engagement personnel.

At mission level, a **CIMCOORD Cell** could operate as a joint coordination mechanism connecting the mission's military logistics staff with civilian protection and social-work personnel. Its functions would include joint assessments, logistics-social mapping, humanitarian access coordination, civilian referral pathways, community engagement, early-warning analysis and transition planning. The cell would not command civilian humanitarian agencies. Instead, it would coordinate the interface between mission capabilities and civilian needs.

At strategic level, the AU should develop a CIMCOORD policy and standard operating procedures that can be adapted by Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms. Such an approach would allow the framework to work within the existing APSA architecture and avoid creating another institutional layer. The ECOWAS Standby Force, Eastern Africa Standby Force and other regional capabilities could adapt the model to their respective operational contexts.

9.0 Recommendations

Recommendation One

The African Union should institutionalise Civil-Military Coordination (CIMCOORD) within peace support operations to strengthen coordination between military logistics, civilian protection and humanitarian functions.

Implementation Strategies

i. AU Peace Support Operations Division to develop CIMCOORD guidelines covering joint assessment, logistics, humanitarian access, civilian protection and operational coordination.
ii. Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms to integrate CIMCOORD into peace support planning, training, exercises and deployment frameworks.

Recommendation Two

The African Union should integrate professional social work into the civilian dimension of peace support operations to strengthen human-security and community-based responses to conflict.

Implementation Strategies

i. AU peace support operations to incorporate qualified social workers into appropriate planning and field structures for social assessment, psychosocial support, protection, referral and community engagement.
ii. AU Member States in collaboration with professional social-work institutions to develop specialised training for social workers in conflict, humanitarian coordination, civilian protection and peacebuilding.

Recommendation Three

The African Union should establish integrated logistics-social coordination mechanisms to connect military logistical capabilities with civilian protection and social-service needs in conflict-affected communities.

Implementation Strategies

i. AU peace support missions to conduct joint logistics-social assessments covering access routes, vulnerable populations, essential services, displacement and community resources.
ii. Military, civilian and social-work components to establish clear referral and coordination procedures for vulnerable persons, humanitarian access, psychosocial needs and other civilian protection concerns.

Recommendation Four

The African Union should ensure that CIMCOORD remains civilian-led, community-centred and consistent with humanitarian principles, professional ethics and long-term community resilience.

Implementation Strategies

i. AU peace support operations in collaboration with humanitarian partners to establish safeguards defining the circumstances, procedures and limits for military logistical assistance to civilian and humanitarian activities.

ii. Mission civilian authorities in collaboration with community-based actors to institutionalise community participation, feedback, gender inclusion and transition planning within CIMCOORD interventions.

10.0 Conclusion

The growing complexity of African conflicts requires peace support operations to move beyond a narrow understanding of security as the containment of armed threats. Military capability remains indispensable in many conflict environments because armed forces possess logistical resources that civilian agencies may not have: transportation, engineering, communications, medical evacuation, route access and operational mobility. Yet logistical capability alone cannot determine whether a population is actually protected. Conflict produces social consequences that require professional social work, civilian protection, psychosocial intervention, family support, community mobilisation, referral and long-term social recovery.

The proposed AU Civil-Military Coordination (CIMCOORD) Framework responds to this gap by bringing these capabilities into a structured but carefully bounded relationship. It does not propose the militarisation of humanitarian action or the placement of social workers under military command. Instead, it proposes that military logistics should enable civilian and social-work functions where appropriate, while professional social workers retain responsibility for social assessment, protection, psychosocial intervention, community engagement and referral. Humanitarian principles, civilian agency and professional ethics must remain central to the model.

The framework's principal contribution is therefore institutional rather than merely operational. It proposes that military logistics, social work and civilian protection should be connected through joint assessment, logistics-social mapping, protected access, referral systems, community participation, information coordination, transition planning and accountability. Such an approach would strengthen the civilian dimension of the AU's existing peace support architecture without creating a new parallel institution. It would also help transform military capabilities from instruments primarily designed to sustain operations into carefully coordinated enablers of human security.

Ultimately, the success of African peace support operations should not be judged only by territory secured, armed groups contained or military deployments sustained. It should also be measured by whether families are protected, children remain connected to essential services, communities regain functioning social institutions, displaced populations are treated with dignity, vulnerable persons can access protection, and local communities acquire the capacity to recover. The proposed CIMCOORD framework offers the AU a pathway towards this broader conception of peace support: militarily capable, civilian-led, socially informed and community-centred. Its strategic value lies precisely in connecting the physical capacity to reach conflict-affected populations with the professional capacity to understand, protect and rebuild their social lives.

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