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Use of the terminology ‘Lethal Aid’

Council for International Development (CID) is calling on New Zealand media outlets to refrain from using the terminology ‘lethal aid’ in reporting about Ukraine (and any other conflicts or situations of violence).

The term ‘lethal aid’ has been used recently to label New Zealand’s provision of military assets, such as the C-130 Hercules, NZDF personnel, and funds used to procure weaponry and ammunition.

The complexity of the humanitarian crisis in Eastern Europe has necessitated ongoing security considerations, including protection of critical humanitarian principles. The language used to describe the support for the Ukraine response is an important aspect of this.

It is critical that a distinction is maintained between humanitarian relief items/aid and the provision of equipment, goods or funds that will be used for military objectives, either directly or in-directly.

“‘Aid’ is defined by - and articulated within the CID Code of Conduct - as activities undertaken in order to reduce poverty and address global justice issues in the broader context of working to achieve sustainable development”, states Aaron Davy, Standards & Humanitarian Manager at Council for International Development. “In this regard ‘aid’ is about life-saving support and the meeting of basic human needs.”

Use of terminology such as ‘lethal aid’ has the potential to impact humanitarian access on the ground. CID believe that the common use of this terminology carries a real risk of eroding critical humanitarian principles such as *neutrality* and *impartiality*.

The clarity of humanitarian principles strengthens the security and safety of humanitarian organisations and partners, supporting their ability to access vulnerable communities and operate in complex emergencies like the Ukraine and surrounding areas.

It is important that any form of aid is not confused with the provision of lethal weapons or any form of military support.

The Council for International Development (CID) is the peak body for New Zealand’s international development and humanitarian aid sector:

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