

Humanitarian Exchange

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This issue of *Humanitarian Exchange*, co-edited by the Humanitarian Practice Network and the Security Management Initiative (SMI) in Geneva, focuses entirely on staff safety and security. Responses to safety and security challenges vary widely across the aid sector. Different contexts, organisational values, principles and missions, perceptions of security, risk thresholds and human and financial resources all contribute to different management approaches. The articles in this issue are intended to encourage critical thinking around risk management and, in some cases, to challenge existing security management norms.



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In the leading article, Adele Harmer highlights five important new topics covered in the revised edition of HPN's Good Practice Review (GPR) 8, *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments*, scheduled for publication in September 2010. Originally published in 2000, GPR 8 is considered a seminal document in humanitarian operational security. While much of it remains valid, key changes in the security environment for aid workers and in humanitarian security tools, agency practices and interagency security coordination over the intervening ten years point to the need for a revision.

In his article, Gilles Carbonnier discusses why it is important for aid practitioners to undertake political economy analysis to identify contextual drivers of insecurity. Private military and security company regulation is discussed by André du Plessis.

Christina Wille demonstrates how incident data may be analysed to inform strategic and operational decision-making. Policy issues are explored by Elizabeth Rowley, Lauren Burns and Gilbert Burnham, while Larissa Fast and Michael O'Neill present new ideas on developing and implementing acceptance approaches to security. They note, as do Christine Williamson (human resources and security) and Madeleine Kingston and Oliver Behn (risk attitudes), that managing and reducing risk is not just a field or operational issue but a collective responsibility, involving decision-makers and staff at all levels of an organisation. Mark Allison looks at kidnap and ransom management and Ivor Morgan outlines how agencies have adapted to changes in the security environment in Darfur. Finally, Michael Kleinman and Mark Bradbury examine the relationship between aid and security in Kenya.

As always, we welcome any comments or feedback, which can be sent to hpn@odi.org.uk or to The Coordinator, Humanitarian Practice Network, 111 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JD, UK.

About HPN

The Humanitarian Practice Network at the Overseas Development Institute is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience. *The views and opinions expressed in HPN's publications do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Humanitarian Policy Group or the Overseas Development Institute.*



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A decade on: a new Good Practice Review on operational security management

Adele Harmer, Humanitarian Outcomes

A decade ago, only a handful of agencies were aware of and seriously considering the challenges posed by operational insecurity. At the time, few international or national organisations had designated security positions or policies on how to manage the risks of violence against their staff and operations. The impact of high-profile attacks such as the 1996 assassination of six ICRC workers in Chechnya spurred a number of international aid organisations into action. A collaborative learning initiative on security issues resulted in the earliest interagency security training, as well as the first edition of the Good Practice Review on *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* (also known as GPR8). GPR8 introduced core security management concepts and highlighted good policy and practice in operational security in humanitarian relief efforts. It became, in the words of one user, ‘our Security 101. It was the primary reference – our go-to guide’.

in the last ten years major progress has been made in the professionalism and sophistication of humanitarian security management

Since the publication of GPR8 a decade ago, the global security environment has changed significantly. New conflict contexts involving intervening Western powers fighting against armed insurgent forces have created new sources of threat to international humanitarian action. Increasing violence against aid workers and their operations, including more kidnappings and lethal attacks, has had serious implications for humanitarian relief work in insecure contexts. In some circumstances attacks have been increasingly politically motivated. This growing violence has generated a deeper awareness of the security challenges faced by operational agencies, giving rise to new adaptations and strategies in security management. Despite or perhaps because of the fact that GPR8 was still being well utilised, HPN decided that it was time to review and update the manual to reflect these changes in the operational and policy environment.

The new GPR – what’s changed?

In the last ten years major progress has been made in the professionalism and sophistication of humanitarian security management and in interagency security coordination. GPR users interviewed felt that the revised edition could usefully reflect these advances, while at the same time stressing

that much of the original volume remained valid. We were careful therefore not to start from scratch, but to add detail to practices that had become more sophisticated over time, to nuance areas that were previously misunderstood or needed elaboration, to trim what was outdated or no longer useful and to highlight areas where practice in the field and at headquarters has evolved. The GPR covers over 25 topics in security management. Here we highlight five.

Risk assessment

A proper assessment of risk is a critical component of good practice in security management, and is an area where aid organisations have advanced significantly in recent years. The risk assessment chapter in the revised GPR is an attempt to take the complex subject of risk and provide a simple, practitioner-oriented guide to the stages of analysis that need to be undertaken, including programme and criticality assessment, threat and vulnerability analysis and a workable methodology for approaching a risk assessment. It considers how to identify different threats and risks for national staff as compared to expatriate staff. It examines the issue of risk transfer and highlights ways to mitigate this, both with an agency’s own staff and with partner agencies. It also discusses the difficult task of identifying a risk threshold and determining what constitutes acceptable risk – both at the organisational and individual level.

In our interviews, ‘danger habituation’ was an area many agencies thought particularly challenging. As one interviewee working in Darfur, Sudan, noted: ‘Some advisers came from headquarters and told me that they wouldn’t visit again if things didn’t tighten up (because they felt insecure themselves), so that was a wake up call’. The tendency not to reinforce security measures until after an incident has occurred is still widespread. The GPR argues that any decision to accept a greater level of risk requires external oversight and would only be justifiable if security measures have been significantly strengthened and improved, and that those staying in high-risk environments can manage the stress and have properly reassessed their personal threshold of acceptable risk.

Security strategy

The first edition of GPR8 identified three broad security approaches shaping an organisation’s security management strategy, namely ‘acceptance’, ‘protection’ and ‘deterrence’. These concepts were presented as a so-called security ‘triangle’. The triangle model was not meant to imply that an aid agency simply decides, at an institutional level, which approach is preferable (or where the agency ‘sits’ on the triangle) and conducts its operations accordingly. The reality is much more fluid.

These approaches are often used in combination, and will vary according to local security cultures and conditions.

The revised GPR abandons the concept of the triangle in order to avoid this confusion, but maintains a focus on these three core security approaches and invests in a detailed analysis of good practice measures. In particular, there is a more comprehensive examination of the means to implement an ‘active acceptance’ approach. The GPR stresses that acceptance cannot be assumed; it has to be won and maintained. It also recognises that, since acceptance was first analysed in the 2000 GPR, it has become much harder to achieve. Whether, when and from whom acceptance can be gained is now a serious operational question. The GPR outlines the key components of an acceptance approach and offers some possible indicators of how to measure the extent to which acceptance has been achieved. It also considers the practical implications of acceptance, including how much it costs and the administrative and human resources required. The GPR also details deterrence and protective approaches, including ‘low-profile’ programming, and highlights the key issues an agency should consider before and while using armed protection.

Remote management

Remote management has entered the lexicon of humanitarian security discourse in recent years. The position is usually a reactive one and comes about due to poor or deteriorating security conditions or other restrictions in the operating environment. It is increasingly being used in high-risk environments, and thus it was introduced as a new topic in the GPR, along with the options of evacuation, relocation and hibernation. Remote management involves withdrawing international staff or other categories of staff from the programming location, and altering management structures to give more responsibility to national and local staff remaining in situ, or forming new operational arrangements with local partners.

Because remote management sometimes occurs gradually, as security conditions deteriorate, many agencies do little planning and preparation for it. The GPR highlights possible triggers or indicators for agencies to consider, and points to good practice examples where the need for remote management programming can be recognised in advance and appropriately planned for. It also highlights the types of training, resources and other measures that can contribute to more effective and secure remote management programming.

Managing security collectively

Security coordination has never been an easy operational pursuit. As one interviewee noted: ‘The majority of collaboration remains the preserve of the security officer in the bar or with a select group of contacts. It is shared under Chatham House rules with people unwilling to share details.’ The GPR explains the critical importance of sharing security information both within and between agencies. It takes the reader through a step-by-step process of incident reporting, including what counts as a reportable incident, what information should be included in an incident report and the common problems found in incident reports.

On the issue of interagency coordination, the GPR recognises that, while there are many reasons why information-sharing might need to be informal, there are significant benefits in establishing and supporting formal interagency security mechanisms. In terms of practical measures, the review highlights financial and human resources, as well as operational assets such as vehicles, communications and IT equipment.

Developing a security culture

From the outset, the GPR clearly states the need for security management to be integrated across the organisation, and not treated as an ‘add-on’ or a luxury. While this is not a new topic, only in recent years have organisations begun to realise that developing a security culture poses one of the most significant challenges.¹ Much of the focus in security management tends to be on specific operational needs, such as security policies and plans. Yet there is also a need to take a step back and look at how to develop a culture of security within the organisation, including developing capacity.

The GPR highlights that good practice in security management is closely linked with, builds on and reinforces good practice in programme and personnel management more broadly. These are not separate tasks and workloads; there is an important positive multiplier effect. Good programme management requires an understanding of the operating environment and the impact of the agency’s presence and its work, building good relationships, managing international and national staff well and collaborating effectively with other agencies. In other words, it reinforces an active acceptance strategy. The GPR details multiple ways in which security can be treated as a staff-wide priority, and the possible options for ensuring accountability.

The 2010 GPR

The GPR will be released in a very different climate to that of 2000. The threats aid operations face today are far more frequent and challenging than those identified a decade ago. Equally, though, there has been significant progress in organisational appreciation of the risks faced and the types of personnel and assets needed to mitigate them. The GPR will no longer be the sole document on an operational manager’s bookshelf. For some readers it will be squeezed in amongst a much wider operational security literature, as well as specific agency guidelines and protocols. We hope nonetheless that it will remain an important reference and perhaps a benchmark, and that it will serve both those who directly oversee operations in violent environments in the field, and those who support them.

The GPR will be released in English in September and in French and Spanish in December 2010. It will also be found in a user-friendly format online. As a multi-language resource, we hope it will be widely read and that it will contribute to increasing awareness and appreciation of good practice in security management over the next decade.

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¹ Koenraad Van Brabant, *Mainstreaming the Organisational Management of Safety and Security*, HPG Report 9 (London: ODI, 2001).

A closer look at acceptance

Larissa Fast, Kroc Institute, and Michael O'Neill, Save the Children

Repeated bombings and attacks in Afghanistan, carjackings in Sudan and persistent insecurity in Somalia and elsewhere demonstrate the challenges of providing security for humanitarian aid workers. The statistics point to higher numbers of targeted attacks against aid workers between 2006 and 2008, driven largely by insecurity in Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan.¹ This growing insecurity has prompted media articles and a persistent and increasingly prevalent discourse among humanitarian organisations that challenges 'acceptance' as a legitimate, effective approach to security management. For example, a conference in April 2010 discussed the 'limits and possibilities' and the '(perceived) end' of the acceptance approach in light of the increase in security incidents and the perception that aid is part of a Western agenda.²

Some practitioners argue that humanitarian agencies place too much faith in acceptance without fully acknowledging changes in the security environment that undermine its effectiveness. For example, kidnappings for extortion or remuneration reflect a different environment than those motivated for political reasons and therefore deserve a security management approach tailored to that unique threat environment.³ Others share anecdotes about NGOs implementing relief and development projects that are targeted for hostile action despite apparent acceptance by local communities. But is it really the acceptance approach that has failed as the basis of sound security management, or might there be another explanation behind this phenomenon?

The death of acceptance?

Even as many question the efficacy of acceptance in the most violent places, others, like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Save the Children, are resolutely and deliberately using an acceptance approach as a

¹ Abby Stoddard, Adele Harmer and Victoria DiDomenico, *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: 2009 Update*, HPG Policy Brief 34 (London: ODI, 2009).

² The 2010 NGO Security Conference is sponsored by the Centre for Safety and Development. See <http://www.centreforsafety.org/Default.aspx?>

³ Bob Macpherson, Christine Persaud and Norman Sheehan, 'Experienced Advice Crucial in Response to Kidnappings', *Monday Developments*, 26, March 2008, pp. 22–24.



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The death of acceptance? US troops secure a blast site outside the offices of the ICRC in Baghdad, October 2003

core element of their security management strategy. We argue that insufficient evidence exists either to support or refute the effectiveness of acceptance. With apologies to Mark Twain, reports of the death of acceptance are an exaggeration.⁴ Instead, the humanitarian community needs a clearer understanding and a more consistent application of the acceptance approach, and a systematic assessment of its effectiveness in different contexts in order to evaluate whether and under what circumstances the acceptance approach works. While aid workers may *believe* that acceptance-based strategies make them most secure, no corresponding evidence exists on whether or to what degree acceptance works in practice.⁵

The ICRC is the recognised originator of the concept of acceptance, tying its security approach to the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. Its security approach relies on gaining consent from stakeholders

⁴ In May 1897, American author Mark Twain famously responded to rumours of his demise with 'the report of my death was an exaggeration'. See <http://www.twainquotes.com/Death.html>.

⁵ Larissa Fast and Dawn Wiest, *Final Survey Report: Security Perceptions Survey*, unpublished, 2007.

in an operational area, including (especially) those who might obstruct access to or commit acts of aggression against beneficiaries and field workers. Thus, the ICRC's acceptance is linked to its ability to inform and educate local stakeholders about its mission and programmes, and to its negotiations for access to war-affected populations. Good Practice Review 8 (*Operational Security Management in Violent Environments*, published in 2000 and currently being revised) outlined acceptance in more detail, highlighting the importance of analysing context and conflict dynamics, cultivating relationships with multiple stakeholders, and understanding the perceptions of local populations. Since then, relief and development NGOs have latched on to acceptance, largely because it is most consistent with their values, missions and mandates. Most NGOs today claim acceptance as a foundation of their security strategy. How each NGO implements acceptance, however, differs substantially. Many take a 'passive' approach, assuming that doing good programming will win the consent of the local population and acceptance will automatically follow. Others take a more 'active' approach, deliberately working to gain and sustain consent from all stakeholders. The continuum of implementation, from passive to active, is evidence of the diverse ways in which NGOs apply acceptance.

no evidence exists on whether or to what degree acceptance works in practice

This diversity in implementation suggests that the acceptance approach remains inadequately understood in conceptual and operational terms. For example, a recent review of security policies reveals that many organisations understand and implement only part of the original acceptance concept.⁶ The sections of the acceptance framework, as articulated in GPR8, that organisations most commonly incorporate in their own descriptions of acceptance include broad-based relationships (in particular developing relationships with multiple authorities and power-brokers), implicit messages through appearance and behaviour (translated by many organisations into statements about the importance of cultivating a positive 'image' for the organisation) and effective programming. The review found that many organisations do not distinguish between passive acceptance, which assumes that good, community-based programming will automatically lead to acceptance, and active acceptance, which is based on establishing and consistently maintaining consent from all stakeholders. Much of GPR8's guidance on issues such as interpersonal relations and negotiating styles, the nuances of appropriate socialising and diplomacy, the messages and images conveyed through formal and informal meetings and real or perceived divisions among staff are typically not emphasised as part of the acceptance approach. While these diplomatic and negotiation skills are conceived of as integral to the 'humanitarian craft'

⁶ Elizabeth Rowley, *NGO Security Guidance Review Report* (Baltimore, MD: Center for Refugee and Disaster Response, The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2009).

that facilitates access to vulnerable populations, they are rarely directly linked to the skill sets needed to address security concerns through the acceptance approach.

the fact that humanitarian agencies often share the aid landscape with other actors poses further challenges for acceptance

The importance of local perceptions

A persistent and thorny problem with an acceptance approach is the diversity of missions, mandates and values among humanitarian agencies. Aid agencies rarely represent themselves with any unity of mission at municipal, regional or central government levels, largely due to competition among organisations, differences in programme objectives and design or organisational cultures and individual personalities and national/ethnic backgrounds. The fact that humanitarian agencies themselves often share the aid landscape with other actors – private-sector, religious and increasingly military – poses further challenges for acceptance as an approach to security. Local stakeholders often perceive these various entities as more-or-less indistinguishable. Several research initiatives have documented how local communities perceive relief and development actors, including the HA2015 project of the Feinstein International Center,⁷ CDA Collaborative Learning Project's Listening Project and MSF-Switzerland's study of local perceptions of MSF. Their conclusions suggest the need for more attention to local perceptions and their effect on security.

While an individual organisation may well have established an effective acceptance-based approach, this hard-won acceptance can be undone by the behaviour, affiliation or other attributes of another, unrelated organisation. Thus, in places like Afghanistan and Chad, where military and civilian actors work in close proximity, the actions of non-humanitarian organisations can undermine the safety and security of humanitarians. As a case in point, after seeing its access progressively diminish the ICRC delegation in Afghanistan chose to reassert its distinct mission as a means of renegotiating consent from belligerent factions and distinguishing itself as a unique entity among humanitarian actors. In the absence of unanimity of purpose and a disciplined commitment to humanitarian principles, individual NGOs are left with the same dilemma, but without the benefit of the ICRC's unique standing.

In our view, acceptance is founded on effective relationships and cultivating and maintaining consent from beneficiaries, local authorities, belligerents and other stakeholders. This in turn is a means of reducing or removing potential threats in order to access vulnerable

⁷ Antonio Donini et al., *Humanitarian Agenda 2015: The State of the Humanitarian Enterprise* (Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center, 2008), available from <http://fic.tufts.edu/?pid=75>.

populations and undertake programme activities. Gaining acceptance among stakeholders is directly related to an agency's mission and positive stakeholder perceptions of the agency's image. Local perceptions are influenced by project design and accountability, adherence to humanitarian principles, staff behaviour that is respectful of cultural norms and whether the agency understands the dynamics among various power-brokers. Gaining consent depends not on how an NGO sees itself, but on how external actors perceive the NGO. Many organisations have established codes of behaviour for their staff that are linked to general ethical standards (e.g., avoiding conflicts of interest) or to an organisation's mission and principles.⁸ Although these codes and standards influence how an organisation is perceived, how many of these are understood in light of acceptance or integrated into a security strategy? The values and principles an NGO espouses are not always readily evident to external stakeholders, and should be explicitly promoted and contextualised through outreach and negotiation.

acceptance is founded on effective relationships and cultivating and maintaining consent

Acceptance is not just about gaining the consent and support of the local community; instead, it is as much about gaining consent and access from those who may want to obstruct the organisation or harm its personnel. In this way, the diplomatic and negotiating skills that are part and parcel of the humanitarian craft are critical to a successful acceptance approach. While often perceived as valuable to beneficiaries, the actions of NGOs may at the same time

⁸ For example, the Save the Children Code of Conduct for its staff members explicitly forbids the exploitation of children. The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief links standards to operational details. The Red Cross Code is available at <http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng.nsf/html/p1067>.

undermine local power-brokers, commercial interests or those that seek instability to advance a political agenda. Any of these actors may target an organisation that they see as undermining their interests; they are therefore key stakeholders from whom at least tacit consent is required. The inability of NGOs to gain safe access to affected populations from key belligerents in Somalia, Pakistan and Afghanistan testifies to this challenge.

Much of the recent critique of the acceptance approach seems to assume that a security management strategy that is neither deterrence-based nor protection-based by default implies an acceptance-based approach. We suggest that, in many cases, what is being critiqued is not the acceptance approach per se, but overall substandard security management. While many NGOs may claim to use acceptance as a primary means of improving the security of their staff, it is not at all clear how they define acceptance, how they implement it in practice, whether or not it is effective, or the circumstances under which it is, or is not, effective. Many questions still surround our understanding of acceptance and its effective application. What does successful acceptance look like? What are its necessary constituent parts? How do we assess whether and under what conditions the acceptance approach is most effective? What factors contribute to achieving acceptance? The lack of a widely accepted conceptual and operational understanding of acceptance hampers not only its implementation but also its testability. Further consideration of what acceptance means, how this approach is implemented in the field and its level of impact on the security of national and international staff is timely and crucial in light of the current debate about how best to ensure the safety and security of aid workers and the requisite competencies, skills and training that aid workers require. Before the obituary on acceptance is definitively written, we need a better understanding of the acceptance concept, how it is applied and its effectiveness in secure and insecure contexts.

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The six 'Ws' of security policy-making

Christina Wille, Insecurity Insight

On 29 October 2008, a vehicle loaded with explosives forced its way into the UN compound in Hargeisa, the capital of the breakaway republic of Somaliland. The detonation killed two employees of the UN Development Programme (UNDP). Across town, further bombs targeted the presidential palace and Ethiopia's diplomatic representation. Another two bombs exploded in the semi-autonomous Puntland region. The attacks occurred as leaders from Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti and Ethiopia met in Nairobi to discuss the Somali issue. Islamist groups with links to Al-Qaeda are believed to have been responsible.

The events made headlines around the world. Images of broken windows, damaged walls and dead civilians inevitably shape our opinion of the dangers and threats associated with delivering aid in a volatile and ungoverned country like Somalia. In the absence of foresight, accounts of past events are the best available sources to gain an overview of the specific dangers in a particular environment. However, the media's focus on selected attacks is not a guarantee that our attention is drawn to the most frequent or the most dangerous situations that aid workers confront. Moreover, such reports do not tell

us what can be done to make people and their work less vulnerable.

The six ‘Ws’

This article describes a new project that highlights patterns of violence drawing on analysis of data providing detailed information on the nature of the event. This is based on the six ‘Ws’: **who** did what to **whom**, **where**, **when**, **why** and with what **weapons**. Such analysis can provide vital information for designing an effective policy response. Insecurity Insight, in partnership with humanitarian agencies and umbrella organisations, collects information on a wide range of incidents covering both the most devastating attacks and near-misses. By applying an innovative approach to data analysis, we can generate insights into common factors underlying these attacks, which can then be used by the project’s members and the broader humanitarian and policy-making communities.

The project combines information from media reports with internal security monitoring by humanitarian agencies. Partner agencies, including Care International, International Medical Corps, Oxfam and Save the Children, submit detailed descriptions to Insecurity Insight of security incidents affecting their staff or work. The definition of security incident is as broad as the spectrum of events affecting the delivery of aid. It covers murders and kidnappings of aid workers, as well as the less severe but more frequent robberies, injuries, threats and expulsions.¹ It also records information on the impact of security events on the ability to deliver aid, for example in cases where security concerns or ambient violence have resulted in staff being withdrawn, or operations being suspended or cancelled.

by applying an innovative approach to data analysis, we can generate insights into common factors underlying attacks

Humanitarian agencies have long recognised that cooperation in sharing security information benefits everyone. Yet legitimate concerns regarding data protection responsibilities towards the victims and differences in the way organisations’ reporting mechanisms work in the past made sharing information on a global scale very difficult. However, the work of specific information-sharing and coordination mechanisms, such as the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) and the NGO Safety Program (NSP) in Somalia, has shown that cooperation can work. In the project described here, Insecurity Insight functions as a clearinghouse, managing submissions from partner agencies in a confidential manner and making the information available in an aggregate and anonymised format that no longer identifies a specific victim or agency.

¹ Safety incidents such as road accidents are not included.

Such cooperation has wide benefits. Organisations gain access to information on security developments directly affecting aid organisations around the globe without having to spend resources on monitoring incidents beyond those affecting their own organisation. Information about what is happening to other agencies is particularly useful when organisations are taking decisions about whether to open (or reopen) operations in a country. Such data can also be readily used to demonstrate to directors, board members and donors the need for adequate financial investment in security measures.

An important added value of this project lies in its unique and sophisticated approach to event processing. The concept is based on the Taback-Coupland method of violence analysis. The thinking is inspired by public health methods. Information is coded, stored and retrieved in a specifically designed relational database. The aim is to generate findings akin to the kinds of recommendations used by public health specialists seeking to prevent disease by advising people to avoid or adopt certain practices. Applied to security thinking, this means looking for those aspects of security incidents that can be affected by a change in people’s behaviour or controllable elements in the environment.

Information on the six ‘Ws’ draws attention to the role various factors may play in shaping the outcome of an event, helping to identify where policy measures are required. The aim is to reduce the vulnerability of victims and the potency of perpetrators in order to limit the impact of violence. The objective of such a database is not to describe the magnitude of the problem by attempting a full count of all violent events and numbers of affected people. Public health experts teach us that the search for the factors that influence the spread of a disease, which is the information needed to identify counter-measures, does not require information on the total number of people affected by a disease. Instead, a sample of relevant events can provide these answers.

Case example: kidnapping in Somalia

The example of Insecurity Insight data on kidnappings of humanitarian staff in Somalia illustrates the approach and outputs. At present, the database, which is continually updated and backdated, contains 115 events reported from Somalia for the period July 2008 to December 2009. These events describe the death of 52 humanitarians, the kidnapping of 50 employees and ten threats to organisations. This is not a complete list of events, and does not provide a full count of the number of aid agencies affected or staff killed, kidnapped or threatened. The total count is, without a doubt, higher. Even so, enough events exist to start looking for patterns.

All 50 kidnapping victims worked for humanitarian agencies, whether non-governmental or UN-related. Of these, 27 were expatriates and 21 were Somalis.² However, this does not show that expatriates are at a higher risk of kidnapping than Somali employees. Such

² For two kidnapping victims no information was provided as to whether they were Somalis or foreigners.

a conclusion could only be drawn with the knowledge that the sample accurately reflects the proportion of expatriates and Somalis kidnapped and the total numbers of expatriate and national staff in the country. The approach here treats groups of events with distinct characteristics as separate samples. In the example here, these are the sample of events in which expatriates were kidnapped and the sample of events in which locals were kidnapped. Both samples are examined for differences that are unlikely to be the result of biases within the data.

All but two of the 27 expatriates kidnapped in Somalia were released following an average of 100 days in captivity (mean 100 days, median 67 days). Two other victims are missing without any information available as to their whereabouts. Of the 21 kidnapped Somalis who worked for humanitarian agencies, five were killed, and 15 were either freed or managed to escape, usually on the day of the kidnapping itself (median 0 days in captivity, mean six).³ The exception was the kidnapping of Hassan Mohammed Ali, the head of UNHCR in Somalia, who was held for 67 days.

The differences in the example from Somalia are interpreted based on qualitative information with a view to identifying areas for policy measures. The conclusion based on this comparison is that expatriates and Somalis are treated differently when kidnapped and may behave differently as well. Ransom demands for kidnapped expatriates tend to be addressed to the organisation they work for or the state of origin. Lengthy negotiations often follow that may or may not include the payment of a ransom. For many Somalis ransom demands appear to be made to their families, some of whom may pay up quickly. It is also likely that the amount of money demanded is higher when demands are addressed to an organisation or state, rather than a local family (although this information is not

³ There is no further information on the whereabouts of the 21 kidnapped Somalis.

systematically available). The length of time that the head of UNHCR was held may differ from the general pattern of kidnapped Somalis because his captors may have regarded him as higher value due to his senior position within a UN agency.

Few expatriates attempted to resist their kidnapers, perhaps because this is the general advice given. A number of Somali victims, by contrast, attempted to overpower their abductors. Some succeeded and managed to escape, while others were killed. This raises the question whether agencies provide local employees with the same type of kidnapping awareness and behaviour training as expatriates. If so, it could be worth finding out why such advice is not adhered to. If the right answers and policy responses to these differences in behaviour are found, it might be possible to reduce the proportion of Somali humanitarians killed during a kidnapping.

This is just one example of how consumers of the information from this project could use it. The aim is to identify entry points for measures that might make a difference. Training on how to react in the event of a kidnapping might be the 'seatbelt' which, while not able to prevent the car crash, might make the difference between life and death.

The project is looking for more agencies to work with us. Becoming a partner is simple. Following a memorandum of understanding, the partner agency forwards information about security events in its preferred format to Insecurity Insight. Agencies can then take part in seminars that look at patterns within the data, and possible implications. There are also plans to develop online access to summary data for partners, for which funding is being sought. For more information see the Insecurity Insight website at www.insecurityinsight.org.

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Whose risk is it anyway? Linking operational risk thresholds and organisational risk management

Oliver Behn and Madeleine Kingston, European Interagency Security Forum (EISF)

Aid agencies have worked hard in recent years to professionalise security management, including the provision of training for staff at headquarters and in the field and the formalisation of the risk management process. This article is part of a larger European Interagency Security Forum (EISF) research project to support NGO security management by documenting the risk acceptance process. It argues that programme managers should adopt a broader understanding of risk in order to contribute to flexible, organisation-wide judgements of risk exposure. To recognise risks effectively and engage with strategic decision-making, managers must understand *what is at*

risk,¹ not just for field staff and programmes but for the organisation as a whole.

Establishing 'risk attitude'²

Aid agencies operating in complex, high-risk environments have to balance the humanitarian impact of programmes

¹ Phrase attributed to previous discussions with Maarten Merkelbach of the Security Management Initiative (SMI).

² 'Risk attitude' is defined by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) as 'an organization's approach to assess and eventually pursue, retain, take or turn away from risk'. International Organization for Standardization, ISO 31000: *Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines*, 2009.

with the duty of care they have to their employees and associates. The way an NGO manages risk depends heavily on the organisational mission and culture. This attitude to risk should be clearly explained to staff so that personal levels of risk acceptance may also be defined. Whilst some agencies do not consider that their activities justify putting staff at risk, others follow UNHCR in explicitly recognising the risk of serious harm and even death, arguing that the humanitarian imperative renders this a ‘practical probability’. Competing moral imperatives of humanitarian impact and duty of care are complicated further by organisational capabilities, reputation, internal and external financial leverage, experience and judgement in the field and decentralised decision-making.

aid agencies have to balance the humanitarian impact of programmes with the duty of care they have to their employees and associates

Aside from a conscious acceptance of risk, ‘risk creep’ may occur. In Chad, the Central African Republic and Darfur, for example, agencies may tolerate an extremely high risk of armed robbery and carjacking. Predefined trigger events can rarely be absolute, and adaptation is necessary in dynamic contexts. At the same time, however, it is unclear the extent to which this process is conscious and consistent, and how risk attitude is communicated to international and national staff, partner institutions, beneficiary communities and donors.

Tools without process

Many humanitarian agencies freely admit that, while context and risk assessment frameworks are in place, understanding of their own internal workings, and of thresholds of risk, is incomplete. The risk acceptance process remains fluid, context- and personality-driven and lacking in documentary support. Risk attitude is seen as intuitive, driven by case-by-case decisions taken in the field or at the regional or head office, depending on the severity of the event. During the first presidential elections in Afghanistan in 2004, for instance, some NGOs based their acceptance of risk partly on an assertion by senior staff that the situation was no worse than in Mogadishu in 1992, or other contexts they had worked in. Every worst-case scenario mapped out had been surpassed, yet the acumen of managers, based on current context analysis as well as transferrable experience, enabled agencies to continue operating. Depending on the context, this level of fluidity may be central to achieving humanitarian objectives. However, the constant re-evaluation required in dynamic situations must be documented, transparent and adaptable.

The basic technical steps involved in accepting or rejecting risk are:

1. Establishing the external threats; evaluating internal structures and vulnerabilities.
2. Evaluating the risk mitigation process; documenting the measures taken to mitigate risks and expected outcomes.
3. Determining the capacity of staff to manage the residual risk.
4. Documenting the humanitarian impact of programmes, and whether this warrants accepting the residual risk.

Where documentation of these steps is complete and satisfactory, programmes can usually go ahead. Risk assessment tools such as the impact-probability matrix are employed to document the internal and external contexts, arming programme staff with a snapshot of known threats and prompting frequent communication with local contacts and situational monitoring. These tools do not easily incorporate uncertain risks such as terrorist attacks, and encourage a heavy focus on singular threats (such as theft, armed attack or road accidents) and the organisation’s ability to reduce the likelihood and/or consequences of these threats, rather than systemic risk (cumulative threats weighed against organisational capacity, structural weaknesses, financial and reputational pressures, etc.). A narrow focus at the dynamic technical level, or poor communication of the organisational risk attitude, can lead to inconsistent risk acceptance processes and a lack of synergy between operational risk judgement and strategic decision-making.

Layers of risk attitude

Case studies reveal that who makes the decisions at which level of the organisation has a substantial impact on the content and outcome of the technical risk assessment steps described above. The higher the organisational risk the higher the levels involved in the decision-making process. For this reason, we distinguish between risk attitudes at different levels. Definitions for operational and organisational security offered by People in Aid provide a framework for these distinctions:

- Operational definition of security: ‘NGO security is achieved when all staff are safe, and perceive themselves as being safe, relative to an assessment of the risks to staff and the organisation in a particular location.’
- Organisational definition of security: ‘NGO security is achieved when organisational assets are safe and when the organisational name and reputation are maintained with a high degree of integrity.’³

The basis for decisions will also affect the trajectory of the risk acceptance process. Calculations prompted by trigger events are relatively ill-defined. On a short-term basis, gut instinct is employed as a measure of the severity of threats and the level of humanitarian impact. External influencers include the actions and recommendations of other NGOs, the UN and host governments, the potential risk transfer to

³ People in Aid, *Promoting Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel: Policy Guide and Template for Safety and Security*, 2008, www.peopleinaid.org/pool/files/publications/safety-security-policy-guide-and-template.pdf, p. 6.

national staff and partners and prospects for returning to the area of operation. Swift, incident-based organisational withdrawals from Pakistan and Afghanistan have been described in this way.

Calculations that are not immediately related to specific threats or security incidents are more likely to involve a sophisticated approach, in which standard operating procedures are central. It is useful to think of such calculations in terms of parameters of *risk* rather than of *security*. Deciding when to withdraw is a process of continuous risk assessment and mitigation, and largely involves a gradual reduction of activity or visibility. Good identification and communication of changes in the operating environment has allowed agencies to return to full programming in contexts as diverse as Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe.

deciding when to withdraw is a process of continuous risk assessment and mitigation

Decision-making

The decision-making process hinges on several factors that may adversely affect risk management. Wide consultation and inclusiveness – firmly led by senior and middle managers – is important for NGOs, particularly when returning to a country or project area. Having an effective structure in place, and commitment at all organisational levels, will prepare agencies for uncertainty in a way that predefined risk reactions and decisions cannot. Yet provisions for ensuring this are often unclear. Depending on organisational structure and operating mode, communication can be problematic. Relations between country or project bases and head offices may be hindered by remoteness, misunderstanding of either the local context or the big picture and conflicting interests.

In one example, a Country Office in the Philippines managed by national staff came under pressure from Head Office to revert to standard operating procedures and push project activities further into the field. The Country Office felt that emergency standards were still appropriate due to the political and military situation, together with the organisation's profile locally and popular perceptions of a rich, Western-driven entity. In this case, a regional security manager mediated between the two loosely connected Offices to emphasise the potential harm to staff if sophisticated field operations resumed. Since the Country Director's leverage with senior managers was limited, this negotiation process was vital in ensuring that project staff were not exposed to unacceptable levels of risk.

Structured provisions within security policies and plans for consultation are required, a process that should be documented and monitored as rigorously as risk decisions and supporting evidence.

Personality and experience

Personality and experience can encourage the devolution of authority and deviations from risk management policy. In an evacuation from Goma in 2008, the appropriate Desk Officer was rapidly deployed, and a Security Management Team set up to liaise with the Head of Operations. Despite the hierarchical nature of the organisation, authority was devolved to the Desk Officer, who possessed considerable experience within DRC and had close links to local political and social actors. The Desk Officer's decision to withdraw was communicated to regional security managers, and the role of the Management Team was in this case to confirm and document the decision. This level of decentralisation is necessary in dynamic contexts, but possible only when an organisation has full confidence in the experience and judgement of staff further down the organisational hierarchy, and where staff are relatively forceful and prepared to accept high levels of responsibility for tough decisions. Far greater organisational guidance on risk attitude is called for in contexts where staff are less experienced or proactive.

Regardless of organisational structure, it may be difficult to reconcile operational risk assessments, funding requests for security measures and the desire to prolong programmes for reputational or financial reasons. Middle ground can be hard to find when short-term technical or operational logic meets long-term programmatic and organisational priorities.

Operational risks in organisational context

The examples given here illustrate the need for aid agencies to develop processes for risk acceptance and rejection that are consistent, accurate, transparent, participatory and unbiased by self-interest. Risk attitude must be systematic and driven by senior management, yet embraced by staff at all levels, enabling them to respond flexibly to both routine and unforeseen challenges. A broader conceptualisation of risk could facilitate this flexibility. To engage with programme managers appropriately, security advisers should consider equipping themselves to analyse both the internal and external environment, weighing operational and organisational risks against programmatic impact and strategic priorities.

For practitioners of humanitarian security, an organisational culture of awareness and exchange is sought over and above rigid frameworks or lengthy policy documents. Programme and security managers may therefore want to concentrate on formalising the risk acceptance *process*, rather than adding to the supporting literature. Transparent consultation and decision-making structures are required, which are well-documented and instilled in staff on the ground.

The process of establishing and acting on risk attitude is not readily defined. NGOs work in complex and dynamic environments; they comprise a multitude of values, perspectives and interests, and judgement of risk depends heavily on the mission, programme outputs and capacity. Documenting internal and external operating contexts and humanitarian impact through robust monitoring and evaluation can aid project-level decision-making. When

defining risk parameters for organisational portfolios, though, agencies need to consider systemic risk and overall exposure. Despite progress towards professionalisation, work remains with respect to applying clearly defined structures and processes to the management of humanitarian risk.

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internal documents provided by security practitioners, as well as discussions held at various NGO fora. It also draws on risk management principles introduced by the ISO. EISF recognises the pivotal role of the Security Management Initiative (SMI) in promoting awareness and understanding of ISO standards. EISF would like to thank **Maarten Merkelbach** in particular for his invaluable input and contribution to the interpretation of many of the issues raised.

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Key security messages for NGO field staff: what and how do NGOs communicate about security in their policies and guidelines?

Elizabeth Rowley, Lauren Burns and Gilbert Burnham, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

In recent years, staff security management within humanitarian organisations has developed considerably. Only ten years ago, many NGOs did not have full-time security officers, written security policies and guidelines or training programmes focused on the prevention and management of staff security incidents. Today the majority do. As the field expands, it is appropriate to look at how humanitarian organisations communicate to field staff about security issues. What key messages do staff receive about security management? What issues are less commonly addressed? How do organisations communicate these messages? To what extent are security messages and advice similar or different across organisations? What is the potential impact of these differences at field level?

These are some of the questions that researchers at the Center for Refugee and Disaster Response (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health) looked into during a recent review of humanitarian agency policies and guidelines. With support from the Bureau of International Cooperation of the International Medical Center of Japan (IMC), research staff undertook a document review with the following objectives:

1. Identify the most and least commonly cited security management messages NGOs are communicating to their field staff.
2. Determine the types of documentation that NGOs most often use to communicate key security messages.
3. Distinguish the points of commonality and divergence across organisations in the content of key security messages.

Security policy and guidelines review

Through InterAction and the European Inter-Agency Security Forum, research staff invited international humanitarian organisations to share their security policies, manuals and training materials for the purpose of the review. The review included the materials of 12 US-based NGOs, seven European NGOs and one Japanese NGO, all involved in the delivery of international humanitarian assistance. The documents included 20 security manuals, 12 policy/guideline documents and five sets of training materials. Many NGOs hire outside consultants and organisations for training and do not have original training materials. Because so few training materials were received, these were not included in objectives 2 and 3 above.

As a guideline, researchers used the InterAction Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS), including the Suggested Guidance for Implementing InterAction's Minimum Operating Security Standards (2006) and The Security of National Staff (2002), referenced by the InterAction MOSS. The InterAction MOSS encompasses five main areas:

1. Organisational Security Policy and Plans.
2. Resources to Address Security.
3. Human Resource Management.
4. Accountability.
5. Sense of Community.

From InterAction's MOSS framework, researchers developed a list of key security guidance points. The researchers added another 15 guidance points based on an initial review of documents received. In total, researchers checked each available document within each organisation for 85 items.

Two main tallies were used to determine the most and least commonly cited security messages. First, researchers tallied up the number of times each item was mentioned in each type of document (security policy, manual or training materials). The item was counted once even if cited several times in the same document. The researchers also counted the number of organisations that mentioned the item in any of their materials. Based on a count of both the number of times a specific item was mentioned across all organisations, and the number of organisations that included it in any of their materials, the researchers were able to determine the most and least commonly cited security messages.

security policies are typically brief and highlight overall security philosophy, important principles and key guidance points

Key findings

Typically, organisations' security policies are brief and highlight overall security philosophy, important principles and/or key guidance points. Security manuals provide more detail about policy implementation. Not all organisations have a distinct security policy. Since policy documents are an important reference point, this could place staff at a disadvantage in terms of internalising the content that is normally provided in a security policy, and in interactions with host governments, donors, local leaders, community members and other staff where security management questions arise.

Researchers found that the majority of organisations in this review devote most security material content to Organisational Security Policies and Procedures (Standard 1). This is not surprising insofar as it is the most developed

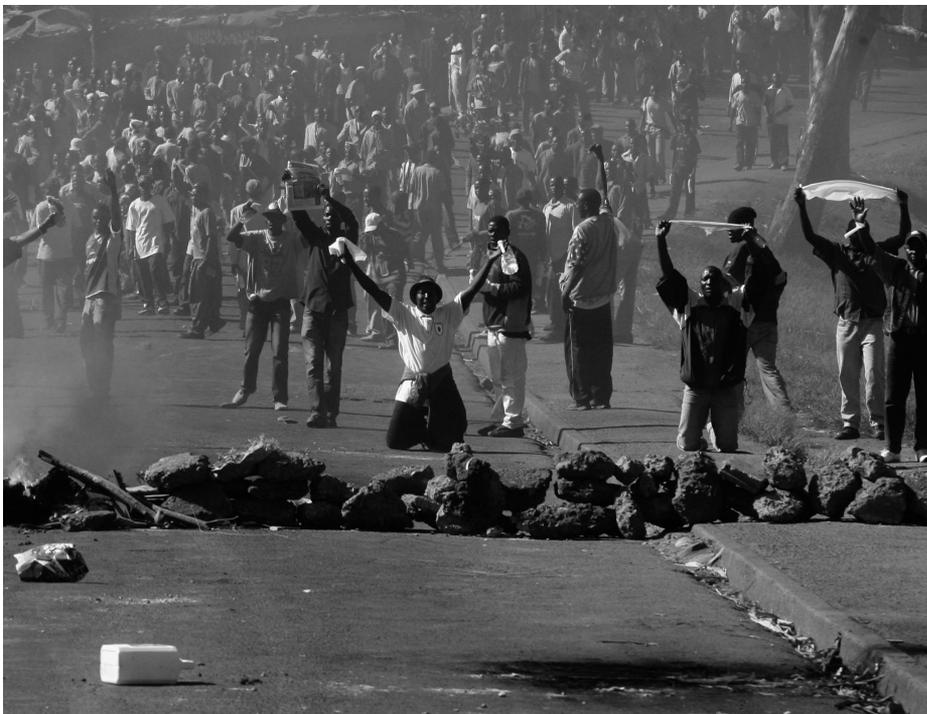
section of the MOSS. It is in this area that organisations provide specific, practical guidance about security in day-to-day operations. With two exceptions, all of the most commonly cited security messages are found under Standard 1. The most commonly cited security messages cover a range of issues, including:

- Incorporation of threat/risk assessment processes in country-specific security plans.
- Articulation of individual staff responsibility for carrying out their work in a way that supports the organisation's security efforts.
- Guidance on acceptance, protection and deterrence strategies.
- Framework for determining acceptable and unacceptable risks to the organisation's staff, assets and image.
- Inclusion of situation analysis (political, economic, historical, military) in local security plans.
- Use of armed security.
- Security incident reporting requirements and procedures for individual responses to incidents.
- Movement and transportation, telecommunications and contingency plans (security evacuation, medical evacuation).
- Sharing of security-related information with other humanitarian actors.
- Establishment of a headquarters crisis management plan.
- Agency response to hostage-taking and demands for ransom or protection money.

Security management entails costs for staff, materials and equipment, insurance, training, assessments and communications. While investments in staff security are crucial, very few organisations in the review make explicit reference to Resources to Address Security (Standard 2) in their materials. Guidance on budgeting for security and consideration of other resources may be included in other types of materials (e.g. programme planning and budget guidance). However, this is also likely to be a reflection of the difficulty many organisations still face in streamlining security costs into programme budgets.

Most of the least commonly cited security-related messages are found under Human Resources Management (Standard 3). Like Standard 2, these include issues that might be covered by other materials within organisations, such as personnel policies and procedures documents, or that would be considered in practice even if not documented. However, the documents in this review indicate that many human resource management concepts have not been mainstreamed into formal security guidance. These include:

- Consideration of threats to national staff incorporated into staffing decisions (e.g. whether to fill a position with national or expatriate staff).
- Security awareness incorporated into all job descriptions.
- Inclusion of efforts to anticipate emerging security threats that could warrant additional security duties.



Protesters taunt police during a protest in Nairobi in January 2008

- National staff trainers and national staff issues are included in security training curricula.
- Review of the organisation's history, role, mandate and message included in orientation materials for national staff.
- General explanation and additional detail on request provided to staff about life insurance, health insurance, supplemental war risk insurance and compensation for work-related injuries.

Accountability (Standard 4) and Sense of Community (Standard 5) are both brief and have mixed coverage by most organisations in this review. Of the items found under Accountability, two are among those least commonly cited: staff evaluations to include security-related responsibilities, if any; and clearly stated consequences for violation of security policies and procedures. Articulation of the individual's responsibility for carrying out their work in a way that supports the organisation's security efforts is one of the items most commonly cited.

Under Sense of Community (Standard 5), there are also items that are most commonly mentioned by the NGOs in this review (i.e. information-sharing with other humanitarian actors as appropriate), and least commonly mentioned (i.e. taking steps to mitigate any negative impact of an organisation's operations on the security of others). The latter occurs in the field in many, though perhaps not all, instances, even if not formalised in agencies' security guidance. But there is little if any detail on how information-sharing about security-related issues should happen. Although different operating environments to some extent determine how this occurs in reality, more guidance on information-sharing might facilitate better security-related communication across organisations.

In terms of the review's second objective – looking at which documents are used to communicate the key security messages – researchers found that the most commonly cited messages were in NGOs' security manuals, rather than in security policies. As mentioned above, security manuals are often fairly detailed, while policy documents tend to focus on a few key issues or the general security approach of an organisation. Among the most commonly cited messages included in security policies specifically are an articulation of the individual's responsibility to work in a manner that supports the organisation's security efforts, clarification of the organisation's position on the use of armed security, and emphasis on the inclusion of threat/risk assessment

processes in country-specific security plans. Although researchers could not access the security training materials used by many NGOs, this is not to say that training does not occur. Indeed, NGOs continue to make significant investments in this area. However, the limited availability of training materials for review is likely to be a symptom of a somewhat scattered approach to security training, whereby some is done at headquarters, some is done in the field, some is conducted in-house and some done by consultants using their own materials. Anecdotally, there is a great deal of variation in how training is done, who is trained and what training content includes. It is not possible to comment on how this impacts on key training messages that field staff receive or the overall effectiveness of security training. This is an important area for further review.

Researchers focused on three of the most commonly cited security messages to investigate similarities and differences in interpretation across NGOs (objective 3 of the review). These were threat/risk assessment processes, frameworks for determining unacceptable risk and guidance on acceptance, protection and deterrence approaches. The review indicates that, while NGOs use similar definitions and frameworks for security assessments and security risks, there is considerable variation in the level of detail provided in how to undertake assessments. Staff at some organisations may receive additional detail on assessments through training, and seasoned staff may have a better sense of assessment implementation gained through experience. However, it is likely that even senior humanitarian staff are equipped with different levels of information on the purpose and practice of security assessments. Few NGO materials indicated that a security assessment is not a one-off exercise, provided guidance on determining the frequency of security assessments or discussed which staff to involve in the assessment process.

Most NGO security guidance highlights that not all organisations, nor all staff within the same organisation, have the same level of vulnerability in a given security environment. Based in part on different assessments of vulnerability, NGOs in the same situation sometimes make different security decisions based on their own interpretation of risk. This is to be expected, but it also highlights the need for good communication across organisations in the field since the decisions of one can affect the security of others. The review also found variation in the frameworks and terminologies that NGOs use for determining an unacceptable security risk, and when an organisation might suspend project activities or withdraw staff. Many but not all organisations have adopted a framework that uses either a risk matrix (plotting the probability of a security event against the impact of such an event if it occurs) or a variety of indicators to determine security levels, using categories such as low, moderate, high and severe. There is considerable variation in indicators used to define those categories and differences in security level terminology.

NGOs continue to make significant investments in security training

Sixteen of the organisations in the review refer to acceptance, protection and deterrence as the three main security management strategies or approaches. The definitions provided for these terms are similar across organisations, and most point to acceptance as the preferred approach. However, there is variation in the detail provided about what acceptance means and how to implement it as a security management approach. Many organisations provide a cursory description similar in nature to basic project management (e.g. building good relations with

the community, impartiality and transparency). Few go into the more nuanced description of acceptance as a security management approach as originally outlined by Van Brabant in *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments*, and none provides indicators for implementing a successful acceptance-based strategy.

Conclusions

NGOs have made significant advances in efforts to prevent and respond to aid worker security incidents over the last few years. Having dedicated security staff, increased emphasis on training and the drafting of policies and guidelines are all important parts of this work. The review of 20 NGOs' security documents shows a focus on key security messages mainly in guidance on organisational security policies and plans, while other areas, particularly resources for security and issues related to human resources, are less frequently cited. More detailed guidance on security-related communication between organisations could enhance effective information-sharing in the field and facilitate trend analysis across organisations. While we now have an idea of which security messages are most and least likely to be communicated to NGO staff, we do not know which communication methods are most effective, or the most common hindrances staff face in implementing policies. We could learn more through a systematic field-based review of security practices in relation to policies. As the security environment continues to change, NGOs will need to reassess the messages conveyed to staff and what impact these messages have in preventing and responding to security incidents.

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Personnel management and security

Christine Williamson, People In Aid

The safety and security of humanitarian aid workers is arguably in greater jeopardy today than at any time in the history of the humanitarian endeavour. The environment has changed and it takes more than a set of technical skills and a friendly manner to be a successful humanitarian worker. Staff are no longer immune from acts of violence, if indeed they ever truly were, and acceptance strategies, so often adopted, are not always effective in some contexts. Humanitarian workers are expected to negotiate their way through complex, insecure and unfamiliar situations in a foreign language and culture in an unstable and often corrupt environment. Simple processes – clearing a checkpoint or renewing a visa, for instance – can rapidly turn volatile. At the same time, international NGOs must

comply with minimum legal requirements for a healthy and safe work environment, to ensure that they are not exposing their staff or the organisation to unnecessary and avoidable risk. Avoiding the potentially catastrophic consequences of being found negligent requires an integrated, risk-based approach to security management. This article highlights the main areas of concern and the key ways in which INGOs can mitigate the risks they face.

The nature of humanitarian work requires us to take risks – the challenge is making those risks affordable and acceptable. Many of those interviewed for this article used the term 'acceptable risk' when explaining how they handled their staff security. Of course, what constitutes



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Angry crowds at a food distribution in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, January 2010

‘acceptable risk’ varies from organisation to organisation and is heavily dependent on the organisation’s culture and how critical staff are perceived to be to the organisation’s success. However, it is not at all certain that the term ‘acceptable risk’ would carry weight in a court of law. In a world where knowledge and information is readily and quickly accessible, a court is likely to take the view that most risks to staff safety are known. It is important therefore to use the same standards the courts use in deciding whether an organisation has taken all reasonable steps in its duty of care towards its staff. Particularly for those working in remote and insecure environments, organisations should ensure where possible that these are enhanced (or taken as minimum standards). Unless this perspective is brought to the decision-making process or risk management analysis, it is highly probable that an organisation is only measuring itself against its own standards. These may or may not be reasonable, and therefore may or may not be those used in a court of law. Organisations that do not examine these risks carefully and show clearly the steps they have taken to mitigate them are likely to be found to have acted irresponsibly and may be subject to legal action.

humanitarian work requires us to take risks – the challenge is making those risks affordable and acceptable

The role of Human Resources

In many ways, the Human Resources (HR) function is where security management and legislation ultimately converge. In almost every jurisdiction the organisation has a duty of care

towards its staff and is expected to mitigate the risks staff face. The duty of care towards staff is the HR Department’s reason for being. If the safety of a staff member has been compromised, employment legislation provides a robust framework for investigation and tough sanctions if culpability is proven. For this reason, it is vital that HR professionals are involved in the design and implementation of risk management strategies and practices.

The employment cycle

The employment cycle has several stages, illustrated in Figure 1 (p. 16). At each stage of the cycle, decisions are made affecting security management. Organisations should seriously consider each stage of the

cycle, particularly the planning stage, and understand how people management and security management decisions are integrated. The best solution integrates security management with all stages of the employment cycle.

Recruitment

Hazardous environments require staff with specific skills and experience; an organisation should never underestimate the importance of the recruitment process and the risks associated with hiring the wrong person.¹ Placing the wrong person in any overseas environment can be very costly and unproductive. Apart from the amount of time spent on recruitment and selection, which has been put at between three and five times an employee’s annual salary, according to the Harvard Business School, staff are likely to be unhappy and underperform, which will have a direct impact on programme implementation (and therefore a waste of donors’ money), their manager’s time, team morale and even security.

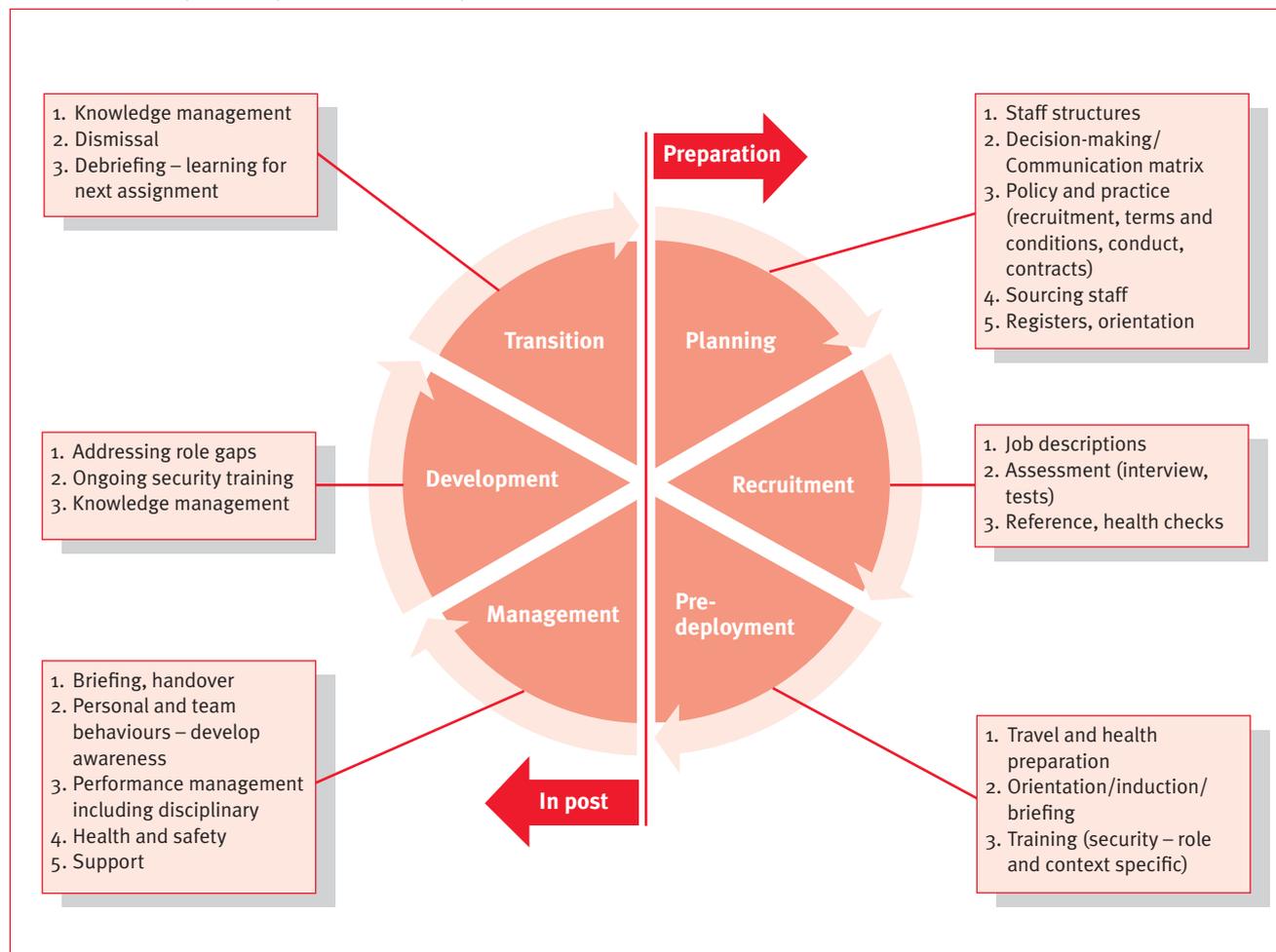
The recruitment process should enable organisations to determine whether prospective candidates are appropriate for the role. The job description, interviewers, recruitment assessments and references all play a part in helping managers decide whether the person before them has the essential requirements. The recruitment process is an opportunity to identify a candidate’s strengths and areas for development, and assess them against essential skills and competencies. This assessment process should inform the preparation given in the pre-deployment stage of the employment cycle.

Pre-deployment preparation

Preparing a staff member for their assignment is probably the single most important thing an organisation can do.

¹ A hazardous environment includes situations arising from a natural disaster, conflict and post-conflict events.

Figure 1: Employment cycle and security



Statistics show that nearly one-third of deaths of humanitarian workers occur in the first three months of duty.² It is surely not reasonable to send a staff member to a conflict zone without substantial preparation. Most organisations give briefings on the role and some give general security training; some even give specific contextual training in the field. However, the clear message from INGOs and security specialists alike is that they should be doing more. Two experts on security interviewed for this article spoke of their deep concern about the relatively small amount of time and money dedicated to equipping humanitarian workers for the contexts in which they would be working. If organisations are sending people on assignment without fully understanding the pre-deployment stage of the employment cycle then it is likely that these people, and the organisation as a whole, are ill-prepared. Leaving an ill-equipped staff member to make decisions that could jeopardise their personal security (and the security of others) is an abdication of responsibility and duty of care.

During the pre-deployment period, general information should always be given to staff on personal conduct, staff rights and responsibilities, the organisation’s values and mandate, personal objectives and reporting lines. Two areas in particular warrant more attention: personal security awareness and stress. Staff must be aware of

² M. Sjeik et al., ‘Deaths Among Humanitarian Workers’, *British Medical Journal*, vol. 321, 2000, pp. 166–68.

the risks to their own personal security. They should know what is expected of them during and outside normal working hours and should behave accordingly. They should fully understand the context in which they are working (how the society around them functions and communicates), and how their own behaviour can affect their vulnerability. Staff should also be aware of how stress affects their personal behaviour – people can often release stress in damaging ways, such as excessive drinking and promiscuity. Organisations must consistently enforce sanctions against staff who put themselves and others at risk.

nearly one-third of deaths of humanitarian workers occur in the first three months of duty

Staff care

The extent to which organisations see staff as central to their mission is often reflected in the policies and practices that relate to staff care. Pre-deployment preparation including security training and information on how to take care of oneself go a long way towards keeping staff fit and healthy. Training is often overlooked or not afforded a priority by humanitarian organisations. However, the

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Case study

Staff should always feel that they can be open and honest about their concerns. One organisation interviewed for this article uses a monthly questionnaire which the Programme Director sends to all staff in Afghanistan. Questions asked include: How vulnerable do you feel, and why? Has anything changed in the last month? Are family members concerned about your safety?

The questionnaire not only allows staff the opportunity to express their feelings and concerns, but also gives managers an insight into the value a staff member places on their own security. They also provide clues to what is happening in the community, through feedback from local staff. The answers to these questions then underpin risk management planning within the programme. For example, if a local staff member highlights some uncertainty in the community as to what the organisation is really doing there, managers can take measures to ensure that the right messages about the organisation's mandate and mission are communicated to the right people in the community. Managers should also look for evidence that this communication has taken place.

insecure nature of the environment means that serious incidents do happen. Staff can find themselves in very difficult situations or may be involved in critical incidents such as a robbery, violent attack, kidnap, serious sickness or injury. Organisations must have policies and practices that clearly state what happens during and after such critical incidents. How an organisation handles sensitive information and protects the people involved is also important. Any critical incident is susceptible to media attention, so how an incident is dealt with is crucial not only for the staff member and team on site, but also for the organisation's reputation.

Conclusion

Principle 7 of The People In Aid Code of Good Practice – the Human Resource Code for the relief and development sector – states: 'The security, good health and safety of our staff are a prime responsibility of our organisation.' It is recognised that the work of relief and development organisations often places great demands on staff in conditions of complexity and risk. Organisations therefore have a duty of care to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of staff before, during and on completion of their period of work with the organisation.

Health, safety and security are dynamic themes that should permeate every part of an organisation. If staff are central to the achievement of the mission, how central are they in planning risk management strategies? If organisations are going to continue to work in highly complex and insecure environments they must place a high level of importance upon the care of staff, so that it becomes part of the culture across the whole organisation – from the Board down to the operational level.

Stressful and risky situations are inevitable in both humanitarian and development work. Yet there is much that can and must be done to mitigate the risks of illness, injury, stress, burnout and critical incidents, for staff and their dependants. Employing organisations should ensure that the security, health and safety of all staff are appropriately protected as far as is possible, and that measures are in place to safeguard their well-being. This will require significant thought and planning on the part of managers, and a recognition that improving staff security may add to project costs. Maintaining the safety of staff is paramount. Cost must be considered, but the primary objective is ensuring that staff are able to deliver the services organisations require in the most challenging environments.

Christine Williamson is HR Services Manager at People In Aid. Her email address is Christine@peopleinaid.org. Thanks in particular to Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP, Barney Mayhew, Ben Emmens, David Bainbridge, Jon Kennedy, Katherine Kelland, Mark Sreeton, Rupert Reid and Sarah Newnham.

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Correction

We inadvertently introduced an error in Louise Searle and Kate Sutton's article 'Standards to incorporate protection into humanitarian response: do they work?' (*Humanitarian Exchange* no. 46, March 2010). In the legend to Figure 1, base-line % alignment in fact refers to the pink bars in the chart, and end-line % alignment to the grey bars.

Security management and the political economy of war

Gilles Carbonnier, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

Understanding the political economy of armed conflicts can contribute greatly to enhancing the security of humanitarian operations. Since the mid-1990s, the body of literature on war economies has grown steadily. Following a political economy approach, scholars and practitioners started looking at how armed conflicts redistribute wealth and power within war-torn societies.¹ This article discusses how this approach can assist humanitarian organisations in improving the security of their staff and operations.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, academics and policy-makers had difficulty grasping and dealing with the so-called 'new wars' afflicting weak and collapsed states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia. The analytical framework inherited from the Cold War, with its focus on East-West rivalry and ideological confrontation, was of little use in trying to understand these brutal conflicts. The political economy approach offered a new framework to analyse civil wars by focusing on their economic dynamics. Surprisingly perhaps, the first major contributors were not economists but humanitarian practitioners and political scientists.² Until the end of the 1990s, economists generally regarded civil war as an exogenous event impervious to rigorous economic analysis. By the turn of the century, studies undertaken by the World Bank under the leadership of Paul Collier had sparked a lively debate on 'greed' versus 'grievance', i.e. on whether war was motivated by economic rather than political objectives. In an article entitled 'Homo Economicus Goes to War' Christopher Cramer provides a detailed account of the way economists started to explain rebellion as rational behaviour by profit-maximising agents.³

The political economy approach explained

The political economy approach focuses on how an armed conflict redistributes wealth, income, power and destitution in a given historical and institutional context.⁴ It asks three main questions:

1. How do belligerents pay for war?
2. Who wins and who loses from war (and peace)?
3. What are the socioeconomic functions of armed violence?

1 See for example Jean-Christophe Rufin and François Jean (eds), *Economie des guerres civiles* (Paris: Hachette, 1996); David Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*, Adelphi Paper 320 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Philippe le Billon, *The Political Economy of War: What Relief Agencies Need To Know*, Network Paper 33 (London: ODI, 2000); and Mats Berdal and David Malone (eds), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003).

2 Rufin and Jean, *Economie des guerres civiles*.

3 Christopher Cramer, 'Homo Economicus Goes to War: Methodological Individualism, Rational Choice and the Political Economy of War', *World Development*, vol. 39, no. 11, 2002, pp. 1,845–64.

4 Le Billon, *The Political Economy of War*.

To address the first question, it is useful to classify war economy activities into four broad categories.⁵ The first comprises activities that directly contribute to financing the war effort, like diamond or timber extraction and trading in the Mano River region of West Africa in the 1990s. These activities can be a root cause of conflict, or become the main reason for its perpetuation. The second category consists of illegal activities made possible by the climate of impunity and lawlessness that civil war helps to create (e.g. poppy and coca cultivation in Afghanistan and Colombia; looting of cultural treasures in Cambodia). Globalisation fosters a third category of war-economy activities, which includes trans-border exchanges through global trade and financial networks involved in arms, gems, drugs and other illicit activities. The fourth category consists of survival activities and coping strategies carried out by the people caught up in armed conflict. This includes not only vulnerable people engaged in subsistence farming, for example, but also those involved in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan or in prospecting for alluvial diamonds in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone.

war economies function within the realm of the market and can be examined and addressed through standard economic tools and policies

All four economic activity categories are closely intertwined. They underscore that war economies function within the realm of the market and therefore can be both examined and addressed through standard economic tools and policies. They respond to price signals and other standard incentives. Regulations and sanctions, however, are often ineffective in the face of weak judicial systems and ineffective enforcement mechanisms. Longstanding efforts to eradicate poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and promote alternative cash crops and livelihood options show how difficult it is to transform war economies. Buying warlords off by offering them money or key political positions may yield some quick wins, but these are generally short-lived and provide perverse incentives by instilling a culture of rewarding violence and potential 'peace spoilers'.

Addressing the second and third questions regarding winners and losers requires taking a look at the costs and benefits of civil war. Costs are generally much higher and more widely distributed than benefits, and the vast

5 Jean-Bernard Veron, 'A propos des économies de guerre', in J.-M. Chataiger and H. Margo (eds), *Etats et sociétés fragiles: entre conflits, reconstruction et développement* (Paris: Karthala, 2007), pp. 141–52.

majority of the population loses out of war. Indirect costs resulting from the erosion or absence of essential public services are often more severe than the direct costs associated with the destruction caused by armed violence itself. But there are also ‘winners’ who benefit from looting, racketeering, diverting aid resources and by getting a form of salary by joining the regular security forces, the insurgents or private security firms. Beyond economic benefits, violence can fulfil several other functions. Joining an armed group may be a way to enhance one’s own security. Exerting violence may be a way of securing higher social status and prestige, or a sense of group identity in highly fragmented societies. The politico-economic and military elites as well as leaders of non-state armed groups can make extraordinary profits from illegal activities made possible by the weakness or sheer lack of law enforcement mechanisms resulting from civil war. They often draw rents by controlling the black market and maintaining an artificial monopoly over the provision of essential goods and services, pushing prices up by restricting supply.

Depending on the characteristics of the armed conflict and of the goods and services available for exploitation and trade, war benefits can either be substantial and highly concentrated, or they can be limited and diffuse. For example, it is easier and cheaper to loot and sell alluvial diamonds than oil or gas. A situation of low-intensity conflict makes it more attractive for war entrepreneurs to invest and trade than situations of all-out violence, where risks can be prohibitive, even for activities which yield quick returns.

Political economy analysis and humanitarian action

What does all this mean for the security of humanitarian organisations? First, the political economy approach highlights that the traditional interlocutors of humanitarian workers, such as rebel or army commanders and government officials, often wear several hats. Beyond their official positions and political agendas they are also entrepreneurs with vested interests in the war economy. Factoring an analysis of political leaders’ business interests into programme design and security risk assessment and mitigation can help to enhance safe and effective programme delivery. For example, the governor of a province in the Great Lakes region granted an official security guarantee to a humanitarian organisation for a food and seeds distribution. Yet behind the scenes he organised several security incidents that forced the agency to stop the distribution. The governor also owned a micro-credit scheme that enjoyed a monopoly over the provision of high-interest loans, which farmers required to buy seeds. A free distribution of seeds by the humanitarian agency would have competed with the governor’s business interests. Second, when war profiteering becomes a major driver of armed violence and a key objective for armed groups, criminality increases and aid agencies are likely to face a higher risk of hostage-taking, racketeering and looting of aid resources and assets, and may need to resort to public or (more often) private security providers.

When responding to humanitarian needs in conflict-affected countries, humanitarian agencies often establish close working relations with local business people in the transport, warehousing and logistics sector, and through the local purchase of goods and services. Yet they often miss opportunities to benefit from the business community’s analysis and understanding of the conflict, which would complement the perspectives provided by other humanitarian agencies, the UN and donors. Business people often provide a different and perhaps more accurate assessment of the political economy and of the needs and vulnerabilities of affected communities since the success of their business activities critically depends on a sound understanding of the conflict and of the coping mechanisms of those affected. For instance, a humanitarian agency consulted local traders in a government-held enclave of the Angolan Planoalto between 2000 and 2002. The traders and farmer associations all encouraged the agency to continue distributing food, but insisted that it should pay its local staff in hard currency. This suggested that beneficiaries did not represent a commercial interest for lack of purchasing power, confirming that the food distribution responded to real needs and did not compete with local businesses. It also suggested that local businesses welcomed humanitarian agencies because they boosted effective demand for goods and services by paying wages in US dollars.

understanding the political economy of war and how humanitarian action interacts with it is a valuable asset

Humanitarian organisations have much to learn from interaction with economic actors in a conflict situation. The information gathered can improve programming, security management and the safety of field staff. There is one important caveat, however: building relationships with the business community must be a transparent process. This requires making clear from the outset that the sole objective of a better understanding of the political economy of war is to enable the agency to better protect and assist vulnerable people. It also requires showing no interest in criminal economic activities for reasons which are not directly related to legitimate security concerns and the capacity to carry out humanitarian work. Recent experiences in the DRC and Sudan show that agencies with a strictly humanitarian mandate should explicitly dissociate themselves from research conducted by expert panels or advocacy groups aimed at naming, shaming or prosecuting war profiteers. Failure to do this can compromise the security of relief workers on the ground.⁶

Understanding the political economy of war and how humanitarian action interacts with it is a valuable asset.

⁶ This is not to deny the merit of investigations and sanctions by expert panels and international tribunals.

Table 1: Relief Access Mapping

	Actors whose interests are at stake: local, national, external actors	Potential strategies, tactics and reactions of key actors	Ensuing risks for the intended beneficiaries	Risks for the humanitarian agency and staff	Options to reduce and manage risks
Initial need assessment					
Funding and procurement					
Contracts for logistics, transport, employment					
Distribution, targeting					
Monitoring					
Final evaluation, reporting					

It provides information that helps enhance humanitarian space and improve the security of relief agencies, as well as their outreach and networks. By analysing how belligerents finance the war and who the winners and losers of armed violence are, humanitarian organisations can gain a better grasp of the economic interests of the political elite and the links between political leaders, war entrepreneurs and armed group commanders – who are often the same people wearing different hats.

There is a whole range of tools and instruments that humanitarian workers can use to analyse how their intervention fits into the political economy of war. In his Network Paper *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: What Humanitarian Agencies Need To Know*, Philippe le Billon presents a Relief Access Mapping (RAM) tool. This consists of a simple table, reproduced here, which helps to identify at each stage of the aid operation the interests of local actors, how these interests might be affected by the operation and any potential associated security risks.

Taking the example of a food distribution, RAM helps identify how the interests of key political leaders, economic agents, intended beneficiaries, armed groups and others

might be affected, and thus how they might react at each stage of the distribution process. Although RAM does not tell agencies how to manage security risks, it enables them to identify and discuss potential risks associated with humanitarian aid from a political economy perspective.

In the past, some economists who promoted the political economy analysis of civil war often portrayed rebels only as greedy entrepreneurs who used violence solely as a means of maximising profits. This tended to define rebels as simple criminals, with no political cause to fight for, enabling repressive regimes to deny the legitimacy of rebel complaints as well as combatant status under international humanitarian law. Despite this bias, political economy analysis has done a useful service by highlighting the economic dimensions of civil war. Political economy analysis can help to improve the security of humanitarian workers in the field through a better understanding of the economic interests of the actors involved, and how humanitarian operations interact with those interests.

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Safety with dignity: integrating community-based protection into humanitarian programming

Kate Berry and Sherryl Reddy, *Network Paper 68*, March 2010

This Network Paper explores the concept and practice of community-based protection, and highlights opportunities and challenges associated with implementing a community-based protection approach. The paper draws on ActionAid’s publication *Safety with Dignity: A Field Manual for Integrating Community-based Protection across Humanitarian Programs*, which aims to provide practical guidance for field staff working in humanitarian and development settings on how to integrate community-based protection across sectors and contexts.

Kidnap response: immediate priorities for aid agencies

Mark Allison, Clayton Consultants, Inc.

‘One minute we were heading to the airport, happy to be on our way home ... next minute we were being bundled into a pick-up truck crowded with gun-toting bandits, AK47s pointed at our heads, racing off into the unknown.’ Almost 80 days later, after difficult and at times traumatic negotiations, one of the captives was brought safely home. The other was eventually released four weeks later. Both hostages believed that their captors were not aware beforehand that they were aid workers and simply targeted them because they were foreigners.

Accurate kidnap statistics are notoriously difficult to obtain and any reference to facts and figures has to be treated with caution. Based on published reports and limited unpublished data, it appears that some 79 NGO staff (national and international) were kidnapped in 2008.¹ The actual figure is certainly much higher, as the majority of kidnaps go unreported and published data is unlikely to accurately represent the picture for national staff. According to the Afghan NGO Safety Office (ANSO), 78 NGO staff were kidnapped in Afghanistan alone, the vast majority of them (71) Afghan nationals.² Despite the lack of data, all aid actors undoubtedly face a serious kidnap threat. Prevention measures can mitigate the risk, but cannot remove it entirely. Aid agencies therefore need to be ready to respond if things go wrong.

Crisis Management Teams

Crisis or incident management plans provide valuable guidance and ensure that essential actions are not forgotten in the heat of the moment. But what really matters are the people assigned to respond to the incident.

what really matters are the people assigned to respond to the incident

Most people do not like to admit that they find crisis situations challenging. It is therefore incumbent upon senior managers to critically assess their staff and themselves as crisis managers, allocate roles accordingly and address competency deficiencies through professional development and training. There will of course be situations in the field where there is little choice in the composition of the team dealing with a crisis, at least until support arrives. Whether in the field or back at Head Office, however, the foundations for good crisis management are laid at the recruitment stage, and built throughout the period of employment, with ongoing assessment, crisis management training and support.

¹ Risk Statistics 2008, Clements International, www.clements.com.

² Afghan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) Quarterly Data Report Q4 2008, p. 6.

Raising the alarm

Too often, plans for responding to a kidnap start from the point when there is confirmation that an incident has occurred. However, from a management perspective kidnaps are not always immediately obvious events. There are often no reliable witnesses, and hours or even days can be lost if a disappearance goes unreported and unnoticed.

Kidnaps can only be confirmed as such when there is unambiguous information that the act has been committed. This can be obtained either from a dependable eyewitness to the incident, or more reliably by contact from the perpetrators themselves, who will need to prove that they do indeed have the hostage (eyewitnesses must be treated with caution. Their information may be inaccurate or they may deliberately try to mislead). Until then, the abductee is simply missing.

This period of uncertainty is when management teams often make their first serious mistake by prevaricating and failing to make quick decisions, which can lead to problems if the situation quickly deteriorates. For example, if the kidnapers make first contact through a telephone call to an unprepared family member, they will be shocked and upset if they discover that the agency knew beforehand that something had happened, and failed to inform them at the earliest possible moment, they will also be extremely angry. This is likely to lead to a loss of trust and may prompt the family to take matters into their own hands, which is likely to make the situation worse.

Family

If, after enquiries have been made, there are sufficient grounds for assuming that a kidnapping has taken place, the decision to inform the victim’s family must be taken and acted on quickly. This raises difficult questions. How long is a reasonable timeframe for investigating the lost contact? What can be regarded as ‘the earliest possible moment’ for informing the family? Which family members should be contacted? The form of contact is also important. Is it possible to notify the family in person? If so, who should do this? The traditional approach is for the most senior manager available to do it face-to-face, but this might not be practical or even possible. If the family contact lives in another country, who is best placed to deliver the bad news? In many countries, the police have official responsibility for informing the family, though this should not preclude an approach from the hostage’s employer.

An appropriate member of the CMT should be responsible for family liaison and should maintain a regular schedule of contacts, even when there is no new information to report. The family should also be advised that there will be certain details that cannot be divulged, for operational security reasons. It is also essential to stress the importance of not

talking about the situation to the media or anyone outside the immediate family.

Informing families of national staff should be slightly less complex as there are fewer options to consider. However, whether national or international, families need to be given clear information about the situation: events (as far as they are understood), and the actions being taken to deal with the situation. The family must also be briefed on what to expect in the event of a call from the kidnappers, and need to know what to say and what not to say.

Families of national staff are more likely to carry out their own investigation and may even conduct their own negotiations if they are able to make contact with the kidnappers. It may not be possible to prevent this and it can be damaging if not properly handled. Local families can have better contacts and networks, which in some cases might be able to help. It is important in such circumstances to coordinate all activities with the family and to share with them any relevant professional advice which the agency may be receiving.

In practical terms, it makes sense to check if the family has had any contact with the family member in question, particularly if family members are in the same country. But this should be done carefully in order to avoid alarming or frightening them unnecessarily. The opening line is therefore very important, and the caller needs to give due attention to the form of words they use. If they have had no recent contact, the family will naturally want to know as much as possible; again, great care must be taken here. It is important at this point not to speculate about what might have happened and instead to remain positive and optimistic. The family will inevitably make their own enquiries. This can be immensely helpful, though it can also create problems later in terms of managing information flows.

contact from the perpetrators may come at any time, from minutes to months after the abduction

First contact

Contact from the perpetrators may come at any time, from minutes to months after the abduction, and could be in spoken or written form. It is therefore important to be prepared to receive that contact, and the priority is to prepare for contact by telephone. Phone contact will provide an opportunity to glean vital information from the kidnappers and should not be wasted. Every possible recipient of such a call needs to be briefed. The call-in point will depend very much on the kidnappers' preferred modus operandi. If they want to achieve dramatic effect and create an emotional response, they may call the family. If they have a no-nonsense approach and want to get down to business quickly, they are likely to call the agency.

When dealing with the first contact, listen and note down the information provided as well as any other details (gender, accent, attitude, coherence, background noises). If it is not provided voluntarily, it is very important to request proof of life, not only to determine if the hostage is alive but also to rule out hoaxers. The best proof of life is a live conversation with the hostage. This can be immediate and is normally a huge morale boost to hostage and family alike. Failing that, a question that can only be answered by the hostage is also a quick means of obtaining proof of life. Choose the question with care: questions like 'What year did you get divorced?' are not ideal because they might have a negative association. A question like 'What was the name of your childhood holiday home in Scotland?' is better as it evokes happy thoughts and is much more memorable. The question and answer should be easy to pronounce and simple to understand because the person at the other end of the telephone may have limited language skills. Be aware that the answer to the question may not come immediately if the hostage is not near the telephone. If the answer that comes back is incorrect, a second simpler question can be asked, as the first question may have been miscommunicated or the hostage may not have been able to remember the answer. Continued failure to answer proof of life questions correctly indicates that the hostage is either dead or the caller is not genuine. No matter what form it takes, the proof must be unequivocal, and must confirm beyond doubt that the hostage was alive at that moment in time.

Ensuring that the hostage is well, as well as alive, is essential: the kidnappers must be informed as soon as possible of any serious health problems and medical needs (including full details of any medication required). The hostage is a valuable asset, so it is unlikely that the kidnappers will ignore any serious health warnings.

The communicator

Normally it is preferable for an intermediary to act as the conduit for information between the management team and the kidnappers, who may also have their own intermediary. Generally referred to as the 'communicator', the intermediary should be of a calm disposition and articulate in the local language. He or she should be seen as a spokesperson only and should have no decision-making power. A trusted national staff member is an ideal choice, provided that they are not too closely connected with the hostage. Changes in intermediaries should where possible be avoided as these can be unnerving for the kidnappers and any rapport and trust that might have been established over the course of previous conversations may be lost.

Identifying and briefing the communicator is an urgent priority. Once this is done, all phone calls from the kidnappers should be routed through that person. If known at the time of first contact, the person receiving the first call should provide the kidnappers with details of the preferred contact point.

Practical matters

There are also practical considerations. The communicator should have a dedicated phone for all contact with the

kidnappers, and a device to record these calls. A second phone may be needed for contact with members of the CMT. If possible, each CMT member should also have a telephone dedicated to dealing with the incident, in order to create a clear division between routine business and the kidnap response itself.

To ease the functioning of the CMT, a dedicated and lockable meeting room is preferable so that the business of managing the crisis can be separated clearly and securely from routine matters. The room should have dedicated phone lines, adequate IT equipment and support, as well as sufficient wall space for white boards and wall charts so that all important information can be clearly displayed and logged. Information from wall charts and white boards must also be captured in electronic format in order to ensure that it is not lost when the information is refreshed.

Conclusion

A crucial early objective in managing a kidnap response is to establish a strong position from which to conduct future negotiations. This article sets out the immediate priorities to that end (there are other important aspects, such as dealing with the media, but these are outside the scope of this paper). Inevitably, though, kidnaps are often lengthy and difficult events, stretching from days to weeks, months or even years, making long-term demands on everyone involved, including the hostage's colleagues and relatives. Nor does the agency's responsibility end when the kidnap is resolved: the victim's return to normal life is likely to be a difficult process, and will need sympathy, support and understanding.

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The Global Code of Conduct for Private Security Companies: why it matters to humanitarian organisations

André du Plessis, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces

In the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, there were reports of violence breaking out during handouts of foreign aid. In December 2009, a suicide bombing took place in an area of Kabul that was home to several aid agencies. According to OCHA, there were at least 12 incidents targeting humanitarian organisations in North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in January 2010.¹ These are just some examples showing that insecurity remains a major challenge to international humanitarian operations. In response, aid agencies have adopted several different measures and approaches, including contracting private companies to provide security services.

The advantages or otherwise of using the private sector to assist in a humanitarian organisation's security policy is a broad topic, and one well outside the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that, for humanitarian organisations, the advantages of using security providers to assist in the protection and training of aid agency staff need to be balanced against the actual, and reputational, vulnerabilities that they are exposed to when hiring these companies. Whatever the merits of the decision, private security companies are now an integral part of the security policy of many aid agencies.

The need for scrutiny

Knowing who your contractors are is critical. An aid agency that uses private security has a particular moral duty to uphold – it is specifically helping a local population, and so should not be involved in actions that actually harm them. There are also potential legal liabilities. At the very least, if it were careless in its contracting of security, an aid agency

¹ 'Desperate Haitians Over-run UN Food Hand-out', Times Online, 26 January 2010; 'Suicide Bomb Hits Afghanistan Capital, Kabul', BBC News, 15 December 2009; 'DRC: Security Beefed Up for North Kivu IDPs', IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis, 8 February 2010.

could face lawsuits by those harmed by the actions of private contractors. There is also a risk of severe reputational damage arising from an incident, undermining the agency's credibility and reducing its access to the local population and its ability to perform humanitarian missions.

an aid agency that uses private security has a particular moral duty to uphold

Despite the risks, many organisations have no concrete guidance on how to contract or manage private security firms. This is understandable given the difficult contexts in which humanitarian organisations operate and their often limited resources and expertise. The choice of providers in a particular context may be limited, and local regulations may place restrictions on which private security companies can be used (for example, only local ones, not international). But the imperative to do the best one can given the circumstances still exists, particularly for a service that has such potentially disastrous consequences.

The Montreux Document as a starting point for best practice

Thankfully, humanitarian organisations do not need to start from scratch. In a diplomatic initiative taken by the Swiss government and the ICRC, 34 states have endorsed the Montreux Document.² The document as a whole is principally aimed at states, reminding them of their

² A/63/467. The organisation for which I work – the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) – is supporting the Swiss government in its promotion of the Montreux Document and its work on the Code of Conduct.



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Humanitarian organisations may have to work in security-sensitive situations

obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and setting out best practice for governments in their interactions with the private security industry.

In a supporting brochure³ NGOs are reminded, however, that they can also make practical use of the Montreux Document in helping to formulate internal policy with regard to private security companies. The list of best practices in the Montreux Document includes recommendations that clients determine which services they want to outsource and that they clearly set out how they will select and contract companies, including the criteria they will apply in making their selection. There are also recommendations regarding clauses that should be included in contracts and ways that clients can monitor compliance with the contract and ensure that companies are held accountable for any breaches.

The Code of Conduct

More help comes from a new initiative by the Swiss government to establish a Global Code of Conduct. Based on human rights and international humanitarian law, the Code of Conduct builds upon the Montreux Document. However, whereas Montreux was aimed primarily at states, the new Code of Conduct is aimed primarily at the private security industry itself. Indeed, the private security industry has been one of the principal drivers for better regulation of the sector, and has worked closely with the Swiss government in the early stages of elaboration of the Code.

Standards

The first section of the Code sets out the norms and standards that companies should follow.⁴ Areas covered

³ 'Brochure on the Montreux Document', p. 43, <http://www.eda.admin.ch/psc>.

⁴ A first draft was released for public consultation between January and May 2010 (available for download at http://www.dcaf.ch/privatisation-security/_index.cfm). These comments are currently being considered for a final draft. At the time of writing, it was expected that the Code would be agreed and signed up to by leading private security companies in the second half of 2010.

include the use of force to defend people and property and a prohibition on the use of torture. The Code also requires private security companies to adopt and implement broader management policies to ensure that they operate in compliance with human rights norms, for example taking measures against harassment, sexual abuse and trafficking, training personnel appropriately and, crucially, thoroughly vetting new hires. The section concludes with an undertaking by private security companies to set up both employee and third-party grievance procedures. The overall aim is to clarify the standards according to

which private security companies should operate, thereby encouraging an overall improvement in the quality of services they provide and minimising any adverse human rights impacts.

This section of the Code can be incorporated into contracts with clients, and as such is clearly relevant to humanitarian organisations. By including a clause along the lines of 'the private security company shall comply with the standards set out in the Global Code of Conduct', humanitarian organisations can easily incorporate compliance with high industry standards into their commercial contracts. In effect, this would make a breach of human rights standards a breach of contract, giving the humanitarian organisation the opportunity to terminate its relationship with the private security company. It also allows humanitarian organisations to demonstrate that they have taken measures to ensure that the highest standards are met. In the event that an agency faced legal action in the aftermath of a human rights incident involving a private security company it had contracted, it could point to these measures as evidence that appropriate steps had been taken in retaining the company.

Oversight

The next section of the Code aims to establish an international accountability mechanism (IAM) to ensure that the standards set out in the first section are met. While still in the development stage, it is anticipated that this will include some form of international certification of private security companies, and a complaints mechanism for third parties.

Certification would essentially comprise a process whereby private security companies submit an application to a certification body, showing that they are in compliance with the standards in the Code of Conduct. Those companies that fulfilled these requirements would be issued a certificate, which would act as a 'stamp of approval' that the firm could use publicly. An auditing team

could then periodically evaluate this certification. In time, humanitarian organisations could use certification to help in selecting a private security company. Certification would mean that the company is considered to be in compliance with the standards in the Code. By only hiring such companies, humanitarian agencies could show that they have taken measures to ensure that the highest standards are met. Several key clients, including governments, have indicated their willingness to only hire companies that meet these high standards.

certification of private security companies may turn out to be a long-term goal

There are several potential shortcomings to this certification procedure, of course. First, the scheme is not up and running, and at the time of writing it was likely to be several months at least before it became operational. Second, it requires a real, effective and independent quality-control process to ensure that companies really are in compliance with the standards. This will be both difficult and expensive. Third, the principal driving-force behind the IAM has been the large, multinational private security companies, and it is not clear whether the certification scheme will be relevant to the small, local companies that many humanitarian organisations tend to use. The details of certification are still only in draft format, so there remains an opportunity for humanitarian organisations to provide input to ensure the certification process is as independent and thorough as possible. As regards local private security companies, it will also be important to ensure that this issue is adequately addressed in the certification process. It may be that certification of private security companies is a long-term goal, even if not immediately realisable.

Complaints

When established, the IAM is also likely to have a third-party complaints mechanism. Private security companies

found to be in breach of the IAM by this mechanism may have their certification revoked. The IAM may also award damages to victims of any malpractice by the company.⁵ When this mechanism is established, humanitarian agencies should be able to report any breaches of the Code, whether involved directly as a client or not. In fact, by the nature of where they work and the job they do, field staff are in many ways best-placed to bear witness to the impact of private security companies on local populations and to report human rights violations.⁶

Conclusions

Even though the Code of Conduct is still in the development stage, humanitarian agencies can begin using the standards it sets out, and the Montreux Document, in their contracts with private security companies. Agencies should also ensure that they provide input in the elaboration of the IAM certification and complaints mechanisms.⁷ The Montreux Document and the standards section of the Code may also be useful yardsticks against which to assess national or other international policies and regulations. Agencies could also increase awareness in the field of the Montreux Document principles and the Code of Conduct, and recommend adoption of its principles to governments, members of parliament, companies and other NGOs. When the certification procedure is established agencies should consider using only private security companies that are certified; once the complaints mechanism is established, agencies should work to raise awareness of it in the field so that victims know of this additional avenue of redress.

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⁵ The IAM is not intended to replace other dispute resolution procedures, but is intended to be an extra tool for redress. In particular, it should not replace or hinder any criminal investigations or proceedings.

⁶ Again, this should be in addition to reporting any incidents or crimes to the local authorities. The IAM does not seek to replace judicial criminal or civil proceedings.

⁷ Contact the author at a.duplessis@dcaf.ch to ensure participation in this process.

NGO responses to insecurity in Darfur

Ivor Morgan

NGOs in Darfur have adapted operations reasonably effectively in response to insecurity, to allow aid delivery to continue. They have been less effective at predicting and proactively responding to emerging threats. This article reviews how NGOs have responded to the main hazards in Darfur (carjackings, compound raids and kidnapping), through the lens of the classic 'security triangle' (acceptance, protection and deterrence). It also discusses security-related interactions with other actors, and the implications of these various changes in security management.

Protection strategies

Carjacking

Although white four-wheel-drive vehicles (4WDs) are synonymous with humanitarian NGOs in many countries, in Darfur the threat of carjacking means they are now hardly used. Instead, NGOs are renting much older, less powerful 4WDs, and using small saloon cars for travel within towns. In remote rural areas, some NGOs have used donkey-carts or walked. This approach is not without problems. Rental vehicles are generally in poor condition and less well-equipped than the modern 4WDs NGOs

would normally use. In effect, NGOs have lowered their normal vehicle safety standards and accepted a higher risk of accidents or breakdowns to reduce the threat of carjacking. Humanitarian agencies have also become increasingly reliant on expensive UN-operated helicopters for access to ‘deep field’ locations and areas inaccessible by road during the rainy season.

Compound raids

The threat of compound raids and kidnapping has increased attention on compound security. Many NGOs initially eschewed UN approaches, such as barbed wire and Minimum Operational Residence Security Standards (MORSS) compliance, feeling that they undermined ‘acceptance’ by local communities and marked out compounds as containing things worth stealing. Over time, however, most NGOs have adjusted their approaches. One simple action has been to move generators inside compound walls to prevent assailants from forcing entry when a guard steps outside late at night to turn the generator off. Another involves storing vehicles separately from guesthouses, so a raid to steal vehicles does not turn into an assault on staff. Many NGOs now also seek MORSS compliance for their Darfur compounds, raising walls and using razor wire. In some cases these standards are even exceeded, for example by using better-quality interior doors to protect staff should perpetrators succeed in entering a compound. There is anecdotal evidence that such modifications, if well managed, do not necessarily lead to reduced acceptance.

Kidnappings

The kidnap threat in particular has forced NGOs to adapt their operations, including increasing preparations to handle an abduction: collecting ‘proof of life’ information from staff; reviewing crisis management plans; and preparing staff to cope if they are kidnapped, with ‘Hostage Incident Cards’ providing a pocket-sized reminder of key guidelines. Measures have also been taken to mitigate the risk. In addition to improving compound security, international staff numbers have been reduced in rural areas, especially overnight, and steps have been taken to reduce the predictability of staff movements.

the kidnap threat in particular has forced NGOs to adapt their operations

Acceptance strategies

Most NGOs in Darfur would state a preference for acceptance strategies. There have been some innovative approaches, such as ‘community escorts’, where respected community elders travel with an NGO convoy to reduce the risk of attack, or ‘acceptance projects’ implemented in urban areas of a state capital, to encourage acceptance by the host community as well as by IDPs living on the periphery. However, overall protective strategies are more common than acceptance strategies following security incidents.

Some observers believe that acceptance was undermined by the initial response to the crisis in Darfur, in which most assistance was directed to IDPs. Nomadic communities, amongst the most vulnerable prior to the conflict, have sometimes used their exclusion from assistance as justification for attacking humanitarian agencies. In addition, some local media outlets have undermined acceptance by repeatedly carrying inaccurate stories that deliberately portray NGOs negatively. Although NGOs have acknowledged the need to counter this by providing positive stories to the media, and have been encouraged to do so by the Sudanese government, many lack the necessary capacity at field level. Others fear that talking to the media will have negative repercussions.

The limits to acceptance must be acknowledged. In one incident during the upsurge in violence that followed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in May 2006, several NGO national staff were attacked in an IDP camp, with one beaten to death. Their agency had been working in the camp for two years, and had developed good relations with its inhabitants. However, when a false rumour went round that the water supply was being poisoned, the agency’s previous history in the camp was not enough to protect its staff. There are also situations where a local community may ‘accept’ an NGO’s presence, but be unable to protect the agency (or themselves) against threats from external actors.

Deterrence strategies

Deterrence strategies, involving the use of armed guards or escorts, are a particularly sensitive topic in Darfur. Most NGOs prefer to avoid armed guards or escorts, except in extreme circumstances, but there is no clear agreement on what constitutes such circumstances. Although NGOs in Sudan endorsed guidelines for Darfur in 2007 that committed them to ‘consider using military or armed escorts only as a last resort and never as a long-term solution to a conflict environment’, awareness of this commitment is limited and it has not been used to guide decision-making. Likewise, the IASC’s *Non-Binding Guidelines On When To Use Military Or Armed Escorts* have not been used to inform collective, inter-agency decision-making in specific situations. That said, the vast majority of NGOs are carrying out their programmes without relying on armed protection.

Interaction with other actors

Government

The Sudanese government has overall responsibility for the protection of humanitarian workers. Efforts by many NGOs to develop good relations with the authorities have helped to address bureaucratic restrictions and provided space to discuss security issues. For example, the government took action to stop compound raids in West Darfur after concerns were raised by NGOs. At the same time, however, NGOs have raised concerns with the government about perceived impunity for perpetrators of attacks against humanitarian workers. For its part, the government cites lack of evidence and witnesses as reasons for the lack of prosecutions.

Interagency initiatives

Following the upsurge in violence and insecurity that followed the DPA, there was discussion around a ‘collective threshold’ or an agreed point at which all agencies would decide to withdraw. It quickly became clear, however, that agencies were reluctant to commit in advance to closing their programmes in response to an incident affecting a different agency in a different area. Instead, a joint UN/NGO ‘Strategy To Regain Humanitarian Space’ was proposed, covering dialogue with the parties to the conflict to promote understanding of humanitarian principles; awareness-raising with local communities to promote understanding of humanitarian operations; addressing bureaucratic restrictions; enhancing safety and security through the ‘Saving Lives Together’ initiative (see below); and strengthening the capacity of field staff to cope with the stressful environment in Darfur. Despite some progress in addressing bureaucratic problems, movement in other areas has been limited, and there has been no concerted effort to implement the strategy.

Timely sharing of information about actual incidents or near-misses is crucial to collective security. In West Darfur, NGOs, with UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) support, established a culture of sharing information about security incidents. Immediate notification of an incident would be shared via a UNDSS-managed SMS system, with more detailed analysis circulated by email later. If any NGO failed to circulate appropriate information after an incident, other agencies would remind them to do so.

timely sharing of information about actual incidents or near-misses is crucial to collective security

Other informal interagency collaboration efforts have addressed specific security concerns. Guidelines on contingency planning were circulated to NGOs in late 2008, prior to the ICC announcement on 4 March 2009 that it was issuing an arrest warrant for President Omar al-Bashir, and advice on dealing with the threat of kidnapping was circulated in 2009, immediately after it was identified as a new trend. In response to pressure by local authorities to place armed police guards at NGO compounds, NGOs developed a position paper stating a preference for area rather than point security, which was translated into Arabic to facilitate communication with local authorities.

The ‘Saving Lives Together’ project

In 2007, the Humanitarian Coordinator proposed that UNDSS should deploy four Security Officers under the Saving Lives Together (SLT) initiative. The deployment of staff has however been extremely slow, and the quality of support provided by other UNDSS staff has varied greatly. In accordance with the global SLT initiative, INGO representatives attend UNAMID’s weekly Darfur-wide

Security Management Team (SMT) and state-level Area SMTs. This has assisted information flow and helped to ensure that NGOs are included in UN relocation planning.

Remote programming and risk transfer

How programmes are delivered has also changed, with a shift towards ‘remote programming’ through local staff or partners. This has arguably had the effect of transferring risk to local actors. In some cases, national staff may be at less risk than internationals because of their long-term presence and their better understanding of the security situation. However, there are also situations in which national staff may be more at risk than international staff, due to their ethnicity or perceived political allegiance. It is not clear to what extent NGOs have been able to objectively assess risks to staff. It is certainly the case that the kidnapping of 11 international staff during 2009 (all of whom were released) attracted far more attention, from the humanitarian community as well as the international media, than the deaths of 13 national staff during 2006.

Flexibility in decision-making

Flexible and responsive decision-making is needed regarding security in Darfur. This may mean relaxing some security procedures, such as using older, less well-equipped vehicles to reduce the risk of carjacking, or it may mean adopting ‘stronger’ procedures, such as using razor wire on compound walls. Flexibility is also needed in deciding whether an area is safe to travel in or to. After a serious incident, staff are usually relocated until a determination is made that it is safe to return. Deciding whether (and when) to return to a location requires a nuanced understanding of both the local and broader security context. Several NGOs have developed checklists or indicators to guide such decisions.

Human resources management

The relationship between security management, human resource management and programme management is a complex one. Although organisations need to set levels of acceptable risk, individual staff also need to decide what they deem to be acceptable themselves. In Darfur, some agencies have made a point of repeatedly telling staff that they should feel able to withdraw if they no longer felt comfortable with the level of risk, even if the agency as a whole was willing to stay. By contrast, some staff may be prepared to take more risks than their organisation would accept, and may become frustrated by the need to adhere to security procedures. In such an environment, managing staff expectations becomes an important part of enabling good security management.

Financial issues

Adapting to insecurity in Darfur has imposed significant additional costs for humanitarian agencies. Transport costs have risen because staff increasingly travel by air and contractors charge premiums for transporting supplies by risky land routes. NGOs have also had to invest more in communications equipment, including hefty licensing fees. The need to continuously upgrade

compound security in response to changes in risk has also proved expensive. Staff deploying in Darfur may require more frequent breaks, special security training and psychosocial support and time off if they are involved in an incident. Changes in the security situation may require a reduction or suspension of programme activities, while administrative and overhead costs continue or even increase. Adequate and flexible donor funding for agencies working in contexts such as Darfur is crucial.

Conclusion

During 2009 14 international staff were kidnapped and 87 vehicles hijacked between January and October. Frequent adaptation has enabled NGOs in Darfur to

continue delivering humanitarian assistance in the face of these high levels of insecurity – although there are concerns that the limits of such adaptation will soon be reached. However, there has generally been insufficient attention paid to developing acceptance strategies, and communicating what NGOs do, and how they do it. While the security of one NGO is inextricably linked with that of other NGOs and UN agencies, including UNAMID, collaboration across the aid community is not what it might be and must be improved.

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Local perceptions of US ‘hearts and minds’ activities in Kenya

Michael Kleinman and Mark Bradbury

In the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, US military strategy has increasingly focused on the provision of humanitarian and development assistance in order to ‘win the hearts and minds’ of local communities.¹ This strategy, however, is not limited to active conflicts. The US military is also trying to win hearts and minds in Muslim populations in the Horn of Africa, in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Established in 2003 and based in Djibouti, the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) provides humanitarian and development assistance in the region as part of a broader regional counter-terrorism and stabilisation strategy. At the same time, the activities of CJTF-HOA reflect the growing engagement by the US military in humanitarian and development activities, not least through the establishment of the US Command for Africa (AFRICOM) in 2008.

Winning hearts and minds – or losing them?

We recently undertook a study looking at the effectiveness of CJTF-HOA’s humanitarian and development projects in winning the hearts and minds of communities in north-eastern Kenya and along the Kenyan coast.² Assessing the impact of CJTF-HOA’s hearts and minds activities is complicated by the changing objectives of the Task Force itself. Over time the initial aim of influencing the attitudes of the target population has become conflated with more ambitious objectives to counter terrorism and violent extremism through alleviating poverty and facilitating the reach and acceptance of the Kenyan state into previously ‘ungoverned’ areas.

Tactically, these military aid projects provide an entry point into communities that are potentially hostile to the US and its interests. They allow the military to build connections and networks and acquire knowledge about

the population – connections and information which may then be used to augment intelligence, to influence local leaders or to facilitate a military intervention, should the need arise. At the same time, these projects are intended to influence local perceptions and stereotypes about the US, with the goal of undermining local support for groups hostile to America and its allies and thus to prevent potential conflict.

CJTF-HOA’s projects in Kenya’s North Eastern and Coast provinces were mostly small, scattered and under-resourced. Most were either contracted through small Civil Affairs (CA) teams, or implemented directly by US military engineering units. We were able to compile a list of 151 projects undertaken since 2003 in north-eastern Kenya and along the Kenyan coast, including a few projects in the Rift Valley as well. The projects were overwhelmingly small in scale, costing only \$6.9 million over six years (excluding the costs of maintaining Civil Affairs and engineering teams in the field).

the US military and the communities that are recipients of its assistance have different perspectives on security, stabilisation and developmental needs

The cost of individual projects ranged from under \$10,000 to \$325,000, the latter spent on the renovation of the primary school in the town of Kiunga on the Kenya–Somalia border. Projects were primarily focused on the education, water, health and veterinary sectors; over 50% of all projects implemented were in the education sector. By way of comparison, the United States Agency

¹ Andrew Wilder and Stuart Gordon, ‘Money Can’t Buy America Love’, *Foreign Policy*, December 2009.

² Mark Bradbury and Michael Kleinman, *Winning Hearts and Minds? Examining the Relationship Between Aid and Security in Kenya*, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, April 2010.



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A primary school in Lamu rehabilitated by CA

for International Development (USAID) provides \$8–12m per year for education in Kenya and \$7m per year on governance. The \$6.9m over six years also pales into insignificance in comparison with the \$1.3 billion spent by USAID under the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) between 2004 and 2008, on HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment in Kenya.

The US military and the communities that are recipients of its assistance have different perspectives on issues of security, stabilisation and developmental needs. Whilst the communities themselves are not homogenous, it is possible to draw out some tentative conclusions. Although these activities were arguably effective on a tactical level, in terms of facilitating the US military’s entry into regions of potential concern, our study found that small-scale development projects (and exposure to US military personnel) were insufficient to convince communities to change their perceptions of the United States and its motives.

There is some evidence that CJTF-HOA has achieved a measure of tactical success insofar as CA teams have established a presence in north-eastern Kenya and along the Kenyan coast. Over the past six years, local attitudes towards their presence have become less hostile and more accommodating. Familiarity, political lobbying, better outreach by CJTF-HOA and other US government agencies and a continuing demand for external assistance mean that there is a pragmatic and tacit acceptance of the presence of CA teams. Yet it is not clear that these communities were innately hostile to the US to begin with; for instance, interviewees spoke favourably

about the Peace Corps and USAID assistance. The initial resistance to the CA teams might not have reflected anti-American sentiment so much as suspicion of the US military following the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, a suspicion aggravated by the tendency of CA teams to separate themselves from the population during the early years of CJTF-HOA, and act as though they were in potentially hostile territory.

Arguably, the increased acceptance of the presence of CA teams owes as much to the teams interacting more openly with communities and local leaders – as well as through outreach by the US Embassy and lobbying by interested local politicians – as it does to communities changing their perceptions about the US military. Tacit acceptance, however, is not proof that CJTF-HOA’s presence has changed overall attitudes about the US government and its foreign policy. Communities and their leaders are sceptical about the purpose of CJTF-HOA’s mission and dubious about the utility of some of the assistance provided. Acceptance does not appear to be based on firm foundations and attitudes are not fixed.

Simplistic assumptions

The idea that, by delivering aid, the US military can change people’s perceptions about the United States is premised on very simplistic assumptions. It is naive to assume that a project or series of small projects are sufficient to change people’s perceptions, convictions and values, regardless of the historical and contemporary local, regional and global sociopolitical and economic context. People’s attitudes are influenced by a multitude of factors beyond the scope of aid projects, such as the relationship

between the target population and the Kenyan state, their self-perception as Muslims, local leadership, the media and, more importantly, their perception of the impact of US foreign policy, both globally and across the border in Somalia. Acceptance of aid does not automatically translate into acceptance of the policies or beliefs of the entity providing the assistance.

People in North Eastern province remained highly critical of the military aid projects and suspicious of the ulterior motives behind the presence of the CA teams. It is possible that the negative views our research captured reflected a point in time in early 2009 when the number of projects had declined, particularly in North Eastern province. In Lamu district, people interviewed were generally more positive and less questioning about the US military presence. Nevertheless, they were also conscious that the reason they were recipients of assistance from the US military had more to do with US interests than a concern for their own well-being.

aid projects that aim to win over both hearts and minds can appear as an attempt to directly influence a Muslim community's faith and beliefs

Local communities did not believe that CJTF-HOA activities had improved their security. On the contrary, their comments suggest that some feel more insecure than before because of the US presence. Security in Kenya's borderlands has worsened over the past three years, partially as a consequence of US and Western policy towards Somalia. Some people feared that their association with the US could make them more vulnerable to violence by extremists, although there is no evidence that any projects have led to attacks.

Some respondents were uncomfortable with the US military's association with the Kenyan military, given its record of violence against the Somali population in North Eastern Province. In addition, some people feared that the aid projects (in particular borehole drilling) were in reality a cover for harmful activities such as the burial of nuclear waste. In a context where US foreign policy in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Somalia and Kenya has been seen as an attack on Islam, aid projects that aim to win over both hearts and minds can appear as an



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Graffiti in a school toilet, Garissa

attempt to directly influence a Muslim community's faith and beliefs.

It is also worth noting that CJTF-HOA's hearts and minds efforts have been hampered by the simple fact that soldiers are not aid workers. Despite the developmental rhetoric of CJTF-HOA, there are several glaring problems with the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance by the military. Whatever the technical skills of the reservists who make up the CA teams, they do not necessarily have the requisite skills or knowledge to undertake community development work. The short-term rotation of CA teams means that relationships and projects lack continuity. From our interviews, it does not seem that CA teams are adequately prepared before deployment, nor does the military appear to have effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Overall, the organisational strengths of the military do not translate into more efficiently delivered aid projects.

A moderate religious leader in Lamu summed up the successes and limitations of CJTF-HOA's campaign to win hearts and minds thus:

The projects are useful, but if their purpose is to win the hearts of the people this has not been achieved. They build faith on one side and destroy it on the other. What they are doing to our brothers in Afghanistan and Israel affects all of us.

Michael Kleinman was an independent consultant at the time he conducted the research for this article. **Mark Bradbury** is an independent analyst and Director of the Rift Valley Institute Horn of Africa Course.

Operational Security Management in Violent Environments

Revised edition
September 2010

The first edition of the Good Practice Review on *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* (also known as GPR 8) was published in 2000. Since then it has become a seminal document in humanitarian operational security management, and is credited with increasing the understanding of good practice in this area throughout the community of operational agencies. It introduced core security management concepts and highlighted good policy and practice on the range of different approaches to operational security in humanitarian contexts. When it was published, the majority of aid agencies were only just beginning to consider the realities and challenges of operational insecurity. Few international or national organisations had designated security positions or policies and protocols on how to manage the risks of deliberate violence against their staff and operations. The GPR thus filled a significant gap in the policy and practice of security management.

The revised edition of GPR 8 both updates the original material and introduces new topics. In particular, it presents a more detailed and refined approach to undertaking risk assessments specifically oriented to field practitioners. It also outlines a more comprehensive means of implementing an ‘active acceptance’ approach, as well as examining in detail deterrence and protective strategies, including maintaining a low profile and using armed protection. New topics include the security dimensions of ‘remote management’ programming, good practice in interagency security coordination and how to track, share and analyse security information. It provides a significantly more comprehensive approach to managing critical incidents, in particular kidnapping and hostage taking. Issues relating to the threat of terrorism are discussed in a number of chapters within the revised edition and have been purposefully mainstreamed rather than siloed into one chapter. A series of annexes examines issues such as the changing security environment for humanitarian action, the role of private security providers, insurance provision, and the role of official donors in supporting security management.

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The **Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN)** is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience.

HPN's aim is to improve the performance of humanitarian action by contributing to individual and institutional learning.

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