

## TO STAY AND DELIVER

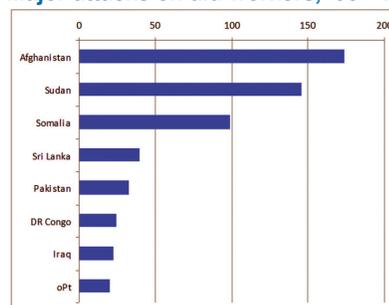
### Good practice for humanitarian in complex security environments

*Independent study commissioned by OCHA. The research team was composed of Mr. Jan Egeland, the team leader, and Ms. Abby Stoddard and Ms. Adele Harmer as the senior researchers.*

#### Key facts and figures – Continuous insecurity of humanitarian personnel

- Over the past decade, violent attacks against humanitarian workers tripled, reaching **over 100 deaths per year**.
- **International personnel** face a higher incident rate per capita than national staff, especially in the most extreme internationalized conflict environments.
- **National staff**, constituting over 90 % of staff in the field, have borne the brunt of security risks.

#### Major attacks on aid workers, '05 -'10



Source: Aid Worker Security Database

#### Why this study?

- Growing concern over shrinking access to affected people in violent areas due to:
  - Targeted attack on humanitarian actors
  - High levels of criminality and banditry
  - Terrorist attacks in civilian areas
  - Active hostilities (air strikes, ground operations)
- Yet, to comply with the humanitarian imperative and take action solely on the basis of need, humanitarians have found ways to continue delivering life-saving services to affected people.
- The study captures innovative strategies and optional practices (Chapter 3) that have enabled practitioners to deliver aid to people in need in high-risk contexts.

#### Good operational practices

- **Acceptance-building:** local outreach and sensitization, promoting community ownership, strengthen responsibilities of national staff.
- **Deconflicting:** Civil-military engagement in peacekeeping, national and international forces to identify days of tranquility and windows for access (e.g. Lebanon, '06)
- **Low profile:** de-branding and blending strategies, home-based operations, discreet protection avoiding militarized appearance.
- Identify **red lines and ground rules** to ensure coherent access negotiations (e.g. Somalia '09).
- Smart **remote management, preventing risk transfer:** hiring Diaspora nationals as international staff, localized programming.

#### National staff survey - key findings

- An **unprecedented survey on national staff's perceptions** regarding their risks and in complex security environments hit over 1,000 responses and found that:
  - National personnel's security risk outweighs their international counterparts' due to the **nature of jobs**, including guards, drivers and field programme officers.
  - **Gender** has little to no effect on national personnel's security risks. A minority reported that female staff was exposed to greater risk due to cultural norms.
  - Inequities in the **duty of care** between international and national staff and partners remain, particularly in terms of resources.
  - **UN employment** carries the highest risks, followed by Western INGOs.
  - Acceptance and thus, compliance with **humanitarian principles** of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, in practice constitutes a core operational tool for ensuring safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access

**METHODOLOGY:** The study captured in-country practices through field-based reviews of 6 complex security settings (Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt), Pakistan, Somalia (remote management), and Sudan (Darfur) and a desk review of an additional six settings (Chad, Colombia, Haiti, Iraq, Sri Lanka, and Yemen). In total, 255 practitioners and policy-makers were interviewed at headquarters and in the field.

## Key messages

- **Maintaining an effective presence through risk management:** Delivering aid to affected populations in complex security environments will entail a residual risk. Senior management's accountability frameworks should aim at promoting effective decision-making based on sound analysis rather than attribution of fault.
- **Acceptance and access require sustained humanitarian dialogue:** In today's volatile operating environments, acceptance for humanitarian action vis-à-vis local authorities and communities, as well as access to affected populations need to be approached as a process rather than as an event, requiring presence, time, and sustained engagement with all parties.
- **Humanitarian principles matter:** Rhetoric for greater adherence to humanitarian principles needs to be matched with practice. In the past, humanitarian organizations have too willingly compromised a principled approach through close alignment with political and military actors. Member States, in turn, need to reconsider policies that impinge on humanitarians' ability to engage with all stakeholders, as this is a basic centerpiece of acceptance-building.
- **Low-profile and localized remote programming, not bunkerization:** Security measures may need to complement acceptance-based approaches when aid workers become clear targets in insecure environments. However, a combination of localized programming and low visibility measures have enhanced local acceptance of humanitarian action in these settings.
- **Investment in national personnel's duty of care and local partners:** Humanitarian organizations need to invest greater resources in their national staff and local implementing agencies in terms of security arrangements and capacity-building.

## Key recommendations

### **To humanitarian aid agencies:**

- Map highest risk settings and the type of threats involved and use this determination to allocate staff and resources.
- Invest in the development of specialized skill-sets, rigorous selection and vetting of trained staff to deploy to complex environments.
- Address inequities in the duty of care between national personnel and international staff.
- Provide financial, material and technical resources to implementing agencies to enhance responsible partnership.
- Ensure that deployed staff possess a sound understanding of the application of humanitarian principles in practice.

### **To HCs, UNDSS, OCHA and the ERC**

- Ensure that security risk management is an integral part of programming, and budgeted within CAP and Flash Appeal processes.
- Develop operational policies ensuring compliance with humanitarian principles.
- Ensure that security personnel possess a sound understanding of acceptance-based practices and humanitarian programming.

- **These recommendations require both a behavioral and attitudinal shift.**
- **Good practices presented throughout the report are recommended options to be considered for implementation.**

- Ensure consistent messaging on safe, timely and unimpeded access to affected populations with relevant state and non-state actors.

### **To the Secretary-General**

- Support humanitarian actors and their need to engage with all relevant actors, including non-state armed groups, in order to reach affected populations.

### **To states**

- Refrain from enacting legislation and policies undermining humanitarian engagement with parties to conflict and local stakeholders.
- Host states are encouraged to engage with humanitarian actors to create conditions conducive to humanitarian action.
- Support longterm humanitarian security risk management practices and acknowledge that building acceptance takes time.
- Support field-based NGO security coordination mechanisms.
- Establish a permanent forum for donor dialogue on security coordination, for instance through the Good Humanitarian Donorship.

## Contact

*For further information and comments, please contact:*

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) / Policy Development and Studies Branch (PDSB)

E-mail: [ochapolicy@un.org](mailto:ochapolicy@un.org); Tel: +1 917 367 4263