



Aid Worker Security Report 2012

**Host states and their
impact on security for
humanitarian operations**

Humanitarian Outcomes

Key findings

- ▶ In 2011¹, 308 aid workers were killed, kidnapped or wounded – the highest number yet recorded.
- ▶ After declining in 2010, total incidents of violence against aid workers rose again, particularly kidnappings.
- ▶ Most of these attacks continued to take place in a small number of countries: Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Pakistan and Sudan.
- ▶ Statistical analysis suggests that attacks on aid workers are most prevalent in weak, unstable states and those experiencing active armed conflict. These attacks are also correlated to low levels of rule of law.
- ▶ The rate of aid worker killings appear to be independent of overall murder rates in the host state, the type of political regime in place and the degree of societal openness.
- ▶ The above suggests that attacks on humanitarian workers are a symptom of state failure as well as a product of war. This limits options for humanitarian actors, as the host states formally responsible for providing secure access for aid operations are fundamentally ill-equipped to do so.
- ▶ Aid agencies must analyse the potential of the host government to protect and assist aid operations in each context, understanding that where the capacity or political will for this is absent, they are wholly responsible for their own security.

Introduction

Long-term historical trends show violence decreasing across the globe. Particularly after the Cold War, statistics show that all manner of warfare has declined, both between and within states, as have state-sanctioned torture and human rights abuse.² In contrast, the number of attacks against aid workers shows an upward trend. This may be partly a function of the relatively short time-span since this data has become available (1997-present), but it is also explained by the willingness of aid agencies and individuals to maintain an operational presence in the small number of very violent settings.

Data from the Aid Worker Security Database show that in the past several years, major violence against aid workers is increasingly concentrated in a small number of extremely insecure countries. In this report we explore why that is the case. We examine these outlier contexts, the countries where aid worker casualties continue to mount, despite organisations' best efforts to strengthen operational security. The analysis measures relationships between aid worker violence and country-specific conditions: governance indicators, stability measures, conflict events, corruption levels and other variables. In addition to the statistics, the report draws on interviews with officials and aid practitioners on the main issues and challenges in those settings and on other current research in this area.

The perennial caveat applies, of course: correlation does not imply causation. Moreover, simply identifying broad patterns does not necessarily lend itself to security solutions on the ground, which must always be carefully contextualised (in the words of UN Security chief, Greg Starr, 'all security is local'). With that in mind, however, the report seeks to elucidate some important features in aid recipient countries that may contribute to or detract from the security of humanitarian operations.

Table 1: Major attacks on aid workers: Summary statistics, 2000-2011

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of incidents	42	29	46	63	63	75	107	123	165	154	129	151
Total aid worker victims	91	90	85	143	125	173	240	220	278	295	245	308
Total killed	57	27	38	87	56	54	87	87	127	107	72	86
Total injured	23	20	23	49	46	96	87	87	91	94	86	127
Total kidnapped*	11	43	24	7	23	23	66	46	60	94	87	95
International victims	21	28	17	27	24	15	26	35	51	74	37	28
National victims	70	62	68	116	101	158	214	185	227	221	208	280
UN staff	31	28	18	31	11	28	61	39	65	101	44	91
International NGO staff	45	48	54	69	69	112	110	132	157	129	139	140
LNGO and RCS staff**	5	2	5	35	43	28	55	35	46	55	47	77
ICRC staff	9	11	7	8	1	3	10	4	5	9	10	5

* Victims survived or not yet determined (those killed while kidnapped are counted under 'killed' totals)

** Local (host country) nongovernmental organisations and National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies

2 Human Security Centre 2005, Pinker 2011.

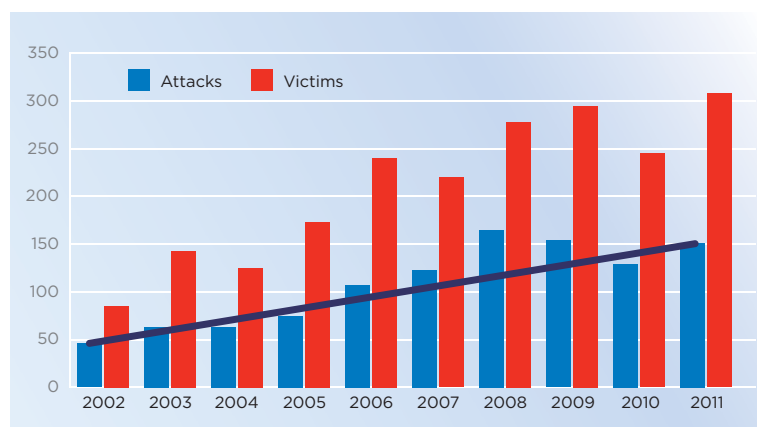
Aid worker attacks: Latest statistics

1

According to the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSDB), the number of major attacks against aid workers rose in 2011, reversing a two-year decline. Worldwide there were 151 major incidents of violence against civilian aid operations, and the total number of victims of these attacks, 308, is the highest yet recorded. Of these, 86 aid workers were killed, 127 were seriously wounded, and 95 were kidnapped³.

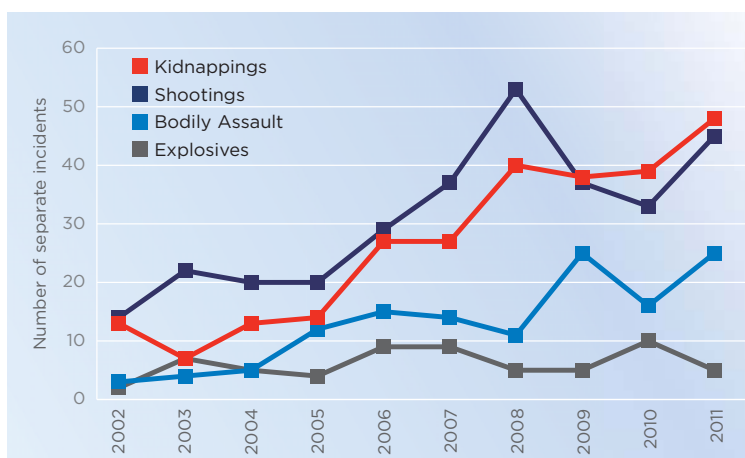
Since 2009, kidnappings have become the most frequent means of violence against aid workers, showing the steepest and steadiest rise out of all tactics over the past decade. According to the data, the majority of kidnappings of aid workers (at least 85 per cent) do not end in the victim's death, but commonly with a negotiated release, with a small number of rescues and escapes. It should be noted also that the dataset likely does not capture all cases of kidnapping, as some organisations and victims' families keep the crime and negotiations secret. It is reasonable to assume that there are even greater numbers of (survived) kidnappings than shown, particularly of nationals.

Figure 1: Major attacks on aid workers and numbers of victims, 2006-2011



Aid Worker Security Database, www.aidworkersecurity.org

Figure 2: Trends in the means of violence



Aid Worker Security Database, www.aidworkersecurity.org

Use of explosives in attacks on aid workers declined in the past year, including vehicle- and body-borne IEDs, as well as stationary bombs and landmines. The use of heavy explosives and suicide tactics are not historically common causes of aid worker casualties; in fact, such incidents barely registered on the AWSDB until the mid-2000s, when they began occurring in conflicts involving international terrorist elements in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan and later Pakistan.

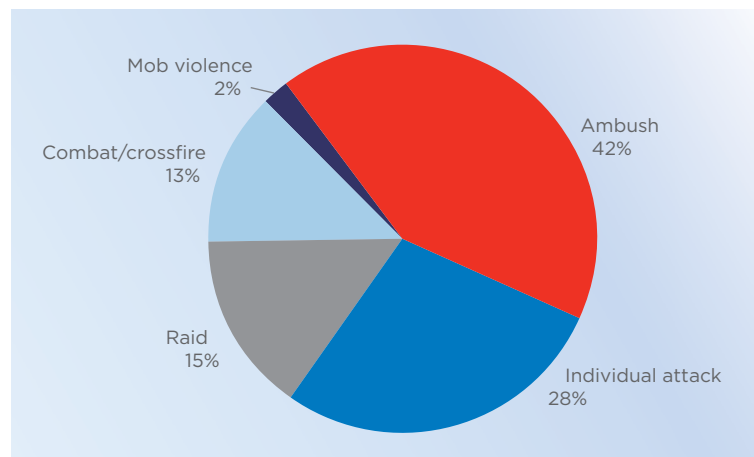
³ The AWSDB defines kidnappings as incidents with non-fatal outcomes.

They are important to track, however, because of their high lethality and potentially large number of victims from a single incident, and because in several incidents the aid organisation was deliberately targeted for the attack, as opposed to being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The dip in explosives-related casualties has been due mainly to fewer bombing incidents in Afghanistan and Pakistan, following a withdrawal, of much of the international aid presence from the most insecure areas of those countries where most of the bombings were occurring (e.g., Kandahar and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, respectively).

The AWSD incident categories were refined in 2012 to distinguish the direct *means* of violence, as in Figure 2 (shooting, kidnapping, etc.), from the *tactical* context of the event (e.g., ambush on the road, armed raid on a project site, etc.). We found that 2011 had a distribution of incident contexts similar to past years, with ambushes and other attacks on the road continuing to be the most prevalent. Attacking vehicles on the open road affords relatively easy access to the targeted people and materials, without such obstacles as security guards or building walls. Road travel and transport thus continues to be the context of greatest risk to aid workers, and most in need of innovation and investment in risk mitigation.

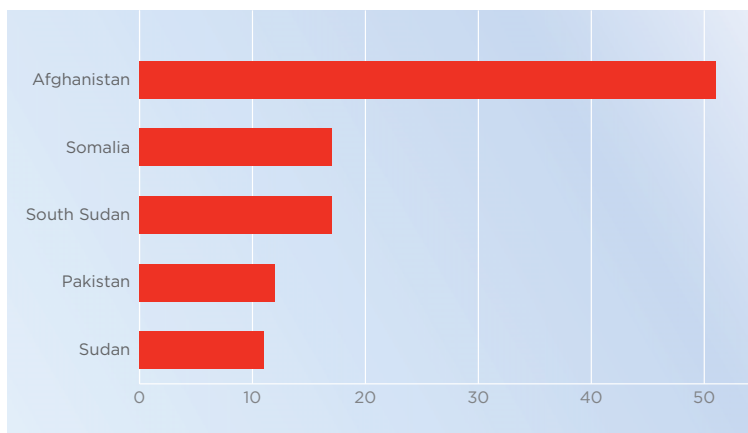
In 2011, roughly 13 per cent of victims (28) were international staff and 87 per cent (280) were national staff working for either international or national organisations in their own countries. Given that international staff account for only roughly four per cent of the global aid worker population, the figures suggest that the attack rate for international aid workers remains higher than for nationals, although nationals remain the vast majority of victims.

Figure 3: Contexts of attacks, 2011



Aid Worker Security Database, www.aidworkersecurity.org

Figure 4: Countries with the highest number of attacks on aid workers, 2011



Aid Worker Security Database, www.aidworkersecurity.org

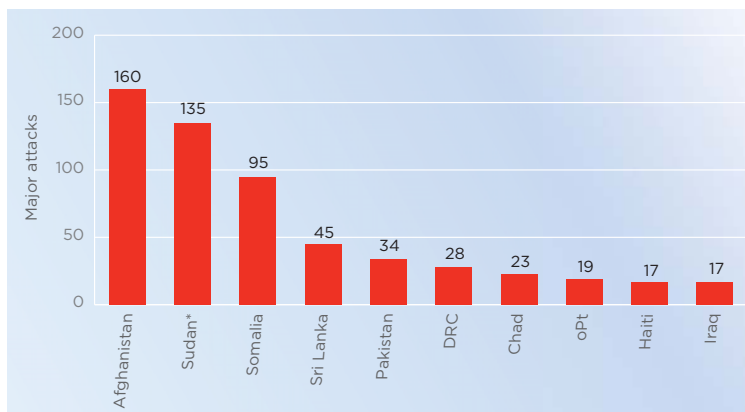
The majority of attacks (72 per cent) took place in a small number of countries: Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan and Sudan, and the world's newest country - South Sudan - entered the category of most violent humanitarian settings at number three. The concentration of many incidents in a few aid settings has been noted by our research in the past, and this pattern continues to hold (AWSD 2011).

The most violent settings for humanitarian action

2

To better understand the settings where aid workers face the greatest insecurity, we analysed the number of attacks in a subset of the ten highest incident settings over a prolonged period, 2006–2011. These contexts were Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, DRC, Chad, occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), Haiti and Iraq. In the 40 other countries where aid worker attacks occurred during that time period, incidents in each country numbered only in the single digits.

Figure 5: Ten highest incident settings, 2006-2010

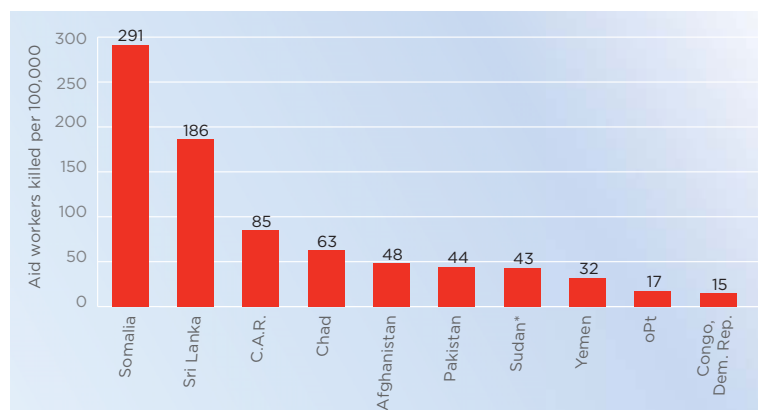


*Includes incidents in South Sudan before independence. Aid Worker Security Database, www.aidworkersecurity.org

of this analysis we have calculated the rate of aid workers killed, in order to compare them to general murder rates. The resulting aid worker murder rates reveal two other highly dangerous environments in addition to the ten above: Central African Republic and Yemen.

It is important to distinguish the cases of Sri Lanka and oPt, where indiscriminate combat fatalities (mostly shelling), as opposed to targeted killing, drove up aid worker death rates during brief periods of intense warfare. In these contexts aid workers do not face the same chronic insecurity as they do in other high rate countries. Aid workers are at most prolonged risk in contexts where they have been deliberately targeted for violence as a means to economic or political ends (and, in many cases, both). In the following section we look more closely at these high incident contexts as well as humanitarian settings where such violence is low to see how different host state variables may play a role in aid worker insecurity.

Figure 6: Aid worker murder rates, 2006-2011



*Includes South Sudan. Aid Worker Security Database, www.aidworkersecurity.org

3.1 Correlates to violence against aid workers in host state governance

The countries with the highest aid worker murder rates represent a diversity of geographic regions, sizes and political contexts, but two unsurprising commonalities are immediately clear. All of them experienced active, internal armed conflict during all or a portion of the time period under analysis. By 2010, most remained among the lowest ranked countries on the Global Peace Index⁴ (excluding Sri Lanka, where active combat had by then ceased).

We set out to explore whether the nature of governance in the host country contributes to levels of aid worker violence. Are dictatorships less safe for humanitarian action than democracies? Are attacks against aid workers a facet of the overall crime environment in the country, or something wholly different? We also wanted to statistically test the assumption that the presence of active conflict corresponded to increased aid worker casualties. Through multiple regression analysis we tested several governance- and conflict-related independent variables to see if they had any statistically significant correlation to violence against aid workers across the world. Variables tested included the presence and intensity of conflict from UCDP-SIPRI conflict data,⁵ measures of the type and strength of the political regime from the State Fragility Index (Monty G. Marshall and Benjamin R. Cole), the full set of the World Bank's World Governance Indicators,⁶ and national homicide rates as sourced from the UN Office of Drugs and Crime. All values were averaged for the years 2006–2010, excluding years where no data was available.

As expected, the presence or absence of armed conflict matters the most: the regression results indicated a moderately significant positive correlation between aid worker violence and presence of/intensity in fighting. There were also correlations between aid worker violence and (in descending order of significance) low levels of political stability, high 'state fragility' scores, institutional weakness of the regime, and low levels of 'rule of law'. The type of political regime in place did not seem to matter, only its strength and stability. Weak government institutions, whether democratic or autocratic, were more predictive of aid worker attacks than either entrenched dictatorships or strong institutional democracies.

Conversely, there was no correlation between aid worker killings and the general homicide rates in host countries. This finding suggests that violence against international aid operations is not indicative of the overall crime environment, but exists as a separate phenomenon that is more connected to a failed or failing state apparatus and the dynamics of war. There was also no significant relationship between violence against aid workers and government corruption or openness within society.

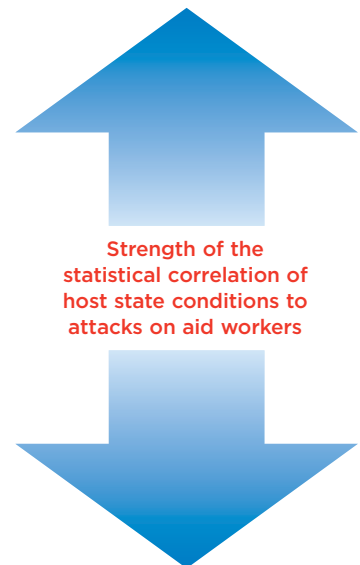
4 <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/gpi-data>.

5 http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/ucdp_prio_armed_conflict_dataset/.

6 <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/worldwide-governance-indicators>.

Table 2: Linear regression results, 2006-2011

Variable	Relationship to aid worker murder rate
Conflict intensity	0.6 Moderate correlation (positive)
Political stability	-0.5 Moderate correlation (negative)
State fragility	0.4 Weak correlation (positive)
Regime strength	-0.4 Weak correlation (negative)
Rule of law	-0.3 Weak correlation (negative)
Govt. effectiveness	-0.3 Weak correlation (negative)
Regulatory quality	-0.3 Weak correlation (negative)
Corruption control	-0.2 No significant correlation
Voice/accountability	-0.2 No significant correlation
Murder rate	-0.1 No significant correlation
Democracy level	0.0 No significant correlation



Evidently it is not the type or mechanics of government that are most relevant to humanitarian security, but rather the stability and validity of the fundamental institutions of governance, i.e., the underlying strength of the state.

3.2 Principles, responsibilities and realities

Nominally, state authorities are responsible for the security of their citizens and any other (law-abiding) persons passing through or residing in their national territory. In times of war, this protection is enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and the principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). States have a duty to promote IHL and to train military and other personnel in how to apply it.

In the case of international organisations and their officials, the host government has a special responsibility under the UN Charter and the government’s agreements (called Host Country Agreements) with the individual organisations. These agreements apply to all types of environments where international assistance is deployed, not just conflict contexts, and cover a wide range of issues including communications, travel and transport, privileges and immunities, as well as safety and security. There are also a number of conventions and frameworks, primarily developed within UN bodies, which describe state responsibilities for aid workers.

Interviews for this research confirm that high level agreements on paper are rarely directly relevant to security on the ground. Many aid agency staff concede that they don’t know the details of Host State Agreements or other resolutions, and neither do the local security authorities in the (often remote) areas where they operate. While there is an understanding that the state is responsible for the safety and security of aid workers, these responsibilities are not articulated in any detail within the agreements, and can be widely interpreted or ignored by the host state and international aid actors alike. In South Sudan, for example, one interviewee observed that ‘there is a violation of the agreement with the government two to three times a day’. The UN’s Under Secretary-General for Safety and Security takes a pragmatic approach, pointing out that the solution will not lie in host states signing additional or expanded agreements. Rather, the international community should actively and regularly engage with the host governments and local authorities on security, clarifying each party’s roles and responsibilities, and jointly seek practical ways to realise the objectives of the agreements.

Operational agencies are not unified in their approaches to host government relations. As one interviewee noted, 'most [agencies] have a general baseline of humanitarian principles, but it's not consistent. The way organisations understand principles and work towards them varies quite significantly.' Interviewees noted that it's a balancing act to maintain their principles of neutrality and independence, but at the same time abide by the laws of the country and not be perceived as in collusion with the authorities. From the perspective of the host state, the security dialogue with international actors is also considered highly sensitive, but for different reasons. Their concerns include the fact that international agencies with a security presence and capability may imply that the authorities cannot maintain law and order. A spate of incidents against

internationals, which tends to attract media attention, likewise undermines perceptions of the state's capability. In addition, they may regard agencies undertaking security assessments and monitoring threats as engaging in suspect political activity or intelligence gathering (ODI, 2010).

Insecurity and impunity: The implications of weak governance

Qualitative research bears out the statistical findings that the biggest challenges to humanitarian operational security derive from weak governance environments where state institutions have neither the resources nor capacities to manage the insecurity within their borders. Combining those challenges with the presence of extremist, violent groups creates significant insecurity for aid operations. When states cannot pacify or police large parts of their territory, aid organisations can become especially appealing targets for perpetrators seeking material or political spoils.

In the new nation of South Sudan, for example, aid agencies have struggled with the government's lack of capacity and lack of observance of responsibilities regarding security of aid operations. Poorly equipped and paid governmental security forces commandeer agency vehicles and other communications assets and detain aid agency staff with no legal basis, along with other harassments and threats. This has made engaging with the state on security issues increasingly difficult for aid agencies. As a result, very few approach government officials for security advice or support, and most agencies try to avoid association with the central government. At the local level, relations tend to be better, however, and most agencies will heed officials' advice if there are limitations on travel, for example.

In Kenya's northeast, the government lacks both capacity and, aid agencies perceive, the political will to provide general security. Aid workers interviewed attest to the government's unwillingness to put additional security on the ground given the direct threats to the government in this area. Because the region is ethnically Somali, aid workers posit that the northeast is not considered

Key conventions, frameworks and resolutions on aid worker security

- Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel (1994)
- Security Council Presidential Statement on the Protection of UN Personnel in Conflict Zones (2000)
- Security Council Resolution 1502, which condemns all forms of violence against those participating in humanitarian operations and urges states to ensure that crimes against such personnel do not go unpunished (2003)
- General Assembly Resolution 59/211 on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and the protection of UN personnel (2004)
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel 60/581 (2005)

politically important to Kenya's centre, hence protecting aid workers is not prioritised. In the words of one interviewee, 'they are prepared to do enough to be seen to be assisting the international community, but not enough to be truly effective in what is required'. Part of the institutional challenge lies in the dual police authorities – Kenyan and Administration police (formally Tribal police). The latter has responsibility in northern Kenya and reports to local District Commissioners but doesn't report to the Kenyan police, which limits overall strategic understanding and decision-making regarding insecurity across the country.

In the more extreme cases, aid workers must operate with little or no extension of state authority to advise or protect them, particularly in the more physically remote areas requiring humanitarian assistance. In Mali, for example, authority is split after the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and Ansar Dine, which is affiliated to Al Qaeda, took over most of northern Mali in early 2012. Aid agencies scrambled to rebuild their stocks and equipment and to re-establish access after wide scale looting of their northern offices. Negotiations for access were made near-impossible due to conflicting responses from different representatives of the rebel movement which made it difficult for aid agencies to rely on any single guarantee.⁷ In Somalia, the transitional authority barely controls the capital, Mogadishu, and until recently Al Shabaab acted as the defacto authority in most parts of South Central Somalia, determining aid agency access and movement. Aid agencies are therefore highly reliant on private forms of security and individually negotiated access. Moreover, there is very limited coordination between aid agencies and no clear strategy to cope with the threats and constraints. As one agency staffer lamented, 'there are no collective approaches: when you work in such an extreme and volatile environment everyone is doing their own thing'.

Government-created obstacles to secure humanitarian access

Governments can also pose challenges to the aid community through overbearing or ill-advised use of their security forces. In its worst form, aid workers can themselves be caught or directly targeted in government forces' hostilities.⁸ Host states often have multiple motivations for exercising militant measures when it comes to aid interventions, not least of which is to make a show of strength of their security forces. This generally applies to all foreign guests in the country, such as the diplomatic community and multinational entities, as well as aid workers. It can manifest as counterproductive, deterrence-driven measures such as highly visible armed protection for aid convoys, which not only compromises the aid workers' neutrality and independence, but can also draw fire. Often another unspoken interest of governments is to police the aid agencies themselves and control their activities. Host governments sometimes restrict movements within, or access to, specific strategic areas, such as those controlled by an insurgency (Wille & Fast, 2010). Host state security measures can also signal ownership by the state of the humanitarian response, which the government may seek in order to increase its popular support, but which undermines humanitarians' neutrality and independence when the government is party to the conflict.

In Pakistan, for example, armed escorts for aid operations became mandatory for international staff in some provinces after a series of kidnappings in early 2012, and the government issued clear warnings to its security agencies that they were to ensure no further incidents occur against foreigners. In some instances NGOs have refused to go to the field rather than travel with the required armed escorts. Some international agencies observed that Pakistan has gradually become more restrictive of their movements and activities since 2008. Said one, 'it is presented as necessary for our own protection. Any incident will be bad PR for the government, and we're at their invitation

7 <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95390/MALI-Negotiating-humanitarian-access-in-the-north>.

8 For example in relation to Sri Lanka: C. Petrie, 2012, *Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka*, November; and in relation to Syria: www.irinnews.org/Report/96952/SYRIA-UN-shrinks-staff-and-movement-amid-insecurity.

and they feel an obligation to protect us.’ In keeping with this focus on foreigners, escorts were not deemed essential for national staff, despite the fact that kidnapping incidents occur more regularly against nationals. This combined with the government’s restrictions on the movement of international staff creates a serious, state-imposed transfer of risk to national staff.

Governments can also impose cultural restrictions, for example by stigmatising the employment of female aid workers, which can contribute to a culture of impunity regarding crimes against women. In response to this, women’s groups in Pakistan have called upon the government to address the atmosphere of silence and shame that heighten the vulnerability of women aid workers and activists.⁹

Communication and information sharing impediments

In both governments and non-governmental organisations there is a tendency to approach security issues with insularity and a reluctance to share information, which further complicates the security relationship. This is partly attributed to the fact that many of those responsible for such information are from national security services, and as one interviewee said, ‘information exchange does not come naturally to people with [a] national security background’. International agencies in some high risk areas confess a tendency to avoid communication with governments. This has implications not only for effectively negotiating relationships, but also because security conditions can change daily, and the authorities have more opportunities to be flexible if dialogue is ongoing (Egeland et al. 2011). The view from the ground reveals that there is often more flexibility and room for dialogue with government officials than the international aid actors are prepared to seek out, and international actors have largely failed to push back and negotiate with their hosts.

Governments tend to focus their own security reporting and analysis on areas of strategic importance. In some cases these are not the same areas as those the aid workers are operating in. In Kenya, for example, the government regularly reports on trends in violence in the capital and surrounding areas, but there is a limited discussion and reporting on security in northern Kenya where the majority of incidents targeting aid workers occurs.

Despite the success of NGO-run security platforms in information exchange and trend analysis, strong security states can be less accommodating of the establishment and operational goals of these platforms. Those that have been most successful in their establishment and longevity have been in contexts where the state has limited ability for oversight, such as in Afghanistan (ANSO), Somalia (NSP) and Gaza (GANSO). In Pakistan and Sudan, however, there have been multiple attempts and various levels of success in having such platforms. Although international NGOs in Pakistan have established a security coordination platform (PakSafe), international staff of PakSafe have not been granted visas to continue their work there. In Sudan, despite a significant need for information exchange, and willingness on the part of donors to support a security mechanism, it has never been established due to restrictions imposed by the government.

There is no context in which the host state actively and formally engages with security platforms, or supplies security incident information to them, although there may be informal exchanges at an unofficial level. Where there is a robust and free media which contributes to keeping political actors accountable, such as in Kenya, one interviewee noted that this can keep such mechanisms free from inappropriate scrutiny.

9 Published in *The Express Tribune*, August 7, 2012.

In its mandated role, the UN acts as an important mediator and negotiator with the authorities on behalf of its humanitarian agencies and the rest of the international aid community. Despite the tensions often cited between the NGO community and the UN, there is significant interdependence between these organisations in their security relations with the host state. For example, many NGOs rely on the UN to manage the government relationship for the international community. As an NGO interviewee noted ‘as a group [we] have no relationship with the government. It’s not intentional . . . just a time factor. We count on the UN to do that and we’ll report issues through through UNDSS with with [the] view that UNDSS will take these issues up.’ UN staff are not always aware of these expectations or prepared for this role, however, and in many countries there is no consistent feedback to the international NGO community on UN-host state communications.

For their part, NGOs are often equally inconsistent in reporting incidents to the UN, which undermines the UN’s ability to map security trends and engage the government on these issues. One interviewee highlighted ‘feedback from NGOs is very poor with regard to their security. We rarely hear about security incidents. So unless it’s an issue that they need assistance with we tend not to hear about it. This is not reflective of the agreement under Saving Lives Together.’¹⁰ NGOs often highlight concern with a perceived lack of partiality in the UN’s position to act as a mediator with the host state, in particular where the UN is considered to be supportive of the government despite evidence of human rights abuses and a failure to uphold IHL. In South Sudan, for example, many aid workers perceive that donor governments and the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) should be ‘more outspoken on issues regarding the safety of staff’ (Macdonald & Valenza, 2012). Without this advocacy it risks government actions going unchecked, including actions that make aid workers less secure. In Pakistan, the UN has also been seen as reluctant to confront the government on issues of principle and humanitarian access, particularly in its stabilisation campaign. This influences NGOs when they consider mechanisms to dialogue with the government (ODI, 2009; Macdonald & Valenza, 2012). One NGO noted that it has ‘no faith in the UN doing access negotiation’, and that it doesn’t want the UN advocating to governments on behalf of NGOs because it is not confident on the quality of the dialogue.

Managing host state support

Agencies have varied experience in managing the specifics of host state support but there are some common stated concerns. In particular, host state support tends to be in the form of deterrence measures, which raise the visibility of agencies and can be poorly executed, putting them at additional risk. Armed escorts, for example, can be managed unprofessionally – in particular, security officers are poorly trained, weakly resourced (particularly in basics such as fuel for vehicles and adequate communications equipment), and time consuming. In Kenya’s Dadaab camp and other parts of the north east, for example, police escorts potentially reduce the risk of kidnapping (the main security threat to aid workers), but at the same time bring agencies into direct threat of an IED attack because police are the principal target of extremists using IEDs. The risk is then compounded due a strong tendency by the police to provide pre-arranged convoys over fixed routes, which increases the vulnerability of those in the escort. It is argued that more sophisticated methodologies could work in different ways to reduce the risk. For example, a more mobile and adaptive form of policing (i.e., that has no set schedules or routes for convoys) would be more appropriate.

In Pakistan, previous research found instances of agencies seeking work-arounds to the imposition of state armed escorts. Some aid organisations were able to arrange for police to

¹⁰ <https://dss.un.org/dssweb/sit/SLTFramework/tabid/1071/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

provide an unseen armed escort who sat inside an unmarked vehicle accompanying the organisation's own unmarked vehicles. This 'low profile armed escort' ceases to be a deterrent measure and rather becomes a protective one (in the eyes of the authorities). From the point of view of the aid organisations it has fairly successfully satisfied the authorities without exposing the agencies as visible targets (Egeland et al., 2011). As an alternate example, in Baluchistan most of the province is policed by tribal levies (tribal police) and some organisations are taking these as armed escorts because using a community based approach to security is more in keeping with acceptance strategies.

Standard operating procedures or rules of engagement are considered critical to managing host state support. These tend to be developed by the host state security providers, but some organisations have developed their own so that they can find ways to work ethically with armed escorts. Examples include defining the distance the escort vehicle should keep from agency vehicles when traveling together, or banning security officials in agency vehicles, premises or in host communities so that there is no static security presence. These rules are not always observed. Said one aid worker, 'we have to constantly remind them to stay back, and not carry on with the escort into the village'. Part of the challenge is that agencies struggle to determine common aid agency security procedures and rules of engagement.

Host state officials also note that aid organisations do not sufficiently take into account other demands that national or local security forces may already be facing. In particular, aid workers and their agencies are a small proportion within the society, and they are not a top priority. The police, for example, have so many responsibilities that resources dedicated to providing escorts and static protection for aid workers are limited. UNDSS, which often has responsibility for managing escorts, notes that NGOs and state security services do not work on similar timeframes or share the same sense of urgency. For example, the police might require as much as five days' notice for an escort, while most NGOs would require such arrangements to be made within 24 hours. When this does not transpire, the initial reaction of NGOs is often concern that restrictions are being imposed on their access, when in fact it may simply be an issue of resources.

The UN's head of security argues that much stronger working relations at the operational level are critical to improving host state relations and ultimately ensuring aid worker security. As part of this goal, the UN has increasingly looked at confidence building measures with host states. In some places the UN has held joint exercises with government, in particular, where governments were suspicious of the UN's intent. Examples include embedding government officials in risk assessment teams to demonstrate methodological and analytical processes. Host country security officials have also undertaken the UN's hostage incident management training programs alongside their UN counterparts. These engagements not only build host country capacities, they also build the UN's own country teams' knowledge and understanding of their operating environment, and strengthen relations.

Implications for humanitarian action

4

If one accepts as plausible that aid worker violence is associated with state failure and fragility, as the statistical analysis and first-hand observations support, the implications may seem more relevant for higher-level political actors than for field-level humanitarian practitioners. As illustrated above, all security is local, both assertive and weak host governments can create problems for humanitarian operational security, and aid workers on the ground must assess and respond to their unique local context in forging secure access.

At the same time, however, it is important for humanitarian actors to recognise the broader context of the host state. Violence against aid operations thrives most in fragile and failing states and states driven by civil conflict. Being proactive and assertive with host governments in such settings will not always result in a good security dialogue and working relations. In addition, emphasising written agreements and precepts of international humanitarian and human rights law may not be productive. State fragility both engenders the dynamics that lead to the targeting of aid workers and deprives the international community of a partner with which to mitigate against this violence.

In humanitarian operations there is no equivalent concept to the military's 'force protection', defined as 'actions taken to prevent or mitigate hostile action [and] conserve the force's potential so it can be applied at the decisive time and place' (US Department of Defense 2005). At best, humanitarian agencies have been able to improve situational awareness, risk assessment, mitigation measures and active acceptance strategies. These efforts have helped to stabilise incident rates in most operational settings around the world, but have proved insufficient for the most dangerous settings, such as parts of Somalia and Afghanistan (Egeland et al., 2011).

While this might paint a bleak picture for agencies operating in these most violent environments, another conclusion to be drawn from the findings is that where the state and its institutions are more effective, the role the state plays in supporting the protection of aid workers can be a critical factor.

Recent humanitarian literature and policy dialogue has sounded a strong theme that international actors must more effectively engage host states in humanitarian response. This includes improving humanitarian access as well as making the overall response more coherent, and effectively utilising local capacities (Harvey, 2009). This dialogue calls for responses to be more politically informed, taking into account

1. the capacity and willingness of the government at different levels (national and local) to protect and assist its own citizens;
2. the political relationship between the disaster-affected government and the various members of the international community; and
3. the willingness of the disaster-affected government to accept international assistance and work cooperatively with international aid actors (Harvey & Harmer 2011).

The findings from this study suggest a fourth determinant: the capacity and willingness of the government's security apparatus at different levels (national and local) to protect and assist aid workers, both national and international. Aid agencies should invest in understanding the nature of their host's capacity and will in this regard and give greater attention to developing security management plans based on these capacities or limitations regarding security support. Despite the challenges in the most dangerous settings, a localised security dialogue with authorities (and where relevant, other defacto power holders) provides the basis of a strategy within which additional forms of risk management will need to be utilised.

The broader community of nations has many indices to measure and rank its members, with various indicators of national strength or weakness, prosperity or poverty, virtue or venality. It seems that another worthwhile indicator would be the ability of humanitarian aid workers to operate safely within a nation's borders. Although any data having to do with political systems and events are inherently 'noisy' and do not lend themselves to a neat causal story, a rise in violence against aid workers could potentially be treated as one indicator of an increasingly fragile state. At the very least the aid worker murder rate should be known, tracked and consistently decried by international actors seeking peace and stability.

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NOTE ON DATA DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGY

AWSD incident data

The Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD) compiles information on major incidents of violence against aid workers worldwide, including killings, kidnappings and armed attacks that result in serious injury. All incidents are compiled from public reports, and verified or supplemented with information provided directly from relevant organisations, agencies and field-level security consortia on a regular basis.

The Database defines 'aid workers' as both international and national employees and associated personnel of non-profit aid agencies that provide material and technical assistance in humanitarian relief contexts. UN peacekeeping personnel, human rights workers, election monitors or those associated with purely political, religious, or advocacy organisations are not counted within this definition. Agencies include those solely mandated for relief functions, as well as those authorised for both relief and development operations. These are: NGOs, the International Movement of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, donor agencies and the UN agencies belonging to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO), plus IOM and UNRWA.

To calculate aid worker murder rates, the analysis used proxy population figures for aid workers present in each country on average during the years 2006–2011. These were estimated using the average total humanitarian aid flows for each country during the time period (figures from the UN Financial Tracking Service at www.fts.ocha.org) and applying an average staff-to-funding ratio for humanitarian organisations. The ratio was based on figures drawn from annual reports and financial statements for the major international humanitarian actors – the UN humanitarian agencies, the international movement of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, and the twenty largest NGOs – and encompasses national staff and staff of national partner organisations.

Conflict presence/intensity

All data on conflict intensity was obtained from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)/Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Armed Conflict Dataset. Within the parameters of this dataset, 'conflict' is defined as an episode of continuous conflict activity which results in at least 25 battle-related fatalities in a given year. Conflict activity after a year or more of inactivity is catalogued as a new episode.

Conflict intensity is coded at two levels: minor armed conflicts (1) and war (2). Minor armed conflicts are categorised as between 25 and 999 battle-related deaths in a given year, while war is defined by 1,000 or more battle-related deaths in the same period. For the purposes of this study, the scores were summed for each of the five years during the period studied, resulting in a range from 0 (no conflict during the period) to 10 (intense conflict throughout all five years).

Democracy index

The Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy ranks countries based on five broadly defined categories: electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture and civil liberties.

Governance indicators

Definitions of the governance indicators used in this study, as sourced from the Worldwide Governance Indicators project, are outlined below. Values reflect annual estimates across six areas of governance performance, ranking from -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong), and are averaged from 2006 to 2010.

- *Political stability and absence of violence or terrorism.* Reflects the perceived likelihood of government instability or collapse by unconstitutional or violent upheaval.
- *Voice and accountability.* Reflects perception of the extent to which citizens are able to participate in freedom of expression and association and selection of their government, including a free media.
- *Government effectiveness.* Reflects the quality of public and civil services, including the level of independence from political influence within these sectors, as well as the government's formulation and implementation of these policies.
- *Regulatory quality.* Reflects perceptions of the ability of government to promote and implement policies which promote private sector development.
- *Rule of law.* Reflects perceived confidence in the ability to uphold rules of society, including the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the proliferation of crime.
- *Control of corruption.* Reflects perceptions of the extent to which public power is used for private gain, including state 'capture' by elites and private interests.

In addition, the Center for Systemic Peace's State Fragility Index supplied scores for *state fragility* and *regime strength*, (<http://www.systemicpeace.org/SFI/matrix2011c.pdf>).

National homicide rates

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) tracks annual rates of homicide per 100,000 people. Here, 'homicide' is defined as unlawful death purposefully inflicted on a person by another person. Rates are calculated based on information provided from each country's criminal justice or public health system.

Caveats

In many of the least developed and most conflict-affected countries there is an absence or weakness of data, which is often a reflection of weak governance. The datasets relied on are the best available for the issues the paper is looking to address. There are weaknesses, for example in homicide rates, for which the UN-sourced data for some countries during the time period were only available for the year 2008. On balance however the datasets have improved significantly from a decade ago when the typology of failed or failings states and other governance indicators started to be developed, and for the purposes of this paper's analysis they are worthy being utilised in their current form.

Interviews and literature review

The policy analysis portion of this briefing paper focuses on host state governments and their approach to the security of aid operations within their borders. The research included semi-structured interviews with a few key officials and personnel in a range of contexts including but not limited to the countries profiled in the report, and draws on other recent security research and current literature, as referenced.

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