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Abduction and Kidnap Risk Management

EUROPEAN INTERAGENCY SECURITY FORUM

European Interagency Security Forum (EISF)

EISF is an independent network of Security Focal Points, who currently represent 90 Europe-based humanitarian NGOs operating internationally. EISF is committed to improving the security of relief operations and staff. It aims to increase safe access by humanitarian agencies to people affected by emergencies. Key to its work is the development of research and tools which promote awareness, preparedness and good practice.

EISF was created to establish a more prominent role for security risk management in international humanitarian operations. It facilitates exchange between member organisations and other bodies such as the UN, institutional donors, academic and research institutions, the private sector, and a broad range of international NGOs. EISF's vision is to become a global reference point for applied practice and collective knowledge, and key to its work is the development of practical research for security risk management in the humanitarian sector.

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Contents

Introduction

What is abduction and kidnap risk management?

Abduction has emerged as a real risk in an increasing number of contexts in which non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are operating. Therefore, building or strengthening appropriate abduction management capacity is regarded as a priority by many aid agencies implementing programmes in these areas. This guide aims to support NGOs preparing to respond in the event of a staff member (national or international) being abducted.

Most abductions involving aid workers end in the safe release of hostages. However, the risk remains that hostages may be killed by their abductors or during rescue operations, as several cases over the past years – some highly publicised – illustrate. Even the successful resolution of an abduction may have grave consequences for the impacted organisation, for example, by affecting its reputation. Abductions are the most complex and challenging type of critical incident an organisation can face. It is important to be prepared for them.

Each individual abduction case is unique and should be managed as such. It may involve a single hostage or multiple hostages with different nationalities working for different organisations. An abduction may be resolved the same day, or remain unresolved for years. It might receive intense media attention, or stay confidential and unnoticed by the public.

Despite the many important variations, some principles and practices apply to almost all abduction management scenarios. Developing relevant policy frameworks, crisis management plans and structures, and providing practical training for crisis team members enables organisations to respond more effectively to an abduction should it occur.

An abduction becomes a kidnapping once demands are made by the hostage-takers. In this guide, the term 'abduction' is used broadly to refer to the forcible capture of individuals and is used as an umbrella term to refer to situations where no demands have been made as well as kidnappings (where demands have been made).

Who should read this guide?

'Abduction and Kidnap Risk Management' is aimed at NGO staff in headquarters, regional and field offices who are likely to be involved in leading, planning and providing crisis management before, during and after an abduction.

Crisis management is a cross-cutting issue for organisations, hence a range of leaders and managers across an agency are likely to contribute to abduction and kidnap risk management. Security staff and senior managers, however, are normally those most closely involved.

About this guide

This guide is designed to provide a concise summary of key information for organisations facing the threat of a potential or actual abduction of one of their staff members or other individuals under their security responsibility, for example, consultants or volunteers (henceforth, the term 'staff members' encompasses all of these groups within this guide). Although there are notable differences between the abduction of an international and a national staff member, guidance within this document seeks to cover both scenarios and has sections that highlight some of the specific aspects to consider for both staff categories.

This guide focuses on the management of an incident and does not cover prevention or mitigation measures outside of the management of the incident itself, such as captive survival skills.

This guide does not provide a comprehensive abduction management plan but primarily discusses preparedness and the initial response to an incident. The exact response strategy required to secure the release of abducted personnel must be determined at the time, according to specific features of the abduction at hand, including the context and the specifics of the organisation. Each incident is unique; therefore, it is not possible to provide guidance and actions for every possible scenario. Common sense and a fair degree of flexibility must be applied to an abduction response and therefore also in the use of this document.

The content of this document is generic and guidance provided must be adapted to an agency's needs and circumstances. This guide may be used as a checklist. Key concepts and definitions of terms used are listed in the glossary at the end of this guide.

This guide builds on the EISF briefing papers 'Crisis Management of Critical Incidents' and 'Abduction Management'. This guide should be read in conjunction with EISF guides 'Managing the Message: Communication and Media Management in a Crisis' and 'Family First: Liaison and Support During a Crisis'.

How to use this guide

This guide is divided into the three stages of **planning and preparedness**, **incident management**, and **post-incident**. At the start of each chapter, a navigational chart highlights the section of the process that will be discussed.

Throughout the text are:

- Crucial activities and tips, indicated with 🔔
- Expert accounts, indicated with 💬
- Cross-references within the guide, indicated with ▶
- References to further resources, including those published by EISF and available at www.eisf.eu, indicated with 📖
- Please refer to the References section for details of, and links to, resources cited in the text.
- Hyperlinks are provided for easy navigation.

At the end of this guide are a number of practical tools. These are referenced in the text with the tool symbol shown below, and include the following:

✂ Tool 1: Case management information checklist

✂ Tool 2: Crisis management team – First meeting guide

✂ Tool 3: Crisis management team – Meeting agenda

✂ Tool 4: Selection of a communicator

✂ Tool 5: Guidelines for communicating with hostage-takers

✂ Tool 6: Guidelines for talking to the hostage

✂ Tool 7: Daily summary log

✂ Tool 8: Communications chart

✂ Tool 9: Case momentum checklist

✂ Tool 10: Post-release hostage debrief checklist

✂ Tool 11: Post-crisis analysis report template

The tools are also available in editable format from www.eisf.eu

Tools must be modified to suit each organisation and context.

Key definitions

Crisis is an event that significantly disrupts normal operations, has caused or is likely to cause severe distress, or has severe consequences for individuals, staff or organisations. A crisis requires extraordinary measures to restore order and normality, thus demanding immediate action from senior management.

Critical incident is an event or series of events that seriously threatens the welfare of personnel, potentially resulting in death, life-threatening injury or illness, and triggers an organisation's crisis management response. A critical incident is usually considered a crisis.

Abduction is defined as the forcible capture of one or more persons without demands. All hostage situations are considered abductions until demands are made, at which point they become kidnappings. In this guide, the term 'abduction' is used to refer to situations where no demands have been made, as well as kidnappings. The terms 'incident' and 'abduction' are used interchangeably within this guide.

Detention is where persons are held against their will by an individual or group. While there may be no intention to cause harm, there is also no clear timeline or pre-condition for their release.

Kidnap (or kidnapping) refers to the abduction of one or more persons with the intention of detaining them at an unknown location against their will until a demand for ransom or other concession is met.

Hostage-taking is where persons are forcibly held at a known location, and their safety and subsequent release is dependent on the fulfilment of certain conditions. These conditions may include publicity for a political or ideological cause, the release of prisoners, ensuring groups evade capture by the authorities or the prevention of attacks by security forces.

Hostage is a person who has been abducted and is being held against their will. The terms hostage and victim are used interchangeably within this guide. Victims are also referred to as survivors after their release.

Family includes partners, parents, siblings, and children of the hostage.

Hostage and **family** will be used in the singular form in this guide to avoid the need for hostage(s) and family/families.

Response consultant is an external advisor specialising in abduction and kidnap incidents, who can support organisations in developing and implementing an effective incident response strategy.

Hostage-takers, **kidnappers**, **abductors** or **perpetrators** can be an individual or group that abducts and holds captive individuals in an attempt to seek acquiescence to their demands, which are typically financial or political in nature. The term 'hostage-taker' is the industry norm for all types of abduction situations, even if the terminology is not strictly correct. Throughout this document, the term 'hostage-taker' is used.

Crisis management structure (CMS) is the entire framework within an organisation for dealing with a crisis. The exact structure will vary according to an organisation's composition and the availability of personnel. It will generally include a decision-making authority (DMA), a crisis management team (CMT), an incident management team (IMT), a communicator, and other crisis response support teams and individuals.

Ransom is the money demanded or paid for the release of a kidnap victim. Although a ransom is most commonly demanded in exchange for the release of a hostage, hostage-takers and the organisation can agree on a non-financial settlement instead, for example, the provision of services.

1 Abduction – a distinct type of security incident

Every type of critical incident carries its own complexities and requires a tailor-made response. In that sense, abductions are no different from other types of critical incidents. However, certain characteristics distinguish abduction as the most complex and challenging type of critical incident to manage. These are touched upon in the following section.

1.1 Characteristics

Ongoing event: In contrast to most other types of critical incidents in which crisis management deals with the consequences of an event that has already ended (for example, accidents, shootings, and robberies), an abduction is an ongoing, 'live' occurrence. Incident management must, therefore, adapt to an emerging or constantly changing situation.

Uncertainty: Abductions often entail a high level of uncertainty about the well-being of the hostage, the duration of the crisis, and its outcome. In addition, long periods of no contact with the hostage-takers are not uncommon, creating high stress levels among crisis managers, family, and co-workers.

Multiplicity of stakeholders: Stakeholders with a vested interest in the case can be numerous and diverse. They include genuine actors such as the victim's family, host government, home government, respective law enforcement agencies, media, the victim's co-workers, and local communities. However, they can also include fake kidnappers, and others trying to benefit from the situation. The list further increases if the abduction involves multiple hostages with different nationalities, thereby adding more families and home governments to the list of key stakeholders. In addition, the list of stakeholders may change during the course of the crisis, as may their motives and interests.

Involvement of key stakeholders: As abductions are crimes, governments may have legal responsibilities to intervene. Whether and how they intervene, is often dependent on the relevant legislation and whether a government has a political interest in intervening. The type of government involvement is also likely to be very different depending on whether it is perceived as a purely criminal or terrorist event.

The interests of key stakeholders can differ from that of the organisation. For example, the host government may prioritise the capture of the hostage-takers

over the safety of the hostage whereas the family of a victim might be expected to take the opposite view. Strict no-ransom policies and counter-terrorism (CT) legislation may dictate the strategy of the home government, but if the victim's family lose confidence in the organisation's ability to secure the release of the hostage, they may decide to pursue a different strategy.

Frequently reviewing the stakeholder analysis, and maximising efforts to influence the various actors to support the organisation's chosen strategy, are therefore critical.

Response: The timeliness of a response is often crucial, as the effectiveness of initial actions can exert significant influence over the outcome of an incident. Robust incident preparedness is vital. A system for the prompt notification of a potential incident, including a proactive management culture, is critical for effective incident management.

Impact of decision-making: Pressure on incident managers not to miss opportunities that may lead to the safe release of a hostage is immense. Misjudged decisions may lead to prolonged captivity and (further) harm to the hostage.

Types of kidnappings

Within the category of kidnap, there are different manifestations:

- A **standard kidnap** involves holding one or more individuals hostage until demands for a ransom or other concessions are met.

- **Express kidnaps** involve the short abduction of an individual with the intent of forcing the hostage to withdraw money from automated teller machines (ATMs). There is no communication of demands to the hostage's family. Express kidnappings are a common threat in urban areas.

- The **virtual kidnap** is a growing phenomenon, in which hostage-takers claim to have kidnapped an individual and present a demand to the family, obtaining a settlement before the supposed victim can be contacted and it is ascertained that they were not in fact kidnapped.

- In **tiger kidnaps**, hostages are taken with a demand directed at a targeted victim who is then forced to participate in a crime, often in order to enable access to a secure location, resulting in the theft of cash.

Confidentiality: Abduction management requires a high degree of confidentiality. This is referred to as the *need-to-know* concept: information that is shared on the basis of what stakeholders need to know to enable them to support the overall incident management strategy. If details of a case become public, there is an increased risk of opportunists attempting to take advantage

of the situation, or of damaging information leaks to the media. The process of establishing and maintaining relationships of trust with hostage-takers, the captive's family, and their home government may also be compromised.

The need for confidentiality may be at odds with the desire of concerned co-workers to receive information about the case.

Sharing some information with colleagues and organisations in the vicinity in a controlled manner can help to stem gossip. Rumours will spread if not kept in check.

Motives

The hostage-takers may be a criminal gang, an extremist group or a local clan/tribe, and abductions may be carried out for a variety of reasons: pure economic gain, to exact revenge either against the individual or the organisation itself, or for political or ideological reasons seeking to obtain concessions, alter policy, or to draw attention to local disputes or the group itself.

Motives may change during the period of the abduction. In some cases, the motives may be a mixture of political and economic. For example, perpetrators may seek attention for a political cause through public demands but eventually agree to a financial settlement, often unpublicised, that funds further operations of an insurgent group.

In some countries, kidnap has become professionalised as an industry, and groups with cells specialising in particular aspects of the kidnapping have been formed (for example, those skilled in surveillance, abduction, holding, negotiations, drop/release of hostage, etc.). A common strategy in high-risk countries is kidnap by a criminal element with the intent of selling hostages on to other, often politically-driven, groups.

While there are overarching similarities between all cases, each incident will have a unique combination of actors and dynamics.

The specific characteristics of an abduction incident require distinct capabilities and capacities for an effective incident response. These capabilities and capacities are covered in more detail in the following chapters as per the flow chart overleaf.

Abduction and kidnap risk management: planning and response process

PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS

PRE - INCIDENT

Crisis management plan (CMP)

Crisis management structure (CMS)

Decision-making authority (DMA)
Crisis management team (CMT)
Incident management team (IMT)
The communicator
Additional crisis support teams

Policies and procedures

Insurance
Training and practical preparation
Personnel

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

ABDUCTION INCIDENT

Initial response

First decisions and actions
Informing the family

Managing the incident

Incident management strategy
Stakeholder management
Communications management
Negotiations and scenario planning
Information management

Resolution or closure

Release
or
Unsuccessful resolution

POST-INCIDENT

Post-incident

Operations
Post-release support
After-action review

2 Planning and preparedness

PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS

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- Additional crisis support teams

Policies and procedures

- Insurance
- Training and practical preparation
- Personnel

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

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- First decisions and actions
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- or
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POST-INCIDENT

Post-incident

- Operations
- Post-release support
- After-action review

2.1. Crisis management plan

It is impossible to overstate the importance of organisational planning and preparedness for an abduction scenario. Abduction response preparedness is normally part of an organisation's crisis management plan (CMP), which outlines the crisis management structure (that is, roles and responsibilities) and the policies and procedures the organisation has put in place to prepare for and manage crisis situations.

The crisis management plan should also include the activation process and delineate the roles of the response consultant and insurance provider, if the organisation intends to engage these actors in the event of an incident.

2.1.1. Crisis management structure

The crisis management structure (CMS) is the organisational chart or organogram that outlines the roles and responsibilities associated with the management of a critical incident. It outlines the composition of the various crisis teams, responsibilities of individual crisis team members, and communication lines.

The key parts of the CMS include:

- The **decision-making authority (DMA)**, which is the most senior decision-making body within the organisation and approves the incident management strategy and key decisions, but is not normally part of the day-to-day management of the crisis.

- The **crisis management team (CMT)**, which is the core of the CMS and is led by the CMT leader. This team has the overall responsibility for the management of the crisis. The CMT is usually based at headquarters (HQ) or regional level within an organisation.

- The **incident management team (IMT)**, which is based at field level and implements the incident management strategy and decisions as instructed by the CMT.

- The **communicator**, who is an individual responsible for conveying messages between the CMT and the hostage-takers.

'Response consultants have identified poor communication between the different parts of the CMS as one of the biggest problems in crisis response. Clearly defining who has the authority for different decisions is essential. For example, relations with government stakeholders might be determined solely by the CMT, while the IMT is given financial authority to pay additional travel, subsistence costs, etc. at field level.'

The core functions of a crisis management structure are:

1. Strategic leadership and operational management to secure the release of the hostage. Among other tasks, this often involves liaising with several stakeholders (including the home government of the hostage) and negotiating with hostage-takers.

2. Providing support to the family of the hostage.

3. Managing communications, both internally and externally (for example, with the media).

Crisis management structures and terminology differ between organisations. Therefore, every organisation should determine what is most appropriate and effective for their needs.

Further information

See the EISF briefing paper 'Crisis Management of Critical Incidents' for details.

2.1.1.1. Decision-making authority

The decision-making authority (DMA) refers to the most senior decision-making body for the crisis response. This can be an individual, for example, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the organisation.

In most organisations, the DMA is not part of the day-to-day management of the crisis but ensures operational continuity and thereby enables the organisation to continue to function normally despite the crisis.

Broadly, the DMA's key responsibilities during the management of a crisis are to:

• ensure the CMT is enabled to effectively manage the incident (for example, the team has the necessary resources);

• approve the incident management strategy designed and proposed by the CMT;

• safeguard the organisation's integrity and reputation;

• ensure continuity of the organisation's general operations.

In some organisations, the DMA may also have the responsibility to formally activate the crisis management mechanism at the beginning of a crisis and to decide to deactivate it when management of the incident is deemed complete.

The DMA usually maintains regular contact with the leader of the CMT to receive updates on progress and to approve adjustments to the incident

management strategy. The DMA may also engage in external representation related to the crisis (for example, initial contact with the family, meeting senior government officials, etc.).

'Organisations should be wary of the DMA getting sucked into the day-to-day management of the crisis. This may hamper the DMA's ability to maintain the distance required from the case both to challenge the CMT, as well as to ensure business continuity.'

2.1.1.2. Crisis management team

The crisis management team (CMT) is the command centre of the crisis management. The CMT, led by the CMT leader, takes responsibility for all aspects of the crisis response. This includes:

- ensuring the safety of remaining staff in the location where the abduction occurred;

- setting up a structure tailored to the incident;

- ensuring that all necessary functions are filled in the right locations;

- ensuring that roles, responsibilities and communication lines are clearly established for all members of the crisis response structure (i.e. the CMT, IMT, and other crisis support teams);

- managing/coaching/supporting the various crisis teams (including support functions in other locations);

- developing and overseeing the implementation of the incident management strategy (including strategies on negotiations with hostage-takers, public communications, family support, etc.);

- ensuring all aspects of information management are carried out appropriately.

The CMT should be located where it can be most effective. If the abduction involves international stakeholders (i.e. in the case of international staff being abducted), locating the CMT at HQ or in a regional office would generally be preferred. Proximity to the DMA is also important.

'As communications technology improves, a growing number of organisations no longer require all members of the CMT to be in one location. This allows the organisation to establish a 'virtual CMT'. Confidence in the effectiveness of the communications equipment must be absolute if this is going to work.'

The composition of a CMT is dependent on the requirements of the abduction case and the capacity of the organisation. However, the following are core CMT functions that are required in all abduction cases:

Crisis management team functions	
CMT leader (also sometimes referred to as CMT director or CMT coordinator)	• Has overall responsibility for the management of the crisis. • Manages the CMT and leaders of other crisis teams. • Has responsibility for developing the incident management strategy, which must be signed off by the DMA. • Ensures follow-up and implementation of the approved strategy. • Seeks approval from the DMA on key strategic decisions. • Maintains regular contact with the DMA and incident management team.

Human Resources (HR)	• Develops or advises on the HR strategy.
	• Manages the HR-related functions of the crisis response, including:
	  • Family support (please note that the family support officers are not part of the CMT).
	  • HR administration.
	  • Psychosocial support for affected staff (including crisis team members).
	  • Aftercare for the hostage post-release.

Communications	• Develops or advises on the organisation's media strategy in response to the crisis.
	• Manages communications-related functions and staff, including:
	  • Media monitoring, including social media.
	  • Relations with relevant media.
	  • Preparation of external and internal communications.
	  • Management of spokesperson (please note that the spokesperson is not part of the CMT).

Note taker	• Takes notes of CMT meetings, phone calls, etc. • Compiles all crisis documentation (for example, meeting minutes, phone call recordings, memos, logbooks from other crisis teams, etc.). • Maintains overall crisis logbook, which involves logging communications, actions and decisions made.
Administration/ crisis logistics	• Responsible for CMT facilitation. • Updates and distributes crisis team contact lists. • Maintains in-house logistics (for example, crisis room, phones, computers, etc.). • Chases CMT members to maintain logbook(s). • Oversees travel arrangements for CMT members. • Oversees information management.

The number of CMT members should be limited to the functions that need to be filled. Current good practice suggests a CMT of three to five people is optimum. Depending on the complexity and pace of the crisis, the functions of note taker and admin/logistics may be combined.

Organisations may choose to seek assistance from external crisis response consultants to support the CMT. Their role, however, is not to take over the management of the crisis response but rather to advise the CMT on strategic and operational issues concerning the management of the incident. In some cases, consultants are provided by insurance companies as part of an organisation's special risks insurance policy. External consultants are normally not formal members of the CMT as their role is usually limited to providing advice. However, they may have the same access to information as the CMT members.

2.1.1.3. Incident management team

The crisis team at field level is referred to as the incident management team (IMT). It is often located in the capital city of the country or province in which the abduction occurred. However, in some contexts, this proximity to the incident location may not be feasible and the IMT will sit as close as it is determined safe to do so. The IMT reports to the CMT and implements the CMT's strategy and decisions at field level. The IMT's tasks include:

• supporting families of national staff hostages;

• supporting in-country families of international staff members affected;

• context-analysis and networking;

• maintaining relations with local stakeholders (for example, host government agencies, other aid organisations, local communities, etc.);

• contributing to tactical and strategic decision-making taken at CMT level;

• implementing media strategy at field level.

Incident management team functions	
IMT leader	• Responsible for the implementation of the CMT's strategy and decisions at field level. • Manages IMT members. • Maintains regular contact with the CMT leader. • May represent the organisation at field level.
Human Resources (HR)	• Provides family support (that is, family liaison, psychosocial support) under the direction of, and in cooperation with, the CMT HR representative (please note that the family support officers are not part of the IMT). • Responsible for HR administration at field level. • Offers support to staff affected at field level.
Communications	• Responsible for overseeing the implementation of the media strategy at field level under the direction of, and in cooperation with, the CMT communications representative. • Responsible for overseeing local media monitoring. • Distributes external and internal communications. • Manages the spokesperson at field level (please note that the spokesperson is not a member of the IMT).
Note taker	• Takes notes of IMT meetings, phone calls, etc. • Compiles all IMT crisis documentation.
Administration/ crisis logistics	• Responsible for IMT facilitation. • Maintains in-house logistics (for example, crisis room, phones, computers, etc.). • Oversees travel arrangements of IMT members. • Oversees information management.

Depending on the complexity and pace of the crisis, the functions of note taker and admin/logistics may be combined within the IMT, as within the CMT.

External assistance may also be provided at the IMT level. It may be deemed appropriate for a crisis response consultant to sit with the IMT as well as (or instead of) at the CMT level. Other external experts may also be brought in as country teams are less likely to have the breadth of expertise required to respond to an abduction incident.

2.1.1.4. The communicator

The function of communicator is unique to abduction incidents. The role of the communicator is to convey messages between the CMT and the hostage-takers (or the person tasked by the hostage-takers to act as their communicator). Distance between the CMT/IMT and the hostage-takers is crucial since this distance introduces a spatial and temporal gap that provides the time needed for analysis of the situation and internal/external consultation before responding. Employing a communicator allows the organisation to maintain this distance.

The communicator must adhere to strategic decisions made by the CMT/IMT before engaging with the hostage-takers. If an external response consultant is supporting the organisation's incident response, they can provide support and coaching to the communicator.

Although the communicator could be physically located close to the IMT, they should not be part of any of the crisis teams and should play no part in taking strategic decisions. It is important to make clear to the hostage-takers that the communicator has no decision-making authority.

> **Direct contact between the hostage-takers and CMT/IMT members should be avoided under all circumstances. Sometimes, however, this is not possible and organisations should be prepared for this scenario.**

Communicator vs negotiator

Many people refer to the person who talks to or meets with the hostage-takers as the 'negotiator'. This is generally incorrect as this person would not normally have the power to negotiate. It is safer and more sensible to use this person to communicate the wishes of the CMT/IMT to the hostage-takers. It is important to ensure that the exact role of the communicator is clear to all, including the hostage-takers.

The communicator is a key participant in the negotiation, particularly if two-way communication is conducted with the hostage-taker by telephone or face-to-face. In accordance with the need-to-know concept, it is usually appropriate to limit the communicator's knowledge of the organisation's incident management strategy to avoid extra information being shared accidentally with the hostage-takers.

This should allow the communicator to be seen by the hostage-takers as a neutral player in the negotiation, as more accessible and not dangerous.

Tool 4
Selection of a communicator

Tool 5
Guidelines for communicating with hostage-takers

Tool 6
Guidelines for talking to the hostage

The communicator must be provided with a dedicated phone and equipment for recording communications, as well as secure accommodation and access to a secure internet connection if needed. Safe storage is required for audio recordings, transcripts, recording and other equipment. No one outside the CMT/IMT should have access to this equipment or the communicator's records.

Although the organisation may identify the individual they would like to be the communicator, the hostage-takers may have a different idea. The organisation should plan for various alternative scenarios for the communicator.

2.1.1.5. Additional crisis support teams

In addition to the DMA, CMT, and IMT, it may be necessary to create additional crisis support teams or specific functions, for example, family support across various locations. These functions or teams should report to their respective managers within the CMT or IMT.

Technically-focused crisis support teams may also be established in different locations. These can include support and advice on:

• legal aspects (for example, regarding counter-terrorism legislation, duty of care, etc.);

• local culture, context analysis and/or security analysis;

- information technology (IT) and communications equipment;

- communications (internal and external);

- health (for example, if the hostage requires medical attention).

These teams are required throughout the crisis and are therefore permanent elements of the CMS.

2.1.2. Policies and procedures

A robust policy framework is important to ensure adequate organisational preparedness. Policies and procedures within the organisation should cover, or include statements on:

- the organisation's legal and moral responsibility towards staff, dependants, consultants, partners, etc.;

- insurance coverage for staff and other dependants;

- delegation of incident management responsibilities to, or cooperation with, law enforcement (both within the host and home countries);

- implications of counter-terrorism legislation and sanctions lists in case the hostage-takers belong to a proscribed group;

- the organisation's stance in relation to ransom payments;

- the use of professional external crisis response consultants;

- staff Proof of Life (PoL) information: use, content, and storage;

- social media accounts of hostages (for example, obtaining passwords and authorisation to shut them down in case staff are abducted);

- information management;

- training and practical preparedness of the members of crisis teams (each role should attend multiple trainings).

2.1.2.1. Insurance

Organisations operating in high-risk areas may carry special risks insurance (sometimes known as kidnap and ransom (K&R) insurance or crisis management insurance), which provides support in resolving an incident of kidnap or extortion. This type of insurance policy includes a confidentiality clause, stipulating that the insurance policy cannot be discussed within the organisation among staff or it will be invalidated. Thus, if an organisation has such insurance, only a few senior staff members will be aware of it.

The policy may cover the costs associated with management of the abduction, for example: travel, accommodation, additional staff, etc., as well

as insuring in case of personal injury, loss of cash in transit and business disruption. It can, if desired, provide insurance for the reimbursement of ransom payments.

This type of insurance cover may also include the provision of specialist crisis response consultants to provide guidance or advice during an actual incident.

'When selecting an insurance provider, NGOs should be mindful that sometimes specialist 'advice' from crisis response consultants can be prescriptive. NGOs should understand the relationship before a response is initiated and know what actions may make the insurance void (e.g. not taking the advice given by crisis response consultants).'

Special risks insurance cover

Special risks insurance is useful for organisations even if they have a 'no ransom' policy. Dealing with an abduction is expensive and insurance can help cover a multitude of expenses, for example:

- Travel costs and accommodation for support staff and family members.
- Additional salaries for staff who are on the crisis teams or who fill in for those working full-time on the crisis response.
- Post-incident support (for example, evacuation out of the country).

In selecting an insurance provider, consideration should be given to the following:

- Does the underwriter have a track record of prompt settlement and reimbursement?
- Is the provider appropriate, considering the organisation's principles?
- Is the external crisis consultant linked to the insurance provider specified? What right of choice does the organisation have in selecting the crisis response consultant?

Organisations should ask their insurance providers what period the insurance covers in case of an extended incident and to what value.

In selecting a special risks insurance policy, organisations should ascertain whether the cover includes:

- the intended areas of operation;
- national staff;

- consultants, visitors, and others affiliated with, though not direct employees of, the organisation;

- cash in transit;

- extortion demands;

- cost of salaries and wages of affected staff members/consultants;

- psychosocial counselling, psychotherapy and specialised medical treatments;

- additional security requirements related to the incident, such as hiring office space for the IMT, transport costs, reinforcement of protection/deterrence measures, evacuation/relocation of remaining staff, etc.;

- development of crisis management and business continuity plans;

- death, dismemberment, and injury of affected staff;

- specialist crisis response consulting and risk management services;

- ransom payments (clarifying limitations, such as anti-terror law limitations).

'Reference to a "major incident" in an insurance policy will not necessarily cover an "abduction" or "kidnap" and vice versa. It is important to pay attention to the wording of any insurance policy to ensure it mentions - or specifically excludes - the words abduction or kidnap.'

External crisis consultants can also be contracted directly, not only through an insurance company. When selecting such a consultant, an evaluation should be carried out and include the following:

- Recent/current experience in intended areas mirroring the supported organisation's exposure.

- Physical footprint in regions or countries the organisation is operating in.

- Credible team of consultants with sufficient capacity to support the client base.

- 24/7 operations or call centre for notification.

- Language and translator support.

- Successful case record.

- High level of respect within the industry.

- Ethics evaluation: what other services does the company provide and who are their clients? What is their ethical approach?

- Member of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers' Association (ICoCA), including other appropriate accreditation.

- Additional services that support response work, such as:

  - research, risk analysis, and intelligence gathering;

  - general security services including personnel security details;

  - pre-incident crisis management planning and training.

> **If a staff member carries a personal special risks insurance, tensions may arise if the strategy of the NGO is not supported by the insurance company of the individual. NGOs can avoid such situations by issuing a policy on personal special risks insurance policies.**

Ransom payments

The organisation must be clear on its position regarding the payment of ransoms. It may be relatively easy for board members to say 'no ransom' as a desktop exercise, but more difficult to comply with in reality when a life is at stake.

Organisations should also clearly understand the legislation relating to ransom payments within the home country of the organisation, the home country of the victim, and the host country where the incident takes place. Legislation or sanctions regimes in any of these jurisdictions may strictly forbid contact with, or payment of ransom to, proscribed organisations or individuals.

Restrictions differ by country and change over time. Furthermore, political considerations may affect a government's determination to enforce legislation.

To inform their decision-making, organisations should conduct a comprehensive legal and political analysis of the specific situation to clearly identify the potential risks resulting from interaction with, or payment of a ransom to, such groups or individuals.

When considering paying a ransom, organisations should note that special risks insurance providers will only reimburse an organisation after a ransom payment has been made by the organisation. Therefore, during negotiations with hostage-takers, an organisation must consider whether it has the necessary cash to pay a ransom up front.

Further information

See the 'Guide to selecting appropriate Crisis Management Insurance' by Harry Linnell.

See the EISF briefing paper 'Engaging Private Security Providers: A Guideline for Non-Governmental Organisations'.

2.1.2.2. Training and practical preparation

The following preparatory actions can enhance an organisation's capacity to effectively manage an abduction incident:

- pre-identifying staff (at HQ and in relevant field locations) suitable for crisis management (including staff who can serve as 'replacements' for core crisis team members);

- running crisis management simulation exercises at HQ, regional and country level;

- establishing contact with relevant stakeholders and interlocutors in host and home country governments, particularly in order to investigate government policies and practices in relation to abductions;

- training of staff on abduction risk mitigation strategies and captive survival skills;

- pre-identifying and preparing locations and equipment for the CMT and IMT in HQ and relevant regional or country offices.

2.1.2.3. Personnel

Crisis management team members

The selection of crisis management team members should be based on their suitability rather than their position within the organisation. Core attributes include: professionalism and decision-making skills, crisis management experience, flexibility, stress resistance, availability, confidentiality skills, and, of course, willingness to support the management of the crisis.

Pre-selection and training of potential crisis management team members can significantly contribute to effective crisis management.

The organisation should identify several staff members for each function in the crisis management teams to be able to provide cover when core crisis team members are sick, on leave or have a personal involvement with the incident or those affected. Abduction incidents may last long periods of time, be of a high intensity and result in high stress levels for staff, necessitating the replacement of the members of the crisis management teams at regular intervals. A pre-identified pool of staff should allow for rotations to occur more effectively.

Rotation should also be planned for support functions, such as family support officers.

National staff

National staff members play key roles in crisis management. During incidents of abduction, national staff may be instrumental in:

• feeding into analysis and strategy;

• identifying credible sources of information and strong local networks;

• maintaining links with local communities and stakeholders after the evacuation of international staff teams;

• providing continuity in situations of high turnover of international staff;

• acting as communicators with the hostage-takers;

• participating in the release phase of the hostage (for example, as drivers).

Therefore, key national staff should be involved in crisis management and abduction scenario training and preparation at field level.

It is important to remember that as well as being more exposed to threats by hostage-takers, national staff members are far more vulnerable to the enforcement of national law. This additional risk to national staff is something to consider if the crisis management should, for example, entail activities such as negotiating with proscribed groups or the use of unlicensed communications equipment.

For this reason, the degree of national staff involvement in the management of the incident should be explicitly discussed and agreed in advance, both organisationally and with individual staff members.

▶ *See section '3.2.1.1. Abduction of national staff members'.*

3 Incident management

PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS

PRE - INCIDENT

Crisis management plan (CMP)

Decision-making authority (DMA)
Crisis management team (CMT)
Incident management team (IMT)
The communicator
Additional crisis support teams

Crisis management structure (CMS)

Policies and procedures

Insurance
Training and practical preparation
Personnel

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

ABDUCTION INCIDENT

Initial response

First decisions and actions
Informing the family

Managing the incident

Incident management strategy
Stakeholder management
Communications management
Negotiations and scenario planning
Information management

Resolution or closure

Release
or
Unsuccessful resolution

POST-INCIDENT

Post-incident

Operations
Post-release support
After-action review

An abduction response can broadly be divided into four phases, as follows. These will be discussed in the following chapter in more depth.

Initial response	The first few hours after the reporting of a suspected abduction, when the crisis management mechanism is activated, and the initial and most urgent decisions and steps are taken.
Managing the incident	This phase covers the development and implementation of an incident management strategy.
Resolution or closure	The phase when either (1) the hostage is released, (2) the abduction ends in an unsuccessful resolution, or (3) a decision is made to terminate the organisation's efforts to seek a resolution.
Post-incident	The period after the abduction is deemed 'resolved' or 'closed' and during which all relevant steps are taken to close the incident and hand over pending issues to relevant departments in the organisation.

3.1. Initial response

A fast and effective response can mitigate the impact of an abduction incident and increase the odds that resolution opportunities will be seized. The initial response is the first period after the beginning of an incident. During this phase, the most important and urgent steps are taken. However, the initial response has no clearly defined end as this will vary from case to case.

3.1.1. First decisions and actions

The first decision that usually needs to be taken is whether and when to treat the incident as an abduction. This is not in question when there is clear evidence that an abduction took place (for example, if there were direct witnesses), but may become an issue when a person is missing and an abduction is only one of several possible scenarios.

Whether and when to call an occurrence of a missing person a suspected abduction will mostly depend on the level of abduction risk in the context: the higher the risk of abduction, the sooner a missing person situation may be treated as a suspected abduction. Therefore, vigilance in monitoring staff

movements and prompt reporting of any unusual absences are critical steps for the early identification of a potential abduction and the timely activation of the crisis management plan.

> **It is easier to stand down a crisis management structure when a person turns up unharmed than to try to catch up once an abduction is confirmed.**

Upon notification of a suspected abduction, the following actions should take place:

- Clarify incident details with the source of information (separate facts from assumptions). See 'Tool 1: Case management information checklist' for a summary of key information that should be collected as soon as an abduction is suspected.

- Identify whether any immediate steps must be taken to secure remaining personnel and take these actions immediately.

- Notify management of the potential abduction incident.

- Establish the crisis management structure.

- Alert the insurance company and/or external crisis response consultant(s) as per organisational policy.

- Contain the spread of information: instruct staff and request external actors aware of the abduction not to spread information about it.

- Allocate dedicated phone numbers to allow for communications between the key actors (for example, the communicator, CMT members, IMT members, etc.) and install recording devices where possible.

- If the country director or head of mission is part of the IMT, delegate their responsibilities to another senior staff member to ensure operational continuity, thereby allowing this senior decision-maker to focus on the crisis management.

- Inform the family.
  ▶ *See section '3.1.2. Informing the family' below.*

- Prepare potential recipients (for example, family members, field staff, etc.) to receive the first contact from the hostage-taker. Preparations for this first contact include instructions to guide the hostage-taker to the dedicated communicator.

- Identify and prepare the communicator.

- Start log books to record decisions made and actions taken.

- Begin monitoring the media for information related to the incident and prepare a holding/reactive statement.

- Consider options to shut down the hostage's social media accounts.

Several other steps need to be taken or considered in the first hours and days of an abduction incident; however, the urgency of taking these steps is dependent on the specific case. As the first hours of an abduction case can be hectic, ensure that the right priorities are set:

- Decide whether to continue or suspend programme activities in the region or country. Consider staff safety, the impact the suspension/continuation of activities will have on the abduction case, and management capacity (that is, if key senior staff are allocated to the IMT).

- Consider which stakeholders need to be informed of the incident and to what level of detail. While some of them will have to be informed about the incident (for example, authorities and embassies), this may not have to be done immediately. Actors to consider include:

    - national and international staff in the location;

    - staff elsewhere in the organisation;

    - authorities in-country and elsewhere;

    - relevant embassies;

    - international or national NGOs operating in the vicinity, and others such as the United Nations (UN) and the Red Cross;

    - local partner organisations;

    - communities affected by the disruption of programming.

- If/when the news about the incident spreads locally, it is likely that many actors will contact the organisation for details. Requests for information should be directed to a dedicated spokesperson who can respond with a prepared statement - for example, 'We confirm there has been an incident but cannot share further details at this stage.'

- There are many costs associated with an abduction, aside from ransom payments, and therefore the organisation should ensure that enough money is transferred to the country in a timely manner, and that authority is given to country office staff to spend it appropriately. Many high-risk locations require several weeks for money to reach the country because of due diligence regulations.

Further information

See the EISF guide 'Managing the Message: Communication and media management in a security crisis'.

3.1.2. Informing the family

In many abduction cases, the family of the hostage is a central stakeholder. Thus, it is important to establish a strong relationship with the family. The first contact – giving the bad news – is key in that process.

The family of a hostage should hear from the organisation first if possible.

It can be difficult to determine the best moment to inform the family that their loved one has been abducted or is suspected to have been abducted. If the incident is still treated as a suspected abduction, and may turn out to be a false alarm, one will want to avoid presenting the family with such shocking news in the middle of the night, only to have to inform them the next morning that their family member simply had a late night out. In addition, it may be deemed more appropriate to wait until staff can travel to meet the family face-to-face, rather than giving the news over the phone.

While both are valid concerns, the most important principle is that the family should receive the news from the organisation first, and not through the media or other sources. Finding out from the organisation helps to create confidence and trust in the organisation's ability to manage the abduction effectively – a pre-requisite for building a strong relationship with the family.

Therefore, consider contacting the family even before an incident is confirmed and the facts fully known (a face-to-face meeting should be arranged as soon as possible as well).

By having a senior staff member make the first phone call, and join the first face-to-face meeting, the organisation can demonstrate its commitment to fulfilling its duty of care responsibilities and that it is giving the case attention at a senior management level.

Ideally, a Family Support Officer (FSO) is identified immediately and participates in the first meeting with the family. After the initial contact, all communication with the family should be channelled through the FSO.

Other considerations when planning for the first contact with the family are:

1. The language spoken by the family, and

2. The family situation (for example, if the family is 'fractured' and contact needs to be established with several family members in multiple locations).

When employing international staff of different nationalities, it is important to find out what their home country authorities will do in the event that they

are abducted; for example, there may be trained local police family liaison officers equipped to inform the family.

▶ *See section '3.2.2.1. Family support' for further guidance.*

Further information
....

See the EISF guide 'Family First: Liaison and support during a crisis'.

3.2. Managing the incident
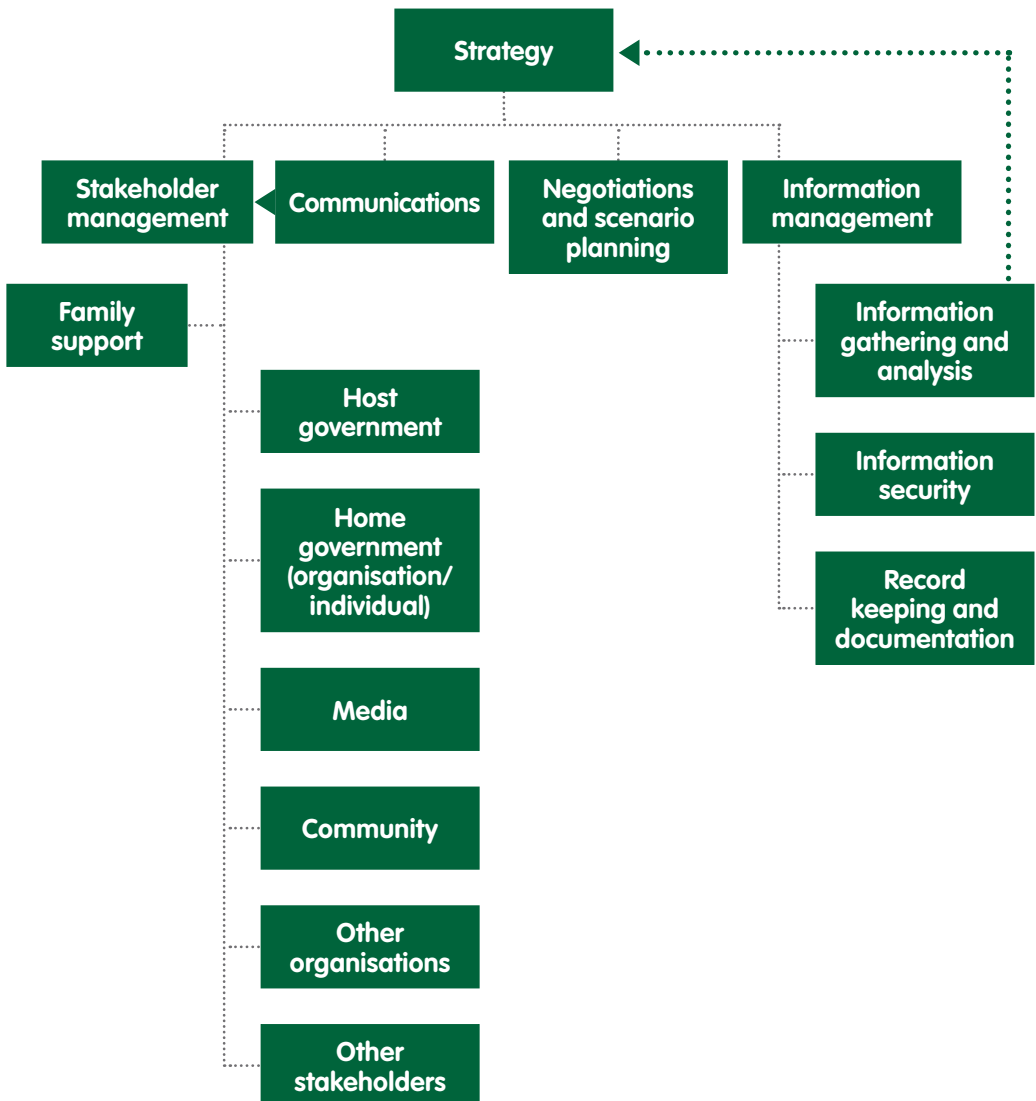
3.2.1. Incident management strategy

All aspects of abduction management – liaising with stakeholders, hostage negotiations, communications – are interlinked. The incident management strategy, developed by the CMT, determines the organisation's approach to the abduction, ensuring these various elements reinforce each other.

Each case of abduction is unique and the list of variables is considerable. The known or suspected identity, motives and demands of hostage-takers, the number and nationality of hostages, the organisation's footprint and profile in the country, and whether multiple organisations are affected, are but a few of the factors that have an impact on the case. Therefore, incident management strategies should be case-dependent and may be altered during the course of an abduction as the context and/or the situational analysis evolves.

'It is imperative to avoid the scenario of different stakeholders following different strategies, each opening independent channels of communication with the hostage-takers. Gaining support for the chosen strategy from all relevant stakeholders is therefore essential. This can be a challenge, however, as other key stakeholders – governments and the family – may decide to develop their own strategies. The more governments and families that are involved (for example, in multi-hostage incidents) and the longer the crisis remains unresolved, the larger the challenge to keep these stakeholders "on board" with the organisation's strategy.'

Every strategy will be based on certain assumptions and bear risks. The incident management strategy should consider all applicable legal frameworks and jurisdictions, which will differ by country and may change over time. These include legal obligations towards the hostage (for example, applicable labour law and duty of care), insurance terms, and legal restrictions related to: (1) paying ransoms, (2) communicating with the hostage-takers, and (3) counter-terrorism financing laws and sanctions regimes.

Advice from legal counsel and relevant law enforcement agencies may help to ensure better understanding and assessment of the risks and grey areas that various incident management strategies may entail. Law enforcement agencies may also request or demand to debrief the victim, as well as obtain copies of case documentation and other evidence as part of any investigation they may conduct.

In any incident response, it is always important to consider any actions that may increase the 'value' of the hostage and thus make negotiation more difficult. This is a particular concern in the event national staff have been abducted.

> **Real-time reviews could be considered when appropriate to help effective planning and to ensure organisational learning during the management of the incident. However, it is important to ensure that the real-time review avoids assigning blame to members of the CMS, given the need to ensure the continued positive morale of the team members during the crisis management.**

Tool 9

Case momentum checklist

As an abduction is a dynamic situation, gathering and analysing new information is a continuous process. Updates of the stakeholder analysis, and reviews of, and adaptations to, the incident management strategy thus need to be made regularly.

3.2.1.1. Abduction of national staff members

Management of national staff abductions is often limited to the country of operation, as most stakeholders (for example, government, national media, and family) will likely be in-country. Thus, it may be appropriate to move most incident management capacities to field level, although organisations may continue to have a CMT at HQ level.

When only national staff members have been abducted, the organisation will need to analyse the situation carefully, as the abduction may not be directly connected to the hostage's affiliation with the organisation. While this may also be the case for abductions of international staff, this is more likely to be the case for national staff. A key aspect to consider when defining an incident management strategy for the abduction of a national staff member is how prominent organisational involvement should be. Consideration should be given to the following:

- First, particularly in countries with a high prevalence of kidnappings, local resolution mechanisms (for example, mediation by local leaders) may already be established and tested, and are therefore more likely to be successful.

- Second, if the abduction is not related to the hostage's employment within the organisation, the visible engagement of an NGO can result in higher demands from the hostage-takers. Thus, instead of leading the crisis management, agencies may opt to remain in the background, supporting efforts by other actors with advice and possibly other resources. A significant implication of this strategy is that while an agency may be, or may feel, fully responsible for the resolution of an abduction, it may not be able to fully control and exclusively direct the crisis response.

It is advisable to discuss these potential organisational responses with staff (both national and international) in high-risk countries beforehand.

3.2.2. Stakeholder management

3.2.2.1. Family support

Providing adequate support to the family, and establishing and maintaining good relations with family members during what may be the most stressful period in their lives, requires significant resources and expertise. For that reason, EISF has published a separate guide 'Family First: Liaison and support during a crisis' that provides detailed information about the role of the Family Support Officer (FSO). To avoid duplication, this chapter is kept brief and only touches on some key aspects of family support.

The purpose of the FSO is to act as the go-between connecting the CMT and the family, to build trust between the family and the organisation, and to provide practical support to the family during and after the crisis. Effective support for the family is not only part of an organisation's duty of care, but also aims to instil trust and confidence in the organisation's crisis management, and thereby reduce the likelihood that the family will stop supporting the organisation's incident management strategy.

The FSO is key in building a relationship of trust, but the effectiveness of the FSO is also dependent on the CMT (and IMT for national staff and those with family in-country). In terms of sharing information about the case with the family it is important to remember the following:

- The family has a legitimate right to know information about the abduction of their family member. The CMT needs to have good justification for withholding certain types of information.

- Stick to facts and avoid speculation.

- Never lie or knowingly misinform.

- Ensure that questions and requests from the family are responded to in a timely and appropriate manner.

The family may have very little understanding about the organisation, its work, and the country where the abduction occurred. Introducing the family to the organisation, including meeting senior management and visits to HQ or the country office (if the family is based in-country), may also help build trust and confidence.

The FSO is a challenging role, as it has the dual function of representing the organisation to the family, and representing the family to the CMT. The FSO role can also be highly stressful and somewhat lonely as the position is not part of a team. Therefore, organisations need to ensure adequate support for, and regular rotation of, the FSO.

It is important to minimise the risk of misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the information shared by the CMT through the FSO. Not all family members

will always be present during a meeting or phone call with the FSO. Given the immense stress of an abduction situation, family members may also forget parts of the information shared with them, potentially leading to confusion and irritation. Asking the family to appoint one focal person to communicate with the FSO may help to maintain clear communication lines. Families that are not always united, sometimes referred to as 'fractured' families, may require multiple focal points.

Although the responsibility for informing the family of international staff is normally carried out through the CMT at HQ, in cases where the abducted staff member's partner is based locally, FSO capacity will also be required at a country level.

The frequency of contact between a family and the FSO is dependent on the wishes of the family, as well as the course the abduction incident takes. However, the first phase of an abduction is usually when contact with the family is very intense. Predictability is important. A regular schedule for updates should be agreed upon as soon as possible and adhered to even if there is 'nothing to report'.

In multi-hostage situations (or in 'fractured' families), it is important to ensure that all families receive the same information simultaneously to avoid perceptions of favouritism or withholding of information. In addition, organisations should facilitate contact between families of the various hostages.

The family will not necessarily have the confidence that the organisation is in the best position to secure the release of the hostage. In fact, the family may blame the organisation for not having prevented the abduction in the first place, and consider other options to get their loved ones back safely. They have the right to do so, and the organisation cannot stop the family from taking action that the organisation does not consider as supportive of its strategy. It is not always possible to keep the family on board with the organisation's strategy, but families should be provided with the knowledge and analysis that allows them to make informed decisions, thereby ensuring they are conscious of the potential impact of their choices.

'Families that have been informed by their loved ones that they were heading into a context with a high abduction risk, and were supportive of this decision, are possibly more confident in the organisation's incident management capacity.'

The organisation should offer the family psychosocial support from the start of the case. Access to these services should be at the family's discretion and they should remain available throughout the abduction and following its conclusion. Hostage UK offers support services to the families of hostages wherever they are based. Its sister organisation, Hostage US, was established in 2016 to

support families based in the Americas. Where appropriate, families should be made aware of these services at an early stage of the response.

Further information

See the EISF 'Family First' guide and also Hostage UK's 'A Family's Guide to Coping During a Kidnapping'.

See http://hostageuk.org/ and https://hostageus.org/ for more information and resources.

3.2.2.2. Liaison with the host government

While the host government (i.e. the country where the abduction occurred) has formal responsibility in terms of engaging law enforcement in the event of an abduction case, key factors determining its level of involvement include infrastructure and enforcement capacity, domestic political considerations, and the degree of political pressure exerted at an international level (for example, by the United Nations, national government of a hostage, or organisation employing the hostage). The response is also likely to be different depending on whether it is a national or international staff member taken.

Host governments can be a valuable source of information, support, and advice but their objectives can differ from those of the organisation involved (that is, the safe release of the hostage). This may lead to a lack of support for, or even hindrance of, organisational efforts. Host governments may:

- show greater interest in capturing hostage-takers, thereby deterring future abductions, but possibly interrupting an ongoing negotiation;

- wish to be perceived as remaining in control of law and order;

- distrust an organisation's crisis management capacity, seeing it as a challenge to the host government's own institutions;

- resent the fact that an organisation 'allowed' an abduction to occur in the first place;

- wish to prevent organisations from interacting with groups labelled as 'terrorists' or 'rebels' for political reasons;

- impose legislation prohibiting contact with hostage-takers;

- use the abduction for political purposes, potentially leading to certain elements of the government having an interest in either a quick resolution or the prolonging of the incident.

In extreme cases, certain elements of the authorities may be involved in the abduction.

In high risk countries, examine the host government's historical role in, and reaction to, previous abduction cases, current legislation and policies, and where applicable, establish contact with relevant authorities and law enforcement agencies in advance. Also, be aware of local criminal law when determining the response strategy.

'During an abduction in a Southeast Asian country, the main task of the Country Director was to stop the host government military undertaking a 'rescue' mission. At the time, far more hostages were killed by government rescue attempts than by hostage-takers.'

3.2.2.3. Liaison with the home government of the hostage

Policies and practices regarding the abduction of citizens abroad differ by country. The response of the home government can be shaped by the following factors:

- national law, stipulating a government's legal responsibilities towards its citizens abroad;

- counter-terrorism (CT) legislation and policies;

- strategic political interests in the host country or region;

- capacity and resources near to where the abduction occurred;

- the degree of confidence in the organisation's ability to manage the abduction case;

- the wishes of the family;

- domestic political considerations.

As recent abduction outcomes in the Middle East and the Sahel indicate, some governments, including the United States and the United Kingdom, follow strict no-ransom policies in cases where the suspected hostage-takers are proscribed groups identified by respective CT legislation and/or sanction regimes. Other governments are reported to have applied a more flexible approach in the same contexts. In contexts that are not affected by CT legislation, and of less strategic geopolitical importance, governments may decide to take a passive approach, providing support to the organisation and the family upon request. It is advisable that organisations thoroughly investigate their legal responsibilities and risks in relation to CT and criminal legislation.

The home government can also play other important roles during and after an abduction:

- It can exert political pressure on the host government or other actors to use their influence to help resolve the case.

- It can provide strategic or technical support, and share information and analysis.

- It can offer family support where organisations have no presence in the country.

- Its relationship with the family can be important as both actors have leverage to influence each other: the government may influence the family in their decision on whether to continue to support the organisation's strategy; and the family may be able to lever the government through local media and/or their local political representative.

- It can support organisations to manage the media, and can facilitate engagement with social media providers to shut down accounts.

- Law enforcement agencies may also open investigations against the hostage-takers for having committed a crime against one of their citizens.

Establishing a trusting relationship with a home government can help the organisation navigate legal 'grey' areas during an abduction. This approach is advisable also for the governments of the countries where the organisation is registered (if these differ from that of the hostage's home country), given that registration means that an organisation is required to adhere to that country's legislature.

It is important to also consider the above points in relation to the organisation's home government. However, a government is generally only interested in the welfare of its own citizens, and the amount of support available from an organisation's home government is likely to be limited if none of its citizens are involved.

3.2.2.4. Liaison with other organisations

While each organisation has its own individual mission and mandate, careful cooperation with other organisations, including the United Nations and local civil society, in the same location, country or region can possibly assist in the resolution of an abduction and help prevent other organisations from experiencing similar incidents.

> **Actions taken during an incident might affect other organisations during the abduction or following resolution.**

While certain details of an abduction may be kept confidential, information sharing with other organisations can help to develop additional contacts, analysis, and resources for the resolution of the incident at hand. Sharing some information can also help contain rumours. Collaboration will likely add

resources for monitoring and analysis of the broader situational environment during the incident and can help identify useful expertise, including host government contacts. However, always remember that every action has a reaction, and consider the consequences of sharing information or asking for support.

Also note that the UN has a political mandate and must cooperate with the host government: this should be considered when seeking information or support from the UN.

3.2.2.5. Insurance providers and crisis response consultants

In the event of a suspected abduction, organisations should inform their insurance providers and, if they have them, crisis response consultants as soon as possible, and not wait for confirmation of the abduction before doing so.

> **Not all organisations carry special risks insurance as they prefer to remain independent in their abduction response.**

External crisis response consultants generally advise clients in the active management of kidnap and ransom cases. These advisors tend to have military, intelligence and/or law enforcement backgrounds and guide a CMT through all phases of an incident, providing experience and foresight to present a response plan that may lead to a successful resolution of the case. Crisis response consultants may also be made available to support the IMT. It is important to understand what is required and covered by the insurance policy before an incident occurs. If a consultant is to be deployed, it is important to remember that there will a time lag before the consultant is in position, particularly if they will be based at field level. Therefore, the CMT and IMT must be prepared to act immediately and not wait for the consultant before initiating the response.

Consultants provide organisational and personal expertise on effective crisis management, including:

• continued focus on the safe and timely release of the hostage;

• presentation of options highlighting advantages and disadvantages with recommendations for implementation;

• presentation of strategies and a clear, robust and logical response plan;

• selection, training, coaching, and scripting for the communicator;

- anticipation of the sequence that negotiations will follow, identifying pitfalls and means of managing these;

- counter-measures to pressure tactics, threats, coercion and other strategies used by hostage-takers;

- family support and media strategy.

It is important to note that some crisis response consultants may not be familiar with the local context, the organisation's work and standing among local communities and authorities, the concept of negotiated humanitarian access, and various forms of leverage the organisation may have over the hostage-takers.

Tool 1

Case management information checklist

As noted earlier, an organisation must try to maintain effective control during an incident. The consultant is an active advisor, detailing options and possible outcomes so that the organisation can make informed decisions and retain control of the situation.

See 'Tool 1: Case management information checklist' for an example list of questions a crisis response consultant is likely to ask in the event of a suspected abduction.

Other consultants who may be utilised during a crisis response for technical support include:

- a communications expert dealing with media during an abduction;

- media and social media monitoring in various languages;

- a legal advisor;

- a psychologist;

- an expert to cover as IMT leader. If the country director or head of mission is the IMT leader, then a consultant can be brought in to cover for the country director/head of mission to ensure operational continuity.

These consultants should be identified beforehand in order to support a timely crisis response.

3.2.2.6. Other stakeholders

The list of other – potentially important – stakeholders is long. It includes the communities benefitting from the organisation's programme(s), tribal or administrative authorities, armed opposition groups, political parties, business owners, etc. Identifying which group, entity or individual may have a stake in the case, and what that group's or person's interest may be, is essential to maintaining a comprehensive overview and analysis of the incident.

'One of the most time-consuming and difficult things to do is acknowledge the interest and concern of stakeholders who approach the organisation in times of crisis. The organisation may turn people away in order to prioritise resources and not waste time, but it is difficult to know who may be useful in the future.'

Within the sector itself, there are a number of charities that may be able to offer support in certain aspects of the incident management, for example, support to the families of the victims, such as Hostage UK and Hostage US. Home country police authorities are also a good resource for contacting counselling professionals. Network organisations (for example, the EISF network) may also be able to provide advice and support.

3.2.3. Communications management

Communications management is a central task in abduction management given the multiplicity of stakeholders, the need for confidentiality, and the potential risks created when information released is not in line with the overall incident management strategy.

All abduction-related communications with internal and external stakeholders should be directed by the CMT. The CMT determines what the organisation communicates to whom, in what form, and at what time. However, if the CMT decides to delegate any of these decisions to other levels within the CMS (for example, the IMT), this should be made clear.

3.2.3.1. Confidentiality

Abduction cases require a high degree of confidentiality for several reasons. The 'need-to-know concept' refers to sharing of information on the basis of what is best for the overall strategy (which is focused on the release of the hostage), rather than what stakeholders think they should, or have the right to know. The one exception to the need-to-know policy is the family.

▶ *See section '3.2.2.1. Family support'.*

Keeping the identity of the hostage and details of the case confidential will:

- limit the risks of fake kidnappers, or other actors trying to scam the organisation, from making 'credible' claims;

- contribute to protecting the family from unwanted attention, including from the media;

- contribute to generating a relationship with the hostage-takers;

- contribute to protecting sources and intermediaries;

- enhance the odds that the hostage's identity will also remain confidential after release, thereby avoiding unwanted attention post-incident;

- minimise the risk of raising the 'value' of the hostage in negotiations.

It is impossible to control all information flow and to guarantee 100% confidentiality. However, by thoroughly briefing and explaining the reasons for the need for confidentiality to relevant stakeholders, the unwanted spread of information can be contained and minimised.

'An organisation managed to keep the name of an abduction victim confidential, even within the organisation, by explaining to the staff in the country mission and others who were close to the hostage why it was important to maintain confidentiality.'

3.2.3.2. Crisis communications team

The communications team established to support the CMT, called the crisis communications team (CCT) in some organisations, has several responsibilities:

- Development and implementation of the media strategy (which is part of the overall incident management strategy).

- Preparation and drafting of communications for dissemination (for example, internal updates, statements to the media, and reactive lines).

- Dissemination of information as directed by the CMT leader.

- Media-monitoring and response to media reports (including social media) according to the media strategy.

- Identifying an internal and external spokesperson who can provide a buffer function for the CMT.

While the CCT is generally located at HQ, consideration should be given to local language media in the country of the incident and the home country of the hostage, if this is different. This will allow the organisation to monitor local news and social media for crisis management purposes, as well as to respond to enquiries from traditional media sources.

3.2.3.3. Internal information sharing

Information provided to non-CMT/IMT members such as the Family Support Officer, media spokesperson and communicator should be limited to briefing

documents that cover the specific information required for their roles. This approach minimises the individual's need to conceal information and guards against inadvertent disclosure.

'Some organisations apply the need-to-know concept also to the crisis team members, particularly if the team is composed of more than four or five people. Beyond general meetings in which basic information is shared, individual team members are briefed on details relevant to their respective functions. Other organisations prefer a less strict application of this rule to facilitate team-dynamics and to optimise input of team members on strategy-making.'

Within the organisation, different groups may be identified that have different privileges to information (for example, close co-workers and friends versus staff within the wider organisation).

A point of concern is the inherent tension between the need for strict confidentiality and demand for information within the organisation. Understandably, concern for the hostage among colleagues is high, resulting in constant requests for updates. However, in adherence with the need-to-know concept, the information that can be shared with them is usually very limited. In addition, there may be long periods during which no new information can be shared. Both factors can cause frustration and even lead to a lack of trust in the CMT. To mitigate these risks, it is important to explain to staff the reasons for the need for confidentiality and to provide regular updates. Even if the update does not contain any new information, it is better to share that there is no news than not to share anything.

Whenever information is shared, it should include clear instructions on what the recipients should and should not do with the information, for example, they can discuss it with their colleagues but must not share it with anybody outside of the organisation (including their families).

'We have a strict firewall approach with an inner and outer team and information does not go outside the inner team unless an explicit decision is made for it to be shared, e.g. to involve legal advisors or to tell families something.'

Avoiding a vacuum

An organisation operating in Syria chose not to disclose any information within or outside of the organisation after a staff member was kidnapped. This information blackout resulted in the spread of rumours. Those outside the crisis management team did not know what was true and the case was much discussed. A couple of months later, another kidnapping occurred. The organisation chose to disclose specific core details to the sector (who, when and where) and organisations were asked not to share this information further. In this instance, little speculation occurred and no rumours were spread. There was much less discussion and greater credibility in the crisis management capacity of the organisation involved.

Within an organisation and the sector, there will be information that an abduction has taken place, particularly as other organisations may be involved in the information gathering and analysis phases. Although most organisations would instinctually choose to institute an information blackout in the event of an incident, this can sometimes result in greater speculation, rumours, and discussion relating to the abduction. Ultimately, all information-sharing decisions must be based on what is best for the management of the incident.

3.2.3.4. The press

While the abduction of national staff is rarely considered newsworthy in international media (or even in national media if abductions are commonplace in the country or region), the abduction of an international staff member will almost certainly attract media attention. The level of interest from the press is dependent on the context, the nationality of the hostage, the hostage-takers' objectives regarding media attention, and actual media access to information about the incident.

Because of the need for confidentiality, a strategy that minimises public attention on the case should be applied. In recent abduction cases, organisations have managed to convince media outlets to refrain from reporting on the incidents in the interests of the hostages.

As the incident progresses, most organisations adopt a passive media strategy due to the risks associated with publicising details of an incident. Publicly accessible information may attract opportunists and other individuals seeking a stake in the case (i.e. fake kidnappers).

Press statements

Press statements should not include anything that might allude, even indirectly, to operational matters, such as the following:

- nationality or other personal characteristics of the hostage;

- details about negotiations;

- identity or location of the communicator;

- presence or role of any specialist consultants;

- liaison with military or law enforcement;

- details of existing security procedures;

- location or future movement of the hostage's family;

- details on CMS members;

- photographs, except for carefully vetted images of the victim.

Families may be particularly vulnerable to media pressure. Thus, a comprehensive briefing for families should be conducted during the early stages of an abduction and cover the organisation's chosen media strategy and communications line, as well as information on the methods used by some journalists to gain access to information (for example, posing as intermediaries or old friends of the hostage).

It should be noted, however, that the media may also offer opportunities for resolution of the abduction, and may actually be part of the incident management strategy. Journalists, particularly those locally based, may be able to assist with networking on the ground and provide useful information to the organisation through their contacts.

The media can also serve as a vital tool in cases where public pressure is considered part of the most appropriate strategy, for example, by using news stories to pressure political actors to apply their leverage on other stakeholders that can assist in the safe release of the hostage.

3.2.3.5. Social media

> **A strong incident response communications strategy considers the speed at which information can travel over social media.**

Media intrusion when it comes to the families and hostages can be intense in some cases and may be facilitated by any social media activity by the victim's family, friends, or co-workers.

Social networking sites belonging to the hostage or their family (such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) should be shut down as soon as possible. This decreases the chances of the hostage-takers learning details that might damage the hostage's reputation with their captors or place them at greater risk of abuse, for example, if the hostage has a military background.

However, shutting down social media accounts is difficult without the right permissions. Organisations may choose to encourage staff to have strong privacy settings or include a reference to social media access control in the organisation's Proof of Life form that staff complete. Sometimes, a letter from the family can assist the organisation in getting social media sites to close the hostage's account. Home governments may also have contacts within social media companies and be able to apply pressure to have the accounts shut down.

National and international media, including blogs and social media, should be constantly monitored and relevant posts followed up according to the media strategy. External consultants should be engaged if no internal capacity is available to undertake this work.

Furthermore, hostage-takers may be screening the organisation's websites, annual reports and any other media reports about the organisation as well. Often, they aim to find out how much money is invested and spent by an organisation in a country and this information can influence the initial demand made, particularly if a ransom is demanded in exchange for the release of the hostage.

Further information

For more detailed guidance on communication and media management in a security crisis, see the EISF guide 'Managing the Message'.

3.2.4. Negotiation and scenario planning

All scenarios for the resolution of an abduction should be considered from the earliest stages of an incident. These scenarios should be reviewed frequently as the crisis evolves. Although most abductions are resolved successfully (that is, with the safe release of the hostage), all potential scenarios, including partial success and worst cases (for example, injury, death or no information), must be taken into consideration. Scenario planning should also include logistics and administrative support needs.

The organisation has no control over when and how the hostage-taker may make contact (although the hostage-taker can be encouraged to establish contact, for example, by the organisation putting out a message via its

networks that contact would be welcomed). In some contexts, it is relatively common that the hostage-taker makes contact within hours or days after the abduction; in other contexts, weeks or months may pass before the first contact is made.

The essential elements of a strategy (framed by the relevant organisational policies) need to be put in place before negotiations begin. The initial strategy will likely be based on several assumptions. The CMT needs to conduct frequent reviews and adjustments of the strategy as the case and the analysis evolve.

Some of the considerations for developing a strategy include:

- History and outcome of previous abductions in the region.

- Profile of the hostage-taker, including information on motive, level of professionalism, readiness for long negotiation process, etc.

- Organisational leverage in the location where the abduction occurred, that is, depth and strength of the organisation's network, contact with key power-players, as well as operational volume and leverage.

- Profile and resilience of the hostage (including any medical conditions).

- Anticipated involvement of other actors, including local law enforcement and home governments of the hostage and organisation.

- The legal environment. For example, do sanctions regimes and counter-terrorism legislation apply?

- Organisational willingness to negotiate. Negotiations are based on the assumption that an agreement – a settlement that both sides can accept – is possible. Hence, when the organisation agrees to enter negotiations with the hostage-taker, it is signalling that it is ready to make concessions in return for the safe release of the hostage.

- Using other actors as a front for negotiations (e.g. the family or local community).

3.2.4.1. Negotiation

Hostage negotiation is a skill. It requires experience, expertise, and persistence to analyse the actions of the hostage-takers, judge when to resist, delay, and when to make a counter-offer, how to identify bluffs, how to respond to threats and deadlines, and how to identify the right moment to make an agreement. If an organisation does not possess those skills, it is advisable to seek professional support.

Conducting negotiations in a professional manner not only maximises the opportunities to come to the best possible settlement, but is also important

to demonstrate the credibility of the organisation and gain the trust of the hostage-taker. This is an area where an external crisis response consultant can be particularly useful in providing guidance to the CMT.

Conceding to non-financial or financial demands will be subject to organisational policy and the organisation's ability to meet the demands made. This will require a decision on whether to:

- negotiate a financial settlement in response to a financial demand made by the hostage-taker, known as a ransom;

- negotiate for a financial settlement in case the hostage-takers make non-financial demands, which the organisation may not be able or willing to provide;

- negotiate for non-financial settlement to replace financial demands;

- appear willing but unable to concede due to governmental, legal or other restrictions;

- refuse to comply with any demands other than those that fit the organisation's policy;

- comply with non-financial demands where possible, or negotiate a non-financial demand down to an acceptable level of concession;

- use the organisation's operational and political leverage to influence the local community or authorities to pressure the hostage-takers to release the victim, for example, to threaten to withdraw humanitarian or development services in the hope that relevant local leaders exert pressure over the hostage-taker.

Another potentially important factor is the interest of the home government of the hostage. The government may attempt to take over or interfere with the negotiations or pressure the organisation to make (or not make) certain concessions. The level of involvement will vary considerably between home governments, and when there are multiple nationalities involved this can become complex. The organisation may also be excluded from inter-governmental discussions in these cases.

If the organisation is able to influence the hostage-takers, communication with them should be routed through the designated communicator who is prepared for the contact with a script detailing key points. If the hostage-takers choose a different communicator, that person needs to be prepared for future contact.

When negotiating with hostage-takers, the following steps should be followed:

- In the initial stages of an incident, it is important not to immediately concede to the first demand. Confrontation is inevitable, and it would be better that

it occurs early and according to an agreed response plan that establishes and maintains the CMT's negotiating credibility.

- A request for Proof of Life (POL) should be made before negotiations for release commence. This is to confirm that the victim is alive and that the party claiming possession of the hostage does, in fact, hold them. A proof of life request should be placed during every contact with the hostage-taker, but organisations may choose to deviate from this rule, for example, if there are multiple contacts in quick succession.

- The demand should be evaluated by the CMT before developing a negotiation strategy.

- No negotiation, whether financial or non-financial, should begin until the CMT has agreed on a policy and developed a strategy that includes the target settlement figure (TSF) from which the initial offer (IO) will be developed.

- The IO does not necessarily have to be a financial offer nor does the final settlement have to be financial. For example, organisations may decide to offer goods or particular services to a community the hostage-takers are suspected to have links to. The IO should only be communicated to hostage-takers following confirmation of an acceptable POL.

Negotiation aims: These need to be identified at the outset. The safe and timely return of the hostage must remain paramount, with consideration being made to also minimise further risk to the organisation and its personnel. Note that each decision taken by the organisation may have an impact on other organisations operating in the same space.

Degree of resistance: An immediate concession to demands will usually increase risks rather than minimise them. Resistance is essential. Immediate acquiescence and payment of the initial demand may result in the immediate release of the victim. However, should that occur, the organisation may be seen as an easy target and further kidnappings are more likely. If immediate release does not occur, and further demands are made, the organisation will have to resist at some point. It is better to do so at the outset and establish a negotiating credibility, rather than later, under greater pressure and from a greatly weakened negotiating position.

> **A reputable and experienced kidnap response consultant will explain and recommend the initial offer, the target settlement figure, and the anticipated steps to be taken to reach the target settlement figure, agreement and release of the hostage.**

Financial criteria: In the event that the organisation's policy and other external factors would allow and recommend a ransom payment, the following should be considered in developing a negotiation strategy:

- *Maximum settlement:* Is there a financial limit that the organisation will not exceed in payment of a ransom?

- *Target settlement figure (TSF):* What precisely is the organisation's target settlement figure? This figure should be decided before an initial offer is made, both figures being determined following receipt of a demand. Although this is generally used to refer to a financial figure, it can also be used to refer to non-financial concessions.

- *Initial offer (IO):* How much should the organisation offer initially? It should be adequate to preserve life but not high enough to raise expectations.

- *Currency:* Will the organisation be able to raise the ransom in local currency only or, if required, in hard currency? Are there any legal limitations or other considerations to take into account? Are the necessary funds available within the organisation's country account? If not, what are the limitations to bring certain amounts of cash into the country?

- *Final agreement:* Ensure that all parties of the negotiation process are clear about the final agreed amount to avoid any additional demands after the handover.
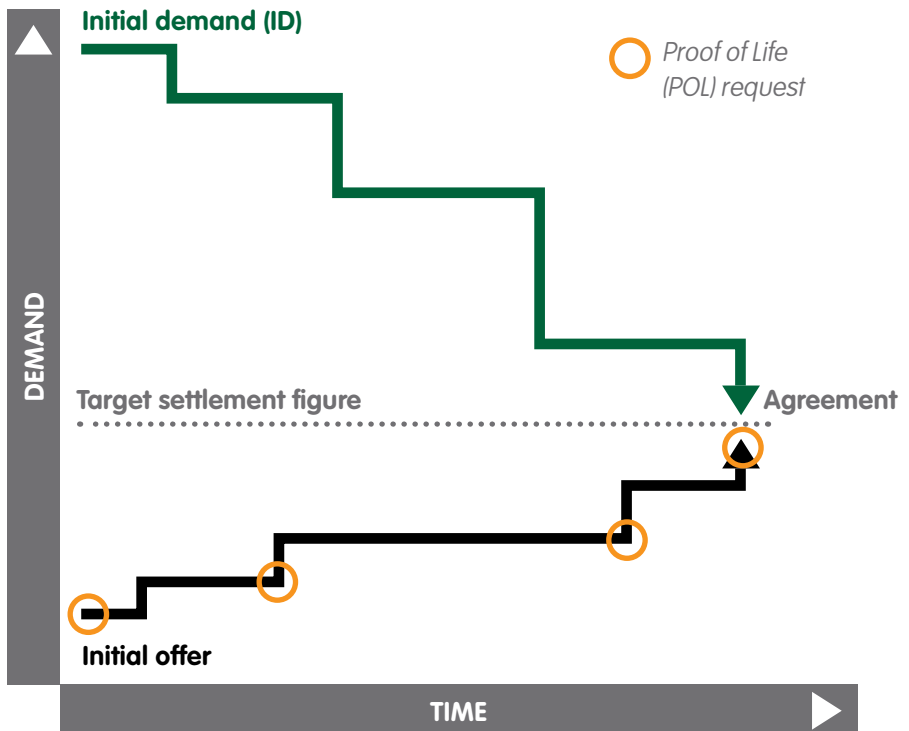
Political demands: In the event that political demands are made by the hostage-takers, such as the release of prisoners or the publication of manifestos, it is unlikely the organisation will be able to concede to or influence the meeting of such demands. The organisation should consider what it might be able to offer instead and how to manage the situation when demands are targeted at a government rather than the organisation. It is important to understand the modalities of the different host and home countries.

The authorities: Organisations should consider the extent of liaison with law enforcement agencies of the home and/or host government during negotiations – including after the abduction. If governments choose not to be proactive, liaison with authorities should be a deliberate act made at the highest possible level following full consideration of the relevant legal frameworks, alternatives, and operational risks.

Liaison with host and home authorities should consider the following:

- Law enforcement agencies need to be assessed for reliability and their track record in previous abduction cases. Once agreed, a discreet meeting should be arranged with law enforcement. Presence of legal representation should be considered.

- Establishing who has the authority to negotiate and agree concessions is key, and needs to be explicitly agreed on to avoid duplicate communications and negotiation tracks.

- Guidance can be sought and could include the handling of evidence and negotiation details (for example, duration, possible concessions, and the size of the ransom if a financial settlement is sought).

- Discuss the legal implications of certain actions, especially in high terrorism risk contexts, and whether authorities intend to bring legal proceedings against the hostage-takers. It is important to discuss these possible governmental strategies from the outset in order to clarify organisational limitations in terms of negotiating with hostage-takers and providing concessions in exchange for the release of abducted staff.

3.2.4.2. Intermediaries

A stakeholder analysis should reveal a list of potential intermediaries: that is, third parties who can potentially act as mediators between the organisation and the hostage-taker, or can otherwise assist in the resolution of the case. These may include local authorities, traditional community and religious figures, business leaders and armed groups operating in the country or area of operation where the abduction took place. Decisions about who should be approached for assistance and who can be trusted should be based on a thorough analysis of potential motives, values, and risks.

However, negotiations involving intermediaries should be avoided if possible. Experience shows that involvement of intermediaries cannot be fully controlled and they may negotiate based on their own interests. Nevertheless, they are crucial for the facilitation of contact, the handover of goods such as food, medication, phones, etc.

> Organisations and family members need to be conscious of the risk of being contacted by individuals or groups claiming to have links to the incident but who may actually not be willing or able to assist in resolving the case and are only establishing contact to serve their own interests.
>
> Fake kidnappers may call and claim they hold the hostage (thus the importance of the Proof of Life (POL) to confirm the caller actually holds the hostage). Some people may claim to have 'important information' and offer to sell it. Other individuals may offer their services to mediate or contact the hostage-takers for a fee (which is likely to be requested in advance).
>
> Filtering out the genuine offers and claims from the fake ones can be difficult and time-consuming. Again, maintaining confidentiality about the case and its details helps to reduce the likelihood of receiving fake claims.

Test intermediaries before trusting them.

Legislation in some countries prohibits intermediaries from receiving payment and/or requires prior authorisation from law enforcement for their use. The potential use of intermediaries should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

If an intermediary is used, a full debrief should take place as soon as possible following contact with the hostage-takers. This debrief should be recorded, then summarised in detail and assessed fully by the CMT/IMT.

3.2.4.3. Proof of life

There are different ways of establishing Proof of Life (POL). The most straightforward is the answering of POL questions, which only the hostage would be able to answer. Videos of the hostage, telephone contact or a combination can also serve as Proof of Life.

Proof of Life is essential and should be insisted upon at certain stages of a negotiation:

• **Upon initial contact:** POL should be sought as early as possible but should be used wisely. Some organisations may choose not to request a POL during the first contact to demonstrate trust in the hostage-takers (this will need to be weighed against the risk of dealing with fake hostage-takers). In general, the

reply to a POL question through the hostage-takers is the instrument to use in the first talks. It raises the hostage's morale and confirms that the CMT is dealing with the true hostage-takers.

- **Crucial moments:** POL should be requested after long silences, expiration of deadlines, following direct death threats and prior to final settlement. It signals to the hostage-takers the importance of keeping the hostage in good health. Consider that videos or audio messages should include information to authenticate the date.

- **Tactical requests:** POL may be demanded to create a delay, stress the need to keep the hostage safe and boost the morale of the hostage.

- **Prior to settlement or payment:** This in order to confirm the hostage is alive.

Proof of Life questions

Proof of Life questions need to meet several requirements. A POL request should be carefully crafted to ensure the request does not contain information that is indicative of great wealth, offensive to the hostage-takers or which relates to the hostage's personal profile and may negatively affect the hostage-takers' perception/treatment of the victim. They should also be impossible for (fake) hostage-takers to find out through a web-search of the hostage or in casual conversation with the hostage.

Many organisations maintain confidential personal data sheets that include specific POL questions for all staff travelling to high-risk areas. Ensure that personal data sheets with POL questions are sealed in an envelope and kept in a safe place, but also accessible outside normal office hours. Some organisations have switched to electronic storage of POLs.

Types of POL that may be provided:

- replies to questions put by the CMT to the hostage, who alone knows the answers;

Tool 1

Case management information checklist

- letter from the hostage on dated material (for example, a newspaper or a magazine);

- letter or audio/visual recording of the hostage referencing a date-specific event or developments;

- photo of the hostage with dated material;

- two-way conversation with the hostage, via mobile phone, internet or radio.

Asking staff for POL when heading into contexts where abduction is a genuine possibility helps to solidify the reality of the situation and may be used as part of the informed consent process. It can also encourage staff to discuss the possibility of abduction with family members prior to an incident. It is often considered good practice to ask family members for POL questions to keep them involved in the process; however, time can distort memories and people may have different recollections of the past, for example, what the name of their first pet was.

3.2.5. Information management

The management of information is one of the most critical aspects of abduction management. In most cases, maintaining confidentiality about the incident and its details is in the best interest of the hostage.

Need-to-know policy

Even though complete control of information flow may not be possible, the CMT should aim to restrict access to information regarding the incident based on the need-to-know concept. This means that all stakeholders will only receive as much information as is required for them to fulfil their functions in accordance with the incident management strategy. The exception to this policy is the family, who have a right to more information. The level of detail to be shared with the family should be discussed at the beginning of an abduction.

Total control of information flow is impossible in most cases, as various stakeholders (for example, the hostage-takers or families) may choose to disclose information about the case within the public sphere. Nonetheless, guaranteeing the maximum confidentiality that circumstances allow is imperative. This can be achieved by:

- ensuring that decision-making on information sharing (what, when, who and with whom) is the exclusive responsibility of the CMT;

- establishing good relations with all relevant stakeholders to maximise the organisation's influence on the information they share;

- utilising secure modes of communication for voice interactions as well as transfer and storage of data;

- sharing information strictly on a 'need to know' basis while still aiming to minimise the risk of rumours filling a vacuum.

'Managed information dissemination can actually reduce "chatter".'

The sharing of some information may be important, for example, to warn other actors operating in the same area of the incident to minimise the possibility of

recurrence. It will not be possible to keep the fact of the incident secret and if no information is shared, rumours and gossip will abound as actors try and ascertain the risks the incident poses to them. However, most actors in this category (for example, international NGO country managers or colleagues of the hostage) should understand the importance of limiting information spread.

> **During the early stages of an abduction there will be pressure on the IMT to gather information and determine the facts, but every person asked for information becomes a source of information to outsiders on the incident. Therefore, a clear strategy is required to balance the need for gathering information and information dissemination in terms of 'need to know'.**

Processing information and record keeping

Abduction management creates a lot of information. Processing, analysis, and record-keeping of this information is key to effective crisis management; it allows for effective incident analysis and learning, and can potentially be necessary for legal reasons.

The CMT should aim to:

- Establish a confidential incident log upon notification of an incident and keep it current throughout all developments and at all levels (both CMT and IMT). This daily log should record all relevant events, including decisions made as they occur and why they were made, with the date and time of the occurrence or notification of occurrence.

- Record all telephone communications. If recording is not possible then document the contents.

- Retain all written and electronic communications (originals should be photocopied and then stored without further handling).

- Store all written information and incident material under lock and key in one location with access limited to a designated custodian.

- Ensure all electronic data (for example, logbooks, minutes of meetings and situational analyses) is password-protected and stored only in a limited number of hard drives or other designated locations.

- Ensure that all known personal information relating to the victim (particularly information related to their personal profile, such as disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, etc.) is only shared on a need to know basis and treated with the utmost confidentiality.

- Maintain all case materials following resolution of the case to support organisational learning as well as evidence for law enforcement purposes.

Effective case management should include a communications chart summarising each contact with the hostage-takers. Each contact should be recorded, translated (when necessary), transcribed and analysed. Any materials received from hostage-takers should be protected in original form as evidence in case it is needed for future use, with duplicates made to be used as working copies.

A record of decisions made (including why and when they were taken) should be included in the daily log. At the end of a case, it may be difficult to remember exactly what information was available when specific decisions were made and why those decisions were made at that moment in time. This information is essential for effective lesson learning after the incident as well as for justification to external bodies if required.

▶ *See section '3.2.3. Communications management'.*

3.2.6. Legal considerations

Throughout the abduction management, legal advice should be sought for all actions and decisions that may have legal implications, for example, in relation to meeting an organisation's duty of care to the victim and their family.

However, legal considerations should not take place only once an abduction or kidnap has occurred but begin before the deployment of international staff and/or the recruitment of national staff. Assuming that a duty of care is owed from the outset provides a good starting point for legal considerations. Such a starting point may begin with ensuring any insurance cover provided is adequate for dealing with an abduction or kidnap incident.

▶ *See section '2.1.2.1. Insurance'.*

Payment of ransom money is an area an organisation must ensure it receives specific legal advice on as soon as a ransom payment is mentioned.

In the tragic event that an individual dies during an abduction, the family of the individual may decide to bring a claim for any sort of negligence against the organisation if they believe it was responsible in some way.

Any form of claim against an organisation for negligence, whether by a bereaved family or the victim upon release, will focus on several areas. Such areas would include, but not be limited to:

- An organisation's risk assessments of the area where the hostage was abducted and the adequacy of the risk assessment process.

- Whether training delivered to staff was relevant and commensurate to the threat of abduction.

- The organisation's procedures for dealing with an abduction and whether or not they were adequate.

- Appropriate insurance cover that would permit the most reasonable response and offer the most reasonable chance of the hostage's release.

The organisation would be expected to provide a full and detailed breakdown of what it did and why during any abduction incident.

Lastly, a key issue that organisations should consider throughout the abduction management, and seek legal advice on, is whether or not to pursue justice against the hostage-takers (should it be possible to identify them) at the conclusion of the incident and any related decisions. It is best if an organisation automatically decides to pursue legal justice at the outset of an incident, even if the organisation later decides not to pursue it. This ensures that the organisation's crisis response procedures during an abduction incident automatically take account of evidence-gathering and information management that would support any future legal action, thereby allowing the organisation to seek legal justice if it later decides it wishes to do so.

Further information

See the EISF paper 'Duty of Care: A review of the Dennis v Norwegian Refugee Council ruling and its implications'.

3.3. Resolution or closure

3.3.1. Release

Effective negotiation with hostage-takers can result in the release of a hostage. In some cases, however, rescue attempts may be the reason for the release of victims. Due to the high risk that rescue attempts can pose to the hostage, however, these are usually not considered a viable option by organisations and would only be considered as a last resort and if it was felt that the hostage's life were in imminent danger.

Organisations must consider (and plan for) the possibility that governments or other interested parties may decide to initiate a rescue attempt of their own accord (if this is the case it is unlikely the organisation will be notified of or have any role in the decision-making process). The CMT must seek legal advice and

decide its position with regards to any rescue attempts, whether initiated by the organisation itself or by a third party independently of the organisation.

Most organisations, however, focus their CMT's energy on negotiating for the unharmed release of the hostage, usually in exchange for a concession.

3.3.1.1. Unharmed negotiated release and/or exchange

The delivery of a physical concession (for example, a ransom) is difficult and can be dangerous, as it often involves significant risks for the person delivering the concession. It is also a significant risk for the hostage-takers in terms of exposure, and therefore this will heighten the tension surrounding the delivery of a concession in exchange for the release of the hostage. This can be mitigated if the exchange is facilitated by a mediator trusted by both sides.

Hostage-takers will try to dictate the time, location, and process of the exchange – normally involving the handover of the concession before the release of the hostage. However, as the exchange entails significant risk, the CMT should try to negotiate the terms of the exchange. For example, the CMT may consider including the exchange details as a part of the final negotiation of the settlement. The person handing over the concession and/or receiving the hostage during the release process needs to be properly briefed and accept the risks involved.

The handover can last several hours as the hostage-takers may choose to lead the concession carrier to different locations before the final handover takes place. The hostage-takers may also decide to release the hostage at a location far away from where the concession is handed over.

When planning the release procedure, organisations should try to request the following from the hostage-takers:

- to minimise attracting attention upon release, please ensure the victim is clean and suitably dressed;

- hand over the hostage to a neutral third party if possible;

- give the hostage a telephone and money for a taxi if they are not being released to a trusted third party;

- inform the hostage of the exact location of their release;

- give the hostage clear verbal and written instructions on how to contact the communicator.

Although the exact time and location of release may not be predictable, the CMT can often confirm a release plan with the hostage-takers once an initial agreement has been reached.

Prior to reaching an agreement, the CMT should ensure that arrangements for release include:

• a driver and escort for the collection vehicle;

• secure accommodation pending further movement, for example, an intermediary safe house where the victim will not be known to casual observers;

• a 'gate-keeper', i.e. a person – ideally known to, and trusted by, the victim – who looks after the victim's needs and ensures their privacy;

• a phone and family contact details to ensure the victim can call their family upon release;

• clothes for the victim along with personal hygiene items;

• an initial medical examination by a physician;

• issuance of new travel documents for the victim (if necessary);

• an evacuation plan for international victims. In most cases, organisations arrange for the victim to leave the country as soon as possible to avoid interrogation by host government authorities;

• a relocation plan for national staff (if required);

• additional necessary arrangements, from release to evacuation/relocation, that consider the victim's personal profile, for example, adjustments to transportation plans to support victims who may have limited mobility;

• the informing of stakeholders of release as deemed necessary (for example, staff, authorities, media, etc.);

• an operational debrief of the released hostage. This should occur soon after the release as the victim may quickly forget important details of the captivity. This debrief should focus on facts and is not an emotional debrief. Consider the personal profile of the victim when making arrangements for the debrief.

If an interview or interrogation of the released hostage by the host government cannot be avoided, organisations should aim to negotiate the location and length of the interview, and request to have another person present during the interview.

3.3.1.2. Release of harmed hostages

Victims may be released after having been harmed. The source of harm could be the hostage-takers themselves, ill health (disease or a pre-existing medical condition), or the result of rescue operations.

If the hostage is harmed, ensure that necessary measures are in place for treatment:

- Ensure that medical first aid is available after the victim is released. Consider procuring any additional medication needed, for example if the victim is known to have a medical condition and may not have received treatment while in captivity.

- Ensure that the victim's family is informed immediately and family support is provided.

- Ensure that potential medical evacuation procedures are available at short notice.

3.3.2. Unsuccessful resolution

Although rare, the unsuccessful resolution of an incident requires due consideration and planning. The potential scenarios include:

- Confirmed death, where the body has been recovered.

- Notification of death with no body recovered.

- Case unresolved, i.e. no contact from the hostage-takers and/or no proof of life.

3.3.2.1. Confirmed death

In case of death of the hostage, significant counselling and support may be required for family members as well as staff involved in managing the crisis. Other issues and challenges to deal with may include:

- Facilitating the recovery and possible repatriation of the remains. For international staff, home government embassies may be able and willing to support repatriation and offer other assistance.

- Undertaking funeral arrangements.

- Coordinating with the different authorities regarding the death certificate, autopsy, and inquests.

- Dealing with various administrative issues such as insurance claims and payments, pension benefits, etc.

- Depending on the national legislation and policy of the home and/or host country, authorities may carry out a criminal investigation in the event of a death.

It is important to ensure that the organisation also provides psychosocial support to colleagues and staff if necessary. Colleagues may experience strong feelings of grief and may want to express their condolences. A room

and a condolence book in the field office and headquarters should be prepared, and the condolences shared with the victim's family.

3.3.2.2. Notification of death

It may be the case that reports of the hostage's death are received via the media, from other sources, or is assumed as a result of photographs or video footage obtained. However, death cannot be confirmed if the body cannot be recovered or found in order to be formally identified. In such situations, the family may or may not wish to accept the reports. If the primary next of kin does not accept these, then death certificates, memorials and insurance claims cannot be carried out.

Further implications of this scenario are that insurance companies may not accept such notifications since the official confirmation of death may be missing. Support may be provided by home country officials who might be able to make an official cross-check of any footage that has been released to ascertain credibility. Home authorities should also be able to provide an official statement about the high likelihood of death, which can be used for insurance and any other official purposes.

The notification of death is characterised by a close accompaniment of the family by psychologists and family support officers.

3.3.2.3. Unresolved case

An unresolved case, that is, where there has been no proof of life or no contact with the hostage-takers for a long period of time, constitutes the most difficult outcome as uncertainty lingers for all parties. Once a decision to formally terminate the incident management mechanism has been taken, an organisation should appoint a case manager to act as a long-term point of contact for the family and other actors. The organisation may choose to implement an annual remembrance day or ceremony to remember the missing colleague.

Further information

See the Hostage UK webpage 'Preparing for the worst' for more information.

3.4. Post-incident

PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS		

PRE - INCIDENT

Crisis management plan (CMP)

Crisis management structure (CMS)
- Decision-making authority (DMA)
- Crisis management team (CMT)
- Incident management team (IMT)
- The communicator
- Additional crisis support teams

Policies and procedures
- Insurance
- Training and practical preparation
- Personnel

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT		

ABDUCTION INCIDENT

Initial response
- First decisions and actions
- Informing the family

Managing the incident
- Incident management strategy
- Stakeholder management
- Communications management
- Negotiations and scenario planning
- Information management

Resolution or closure
- Release
- or
- Unsuccessful resolution

POST-INCIDENT

Post-incident
- Operations
- Post-release support
- After-action review

'Once an incident is over, staff of the organisation will think about how the organisation reacted and responded to the abduction. This will be a critical time for the organisation to maintain the trust of its workforce and the ongoing commitment of its staff to the organisation.'

The end of an abduction may halt the immediate crisis, but several actions and decisions must be taken in the immediate aftermath of the resolution or closure of the incident.

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                        ┌──────────────────┐
                        │  Post-incident   │
                        └──────────────────┘
              ┌──────────────────┼──────────────────┐
     ┌────────────────┐  ┌────────────────┐  ┌────────────────┐
     │   Operations   │  │  Post-release  │  │  After-action  │
     │                │  │    support     │  │     review     │
     └────────────────┘  └────────────────┘  └────────────────┘
     ┌────────────────┐  ┌────────────────┐
     │  Post-release  │  │  Psychosocial  │
     │    debrief     │  │    support     │
     └────────────────┘  └────────────────┘
     ┌────────────────┐  ┌────────────────┐
     │  Deactivation  │  │  Aftercare and │
     │    of CMS      │  │ reintegration  │
     └────────────────┘  └────────────────┘
     ┌────────────────┐
     │ Final incident │
     │    report      │
     └────────────────┘
     ┌────────────────┐
     │Filing of records│
     │ and documents  │
     └────────────────┘
```
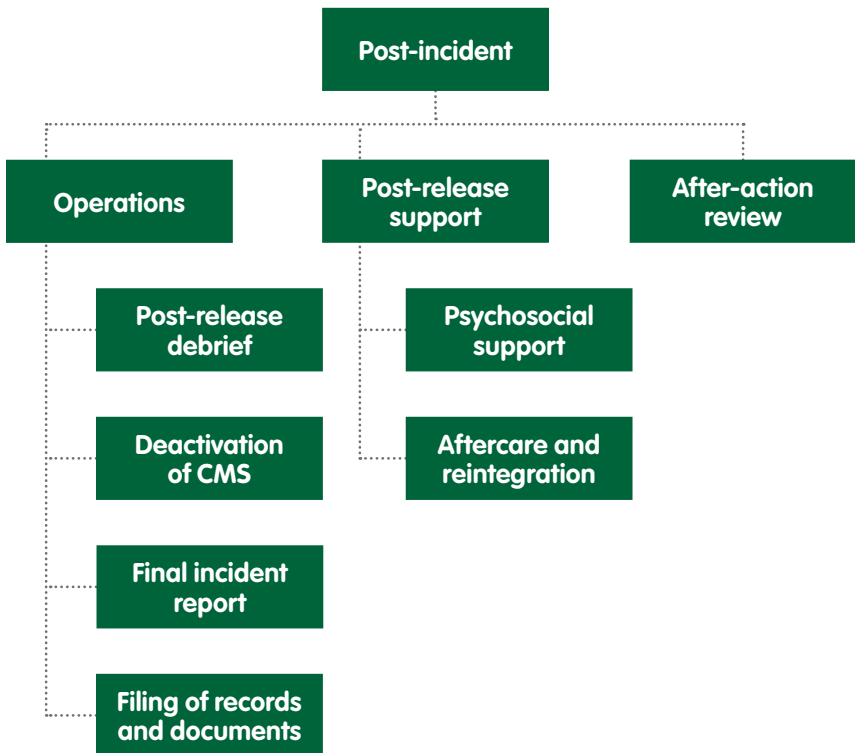
3.4.1. Operations

Immediately following the resolution or closure of an abduction incident, the organisation needs to:

• follow up with authorities in the host and home countries. The level of engagement and sharing of information will depend on the interest of the authorities in the case, the legal framework, and the organisation's interest in involving the authorities;

• assess likely sources of media attention, the intensity of this attention, and agree on an appropriate communications strategy;

• express its appreciation to the stakeholders who assisted during the crisis;

- offer crisis team members time off to recuperate;

- take decisions regarding the future of the organisation's programme(s) in the area. The abduction will likely impact the organisation's risk analysis, which should be reviewed after the analysis of the abduction case is completed. As this process may take some time, communities, authorities, partners and staff should be informed of the decision-making process, as well as the scope or suspension of programming in the meantime;

- consider the role of the donors, both in terms of an authority with an interest in the case and for ongoing operations.

3.4.1.1. Post-release debrief

Depending on the circumstances, there may be several debriefs involving the victim (should the resolution be successful), and different crisis response team members.

The victim should receive the following debriefs:

- **Operational debrief(s)**. This should be the first one to occur as soon as possible after the release in the field, if possible, and should focus on the events and factual details of the abduction;

- **Psychosocial debrief**, which must be conducted by professional counsellors/psychologists.

> **The victim should not be debriefed more than is necessary and never to cover the same information already ascertained in a previous debriefing. Debriefs should consider the personal profile of the victim and be adjusted to meet the victim's needs. Personal information relating to an individual's profile (e.g. their sexual orientation or gender identity) may come to light during a debrief and this information must be kept strictly confidential. The physical and psychological well-being of the victim must be prioritised at all times.**

Tool 10

Post-release hostage debrief checklist

The host and home country authorities may request to debrief the released person as well. In such an event, the organisation must consider the willingness of the released person to attend such a debriefing, and the legal considerations, as well as potential operational implications in the country where the abduction occurred.

Crisis response team members should also receive operational debriefs. These individuals may also require psychosocial debriefs due to the mental strain they might have experienced as members of the crisis management response structure.

3.4.1.2. Deactivation of the CMS

After the repatriation/relocation and debriefing of the victim, the filing of the crisis management documentation, and the response to the immediate aftermath of the resolution, management can formally deactivate the crisis management structure. Responsibilities for pending issues should be handed over to the relevant individuals and departments in the organisation. These may include:

• Aftercare for the victim – Human Resources

• Legal and insurance issues – Legal department and/or Human Resources

• Operational follow-up and programming in the country where the incident occurred – Programmes department

It may be several years after an abduction before all its elements are finally closed. Legal proceedings, in particular, can last for a long time. Under these circumstances, a CMT may continue to be active, although the members of this CMT are likely to be different from those originally assigned to the case.

3.4.1.3. Final incident report

Organisations may choose to distribute a post-incident report (including versions with different levels of detail) to internal and external stakeholders. This reporting may be a requirement for some organisations, for example, if an organisation is based in the UK it may be obligated to report to The UK Charity Commission.

Distribution of post-incident reporting will vary by organisation but should at a minimum be shared with key members of the CMS as well as with legal, human resources, and security representatives. Information may also be shared with other key stakeholders such as partner organisations and others with an identified exposure to the risk of abduction similar to that of the affected organisation.

Tool 11

Post-crisis
analysis report
template

Survivors of an incident should also be given the opportunity to review the post-incident report, but the organisation may choose not to share certain information (for example, the identity of sources who may be at risk if their involvement in the case is leaked).

'One of the key drivers for Steve Dennis to sue the Norwegian Refugee Council after his kidnapping was a lack of access to information after the incident. Organisations may not be responsible for the initial incident, but they are fully responsible for the way victims are treated post-incident, including giving victims the information they need to understand what happened and to evidence that lessons have been learnt from the incident.'

3.4.1.4. Filing of records and documents

All data and documents related to an incident should be securely stored. These records should be reviewed by a designated representative and be catalogued for retention in a secure archive. Legal advice should be obtained to determine compliance with any applicable statutory record-keeping requirements in the host and home countries.

Further information

See the EISF paper 'Duty of Care: A review of the Dennis v Norwegian Refugee Council ruling and its implications'.

3.4.2. Post-release support

Post-release support must include the post-release debriefs of the victim, medical and psychosocial support for those affected by the incident, as well as support to allow the victim to reintegrate into the workplace. Furthermore, a 'phasing out' plan needs to be developed with the family, including possible psychosocial support and information on how to deal with the media.

If the identity of the victim has remained confidential throughout the incident, confidentiality needs to be maintained unless the victim chooses otherwise.

It is important to recognise that future incidents may reignite media interest. Therefore, affected staff may need to continue to receive support at these times (for example, when the victim is from a relatively small country, they may be contacted if there is another incident involving a humanitarian of the same nationality).

3.4.2.1. Psychosocial support

Individualised psychosocial support should be offered to all stakeholders involved in or affected by the incident; the survivor and family members primarily, but also members of the CMS, including the communicator. Support should also be considered for staff directly affected by the incident but not part of the CMS, for example, country-level colleagues.

Accessing this support is at the discretion of the individual and it should not be forced upon them. Nevertheless, a clear mechanism should be defined for later care should the individual feel the need for psychosocial support at a later date (this may be several months or even years after the incident).

The degree of support required by the victim will vary according to the individual and their experience during captivity.

3.4.2.2. Aftercare and reintegration into the workplace

Survivors react differently after their release. Some may want those around them to act in a normal manner, providing them with an opportunity to reintegrate into their previous lifestyles.

If a survivor chooses to return to their previous role, the timing for their return to work will vary by individual. Some may wish to start immediately while others may seek time to recuperate. The organisation may decide it is not in the best interest of the individual (or organisation) for there to be an immediate return to the same role, despite the desire of the individual to do so. This will need to be managed sympathetically and alternative roles identified.

Other survivors may choose not to return to work and the organisation should be prepared to provide information about retirement options, redundancy packages and/or ongoing support if the survivor requests these.

Further information

Please consult the Hostage UK 'A Life After Captivity: Reintegration guide' for useful information on how to support the reintegration of survivors into the workplace.

3.4.3. After-action review

Following the resolution of an incident, the affected organisation should seek to capture accurately what occurred. This is often referred to as an after-action review.

An after-action review is an internal exercise mainly focussed on learning. Although it can include accountability elements, it should not become an exercise to assign blame. The timing should consider freshness of memories but also the tiredness and emotions of the crisis response team members. The after-action review is usually kept as a confidential document and shared only with a select group of staff members.

The after-action review should focus on determining what happened, why it happened, what decisions were made, why they were made, and their consequences. It should consider how a similar incident would be managed in the future, building on lessons learnt throughout the management of the incident.

The after-action review should include a 'lessons learnt' session that would include all key participants. The victim can be included if this is deemed appropriate and is possible. This session should be an open and frank discussion, focussing on the actions taken and results obtained. Special attention should be given to the following:

• Why did the abduction happen?

• What supported the occurrence of the incident?

• What was expected to occur during the crisis management?

• Was the chosen strategy effective?

• What actually happened?

• How effective was the decision-making process?

• What went well and why; what should be repeated in the future?

• What training implications can be derived from the review?

• What are the main successes?

• What are the shortcomings and how can these be improved?

• What are the immediate actionable requirements?

Information obtained from the debriefing of the victim should be used to increase the organisation's overall knowledge, and should improve the organisation's ability to manage future incidents.

This process should conclude with the development of a summary report and implementation of recommendations and improvements.

Learning must be applied.

4

Tools

Available to download and
edit from **www.eisf.eu**

4 Tools

The following section contains a list of tools to support the management of an abduction incident. It is advisable to adapt these to the organisation's structure and needs, and to familiarise crisis management team members with these tools before an incident occurs. These tools can also be used to support crisis management training, including crisis simulation exercises.

Tool 1: Case management information checklist

Tool 2: Crisis management team – First meeting guide

Tool 3: Crisis management team – Meeting agenda

Tool 4: Selection of a communicator

Tool 5: Guidelines for communicating with hostage-takers

Tool 6: Guidelines for talking to the hostage

Tool 7: Daily summary log

Tool 8: Communications chart

Tool 9: Case momentum checklist

Tool 10: Post-release hostage debrief checklist

Tool 11: Post-crisis analysis report template

4. Tools

Tool 1
Case management information checklist

This tool provides a summary of information that should be collected as soon as an abduction is suspected. This information will support the organisation's incident management and also serve to answer questions that are likely to be raised by crisis response consultants and home government authorities. This information, particularly that which relates to a personal characteristic of the victim (e.g. sexual orientation), must be kept confidential and only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

Initial case information	
Date and time of incident	
Number of missing persons, names, and nationalities	
Location of incident	
Description of incident, including any contact from the hostage-takers	
Details of last contact with the affected person(s) (date, time, place, subject)	
Details of any witnesses	
Are local authorities aware of the incident (include contact details)?	
Who reported the incident (include name, contact details, and source of information)?	
Who else knows of the incident (UN, embassies, other NGOs, etc.)?	

4. Tools

Hostage personal details (should be completed for all hostages)	
Name(s)	
Date of birth	
Sex (consider also sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, if known and deemed relevant given the crisis and context)	
Passport number	
Nationality (used to enter country)	
Any other nationalities held (consider ethnicity if known and deemed relevant to the crisis and context)	
Country of residence	
Phone numbers (mobile (including make/model, IMEI/IMSI – if known), satellite phone, home, and work)	
Details of any personal, equipment or vehicle tracking employed	
Email address(es)	
Social media accounts	
Any known medical and psychological conditions if available (including any known disability or chronic condition)	
Economic conditions (hostage-takers may cross-check)	
Marital status	
Age	
Position within organisation	
Language skills	
Relevant experience (i.e. if person has experienced critical incidents before)	
Proof of life information on record?	

Next of kin and family members	
Primary contact	
Name(s)	
Address	
Telephone numbers	
Email addresses	
Language	
Are the family aware of the incident?	
Is there a nominated alternative point of contact? If so, details:	
Other relevant details (consider the dynamics of fractured families or instances where the partner of the victim is not (and may not wish to be) known to the family)	
Next of kin (details if different from above)	

Internal crisis management structure details	
Name and contact details of crisis response team members	
Contact details of point of contact/lead for external queries	
Contact details of local representatives at location (establish out of hours contact procedure)	
Other relevant details (for example, what is the nature and scale of the organisation's presence in the country?)	

More detailed case information	
Were any proofs obtained to establish the hostage's safety or authenticity of the hostage-takers? For example, Proof of Life (POL) or Proof of Possession (POP).	
Is there any evidence concerning the identity of the hostage-takers?	
Was any demand made?	
Was any offer made in response to the demand?	
Describe any organisational or family action taken to date.	
Has any element of law enforcement become involved?	
Is there any media exposure so far? Is media exposure likely?	
Is this the first time that the organisation or family has suffered an abduction?	
What are the known or perceived attitudes of the host and home government and law enforcement to this incident? Consider also the perceived attitudes to the personal profile of the victim, e.g. ethnicity.	
Is there any family or organisational relationship to any member of the host or home governments?	
What about the context needs to be considered (for example, local language, political situation, etc.)?	

Tool 2
Crisis management team – First meeting guide

This tool provides guidance on what to discuss at the first meeting of the crisis management team (CMT) to aid discussion and the establishment of courses of action. This tool should be used in conjunction with **'Tool 3: Crisis management team – Meeting agenda'**.

The CMT should meet as soon as possible and the first meeting should agree urgent action points to be carried out immediately. Briefings should be concise and non-urgent decisions postponed.

Note that it is becoming more common for CMTs to meet virtually, and therefore technology options should be researched and practised prior to an incident occurring.

Item	Led by	Key points and questions
1. Reason for CMT	CMT leader	Why CMT has been established. Presentation of facts. Identification of information gaps. Briefing on actions taken to date.
2. CMT protocols, roles, and responsibilities	CMT leader	Overview of crisis management and related security procedures. Agreement of individual CMT member roles and responsibilities. Is there any conflict of interest/personal involvement of any of the CMT members with incident victims?
3. Security situation in country	CMT or IMT leader	Briefing on the country security situation. Are changes required to existing security measures to ensure the security of other staff? Should other organisations whose security might be affected also be contacted?
4. Crisis resolution	CMT leader	What immediate steps need to be taken?

5. Local crisis response	CMT leader IMT leader	Has a country-based incident management team (IMT) been established? Is the IMT capable of responding? Should the CMT send additional staff? Are any other resources required to support the IMT (logistical, financial, etc.)?
6. External assistance	CMT leader IMT leader	Key organisations that may be able to assist (e.g. embassies, UN, ICRC, NGOs, partners). Agree who will contact these (CMT or IMT).
7. Notification of hostage's family	Message deliverer/ Family Support Officer	Depending on the nature of the crisis, it may be important to contact the hostage's family immediately.
8. Communication (Internal and external)	Media manager and Internal communications	Agree on key messages for initial communication with all key stakeholders and media (for example, a reactive line).
9. General CMT	CMT leader	Confirm key contact person between CMT and the country (usually the IMT if one is established). Confirm contact details and ongoing availability of all CMT members. Confirm time/date of next meeting.
10. Summary of key decisions and action points	Note taker and Internal communications	Confirm who will take notes and action points at which meetings. Confirm action points from this meeting.
11. Information management system agreed	CMT leader Note taker	Agree how all information pertaining to the crisis will be collected, analysed, disseminated and stored.
12. CMT room set-up	CMT leader Note taker	IT and communications equipment. Whiteboards/flip chart paper. Policy documentation. Access to HR information. Key information/photos of affected staff. Key dates, times, locations, names. Ability to conceal information if non-CMT members happen to enter the room.

4. Tools

Tool 3
Crisis management team – Meeting agenda

This tool is a template meeting agenda for the crisis management team (CMT) to aid discussion and the establishment of courses of action. It should be consulted in conjunction with **'Tool 2: Crisis management team – First meeting guide'.**

Date	Time

Check – Are the right roles present?

Actions from last meeting and review of outstanding actions

Facts (What do we know?)

Assumptions (What do we believe?)

Scenarios (Consider best, worst and most likely)

Objectives (Establish objectives for this meeting, validate previous objectives)

Response options (What options are available?)

Priorities (Establish priorities, information requirements and tasks)

Stakeholders and responsibilities (Identify and establish responsibility for stakeholders)

Key messages for stakeholders

Next meeting:	
Time:	Date:
Venue:	
Virtual call-in details:	
Telephone number:	
Chair code:	
Participants code	

Tool 4
Selection of a communicator

This tool provides a summary of skills and behaviours to consider when selecting a communicator to join the crisis management structure.

Necessary skills and behaviours for the communicator:

- The person selected as the communicator must be discreet, reliable, of even temperament, and steady enough not to be thrown by shocking news or highly charged reactions by the hostage-taker's caller.

- The communicator must be sufficiently disciplined to absorb and follow scripts to the letter, follow instructions and not feel inclined to make their own policy.

- Ideally, their communication in the hostage-taker's language must be of a mother-tongue standard, to enable them to understand the finer nuances of the language.

- Consider the communicator's relationship with the hostage, the local community and other possible stakeholders.

- They must be available when required.

Necessary qualities for the communicator:

- Intelligence

- Trustworthiness

- Confidence, initiative and the ability to establish a rapport

- Stress-resistance

- Discretion

- Flexible and unemotional in character

- Normally not associated with the hostage

- Determination

- Patience

- Experience in negotiating. (A lawyer or personnel manager might be ideal.)

The communicator does not normally sit on either the CMT or IMT. The communicator is a key participant in the negotiation process but should never be seen as, or given the role of negotiator. The communicator's role is restricted to communicating the CMT and IMT's messages to the hostage-takers and feeding back to the organisation the hostage-takers' responses. It is usually appropriate to limit the communicator's knowledge of the organisation's strategy and settlement target.

Tool 5
Guidelines for communicating with hostage-takers

This tool provides guidance on how to communicate over the telephone with hostage-takers. This tool can be shared with the communicator, family members and other stakeholders who may be contacted by the hostage-takers.

Remain calm.

Check and activate the recording device (if available).

Answer the call

- Who am I talking to? How would you like me to address you?

- How is my [*colleague/husband/wife*], etc.?

- Can I talk to my [*colleague/husband/wife*], etc.?

- I need a secure proof of life. (utilise pre-agreed POL questions)

- Is my [*colleague/husband/wife*] wounded or ill?

- How can I contact you?

- When can we speak the next time? (consider time difference, if applicable)

- How can I be sure that I'm talking to you next time? Can we agree on a code word?

- (If you are the communicator, introduce yourself and your role.)

Proof of life

- Help me so that I can help you.

- I am worried about my [*colleague/husband/wife's*] health.

- I want to talk to him/her now. (insist)

- How do we know that he/she is still alive?

- That's a good sign from your side. Now we can continue.

Violence

- If the victim is directly harmed during the conversation, call out: STOP IT! (if necessary, end the call)

- In order to best represent your concern, it is important to me that he/she remains unharmed.

- I understood your demand. Violence and harm will not help.

- We want this to be resolved peacefully, and for you as well. You must act peacefully too.

- Please understand his/her situation. He/she is only a [*low ranking employee/driver, etc.*].

- You don't need to harm him/her. We understand what you want.

- I do understand that you are serious. I do not want you to do anything to harm him/her.

Dealing with demands (for example, ransom):

- This is important. I want to ensure that I understand you correctly. (ask them to repeat the demand)

- I understand that now and I will pass your demand to the responsible person.

- I cannot say anything about this now. We will have to talk again. (if negotiations are to be postponed, agree on the next talk/call by establishing date, time, etc.)

- Can we possibly help you with something else?

- Consider that we may need a couple of days to pass the demand/s to the right person.

Directly after the phone call, note the content of the conversation, including time and duration, details (voices, sounds in the background, dialect, mood, etc.). Directly after speaking, contact the IMT/CMT for a debrief.

4. Tools

Tool 6
Guidelines for talking to the hostage

This tool provides guidance on how to communicate with the hostage. This tool can be shared with the communicator, family members and other stakeholders who may be contacted by the hostage-takers and placed in contact with the hostage.

Be prepared for the possibility that the hostage may be in poor psychological and physical condition. The hostage may also have been given a script or been told by the hostage-takers what they should say. Expect that they may be feeling desperate. Your aim is to calm the hostage and to gather information. Let the hostage talk; do not interrupt them.

Remain calm (use a soothing voice).

Check and activate the recording device (if available).

Answer the call

- How are you?
- Do you have everything you need?
- Are they treating you well?
- How are the others? (if applicable)
- We are/your family is fine, don't worry. Everything is fine here. Everything is organised.
- Please be cooperative.
- We are doing everything we can to resolve the situation.
- Do you want to tell me anything?
- How can we reach you? When? (check time and time zones)
- When will you call next? (if applicable)

Dealing with demands (for example, ransom):

- Did I understand you correctly? (ask them to repeat the demand)

Directly after the phone call, note the content of the conversation, including time and duration, details (voices, sounds in the background, dialect, mood, etc.). Directly after speaking, contact the IMT/CMT for a debrief.

Tool 7
Daily summary log

This tool, also known as an incident log, provides a template that crisis response teams, particularly the CMT, can use to log events, actions, reactions and decisions made during the crisis management.

Case name	
Key events	
Date	

Example   ● Demands ● Offers ● Threats ● POL

CD	Day	Date	Event	Remarks	Decisions made (who and what)
1	Wed	07Jun17	Abduction	No further information provided.	Agreed to inform NtK/government/ insurance provider.
2	Wed	07Jun17	Notification	Informed those within the need-to-know group (NtK) about missing staff.	Agreed daily call schedule.
3	Thu	08Jun17	Nothing to report (NTR)		
4	Fri	09Jun17	Crisis response consultants arrive	CMT established. Response strategies and plan agreed.	
5	Sat	10Jun17	Telephone call (TC) 1 & 2 **Demand $4m** **Threat to kill**	Kidnappers called twice. Seem keen to progress. Demand $4 m. **Weak threat** to kill the victim.	
6	Sun	11Jun17	NTR		
7	Mon	12Jun17	TC 3. **POL.** **IO $75K.** **Threats – mild**	Victim put on the telephone for 15 sec. Sounded reasonably well. Initial offer put in. Greeted with relatively mild threats.	
8	Tues	13Jun17			

Tool 8
Communications chart

This tool allows the CMT to summarise each contact with the hostage-takers to support the crisis management.

**Communications chart** ● Demands ● Offers ● Threats ● POL

Case:

Serial	CD	Day	Date	Time of contact	Duration of contact	Break since last contact	Type of contact	From/No.	To/No.	To
1	1	M/T/W/T/F/S/S	dd/mm/yy	00:00	0 mins	1 hour/day	TC; E; SMS	Name/ +xxxx	Name/ +xxxx	xx
	Comment									
2										
	Comment									
3										
	Comment									
4										
	Comment									
5										
	Comment									
6										
	Comment									
7										
	Comment									
8										
	Comment									
9										
	Comment									
10										
	Comment									
11										
	Comment									

Tool 9
Case momentum checklist

This tool presents a process that can help to establish and maintain situational awareness and decision-making during a crisis.
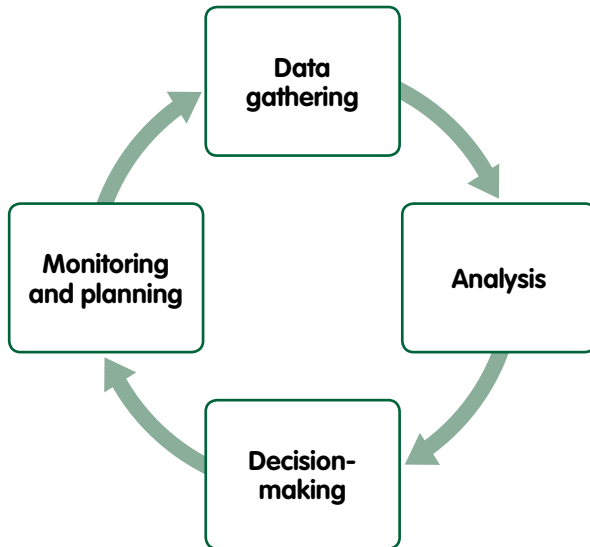
Data gathering

Data should be collected on:

- Hostage-taker communications and demands

- Dates, times, locations of personnel and events

- Stakeholders (family, employees, authorities, possible interlocutors, etc.)

- Assets and appropriate response resources

- Sequence of events

- Injuries

- Damages

- Immediate threats

- Escalation possibilities

- Initial response

- Media involvement, including social media

Analysis

Information gathered is analysed and should be continually updated to reflect:

• What is happening

• What has changed

• What is changing

• What might happen

• What impact it will have on:

  • People

  • Environment

  • Assets

  • Stakeholders

  • The organisation's ability to operate

A stakeholder analysis should also be completed and consider the following:

• Affected parties

  • Hostages

  • Families

• Government authorities

  • Host country national and state authorities

  • Local authorities

  • Home country authorities

• Internal relationships

  • Employees

  • Executive management and Board

  • Crisis management teams

  • Ex-employees

• External relationships

  • Media and the press

  • NGOs and partners

  • Special interest groups

  • Communities and programme beneficiaries

Decision-making

Decisions should be made on the basis of the analysis completed and drawing on:

• Advice from the members of the CMS

• Specialist response consultant advice

• Stakeholder advice

• Requisite authorities

• Cultural norms

A decision-making log should be maintained, including:

• What decisions have been made, when and why

• What decisions are pending, when is a decision required and why is it pending

• What decisions have been elevated to a higher level, when and why

Tasks to implement decisions are identified for:

• CMS members

• Other support staff

• Stakeholders

• Response consultants

Monitoring and planning

The CMS will record, monitor and review actions, ensuring:

• Clarity of tasks and priorities

• Overall effectiveness

• Harmony of response

• Resolution of conflicts

Tool 10
Post-release hostage debrief checklist

The aim of the post-release debrief is to gather as much information as possible in the most detailed way possible from the victim. The following questionnaire provides broad guidance for the debrief.

In general, the aim of the debrief is to answer **who** was doing **what**, **when**, **where**, **how** and **why.** In the first session, try to start with the release and then go back to how the day of the abduction started. In the second session, start at the day of the abduction and go through the entire event until the debrief session. Ask for details and if anything in particular can be remembered. Even if the victim may think something is unimportant, they should still describe it. Care must be taken not to further traumatise the victim.

Victims should be asked what adjustments they need or would like prior to the debriefing. These requests should be accommodated to the greatest extent possible to ensure the debrief is a safe space for the victim to share their experiences. The victim may, for example, wish the debriefing to be conducted outside of the office or by an individual with a specific profile (e.g. ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.).

4. Tools

1. Ask the victim to describe the course of the abduction from the moment of capture and movements to the individual holding places, chronologically, in as much detail as possible, and until the moment of release.

- Please describe the capture in detail. Did you notice anything unusual? Please try to remember everything, other people, vegetation, bridges, rivers, trees, houses, etc.

- Please describe the transport.

- Please describe the holding places in as much detail as possible.

- Please describe the release/escape in detail. What led to the release/escape?

2. Can you describe the motives of the hostage-takers?

- What intentions did the hostage-takers have?

- What were the demands of the hostage-takers? Did they discuss their demands with you?

- Did they ask for money? If yes, how much?

- Prior to the abduction, were there any warnings, clashes, conflicts or any other unusual situations?

3. What do you know about the hostage-takers?

- Can you describe the hostage-takers in detail? If yes, what did they look like? What did they wear?

- How many hostage-takers did you recognise? Did they change? Do you remember names?

- How did you communicate with the hostage-takers? What language did they speak?   Were you able to identify dialects or any other local specifics in the language?

- Did the hostage-takers release any personal information about their intentions, identity, affiliation, etc.?

- Were the objectives of the hostage-takers monetary or political? What gave you this impression?

- Did the hostage-takers speak about affiliation to a specific group, tribe, clan or ethnicity?

- Were the hostage-takers armed? If yes, can you describe their weaponry?

- Was there a hierarchy among the hostage-takers?

- Were they the decision-makers, or did they make phone calls to receive instructions?

- Did the hostage-takers appear well-prepared for the abduction? Did they act professionally?

4. What means of transport was used to transport you during the abduction?

- Can you describe the means of transport in detail (colour, type, model, etc.)?

- Were you able to recognise a number plate or parts of the plate?

5. How did the hostage-takers treat you?

- Were you tortured? Were you harmed/injured? (Note: Before this question is posed, consult with the person providing the psychosocial support to avoid further traumatising the victim.)

- Did they treat any injuries?

- Were you interrogated? What did they ask? What did you say?

- Did you receive blankets, clothes, toiletries, medication, etc.?

- Did you get food and drink? What did you get?

- Were you able to write down your experiences?

- Did the hostage-takers tie you up? All the time? Did they remove the bindings for any situation?

- Were you able to go to the toilet and to wash?

4. Tools

Tool 11
Post-crisis analysis report template

It is extremely important that any lessons learned from responding to a crisis are recorded for future reference. The post-crisis analysis report must include all recommendations, who is following them up and when the actions need to be completed by.

During this process, it is also important to identify not only the areas that require improvements, but also what worked well and should be continued. This will give a better overall picture of which elements of the plan were actually tested during the crisis. It should also be referred to in any future crisis situations.

The following is a brief outline of what should be included in the report. These headings are not exhaustive and will vary depending on the incident.

Description of the incident and date

Situation

- A brief outline of the crisis
- Who formed the CMT
- Outline of the complete CMS

Execution of the plan

- Call-in procedure
- Initial meeting/planning
- Access to appropriate expertise both internally and externally
- Effectiveness of decision-making
- Effectiveness of crisis management structure
- Assessment of the resolution
- Assessment of the timeliness of response

Administration

- Meeting room set-up

- Equipment

- IT support

- Conference facilities (video/telephone)

Communications

- Ability to communicate with field office staff (time difference, phone lines, etc.)

- Communication with family – effectiveness of the family support officers

- Communication with staff

- Communication with other stakeholders

- Communication with external agencies

- Liaison with media

HR support

- Reception plan for victim

- Specialist support and debriefing of victim

    - Ongoing needs

- Management response to wider HR/welfare requirements of affected staff (including CMT/IMT/support teams and country staff)

- Whether the expectations of affected staff were/are being met

Recommendations

Action	Person responsible	Date	Comments

Sources of further information

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Glossary

Abduction is defined as the forcible capture of one or more persons without demands. All hostage situations are considered abductions until demands are made, at which point they become kidnappings. In this guide, the term 'abduction' is used to refer to situations where no demands have been made, as well as kidnappings. The terms 'incident' and 'abduction' are used interchangeably within this guide.

Crisis is an event that significantly disrupts normal operations, has caused or is likely to cause severe distress, or has severe consequences for individuals, staff or organisations. A crisis requires extraordinary measures to restore order and normality, thus demanding immediate action from senior management.

Crisis management plan (CMP) is an organisation-wide plan that is developed prior to an actual incident. This document delineates authority, defines policies, and identifies resources within the organisation for managing a crisis. It will identify the specific roles and responsibilities of those involved in the crisis management.

Crisis management structure (CMS) is the entire structure within an organisation for dealing with a crisis. The exact structure will vary according to an organisation's structure and the availability of personnel. It will generally include a decision-making authority (DMA), a crisis management team (CMT), an incident management team (IMT), a communicator, and other crisis response support teams and individuals.

Crisis management team (CMT) is the crisis response team formed usually, though not always, at the organisation's headquarters to manage a crisis incident. The CMT has the overall responsibility for the management of the crisis.

Critical incident is an event or series of events that seriously threatens the welfare of personnel, potentially resulting in death, life-threatening injury or illness, and triggers an organisation's crisis management response. A critical incident is usually considered a crisis.

Decision-making authority (DMA) is usually the most senior decision-making body within the organisation (for example, the CEO) and is tasked with ensuring the CMT is enabled to manage the incident effectively. The DMA approves the incident management strategy but is not involved in the day-to-day management of the crisis.

Detention is where persons are held against their will by an individual or group. While there may be no intention to cause harm, there is also no clear timeline or pre-condition for their release.

Family includes partners, parents, siblings, and children of the hostage.

Family Support Officer (FSO) is an individual whose role is to support the hostage's family and to channel communications between the CMT and the family of a hostage. The FSO is the family's primary point of contact within the organisation.

Home country or government is the country or government where the hostage holds (or has held) citizenship. If a hostage has dual nationality, an agreement will have to be reached on which is the 'home' country. This will most likely be based on which passport the individual used to enter the country where the incident occurred. Where this guide is referring to the home country or government of the organisation, rather than that of the hostage, this is stated explicitly in the text.

Host country or government is the country or government in the location where the abduction has occurred.

Hostage is a person who has been abducted and is being held against their will. The terms hostage and victim are used interchangeably within this guide. Victims are also referred to as survivors after their release.

Hostage-takers, kidnappers, abductors or **perpetrators** can be an individual or group that abducts and holds captive individuals in an attempt to seek acquiescence to their demands, which are typically financial or political in nature. The term of 'hostage-taker' is the industry norm for all types of abduction situations, even if the terminology is not strictly correct. Throughout this document, the term 'hostage-taker' is used.

Hostage-taking is where persons are forcibly held at a known location, and their safety and subsequent release is dependent on the fulfilment of certain conditions. These conditions may include publicity for a political or ideological cause, the release of prisoners, ensuring groups evade capture by the authorities or the prevention of attacks by security forces.

Incident management team (IMT) is the crisis response team formed at or near the location of the actual incident. The IMT reports to the CMT and implements the CMT's strategy and decisions at field level.

Kidnap (or kidnapping) refers to the abduction of one or more persons with the intention of detaining them at an unknown location against their will until a demand for ransom or other concession is met.

Glossary

Law enforcement generally refers to police, security forces, and government-sponsored anti-kidnap or anti-abduction organisations/agencies.

Proof of Life (POL) is the term used for information received via negotiations channels that confirms the hostage is alive at a given date and serves also to verify the authenticity of the hostage-takers.

Proof of Possession (POP) refers to evidence provided by the hostage-taker, which makes clear that they have the hostage in their possession, but is not sufficient to constitute POL.

Ransom is the money demanded or paid for the release of a kidnap victim. Although a ransom is most commonly demanded in exchange for the release of a hostage, hostage-takers, and the organisation can agree on a non-financial settlement instead, for example, the provision of services.

Response consultant is an external advisor specialising in abduction and kidnap incidents, who can support organisations in developing and implementing an effective incident response strategy.

Target settlement figure is what the organisation aims to negotiate towards in exchange for the release of the hostage. Although this is generally used to refer to a financial figure in response to a ransom demand, it can also be used to refer to non-financial concessions, for example, the provision of services.

Glossary

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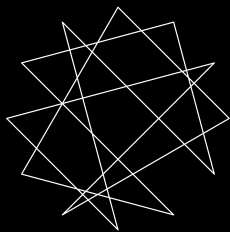Davidson, S. Edited by French, E. – EISF Secretariat

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