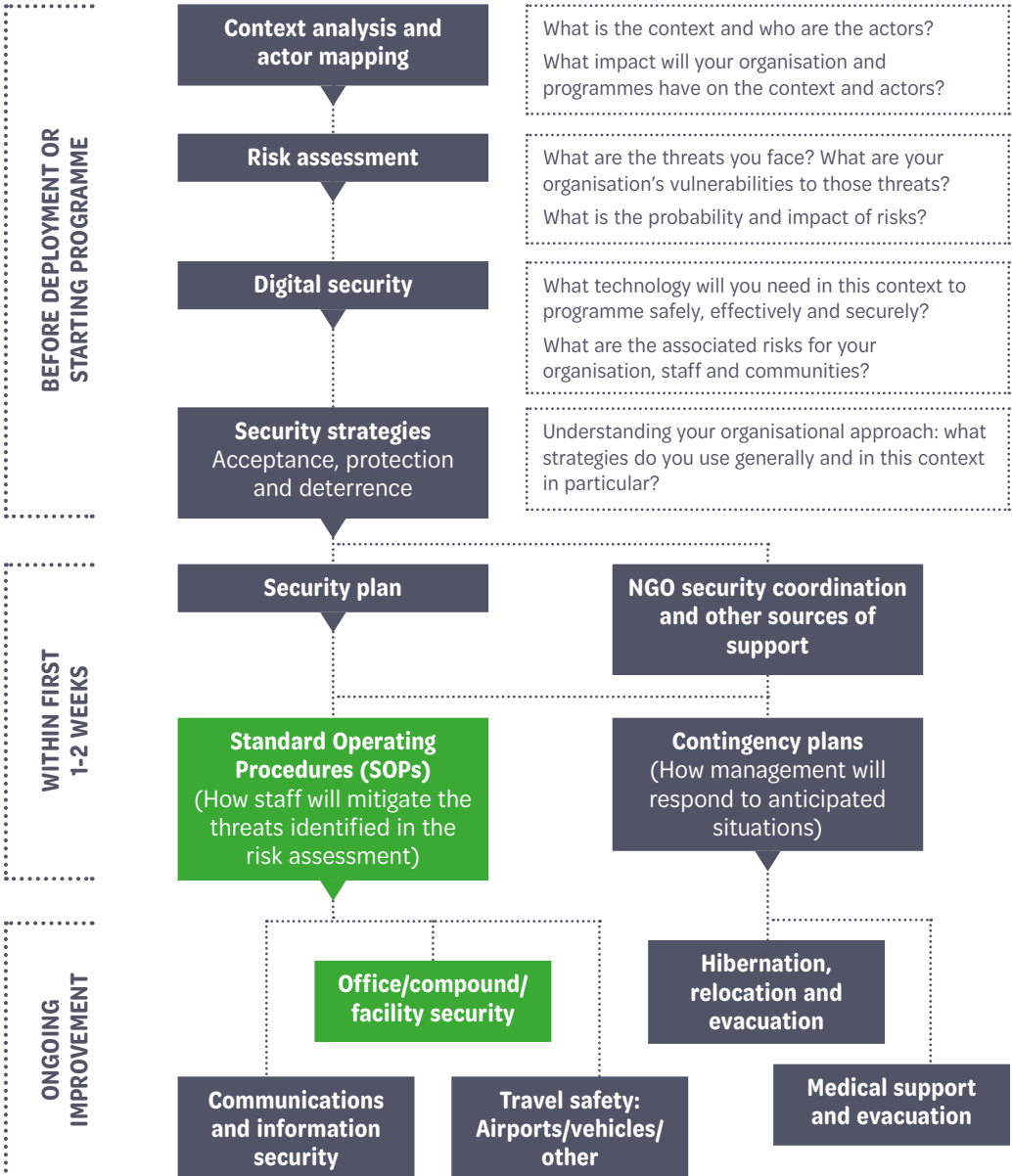


# 8

# Security of facilities



When considering a new office, residence or compound, first review your risk assessment to understand what the types of threats are, what the threat level is and what level of protection or deterrence you will likely need. This also applies if moving into an existing office with a partner organisation. Also consider if it will be possible to build an acceptance strategy in the location: this is often more difficult in large urban environments than in rural settings, though it is always advisable to create mutual understanding with your neighbours.

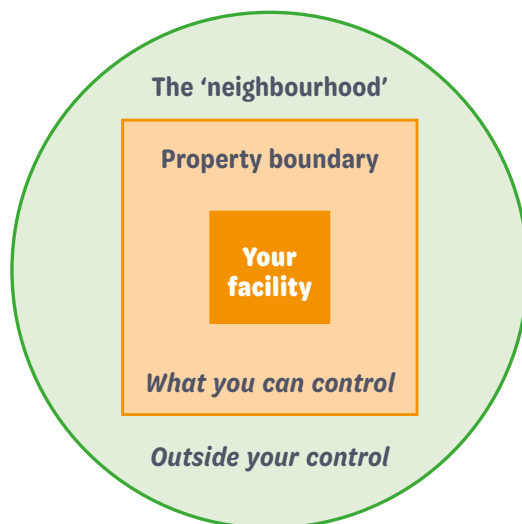


**This is applicable to all organisational properties, offices, residences, warehouses, clinics, schools, etc.**

In an emergency response it is often necessary and/or convenient to share space. If this is the case, it is important to agree who is responsible for what, i.e. perimeter security, guard services, local acceptance strategy, etc.

► See *GISF guide 'Office opening: a guide for NGOs'*

## Security of offices, compounds and other facilities



### The outer ring: the neighbourhood

This is the area surrounding the office/compound/facility/residence. The risk assessment should identify who in the area could have an effect on the safety of staff. You need to understand your neighbourhood and the stakeholders within it to implement your acceptance strategy. It may be easier in rural areas than in urban environments, but developing understanding with your neighbours is essential in all contexts.

Consider:

- Road access, both access to the office and how you will safely travel to other sites. Is it a dead end? This can be positive for identification of hostile observation but will limit travel options/escape routes.
- Natural hazards like rivers (flooding), hills (mudslides/avalanches), swamps (malaria/dengue), or forests (fire, wildlife).
- Neighbours such as embassies, military/police posts, banks, government offices, other NGOs, or universities.
- Distance to airports, hotels, key locations in an emergency.
- Blocking structures/natural features that would interrupt satellite communications in an emergency.
- The landlord and his record and reputation.
- Reliable access to clean water.
- Access to telephone, the internet and mobile networks.

### The middle ring: the property

This is the first area that is under the organisation's control. The risk assessment should guide you in how to secure it in terms of a perimeter wall, fence or hedge, or whether you leave it open, i.e. your protection strategy.



**Always keep in mind that if you feel you need to build a 'bunker' to stay safe, you probably should not be based in that area.**

When planning your perimeter you should consider how it may impact your neighbours and image, and the message it sends. If you decide to have a low profile and then wrap your compound in barbed wire, making it stand out from its neighbours, it will be counter-productive. You should also consider how your presence may affect your neighbours:

- Do you require a generator? If you do, can it be positioned away from other properties and/or is there room for soundproofing?
- Is there sufficient parking within the compound and/or in the area without inconveniencing others?
- Is your presence creating a security risk for your neighbours?
- If you are employing guards, where will they be located?

It is possible to build protection measures that do not do not negatively change the appearance of the compound. For example barbed wire below the top of the wall, using flower beds or pots to disguise concrete barriers, etc.

Within your property there are other issues you will need to consider:

- Access control (planned): how do staff, visitors, suppliers or community members access your property? Consider vehicle/personnel gates, identity checks, safe parking areas, ID cards, waiting areas, and crowd control (if applicable).
- Access control (unplanned): how easy is it for people to get into the site? Are there shared boundaries with neighbours or open spaces? Are there overhanging trees and how close are the buildings to the boundary walls?
- Fire hazards including storage of fuel and combustibles, electrical power lines and designated smoking areas.
- How is trash collected and dealt with in a safe and environmentally sound way?
- Emergency exits: If your compound has a wall and main gate facing the street, how will you evacuate unobserved if there is a danger in front of the facility? Where will you go? Perhaps to a neighbouring compound/ UN facility/other NGO/residences?

### The inner ring: the building(s)

Security for the organisation's buildings, whether they are offices, compounds/warehouses or residences, is key as these hold your most valued items including people, equipment, assets, cash, records, and aid materials and supplies. The design of the building should also be appropriate for the natural hazards, e.g. earthquake resistant, insulated against heat and/or cold for heat and/or cold.

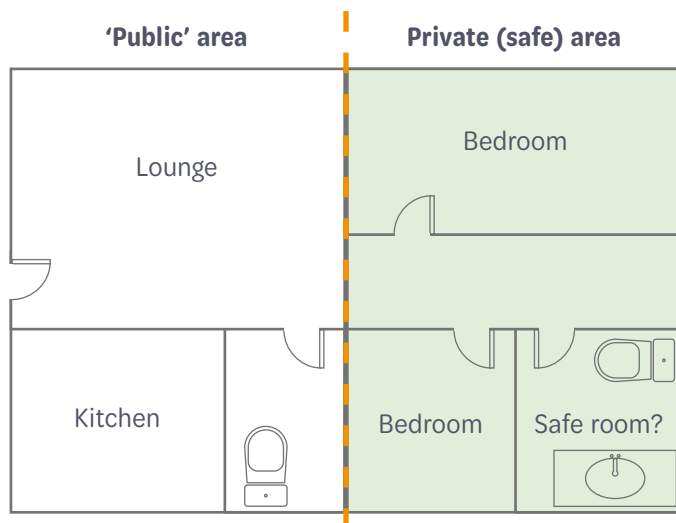
For staff to be effective in their work, it is important for them to feel safe in their office and accommodation. Consider:

- Security of doors/windows that prevent unauthorised access but do not trap staff in event of fire/evacuation.
- Security of roof areas (often a preferred entry point for robberies after hours).
- A reception area that controls access to other vulnerable areas.
- Access control procedures so that visitors admitted to the building cannot roam around unsupervised.
- Scheduled electrical inspections to reduce fire risk in addition to strict policies on not overloading electrical outlets.
- Safe storage of documents including fireproof safes secured to the wall or floor.
- Emergency evacuation routes and procedures clearly posted and rehearsed.

- If necessary, a safe room that will fit all staff expected to be in the building and equipped with emergency supplies (first aid kit, torch, blankets, food, communications device(s) that are charged/ powered, fire extinguisher). Check that the emergency communication equipment works in the safe room. Satellite phones normally require line of sight, so external aerials may be needed.
- Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) units to protect computers and other electrical devices when power supply is not reliable or subject to spikes and power cuts.
- Alarms for fire or intrusion, and actions to take on hearing them, including rehearsals.

## Security of staff residences

Staff residences can be approached in a similar fashion to other properties, but with some additional precautions to ensure safety. While the whole residence needs to have adequate security, valuables (TVs, computers, appliances etc.) are usually held in the ‘public’ areas of the house where guests or friends may be entertained, and these items are likely to be the principal lure for thieves. Private areas of the residence will include sleeping areas. These need to be secured to a higher standard than the ‘public’ areas.



Consider:

- A solid, lockable door between the public and private areas of the residence.
- Improved window and roof security in private areas, lockable from inside but not an obstacle in event of a fire for evacuation.

- A safe room with first aid kits, blankets, torch, fire extinguisher and a communications device that is charged and tested regularly.
- Window screens to keep out mosquitos (for prevention of diseases).
- Firm control of keys and any duplicates.
- Exterior lights, especially around entrances.

It is also important to consider local culture. In a conservative environment you may need to consider separation between male and female quarters, as well as separation between national staff such as guards and drivers, and international staff – so that international staff can relax without giving offence or the wrong impression by drinking and dancing, women wearing shorts, etc.

## Watchmen and security guards

Many organisations look to locally engaged watchmen and/or security guards as a first step to developing their security systems around facilities. Organisations often use the term ‘watchmen’ rather than ‘guard’ to support the understanding that staff are not expected to risk their own safety to protect the compound and assets.

Guards are often the first point of contact between the host community and an NGO. How they behave, their manners as well as professionalism will often reflect back on their employer. Therefore, for all guards or watchmen ensure the following:

- They are aware of your organisation’s mandate and Code of Conduct.
  - They are given clear instructions on their duties and how they will be supervised.
  - Guards have a list of ‘actions on’ to deal with visitors, suspicious activity, robbery, fire, injuries or other incident likely to occur, as identified in your risk assessment.
  - Ensure staff members treat guards with respect as well as understanding of the guards’ duties, and ensure compliance.
  - Guards should be given an emergency contact list and means to communicate if an incident should occur.
- ▶ See *Module 14 – Contracting private security providers*
- ▶ See *GISF briefing paper ‘Engaging private security providers: a guideline for non-governmental organisations’.*

Virtually all NGO guards are unarmed. However, in high-risk environments it may be common for organisations to have an armed response in case of emergency, either activated by panic buttons or existing guards. If this is the case the organisation should get information about who provides the armed service (private company, police, military), what its purpose is (protecting the organisation’s staff and assets or apprehending the attackers), their level of training, and the organisation’s liability if someone (staff, guard, bystander) is shot during an armed response.

There are three main categories of security guards: commercial guards, contracted guards and community volunteers. Each has advantages and disadvantages.

### Commercial guard services

They are provided by a contracted guard services company. The guard company may rotate staff making it difficult to create a level of trust. It is important, particularly in residence buildings, that staff members know the guard who should be opening the gate. Otherwise the guard can create feelings of insecurity rather than alleviating them.

Advantages	Disadvantages
The provider can supply additional services such as a rapid response team (be clear on what this involves), alarms, radio networks, vehicle patrols, and night supervisors.	The organisation has little or no control over the guard’s instructions and duty standards.
Recruiting, training, payroll, HR, admin and scheduling are done by a commercial provider.	Security companies are mostly concerned with ‘the bottom line’.
	Guards are poorly paid and unmotivated.

► See Module 14 – Contracting private security providers

## Contracted guards

They are employed directly by the organisation.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Guards can be better paid since the money of the aid agency does not go to the commercial profit system.	The organisation must take responsibility for training, uniforms, equipment, administration and supervision.
As members of staff, they have increased loyalty and knowledge of the organisation's standards, policies and code of conduct.	No additional support available.

## Community volunteers

Normally, they are guards provided by the host community in programme areas. They are often the only option in remote areas. There is normally a cost for salaries, training, minimal equipment.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Utilises 'acceptance strategy' approach by incorporating the community into security.	No set standards for duties.
	Lack of accountability.
	Open to abuse.