



European Humanitarian Forum

Strengthening security in high-risk areas

Monday, March 21, 2022 / 13.45 - 15.30h

Moderator: *Auriane Arnould-Balourdet* (Norwegian Refugee Council, NRC)

Panelists: *Camille Gillardeau* (International Rescue Committee, IRC), *Heather Hughes* (Global Interagency Security Forum, GISF), *Manuel Patrouillard* (Handicap International - Humanity & Inclusion, HI), and *Nic Lee* (International NGO Safety Organisation, INSO)

Executive Summary:

According to INSO, humanitarian aid (HA) workers are not deliberately targeted, contrary to the common belief. Due to their presence in high-risk areas and protracted conflicts, they are likely to be victims of collateral damage. Additionally, conflicts are now often in urban areas, increasingly bringing civilians and HA workers in contact with explosives and fighting.

Security must be an integral and mandatory part of all organisations operating in the field. Duty of Care (DoC) is enshrined in many organisations' internal rules and it is part of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by partners and donors and of grant agreements. All field security actors are obliged to consider DoC and there is a need to discuss how it can be achieved: **1**) at the level of the staff concerned (emphasising that individuals decide which risks they are willing to take); **2**) at the organisational level through accountability (and disciplinary action if needed); **3**) at the donor level (providing sufficient budget); or **4**) at the external level (engaging with donors and partners, being proactive, bringing up security and placing it on the agenda).

Moreover, NGOs can enhance their preparedness and improve their ability to manage security with the support of collaborative platforms such as GISF. Important points are: **1**) collaboration (benefits through exchanging information and providing training based on best practices); **2**) risk sharing between local and national NGOs (all HA actors need to understand that funding is required to create a sustainable security environment and that it needs to be provided in a way that also smaller NGOs can plan strategically); **3**) what can donors do (fund security as direct cost, support/fund networks such as GISF / INSO and thereby indirectly funding training/support to smaller NGOs with little resources).

In addition, donors should require their partners to have Security Risk Management (SRM) in place and they should fund it. However, they should not impose more standards or SRM certification. Security should be seen in the context of access: an improved SRM may help gain access to areas where organisations currently cannot go. Still, there are residual risks that NGOs and donors must share: the primary responsibility for security should rest with the one delivering aid (NGOs must have their own security risk analysis in place, for example). Other

critical issues are: **1)** the criminalisation of NGOs speaking or dealing with actors which have been placed on various blacklists; **2)** the need for donors to go beyond grants and to facilitate the development of NGO SRM expertise (ad-hoc funding of NGOs or specific initiatives or platforms such as INSO and GISF; generic training that all NGOs can benefit from, for example HEATs); and **3)** states and their donors must protect the humanitarian imperative and support humanitarian organisations' security.