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AFRICA INSTUTUE FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT STUDIES

ASSIGNMENTS THREE

1. Define Gender. How does gender understand an integral part of security for humanitarian employees?

IASC (Inter Agency Standing Committee) 2006 report defines gender as the social differences between females and males (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and inter sexed) throughout the life cycle that are learned, though they are deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable overtime and have wide variations between cultures. “Gender” determines the roles, power and resources for females and males (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and inter sexed) in any culture.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)`s 2011 study notes that while the relative risks to male and female staff are unknown due to a lack of data, it is important to assess security threats and vulnerabilities differently for different types of staff:

Survey results indicate that most national aid workers perceive that the sex of staff has little effect on individual security, but some respondents believed that females face a higher risk. In areas where strong cultural attitudes exist regarding women and men working together and the status of women in society (for instance parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan) the presence of female staff can potentially be a serious security liability if the organization does not take measures to demonstrate respect for local norms.

Analyzing available data on security incidents for 2008 to 2010, Wille and Fast found notable differences in the types of violence experienced by male and female humanitarian workers: women were more vulnerable to threats and crime (such as burglary and theft), particularly in urban areas and places of residence or work, whereas men were disproportionately killed or injured, particularly in rural areas or when traveling on the road. Gaul et al. also found that male and female humanitarian workers face unique risks: men face a higher likelihood of violent confrontation, whereas women face a higher likelihood of sexual assault or harassment. Speer Mears further note the relevance of gender considerations to both men and women. Moreover, Wille and Fast’s study suggests that security incidents affecting men had a greater impact on operational decisions and aid delivery. This difference may be due to a greater proportion of men in the field, more serious risks facing men, or the fact that men’s victimization is simply taken more seriously in operational decision-making. Security management, after all, tends to be a male-dominated field. Yet once again, the lack of gender-disaggregated security data makes it difficult to answer this question conclusively.

Without gender-disaggregated data on security risks, it is also difficult to put effective and risk-sensitive organizational policies and procedures in place. In a 2006 study, Gaul et al. found that most organizations that the study reviewed lacked gender-specific security policies and procedures, relying on the faulty “underlying assumption that gender-neutral security policies equate to gender-equality.” While some humanitarian organizations provide gender-specific security guidelines to their staff, these guidelines are typically limited to restrictions on women’s dress or movement, as reflective of local cultural norms or gender roles.

There is ample evidence, however, that gender matters greatly for the populations that humanitarian actors serve. Due to differences in terms of status and roles played in society, violent conflict and disaster affect men, women, girls, and boys differently. These groups experience different forms of violence, displacement, and disrupted livelihoods. Given the profound affect that gender can have in environments of conflict and disaster, especially with regard to human security, there is little reason to believe that humanitarian workers themselves would be immune from these effects. As with the risks faced by vulnerable populations, an understanding of the different risks faced by humanitarian workers is crucial to designing and implementing an effective response.

1. What are the challenges faced by organization in according security to the humanitarian workers. How can it be overcome?

Humanitarian organizations face a lot of challenges across the globe, assisting those in need organizations often operate in complex and even hostile contexts. Some of the [most dangerous locations](https://aidworkersecurity.org/incidents/search?start=2017&end=2018&detail=1) for humanitarian workers in Africa include South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Mali, Sudan and Nigeria.

Organizations face threats to their worker security in these places. They include crime, armed conflict, acts of violent extremism, and health related threats like epidemics and illnesses as well as floods and landslides.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has suspended most of its activities in Maban, South Sudan, after suffering a violent attack on Monday 23 July 2018.

Organizations face mistrust from many members of armed groups – such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, or al-Shabaab in Somalia. These groups have expressed distrust or hostility toward humanitarian organizations, which they perceive to be collaborators of Western militaries, spies, or profiteers. This often resulted to humanitarian workers being exposed to theft/burglary, armed robbery, kidnapping/abduction, verbal threats/harassment, collateral damage.

A recently published [fact sheet](https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/publications/figures-glance-2018) offers an alarming overview of recent trends of violence against aid workers.

It reports that 313 aid workers were victims of major attacks in 2017. This includes 154 aid workers employed by national NGOs and national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, 98 aid workers in the service of international NGOs, and 48 personnel of the United Nations.

How the challenges have/can be overcome.

Organizations have come to realize that they have to ensure the wellbeing of the people who work for them. If their security isn’t a priority they can’t be [expected to be committed and productive](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09585192.2017.1322121).

Over the years many have come to acknowledge the [value of security management](https://www.eisf.eu/about-us/what-is-humanitarian-security-risk-management/). This is true in terms of protecting personnel as well as ensuring business continuation. Any harm done to aid agency personnel is likely affect an organization’s ability to continue its business.

On some occasions, serious security incidents have forced organizations to adopt risk averse attitudes. This has sometimes led to programs being halted, or in extreme cases workers being withdrawn from the field. For example, earlier this year the International Committee of the Red Cross reduced [its staff presence in Yemen](https://www.icrc.org/en/document/yemen-71-icrc-staff-pulled-out-yemen-amid-security-incidents-threats). This affected the agency’s overall ability to fully continue its humanitarian activities.

Organizations have put measures in place to [address staff security](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Stay_and_Deliver.pdf). They have, for example, hired security advisers, conducted risk analyses, developed security and contingency plans, and carried out staff tracking procedures.

1. What are some of risk mitigating factors offered to international humanitarian workers? Explain four.

Acceptance as a Strategy against Targeted Attacks

The first way for aid workers to gain acceptance is by adhering to humanitarian principles. This is acceptance by proxy. If you are accepted as a humanitarian actor and those who wish to harm you accept international humanitarian law, you are a bit more secure. The second way to be accepted is to do good work. If you have just built someone a house or delivered their baby, they are more likely to thank you than to shoot you.

For many aid agencies that is the limit of acceptance. We're good guys and we do good work. Further security comes from the other strategies. Protection (high compound walls, barred windows and land cruisers), avoidance (don't travel at certain times, don't go to certain places market, avoid being seen with certain people) and, less commonly, deterrence (threats of reports to police or withdrawal of services).

There are two problems with this approach. The first is that they all diminish the primary strategy of acceptance. Acceptance – at its purest – is being seen as part of the community. Protection, avoidance and deterrence strategies all set the agency apart from the community. High walls, travelling at speed in luxury cars, not shopping in the local market: all of these things say, 'I don't trust you' and distrust is the opposite of acceptance. When your perimeter wall is three meters high topped by razor wire, you can be sure that your acceptance is less than optimal. If your perimeter wall is a piece of string that you ask people not to cross (and they don't) then you know you have reached acceptance nirvana. As I was once told in Somalia, "we like you because you're not going to leave us like all the other agencies did, even if a few of you are killed". They were wrong, but the sentiment was clear.

To optimize acceptance, it is necessary to go beyond the passive actions of hoping that potential harmers respect international humanitarian law or the work that you do. In many cases, potential harmers are not the people that you have helped. Much humanitarian assistance is aimed at the most vulnerable (children, the elderly, the sick), almost by definition, these are not the ones who pose a threat to you.

To gain acceptance from potential harmers, you need to understand that they are part of the wider community, not just the group that you are helping. Acceptance is being seen as part of the community. Here are some examples about how to achieve that:

* Insist that all expatriate staff should take local language lessons.
* Encourage staff to engage in one non-work related activity with community members each week.
* Meet with local religious leaders, 'just for a chat'.
* Form a sports team and challenge the local team to a match.
* Invite national staff or community leaders to do a presentation on an aspect of local culture.
* Give paint and brushes to local children and ask them to paint the outside of your compound with pictures of their choice.
* Stop your car on routine journeys to buy non-essentials from random shopkeepers.

Deterrence

Deterrence – the reduction of risk likelihood through the threat of retaliatory harm – is rare as a strategy for humanitarian NGOs. The more obvious manifestations of this strategy (armed guards, electric fences, guard dogs) are seen as anathema to humanitarian principles but are used in extreme circumstances.10 Less obvious manifestations are more common – these include reporting malefactors to police or international criminal courts, loss of employment (i.e. firing) and withdrawal of assistance from the population (wherein deterrence evolves into avoidance). Deterrence tends to be a strategy of last resort for humanitarian agencies – harming people directly (e.g. shooting them) or indirectly (e.g. withdrawing life-saving assistance) is clearly contrary to the principles and objectives of aid organizations.

Protection

Protection is a focus on practical, technical solutions preventing untargeted, non-deliberate hazards (i.e. accidents) as well as reducing the likelihood of targeted risks by reducing opportunity. Examples include the mandatory use of seat belts, training staff in the identification and avoidance of unexploded ordnance (UXOs), the provision of sharps boxes and pits, walls around compounds and passwords on computers. Some protection activities also reduce post-incident impact (e.g. first aid kits in cars, fire extinguishers). Protection is a common strategy for aid agencies but only in moderation – protection activities can often countermand acceptance. For example, a three meter concrete wall, topped with razor wire and well lit at night provides protection but is also a literal barrier to establishing and maintaining cordial relations (the lowest useful level of acceptance) with the surrounding communities.

A fourth strategy, ‘avoidance’, is recognized and but is usually seen as a tactic within one of the three main strategies (e.g. avoidance of crossfire is managed through the protection of sandbags). Avoiding exposure to risk by, for example, not providing aid in highly insecure contexts, presents a moral dilemma for humanitarian agencies that see the provision of aid to those in need as their raison d’être and a moral imperative that should not be ignored. Hence avoidance may be used by aid agencies at a micro level (e.g. avoiding dangerous roads) but is rare at a macro level (e.g. avoiding Afghanistan).

1. Supporting your answer with relevant examples, what are the factors to consider in undertaking Gender sensitive security Risk assessment?

While doing a gendered risk assessmentthe organization should consider;

**Security and safety related needs, experiences, issues, and priorities** of women, girls, boys and men with reference to historical and existing context, such as specific threats, vulnerabilities and the overall risks examined. People often make assumptions on how men and women are positioned and what relations are in place. If you don’t have a good understanding of this you risk reinforcing existing discriminatory, hierarchical structures. One should keep in mind that as an external party, what you do will always have an effect on existing power dynamics. Often women and men have different roles and thus should be targeted differently. Gender specialist being sensitive to gender in situational assessments will ultimately inform the risk assessment and help to identify cultural and behavioral norms well in advance for the purposes of demonstrating respect and for better program delivery.

**Security focal points and security committees**

Consulting several SFPs and establishing security committees provides opportunities to best capture the diversity of staff, their concerns, perspectives and grievances. Good practice would recommend that a gender mixed team should be involved in conducting a risk assessment to ensure that all perspectives are captured and gender barriers overcome. A mix of nationalities (or ethnicities at country/field level) can be effective. Joint security-gender assessments or the implementation of a gender working group that is consulted throughout the assessment could also be considered. 44% of the field respondents stated they had not been consulted on security issues (50% women, 34% men). Meanwhile, 40% of male and 60% of female respondents from HQ/Country Office, feel that there is a lack of consultation of gender groups in security management. In our organization, we encourage and ensure that female staff participate in risk assessments, and that their specific concerns and suggestions are incorporated in the security plans and policies. Periodic review meetings are also held with female staff allowing a safe space for open sharing, questioning and feedback. In my experience this has been a positive experience that has helped us ‘genderise’ our security practices and policies over time. It is an ongoing learning exercise for the organization.

**Working with gender and GBV specialists**

Gender and GBV specialists should be included in any security focal point’s network of key informants since they have valuable information and insight. They can also be consulted for vetting findings and for contributing to solutions for reducing gender-related risk. Gender and GBV specialists have typically conducted an assessment on the historic and current status of women, girls, boys and men and/or the prevalence and profile of GBV. They have the technical expertise and sensitivity to conduct interviews and have knowledge or access to individuals, the community at large, local networks and organizations engaged in gender issues. They can also be included or consulted for the development of a wider security policy or procedural documents and often to facilitate essential gendered training. Many agencies may not have their own gender or GBV specialists depending on their mandate and programming. However, gender and GBV specialists can be easily accessed through other NGOs, the UN, civil society groups and local grassroots organizations.

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**Capturing information**

Several mechanisms, often used for programming purposes, have been employed to capture gender- related security and context information. Focus group discussions (with the community or agency personnel) have proved to be a preferred method in collecting information about perceived and real security risks, information about the communities and their cultural nuances, attitudes, norms, behaviors and codes, and about specific security-related issues staff may be facing

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1. First, talk with women and men separately;

2. Second, bring them together (stepping stones approach); or,

3. Use community/staff conversations to discuss issues around gender (e.g. domestic violence, traditional gender roles, etc.).

If well facilitated in safety and confidentiality and according to situation-specific parameters, focus group discussions alleviate perceptions of pre-existing gender stereotypes, prejudice and assumptions. Depending on the context and staff cohesion, it may or may not be appropriate to further separate national and international staff. Direct observation during program activities is an under-utilized tool, as are informal social opportunities (e.g. Saturday sewing groups, cricket game) that are safe spaces for active and respectful listening.

Some agencies also use quotas. This means that when implementing programs, they often use community selection boards that influence who benefits in the community etc. In these situations, effort is made to ensure equal representation in decision-making, for example with regard to gender. These types of approaches can lead to attitude and behavioral changes towards gender stereotypes; however, they can also have adverse effects and create more tension (within the community or between the community and the organization)