International Council of Voluntary Agencies

THE GRADUATE INSTITUTE GENEVA

INSTITUT DE HAUTES ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT

GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Source: Reuters/AMER ALMOHIBAN

Security Risk Management and Risk Aversion in the Humanitarian Sector

Assessing Decision-Making Processes in Local and International Humanitarian NGOs

Emanuel Hermann & Silvan Oberholzer

December 2, 2019

The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva
in collaboration with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

Executive Summary

This report discusses security risk management (SRM) processes and procedures in the humanitarian sector. It focuses on the institutionalization of such processes in international and local humanitarian NGOs as well as examining their relation to risk-taking/aversion. Furthermore, it identifies how SRM compares to the wider management of risks in the humanitarian sector. Although SRM in the humanitarian sector has increasingly gained the attention of professionals, policymakers, and academia, an assessment of how SRM is included in decision-making processes and how it affects risk-taking/aversion remains largely missing. The objective of this report is to close this gap by providing an overview of current practices within humanitarian organizations as well as offering critical donors' perspectives. Additionally, the results are intended to inform policy making on SRM and help to effectively address security risks at an organizational level. The findings are based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with specifically identified security managers of local and international humanitarian NGOs, key experts with experience in SRM in the humanitarian sector, as well as donor representatives, and are complemented by results of an online survey.

The report finds that:

1.) The institutionalization of SRM within humanitarian NGOs varies considerably, from integration in policies and entire project cycle management to ad hoc decisions on security risks. A one-size-fits-all approach to the institutionalization of SRM does not exist. Instead, SRM processes depend on an organization's structure and the environment it operates in.

2.) This report finds no relation between the institutionalization of SRM and a humanitarian NGO's risk-taking/aversion. Understandably, based on a humanitarian organization's mandate, mission and operational objectives, in conjunction with individual risk perception, an organization is more or less willing to take risks. However, risk-taking/aversion was not necessarily influenced by SRM processes within an organization. For instance, organizations accepted high levels of risk regardless of how institutionalized SRM processes were within. Furthermore, questions of program criticality influence humanitarian NGOs' willingness to accept risks. The more situations are interpreted as life-threatening for people in need, the more willing they are to take higher levels of security risks.

3.) Compared to other risks, security risks still tend to get less attention within humanitarian organizations. However, instead of seeing security risks as separate, many organizations are deciding to opt for an integrative risk management approach which embraces security and other risks such as fiduciary, legal, and reputational.

It is clear that SRM plays a relevant role within various humanitarian NGOs and that they are increasingly dedicating financial as well as human resources to enhance and further

institutionalize SRM procedures and processes. However, some questions and issues remain open with regards to SRM, especially in partnerships with or between international and local NGOs. The existing practices of risk transfer need to be addressed and practicable standards based on evidence need to be developed.

Based on the results of this report, the following recommendations on effective SRM are put forward:

Internal SRM Processes in Local and International Humanitarian NGOs

1.) **Include context-specific analysis and knowledge in all forms of SRM to ensure that security procedures are both feasible and understandable.**

2.) **Have internal security incident reporting procedures in place and ensure that employees can report security incidents without having to fear negative repercussions.**

3.) **Ensure that SRM prevents the transfer of responsibility for incidents on individual humanitarian workers. Vice versa, humanitarian workers should not see SRM as a substitute for personal risk awareness.**

4.) **Avoid prioritizing risks above one another and include SRM as an important part of integrated risk management approaches.**

Partnerships with Local and International Humanitarian NGOs

5.) **Ensure project/contract negotiations are more transparent and include separate budget lines for SRM in project proposals.**

6.) **Accept and respect a partner organization's decision on whether the implementation of a project is feasible or not.**

7.) **Ensure that implementing humanitarian NGOs have the networks and contacts in place that allow for safe access.**

8.) **Conduct capacity building in SRM for humanitarian NGOs as a joint activity, building on existing capacities and knowledge.**

9.) **Ensure that context-specific security training for local staff has the same priority as training for international staff.**

Advocacy of SRM

10.) **Address SRM processes more explicitly in policy discourses on the protection of humanitarian workers.**

11.) **Actors involved in agenda-setting and policy making in humanitarian action need to strongly advocate for security risk-sharing processes, thereby ensuring that security risk transfer becomes inadmissible.**

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) for its support, especially regarding the identification of suitable interview partners and the dissemination of the online survey. Without ICVA's support this report would not have been feasible. We want to especially thank Alon Plato and Jeremy Rempel for their guidance throughout this research project, their critical and constructive feedback from which this report benefitted substantially.

The authors would also like to thank the academic advisors Professor Davide Rodogno and Zubin Malhotra from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva for their support and input during the research process.

Finally, we would like to express gratitude to all the interview partners who took their time to talk to us and thereby added valuable insights into the topic under study. Without their willingness to participate in this study, the report would not have the same scope and depth. We would also like to thank the participants in our online survey for their valuable contribution.

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

EISF	European Interagency Security Forum
HEAT	Hostile Environment Awareness Training
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
INSO	International NGO Safety Organization
INSSA	International NGO Safety & Security Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SMP	Security Management Plan
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SRM	Security Risk Management
UN	United Nations

List of Figures

Every organization needs to have a feeling, how much are they at risk and how much can they afford.

Expert, Interview B, 2019

1. Introduction

Security risks have always been part of humanitarian action*[1] due to its objective to reach populations affected by various insecurities such as war and conflict or natural disasters. While violent attacks against humanitarian workers and infrastructure have increased over the last two decades in absolute terms and specific contexts,[2/3] Security Risk Management (SRM) in the humanitarian sector has attracted increased attention following several court cases for neglect of Duty of Care*[4] by humanitarian organizations.[5] The issue was further discussed at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) 2016, but despite efforts to strengthen risk management processes within humanitarian organizations, preliminary findings in existing literature suggest that they often remain insufficient to mitigate risks for employees.[6]

In academia as well as policy papers, the institutionalization of SRM[7] in the humanitarian sector and its role regarding risk aversion are hardly addressed. According to the literature, SRM in partnerships between international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (INGOs)* and local/ national humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs)* remains undermanaged and under-resourced, especially with regards to local NGOs which often bear the greatest security risks.[8]

Notably, the willingness to accept risk or risk-taking is always based on individual perception. While one employee might decide that the security risk in a certain area is acceptable, another might argue for the opposite. Such decisions can be influenced, among others, by past experiences of

[1] Asterisks follow terms that are explained in the glossary on pp. 46-48.

[2] Schneiker, A. (2018). Risk-Aware or Risk-Averse? Challenges in Implementing Security Risk Management Within Humanitarian NGOs, *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy* 9:2, 107/111.

[3] Dandoy and Pérouse argue that deliberate targeting of aid workers is not a "new and growing" phenomenon and does not differ radically from the past. The authors state that the current humanitarian insecurity debates "offer very narrow and selective readings of the issue of insecurity." See: Dandoy, A. & M. A. Pérouse de Montclos. (2013). Humanitarian workers in peril? Deconstructing the myth of the new and growing threat to humanitarian workers, *Global Crime* 14:4, 341-342.

[4] 'Duty of Care' includes security risk management as an integral part of an organization's responsibilities towards its employees. For more on 'Duty of Care' see Fairbanks, A. (2018). Duty of Care under Swiss Law: How to improve your safety and security risk management, https://www.cinfo.ch/sites/default/files/duty_of_care_eisf.pdf [20.09.2019], 11-14.

[5] The so-called "Dennis vs. Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)" court case in 2015 is a prominent example. The Norwegian court found NRC guilty for neglecting its 'Duty of Care' and argued respectively that NRC's security risk management in 2012 had not been sufficient to mitigate the risk to its staff to an acceptable level before sending them to a high-risk area. See: Hoppe, K. & C. Williams. (2016). Dennis vs. Norwegian Refugee Council: Implications for Duty of Care, *Humanitarian Practice Network*, https://odihpn.org/blog/dennis-vs-norwegian-refugee-council-implications-for-duty-of-care/ [15.09.2019].

[6] Stoddard, A., Czwarno, M. & L. Hamsik. (2019). NGOs & Risk: Managing Uncertainty in Local-International Partnerships. Global Report, *Humanitarian Outcomes & InterAction*, https://reliefweb.int/report/world/ngos-risk-managing-uncertainty-local-international-partnerships [05.06.2019].

[7] Schneiker (2018) defines institutionalized SRM as: "systems [which] include security policies (e.g., on which security strategies to follow) that result in concrete procedures (e.g., for how to conduct risk assessments or evacuations) and are supported by institutionalized structures (e.g., security training) and staff (e.g., security managers)" (p. 108/109).

[8] Stoddard et al., 2019, 5; Stoddard, A., Harmer, A., & V. Didomenico (2009). Providing aid in insecure environments: trends in policy and operations, *Overseas Development Institute*, https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/269.pdf [05.06.2019].

individuals or organizations, an organization's mandate, or the humanitarian approach it follows. Furthermore, risk-taking requires awareness of different contexts. For instance, providing the organization with new cars might lead to fewer traffic accidents or car breakdowns. At the same time, driving around in new cars in certain contexts can increase the risk of humanitarian workers to be targeted.[9] Hence, among others, SRM aims at reducing the influence of individual risk perception in decision making and enabling employees to reach those most in need while ensuring the security of staff members.[10]

SRM in this report is understood as a preventative process focused on identifying physical security risks and managing and mitigating them to an acceptable level.[11] It further refers to the implementation of security strategies (acceptance,* protection,* deterrence*) within an organization.[12]

Although often used interchangeably, the terms security and safety can be differentiated. While security risks are defined in this study as potential threats to life by external acts of violence, aggression or crime (random or targeted) against humanitarian aid workers,* assets or property, safety refers to "unintentional or accidental acts, events or hazards".[13]

Building on existing literature on SRM processes* within humanitarian INGOs, this study addresses the literature gap concerning the institutionalization of SRM – its inclusion in decision-making processes and organizational culture* – in humanitarian INGOs and local NGOs.[14] Additionally, this report examines the relationship between SRM and risk-taking/aversion in humanitarian NGOs and their governmental as well as multilateral donor agencies. Thereby, risk aversion refers to a tendency to avoid or a non-acceptance of greater levels of residual risk for life-saving programming, while risk-taking refers to the willingness to do so.

The primary research question of this study is: **How are security risk management processes institutionalized in local and international humanitarian NGOs and what is its relation to risk-taking/ aversion within these NGOs and donor organizations?**

This study aims at informing senior management, project managers, and aid

[9] Interview C, 2019.

[10] Bickley, S. (2017). Security Risk Management: a basic guide for smaller NGOs. *European Interagency Security Forum* (EISF), https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2157-EISF-June-2017-Security-Risk-Management-a-basic-guide-for-smaller-NGOs.pdf [15.09.2019], 10/11.

[11] Harmer, A., Stoddard, A., Harver, K., Van Brabant, K., Fenton, W., & Foley, M. (2010). *Good Practice Review 8: Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* (revised ed.), London: Overseas Development Institute, https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/GPR_8_revised2.pdf [24.10.2019], 7. This report differentiates between process* and procedure*. A process encompasses all tasks, procedures or methods, of SRM while a procedure refers to a specific or prescribed way of undertaking parts of the SRM process. For instance, the latter includes internal guidelines or policies (see Glossary).

[12] Schneiker, A. (2013). The Vulnerable Do-Gooders: Security Strategies of German Aid Agencies, *Disasters* 37:2, 251.

[13] Bickley, 2017, 6. The authors of this study acknowledge that safety incidents can also impact the security of aid workers. However, it was decided to differentiate between the two terms for analytical reasons.

[14] The assessment of the effectiveness of SRM tools is not part of this study. Vast literature already exists on the issue.

workers of humanitarian NGOs and the wider sector, including United Nations (UN) agencies and donors, to effectively address security risks at an organizational level and draft respective policies. Understanding SRM processes can also help humanitarian NGOs and donor organizations to communicate and negotiate with each other on an equal footing.

It is important to note that this study is not representative of all local and international humanitarian NGOs, but rather providing a critical reflection on SRM based on in-depth information from selected organizations and experts.[15]

Chapter 2 illustrates the current debates around SRM in the humanitarian sector and lays out gaps identified in the academic literature. The research design and methodology are presented in chapter 3, including a reflection on limitations and challenges. The three case studies presented in chapter 4 offer an insight into the institutionalization of SRM in local and international humanitarian NGOs. Based on primary information from in-depth interviews with experts and results from the online survey, chapter 5 highlights different aspects of the institutionalization of SRM in humanitarian NGOs. In chapter 6, the findings are analyzed and reflected on before the conclusion is presented in chapter 7. The recommendations can be found in chapter 8 at the end of this report.

This study was conducted as part of the Capstone Project[16] of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva in collaboration and with the support of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA).

[15] In this report, expert refers to an individual with various years of professional experience in the humanitarian sector and specifically, with operational SRM. Besides, scholars with relevant research experience in SRM in the humanitarian sector are also considered experts. What distinguishes experts from other interviewees is that they provided information without explicitly representing an organization.

[16] The Capstone Project is part of the interdisciplinary master's program in Development Studies at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. The aim of the project is that students gain direct research experience working on real-world research projects and global challenges, contributing to impactful solutions in collaboration with selected partner organizations which approach the university with a research puzzle.

“

There are basically three things in security analysis. There are your guts, there’s the organization, and there’s the technicality.

Expert, Interview E, 2019

2. Literature on Security Risk Management in the Humanitarian Sector

The following section discusses the literature on risk management and SRM in the humanitarian sector with a focus on SRM and risk aversion in humanitarian NGOs.

Risk Management in the Humanitarian Sector

Risk management was already used by humanitarian foundations and organizations during the nineteenth century. At that time, it was mainly applied to the administration of charitable funds. The geographical separation of headquarters and field operations in combination with less developed bureaucratic structures in various humanitarian organizations allowed for both risk management and a "spirit of adventure" in the field during much of the 20th century. Only towards the end of the 20th century, the risk management approach was extended to other than financial risks including security. At the same time, the implementation of improved communication and data collection systems led to greater control of decision-makers at headquarters over humanitarian workers in the field.[17]

Individual risks concerning the provision of humanitarian assistance are widely discussed in contemporary academic literature. Among others, these include targeted attacks on aid workers, landmines, riots (security), vehicle and traffic accidents (safety), health risks (tropical diseases, traumatic events), and corruption.[18] Increasingly, the risk of compromising humanitarian principles and its consequences due to strict enforcement of counter-terrorism legislation has become part of the risk literature on the humanitarian sector. It concludes that national counter-terrorism legislation can impact the ability of humanitarian INGOs as well as local NGOs to negotiate safe access.[19]

Some authors argue that risk management should become an organizational priority in both policy and institutional practice of humanitarian actors, and include assessing and managing different risks such as safety, security and health risks.[20] The UN Office for

[17] Neuman, M. & F. Weissman. (2016). Saving Lives and Staying Alive: Humanitarian Security in the Age of Risk Management. *MSF Crash*, https://www.msf-crash.org/en/publications/war-and-humanitarianism/saving-lives-and-staying-alive-humanitarian-security-age-risk [24.10.2019].

[18] See for example: Sharp, T. W. et al. (1995). Illness in Journalists and Relief Workers Involved in International Humanitarian Assistance Efforts in Somalia, 1992–93, *Journal of Travel Medicine* 2:2, 70–76. Holtz, T. H., Salama, P., Lopes Cardozo, B., & C. A. Gotway. (2002). Mental Health Status of Human Rights Workers, Kosovo, June 2000. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 15:5, 389-395. Roth, S. (2015). Aid work as edgework: Voluntary risk-taking and security in humanitarian assistance, development and human rights work, *Journal of Risk Research* 18:2, 139-155. Stoddard, A., Haver, K. & M. Czwarno. (2016). NGOs and Risk: How international humanitarian actors manage uncertainty, *Humanitarian Outcomes & InterAction*, https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/ngo-risk_report_web.pdf [05.06.2019].

[19] See for example: Norwegian Refugee Council [NRC]. (2015). Risk Management Toolkit: In Relation to Counterterrorism Measures, http://interagencystandingcomittee.org/file/8226/download?token=OPXTzarI [05.06.2019]. Mackintosh, K., & P. Duplat. (2013). Study of the impact of donor counterterrorism measures on principled humanitarian action, *UN OCHA and Norwegian Refugee Council*, https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/CounterTerrorism_Study_Full_Report.pdf [05.06.2019]. Stoddard et al., 2016, 34-35.

[20] Metcalfe, V., Martin, E., & S. Pantuliano. (2011). Risk in humanitarian action: Towards a common approach? *Humanitarian Policy Group [HPG] Commissioned Paper*, https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6764.pdf [05.06.2019].

the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (2014) report '*Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow: Managing the Risk of Humanitarian Crises*' calls for a universal risk management approach for the humanitarian sector.[21] However, current research shows that a "siloed" approach to different risk areas – tackling different risks separately – prevails in humanitarian NGOs. Thereby, security risks were identified as receiving the most attention concerning risk management in humanitarian INGOs.[22] Building on this research, this report aims to understand how SRM is currently embedded in the wider management of risks in humanitarian NGOs.

Security Risks in the Humanitarian Sector

Security risks in the humanitarian sector are various and exposure to risks lies in the nature of emergency or relief activities, especially in contexts of conflict, and is not a new phenomenon. Neuman and Weissman (2016) trace the emergence of SRM in the humanitarian sector over the past twenty years to "a growing sense of insecurity" within the aid sector.[23] However, Dandoy and Perouse de Montclos (2013) show that while absolute data on the number of attacks and victims of humanitarian workers increased, relative numbers have almost remained stable since 1997.[24] Despite these findings, Neuman and Weissman (2016) argue that kidnapping of aid workers has increased in significance over the past years and that humanitarian workers are more frequently exposed to security risks due to an increase of relief operations in conflict areas.[25]

Some authors argue that targeted attacks on humanitarian workers occur due to a lack of commitment to the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality.[26] For example, Germany focuses on promoting these humanitarian principles with the aim to better protect aid workers from targeted attacks as part of its two-year term on the UN Security Council (2019-20).[27] Opponents argue that such an approach is too simplistic and ignores the politicization (humanitarian aid as instrument of foreign policy) and militarization (blurred lines between humanitarian and military actions) of humanitarian action, as well as individual factors affecting the security of humanitarian workers (e.g., representation of social class, religious or ethnic community).[28]

---

[21] UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS [OCHA]. (2014). Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow: Managing the Risk of Humanitarian Crises, *OCHA Policy and Studies Series*, https://www.unocha.org/site/dms/Doucments/OCHA%20SLTT%20Web%20Final%20Single.PDF [05.06.2019].

[22] STODDARD ET AL., 2016, 22.

[23] NEUMAN & WEISSMAN, 2016.

[24] DANDOY & PEROUSE DE MONTCLOS, 2013; NEUMAN & WEISSMAN, 2016.

[25] NEUMAN & WEISSMAN, 2016.

[26] ibid.

[27] DANY, C. (2019, May 14). How Germany advocates for the protection of aid workers in the Security Council. *PRIF Blog*, https://blog.prif.org/2019/05/14/how-germany-advocates-for-the-protections-of-aid-workers-in-the-security-council/ [24.10.2019].

[28] STODDARD ET AL., 2009; DANY, 2019, May 14.

Security Risk Management in Humanitarian NGOs

With the development of a security culture in the aid sector in the mid-90s, security risks were increasingly assessed and managed at the headquarters and field level by security advisors and risk managers with a military and police background. Since the early 2000s, the establishment of organizational SRM systems has increased, mainly in international humanitarian organizations.[29] Various regional security coordination platforms and professional security management networks (e.g., EISF, INSSA) have developed standards, guidelines, databases and training programs for humanitarian workers. NGOs and private security companies have entered the humanitarian security market to provide consultancy, training, as well as protection services (e.g., RedR, INSO).[30]

Through legal obligations of humanitarian organizations to ensure the safety of their employees in the workplace under national (labor) law ('Duty of Care'), the professionalization of SRM became a necessity rather than a choice.[31] Duty of Care obliges humanitarian organizations to inform their employees about risks associated with their work and to ensure that all necessary measures are taken to minimize these risks.[32]

A universal definition of "good SRM" for the humanitarian sector does not exist.[33] The Good Practice Review (GPR) 8 on *'Operational Security Management in Violent Environments'*, a widely recognized reference guideline for SRM in the humanitarian sector, describes "good" SRM as keeping residual risks to a minimum through procedures that reduce the impact and probability of security risks. It further states that risk-taking should be justified by the potential benefits of specific activities.[34]

In contrast, Neuman and Weissman (2016) question the current security culture in aid organizations and whether the professionalization of SRM helps aid workers to cope with risks in crisis and conflict settings. They raise concern over the increasing amount of security procedures and documents which tend to focus on aid workers' behavior who are often implicitly blamed for security incidents*. Hence, as they argue, senior management at headquarters level can use this discourse to justify a centralized approach to security management and the

[29] Bruderlein, C. & P. Gassmann. (2006). Managing Security Risks in Hazardous Missions: The Challenge of Securing United Nations Access to Vulnerable Groups, *Journal of Human Rights* 19, 63-93. Duffield, M. (1997). NGO Relief in War Zones: Towards an Analysis of the New Aid Paradigm, *Third World Quarterly* 18:3, 527-542. Van Brabant, K. (1998). Cool Ground for Aid Providers: Towards Better Security Management in Aid Agencies, *Disasters* 22:2, 109-125. Roth, 2015, 139; Stoddard et al., 2016, 8; Schneiker, 2018, 112.

[30] Neuman & Weissman, 2016.

[31] ibid.

[32] Beerli, M. J., & Weissman, F. (2016). Humanitarian Security Manuals: Neutralising the human factor in humanitarian action. In Neuman, M., & Weissman, F. (2016). Saving Lives and Staying Alive: Humanitarian Security in the Age of Risk Management. *MSF Crash*. Chapter 2 [online book], https://www.msf-crash.org/en/publications/war-and-humanitarianism/saving-lives-and-staying-alive-humanitarian-security-age-risk [24.10.2019].

[33] Neuman & Weissman, 2016.

[34] Harmer, A., et al. (2010). *Good Practice Review 8: Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* (revised ed.), London: Overseas Development Institute, https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/GPR_8_revised2.pdf [24.10.2019], 5.

need for more supervision of field staff which results in decreasing autonomy for humanitarian workers.[35]

Considering this concern and the vast literature on the emergence of security risks[36] and different risk management systems, tools, and guidelines,[37] this report analyzes the institutionalization of SRM in local and international humanitarian NGOs. An analysis of SRM in local humanitarian NGOs, especially when studied independently from partnerships with INGOs, seems to be largely absent in the literature.

Additionally, in their research on the costs of SRM, Zumkehr and Finucane (2013) highlight that securing funding for SRM is challenging and that security costs need to be justified and communicated in program design and negotiations with donors.[38] However, studies of the perception of humanitarian NGOs regarding donor demands show that some humanitarian NGOs fear losing out in the competition for grants if they explicitly list security costs in grant proposals.[39] Therefore, this report tries to understand if donors require SRM processes in contract negotiations with humanitarian NGOs, what exactly they demand and if they are willing to give money for security expenses. Where SRM processes already exist, this report is concerned with the question of how they affect the issuing of grants.

Risk Aversion in the Humanitarian Sector

Risk aversion of humanitarian NGOs and their governmental donors is not widely studied in risk management research. Some scholars mention a trend towards "bunkerization" – construction of fenced off aid compounds, distancing humanitarian workers from populations in need – and therefore identify risk aversion within the entire humanitarian sector.[40]

Roth (2015) studies the tension between voluntary risk-taking at the individual level and risk management at the organizational level in humanitarian action but focuses on international aid organizations/staff and does not consider donors. She finds that

[35] Neuman & Weissman, 2016.

[36] Martin, R. (2003). An Introduction to NGO Field Security, in: K. M. Cahill (ed.) *Emergency Relief Operations*. New York: Fordham University Press. Van Brabant, K. (2001). Mainstreaming the Organizational Management of Safety and Security: A review of aid agency practices and a guide for management, *Humanitarian Policy Group*, https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/297.pdf [05.06.2019].; Dandoy & Perouse de Montclos, 2013.

[37] Mujawar, S. (2009). Security Management in Humanitarian Agencies, *European Interagency Security Forum* (EISF), https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/0375-Mujawar2009-Security-Management-in-Humanitarian-Agencies.pdf [05.06.2019]. Schneiker, 2013. Fast, L., Freeman, F., O'Neill, M., & E. Rowley (2015). The Promise of Acceptance as a Security Management Approach, *Disasters* 39:2, 208-231. Davis, J. et al. (2017). Security to go: a risk management toolkit for humanitarian aid agencies (2nd edition), *European Interagency Security Forum* (EISF), https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2124-EISF-2017-Security-to-go_a-risk-management-toolkit-for-humanitarian-aid-agencies-2nd-edition.pdf [05.06.2019].

[38] Zumkehr, H. J., & Finucane, C. (2013). The Cost of Security Risk Management for NGOs. *European Interagency Security Forum (EISF)*, https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2007-ChristopherFinucane-2014-EISF_Cost-of-Security-Risk-Management-for-NGOs.pdf [20.10.2019], 2 & 6.

[39] Schneiker, 2013, 253-255; Schneiker, 2018, 118-119; Zumkehr & Finucane, 2013, 7.

[40] Duffield, M. (2010). Risk-Management and the Fortified Aid Compound: Everyday Life in Post Interventionary Society, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 4:4, 453-474. Fast, L. (2014). Coping with Danger: Paradigms of Humanitarian Security Management, in L. Fast (ed.), *Aid in Danger: The Perils and Promise of Humanitarianism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 173-225. Neuman & Weissman, 2016.

risk-taking in the aid sector is shaped by security measures of aid organizations and can be in stark contrast to aid workers' individual acceptance of risks and undermine their initial motivation to engage directly with the local population.[41]

Furthermore, Stoddard et al. (2016) analyze the role of donors on risk-taking and find that two-thirds of the INGOs studied in their research believed that donors influence the type and level of risk that the organization accepts. Additionally, they argue that questions of program criticality* are often ignored in risk management of humanitarian INGOs.[42]

Regarding risk aversion, this report builds mainly on the study of Schneiker (2018) which examines how SRM within humanitarian INGOs can impede the implementation of programs. Among others, Schneiker (2018) finds that INGO staff often perceives security management as an impediment to programming.[43] Whereas Schneiker (2018) only considers international and Western NGOs, this report includes both INGOs and local NGOs and tries to identify SRM and its relation to risk aversion/taking, to better understand differing forms of managing security concerns in different operational contexts.

[41] ROTH, 2015.
[42] STODDARD ET AL., 2016, 18.
[43] SCHNEIKER, 2018, 118-119.

“

This competition [for donor funding] is expected to continue and to be extremely damaging to NGOs’ willingness to report incidents, to think critically about their own response, to collaborate with each other, to share information, security or non-security related.

Expert, Interview C, 2019

3. Research Design and Methodology

To analyze the different forms of institutionalization of SRM processes in local and international humanitarian NGOs and to understand if and how it impacts risk aversion of donors and NGOs, several sub-questions guide this report:

- To determine **institutionalization of SRM**: When and how do SRM processes become part of the decision-making process? Who is in charge of such processes? How are they implemented throughout an organization? What are the existing procedures?
- To determine **the relation of SRM to risk aversion/taking**: Does the ability of an organization to manage security risks match with its willingness to accept security risks? Are donors reluctant to fund organizations that do not have (institutionalized) SRM processes in place and do they demand such processes in contract negotiations?
- To determine **how SRM compares to the wider management of risks**: How does the institutionalization of SRM processes compare to the management of other risks (e.g. fiduciary/ legal risks) within humanitarian INGOs/ local NGOs?

This study is built on a qualitative research design within the logic of grounded theory. Open coding was used according to the categories established in chapter 5 and 6, and primarily collected through eleven in-depth, semi-structured interviews of around 30-60 minutes (see questionnaire templates, Appendices II-IV) with security risk managers, project coordinators/managers, scholars and experts in security risk management, as well as donor representatives, active in the humanitarian sector. Information stemming from the interviews was complemented through quantitative and qualitative data from the online survey (n=15; see Appendix I), review of literature, and, where available, analysis of reports and other primary sources on SRM from the respective organizations.

In-depth case studies are used to get a detailed analysis of security risk management processes and procedures in three humanitarian NGOs (one local NGO, two INGOs) and its relation to risk aversion/-taking. The focus lies on organizations rather than countries since the authors of this report acknowledge that SRM should be part of any humanitarian project independent of its location.

The sample of this study is based upon the selection of organizations' willingness to participate in this research project. Furthermore, they all meet the following criteria: i) humanitarian NGOs which are at least operationally active in emergency response/relief activities, and that ii) are committed to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence, and impartiality. Even though the perception of security risks is subjective and therefore to some degree their management, these two criteria allow for a better comparison concerning i) the general context of security risks related to a humanitarian NGO's activities (e.g., high-risk contexts), and ii) the

risks an organization is willing to accept with regard to its vision and mission.

To better understand the role of donors concerning SRM in humanitarian NGOs, the sample includes one governmental and two multilateral donor organizations. All three fund operational humanitarian NGOs that fulfill the selection criteria mentioned above. Although all donors participating in this study also implement projects, the focus of this report lies solely on their role as donors of humanitarian NGOs. This helps to better understand how donor requirements influence the institutionalization of SRM in humanitarian INGOs and local NGOs. Again, the random selection was based on the willingness to participate in this study.

Expert interviewees were selected regarding their knowledge about and practical experience in SRM in the humanitarian sector. This allows to gather and present information that is not strictly bound to specific organizations' opinions and activities, but more representative of the humanitarian sector.

Anonymity is provided on request of several interview partners and applied consistently throughout this report for both interviewees and survey participants and their affiliated organizations.

Limitations and Challenges

The scope of this study constitutes its main limitation. Hence, this report cannot be deemed representative of the institutionalization of SRM in humanitarian NGOs; it rather provides for a snapshot of the issue. However, desk research, interviews and the survey complement each other and help to better understand the institutionalization of SRM in the humanitarian sector.

The online survey (n=15; see Appendix I) on SRM in humanitarian NGOs is not representative of the entire sector. It is used to complement the more detailed information gained through the interviews. Despite dissemination through ICVA's network and beyond, the number of survey participants remained low but within the agreed minimum for this study.

Major challenges encountered during the research process included accessing local humanitarian NGOs (especially smaller NGOs) as well as donor organizations. To overcome this challenge and to expand the scope of the report, five in-depth interviews were conducted with scholars and operationally experienced experts/ consultants in SRM in the humanitarian sector.

The authors of this report are aware of the heterogeneity of interviewee's backgrounds, positions and responsibilities concerning SRM. Their perspectives might not always be identical to those of their colleagues and in general, might not be fully representative. Therefore, each interviewee's background with regards to SRM is briefly introduced in the 'List of Interviews' (pp. 52-55).

If it’s a core activity of your program and you believe in it, then you go and try to do it, minimizing the risks as low as reasonably possible, considering that zero risk doesn’t exist.

Representative of Organization B, Interview G, 2019

4. Case Studies: Institutionalization of Security Risk Management in Humanitarian NGOs

The following sections focus on three organizations as a case study to highlight different forms of institutionalization of SRM. Moreover, it addresses SRM in partnerships between INGOs and donors with national NGOs, donor requirements, and risk-taking/ aversion. Organization A is a large international humanitarian NGO[44] with more than 7,000 staff worldwide. The major security risks the organization is exposed to include collateral damage in conflicts and assaults on personnel and assets. Organization B is a large international humanitarian NGO with just above 2,000 staff. Collateral damages, attacks due to "being at the wrong place at the wrong time", and exposure to armed groups are the principal security risks it is exposed to. Both organizations A and B have their headquarters in Western Europe. Organization C is a large local humanitarian NGO[45] operating in a "high-risk" context with more than 450 staff and 16 regional offices. It employs both local and international staff and faces the following security risks: exposure to armed groups, security threats when refusing clientelism and corrupt practices, and accusations that pose a direct threat to the security of its employees.

Forms of Institutionalization of Security Risk Management: Processes, Procedures, Methods and Policies

Organization A

Who is in charge?

Organization A has a Global Security Manager supported by a team of around ten people at the headquarter level. In total, around 130 staff are concerned with SRM related tasks. The Global Security Manager is part of the Senior Management Group at the headquarters. The group meets three times a week. Furthermore, the Security Manager is included in the Strategic Group which meets once a year. A risk assessment of the overall strategy of the organization is completed once a year.

On the regional level, there are seven security managers while around 15 international staff are responsible for security on the country level as well as in high-risk area offices. Furthermore, the organization employs 80 so-called Security Focal Points around the world whose portfolio includes at least 50% security-related tasks. Every country with a high-risk area is obliged to have an international Security Manager, while all medium-risk area offices have at least a fulltime Security Officer or Security Coordinator (national

[44] In this study, a humanitarian INGO is defined as an NGO with a humanitarian mandate exercised in a country/countries other than its headquarters is based. Thereby, a small INGO is defined as having less than 30 staff members, a mid-range INGO as having less than 100 staff members, and a large INGO as having more than 100 staff members.

[45] A local or national NGO is defined in this study as an NGO with a humanitarian mandate exercised in the country its headquarters is based. A small local NGO is defined as having less than 15 staff members, a mid-range local NGO as having less than 30 staff members, and a large local NGO as having more than 30 staff members.

staff) and every area office has a Security Focal Point.[46]

Monitoring and Evaluation

The internal SRM process and policies of organization A are reviewed regularly and were recently updated. The policy documents are kept short and focus on the principles of the organization. All area offices must conduct a security risk assessment once a year and are responsible for the implementation of the findings. Additionally, there is an internal compliance system in place and the different offices are obliged to conduct a self-assessment every four months. Recently, the organization introduced an audit and review system for security risks. At least every four years, the SRM unit conducts field visits to audit and review the offices to not solely rely on the results of the self-assessments.[47]

Further Methods and Procedures

Organization A has an incident-reporting system in place which is used to determine the main challenges to current operations and activities. Furthermore, the data is analyzed to improve SRM processes as well as procedures and to formulate lessons-learned from operations.

The completion of a Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT)* within the first six months of employment constitutes a minimum standard for all international staff deployed to medium-risk and high-risk countries. The organization has a training unit which conducts seven HEAT-trainings per year. The training lasts for five days and is conducted in partnership with an institution that provides psychological support to humanitarian workers. Recently, an individual safety training program was established for national staff. The training lasts for three days and every local staff member is required to take part every four years. The organization saw this as part of developing the capacities of their local staff and offices. Both HEAT and the individual safety training program include preventive as well as responsive elements.

In terms of staffing, the organization has defined minimum requirements regarding health, safety and security for new employees deployed to medium and high-risk areas.[48]

Organization B

Who is in charge?

In organization B, the post of Senior Security Advisor was recently established as part of an effort to strengthen SRM processes. The Security Advisor is tasked to support the headquarter as well as the missions in SRM. Decisions on whether to implement a specific program/activity or not are usually taken at the headquarter level and the Security Risk Advisor is not always fully involved in the decision-making process. However, the security advisor is frequently contacted to provide a context analysis and assessment.

On the country level, some missions have a Security Officer or Coordinator but SRM is often part of the portfolio of the Head of

[46] Interview F, 2019.
[47] ibid.
[48] ibid.

Mission, Area/Field Coordinator or persons who serve as Security Focal Points. The Security Advisor is usually not part of the drafting of security plans for each mission and location. However, they frequently send their Standard Operating Procedures* (SOPs) for evaluation and discussion to the Security Advisor.[49]

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring was described as a challenge since organization B has several missions and bases all over the world and the Security Advisor is tasked to monitor all of them. While this is done through field visits, an online platform also helps to track changes and evaluate security policies.

Security Coordinators oversee the updating of security plans regularly and at least every two weeks, they discuss the latest developments and concerns with the Security Advisor. In countries where the Head of Mission is responsible for security, monitoring depends on the style of management and how "security-minded" the person in charge is. This approach was described as more difficult to manage by the Security Advisor.

The Security Advisor further conducts a quarterly analysis of the main severe and critical incidents and provides lessons learned that are shared with the headquarter as well as the country and regional offices.[50]

Further Methods and Procedures

A risk management plan at the headquarter level of organization B exists and is currently under review. It is part of a comprehensive planning process that, among others, can be used for security and risk analysis. It combines all information on a specific area and is used to decide if the organization enters the respective area or not. It also helps to draft security plans for the country as well as the regional level. Once a mission commences, it is also used to determine security procedures and serves as a basis for discussion and coordination between the management level and project staff. In this way, the management can ensure that the procedures are clear and followed by staff members, including those who might not always be "security-minded." Through an online management platform, all security-related documents can be shared with the mission and the Security Advisor can track changes in the documents.

An online library with guidelines and documents regarding SRM was established that is accessible to all staff members. It aims at developing an awareness of safety and security issues among staff members.

Organization B also has an online reporting system for security-related incidents. The data can be divided into different categories (e.g., incidents; the level of impact) and used for up-to-date analysis. A list of incidents divided by countries is also prepared to better understand security trends and how to address them.[51]

Organization C

Who is in charge?

Organization C employs a Security Manager at the headquarter level as well as Security

[49] Interview G, 2019.
[50] ibid.
[51] ibid.

Officers at the regional/district level. Before a project in a specific area is approved, the Project Manager must consult with the Security Officer to draw up a security plan. The interviewed representative stated that the Security Officer is part of a Viber[52] group which includes all security managers of humanitarian INGOs and NGOs present in a certain area. The group is used to discuss and consult with colleagues about the risks and challenges involved in opening a new project. The Security Officer then sends a report to the Security Manager who decides whether the planning can continue. If the manager agrees, the Security Officer visits the proposed program site and tries to coordinate with the different local authorities (e.g., relevant state agencies, armed groups, community leaders etc.) and the potential beneficiaries. A second report is sent to the Security Manager who then decides whether the program can be implemented. If the context is considered too dangerous, the organization asks the donor to find another area to implement the project.[53]

According to the official Safety and Security Policy of the organization, available on its homepage, the Executive Director is responsible for the security of staff on the operational managerial level, while the Security Manager is in charge of developing and monitoring policies as well as advising the Senior Management on security issues.[54]

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Executive Director of organization C is responsible to initiate a periodical review of the Safety and Security Policy. Security incidents are to be reported. These reports are used for an analysis of why the incident occurred and what can be learned from it. According to a report on organization C's website, experts of a private international company that provides consultancy on security for humanitarian NGOs reviewed the security policy and procedures recently. Furthermore, an external assessment of the security and safety measures at the organization's headquarters was conducted.[55]

Further Methods and Procedures

One of the principles of organization C is that no operation can commence without a Security Management Plan (SMP) which is based on a context and risk analysis. All staff must be aware of the SMP and the procedures it entails. Among others, the Safety and Security Policy encompasses security guidelines for field visits by international staff and the organization's premises.[56]

For the two interviewees representing organization C, negotiating and coordinating access to beneficiaries in the context of multiple and competing authorities already constitutes a security measure. They argued that the ability to get access was based on knowledge and understanding of the context which gives them an advantage over INGOs

[52] Viber is a messenger for chatting, phone and video calls on smartphones and computers.
[53] Interview K, 2019.
[54] Security and Safety Policy of organization C, available on its website, 01.11.2019.
[55] Review of Security and Safety procedures of organization C, report available on its website, 01.11.2019.
[56] Security and Safety Policy of organization C, available on its website, 01.11.2019.

which often struggle to understand the underlying socio-cultural/political hierarchical structures and how they relate to each other.[57]

Security Risk Management in Partnerships

While working with local implementing partner organizations was common practice for organization A, it was less frequent for organization B to enter into partnerships with local NGOs.[58] In 2018, the department responsible for humanitarian access in organization A established a "Humanitarian Partnership Toolkit" to standardize cooperation with local partners. Furthermore, the organization was in the process of introducing standards for contracts with partners and suppliers including provisions on SRM.[59]

Organization B preferred to directly implement projects. When entering partnerships, the organization favored sitting down with local NGOs and speak about the terms of the cooperation rather than having a general guideline in place. In some partnerships, SRM was part of the negotiations. While security plans were not shared with local partners, some joint security and safety mechanisms existed.[60]

As a local NGO, organization C has been an implementing partner for various INGOs and donor organizations. One interviewee described an incident where a multilateral organization provided all humanitarian agencies with a letter by the Prime Minister to get access to beneficiaries all over the country. However, the letter was insufficient in some parts of the country that were not controlled by government forces. As a result, they avoided using it in some cases and instead directly negotiated with relevant local authorities. Furthermore, they argued that the security training they had received from INGOs was not adequately tailored to the local context (e.g., excluding local traditions and customs). Consequently, they were unable to implement some of the aspects they had been taught.[61]

Donor Requirements on Security Risk Management

All interviewees were not directly involved in negotiations with donors. However, the representative of organization A stated that the results of the security risk assessment are usually part of the project proposal and are shared with donors. Our interviewee also stressed that donors are increasingly demanding compliance, over-sight and SRM while they are not willing to increase funding. However, sustaining a comprehensive SRM at headquarter and regional level requires more money to be spent on the organization which at first sight might not directly affect beneficiaries but is important for organizations to continue operations.[62]

In contrast, one donor was willing to increase funding for SRM processes due to the context organization B was operating in.

[57] Interview K, 2019.
[58] Interview F, 2019; Interview G, 2019.
[59] Interview F, 2019.
[60] Interview G, 2019.
[61] Interview K, 2019.
[62] Interview F, 2019.

Furthermore, in the case of organization B, the SRM process positively affected relations with donors. Even in the case of a security incident, the organization could show that all preventative and responsive measures had been in place to protect its employees and respect its 'Duty of Care' towards them. Hence, donors recognized this in subsequent contract negotiations. Moreover, some donors asked specifically for security procedures and plans. In general, the organization tends to add expenses for SRM in contracts even if not specifically asked for. Especially in the last years, donors have been increasingly interested in SRM in contract negotiations with organization B.[63]

Organization C did not mention donor organizations asking for SRM in contract negotiations. However, one of the interviewees argued that donors cannot ask their organization to implement projects in areas that are considered too dangerous by the Security Officer and that all staff must follow the NGO's security rules. So far, donors and partners have always accepted the Security Manager's decisions on the feasibility of a specific project.[64]

Security Risk Management and Risk-Taking / Risk Aversion

The Global Security Manager of organization A argued that there is a balance between risk-taking and SRM within the organization. In the planning phase for new projects in high-risk contexts, the interviewee stressed the need to internally address issues of program criticality, to decide where it is reasonable to go and how programs can be implemented. If the risk assessment concludes that risks cannot be adequately mitigated and are not relative to program objectives, the organization has in the past decided to stay out of certain areas.[65]

In general, organization B is willing to take risks. It is seen as part of the organization's culture to be willing to take more risks than other organizations. However, again questions of program criticality are considered before a decision is made. The organization especially sees lifesaving activities as justified for taking higher risks. For the Senior Security Advisor of organization B, a balance is to be found not only between the context and the situation but also regarding the core activities of the organization. Overall, SRM in organization B should empower staff in the field to stay and help mitigating risk to an acceptable level.[66]

The willingness of taking risks of organization C was mentioned by the interviewed representatives to be directly aligned with the organization's security policy. Consequently, risk-taking depends on the decision of the Security Officer who must ensure the security of staff members.[67]

[63] Interview G, 2019.
[64] Interview K, 2019.
[65] Interview F, 2019.
[66] Interview G, 2019.
[67] Interview K, 2019.

“

I would prefer that we have a more open and transparent dialogue [with humanitarian NGOs] because the idea is that we are trying to select a partner who is going to be able to deliver results. And that means that they must be able to manage the risk associated with whatever that project is, and we want them to be successful.

Representative of Donor Organization B, Interview I, 2019

5. An Experts' and Donors' Perspective on the Institutionalization of Security Risk Management in Humanitarian NGOs

This chapter is based on semi-structured expert interviews regarding SRM in humanitarian INGOs and local NGOs. The information is complemented by three donor interviews and a survey of humanitarian NGOs.

Forms of Institutionalization of Security Risk Management: Processes, Procedures, Methods and Policies

SRM in humanitarian NGOs can take **different forms of institutionalization**, ranging from integration in policies, the entire project cycle management* to ad hoc decisions on security risks. A one-size-fits-all approach of SRM and its institutionalization in humanitarian NGOs does not exist.[68]

In fact, the form of institutionalization of SRM **heavily depends on an organization's structure and operational security risk environment**.[69] A hierarchical organizational structure does, however, not necessarily exclude a SRM with decentralized decision-making processes that considers security as a shared organizational responsibility.[70]

Opinions of experts vary on where SRM should be placed in the organizational structure of humanitarian NGOs. A **centralized approach** to SRM directly under the Directorate's or Senior Management's responsibilities can facilitate commitment to security throughout an organization and enhance timely public communication by the Directorate in the case of a security incident. At the same time, due to the high subjectivity of risk-taking, such a centralized approach might not be aligned to reality on the ground and too centered on Senior Management.[71] For example, one interviewee observed that small INGOs offices abroad often neither have the capacity nor the time to adopt security plans or templates established at headquarter level overseas.[72]

Institutionalizing SRM as a **support service to operations** (in the form of Security Risk Managers or Advisors who are often based at headquarter level) bears a risk of "silo-ing" security from operations instead of mainstreaming it. This can lead to a perception of SRM as additional work that prevents rather than enables program implementation.[73] However, this form of institutionalization ensures that organizational internal expertise is included in SRM. In some humanitarian NGOs, SRM is part of human resources, mainly regarding security training and communication with family members in the case of a security incident.[74]

[68] Interview A, 2019; Interview D, 2019; Interview E, 2019.
[69] Interview D, 2019; Interview E, 2019.
[70] Interview E, 2019.
[71] Interview B, 2019.
[72] Interview C, 2019.
[73] Interview A, 2019; Interview D, 2019.
[74] Interview B, 2019.

A more **decentralized approach** links SRM directly or closely to operations. Operational staff might be best suited to decide on the balance of risk-taking in a specific context and its impact on humanitarian activities on the ground.[75] This can contribute to the perception of SRM by Program Managers as being part of everyday business, rather than "additional work", thereby making it an integral part of operational activities.[76]

Ad hoc SRM, which usually implies the absence of institutionalized SRM, can nevertheless contribute to humanitarian response but may not address the subjectivity of risk perception to the same extent. In contrast, institutionalized SRM provides more objective guidelines on when risks are acceptable or not and can be understood as an organization's capacity to report, respond, and have a control and command mechanism in place regarding security risks.[77]

The survey (n=15) illustrates [Q8] that in 80% of humanitarian NGOs participating in the survey, the Executive Management or Directorate, as well as Security Risk Managers based at the headquarters, oversee SRM. In all local NGOs that participated in the survey (n=3), the Directorate or Executive Management are responsible for SRM. 67% of local NGOs employ one or several Security Risk Managers based at their headquarters. 92% of INGOs (n=12) mentioned that field management based in the country of operation oversees SRM while in 42% frontline staff was responsible. This indicates that SRM in some humanitarian NGOs consists of a **combination of the above-mentioned forms of institutionalization**, characterized by a decentralized approach with responsibility at the highest levels and support services to operations at regional or country level.

Decision-making Processes

A vast amount of different security risk measures and information on how to implement them is available to NGOs.[78] **Development of SRM and concepts** can include external consultants. However, one expert argued that ideally, this should take place within an organization due to the subjectivity of risk-taking and organization-specific character of SRM.[79]

Decisions on the implementation of security risk measures usually depend on an **organization's perception of how much it is at risk and how much risk it can afford to take** in terms of human, material, and financial resources.[80] The fact that some humanitarian INGOs take these decisions at the headquarter level has led to a disconnect from the local security context in countries of operation.[81]

[75] Interview A, 2019; Interview B, 2019; Interview E, 2019.
[76] Interview A, 2019.
[77] Interview E, 2019.
[78] Interview A, 2019; Interview B, 2019.
[79] Interview A, 2019.
[80] Interview B, 2019.
[81] Interview A, 2019; Interview C, 2019.

One expert highlighted that not all local and international humanitarian NGOs always see **a need for SRM**. This mentality can be strengthened by the imposition of Western concepts of SRM on local humanitarian NGOs which sometimes refuse security advice from abroad due to a perceived better understanding of the context.[82]

On the other hand, various humanitarian NGOs, especially those based in Western countries, seem to have become **aware of their legal obligations towards staff members under Duty of Care**. Implementation of security concepts, provision of security training, and informed consent on the risks taken by humanitarian staff are conditions of these legal obligations. For small humanitarian NGOs, meeting these obligations can pose a challenge. This is even more of a problem since court cases can define the future of small organizations.[83]

As illustrated in Figure 1 [Q6], the **management of security risks in humanitarian NGOs** is perceived by survey respondents (n=15) as relevant with a score of 7.93 on a scale between 1 (insignificant) to 10 (utmost importance). Security risks are ranked the second most important, only after legal and compliance risks (8.20). When dividing for local and international humanitarian NGOs, this order remains the same for INGOs (8.25 for security risks), but changes for local NGOs where security risks rank third (6.67), together with reputational as well as safety risks, after legal and compliance (7.67) and operational risks (7.33).

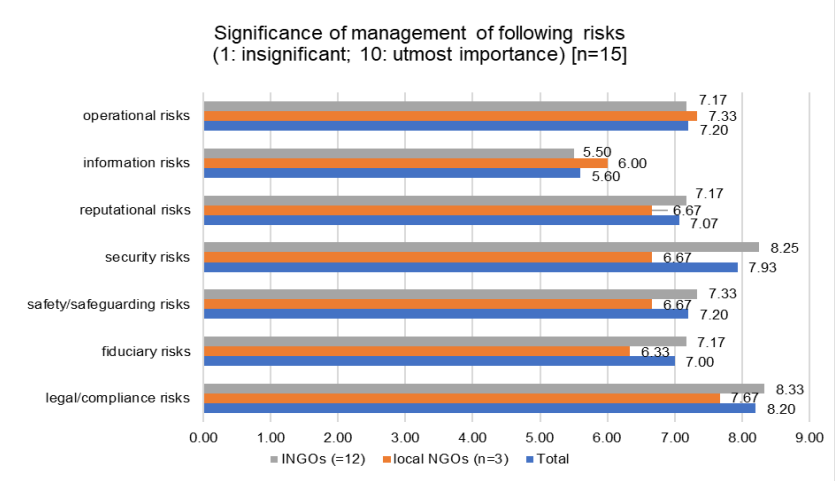


Figure 1: Significance of Management of Risks by Type

The answers of local and international humanitarian NGOs differed regarding the question **when SRM enters the decision-making process** [Q17]. All representatives of local NGOs (n=3) mentioned that risk assessment and management are solely part of the operational implementation of humanitarian projects. In contrast, only 25% of representatives of INGOs (n=12) answered identically, and 17% mentioned that a risk assessment would be conducted before the signing of a contract with donors and partners. Half (50%) of the INGO representatives stated that risk assessment and management are part of every phase in their project cycle management.

Methods/Procedures

Due to their higher amount of financial and human resources, **larger humanitarian NGOs tend to have larger capacities concerning staff solely dedicated to**

[82] Interview D, 2019.
[83] Interview B, 2019.

SRM, which is often reflected by more solid security concepts, compared to smaller NGOs.[84] This is also shown in the survey [Q10]. Only representatives of INGOs (n=12) stated that advisory services and crisis management plans were used, while no representative of local humanitarian NGOs (n=3) mentioned having a security policy in place.

SRM concepts and procedures rest, however, useless, if they are too technical and detailed to be implemented by staff in charge of operations.[85] Representatives of local NGOs (n=3) participating in the survey [Q11] perceived the gap between the availability of security risk policies, guidelines, and tools and the implementation of operational security risk measures in the field with 4.67 higher compared to representatives of INGOs (n=12; 7.08), on a scale from 1 (very large gap) to 10 (no gap). The reasons for this difference remained unclear.

Some experts observe a shift in SRM from a "tick-box exercise" towards a more **person-centered approach**. This trend might also explain the focus on security training for staff members, especially in INGOs, as shown in Figure 2.[86] 67% of INGOs' representatives (n=12) mentioned [Q10] security training as being an important SRM procedure in their organization. Only security (management) plans (92%) ranked higher. Security (management) plans (67%) and security guidelines (67%) were mentioned most frequently by representatives of local NGOs (n=3), after security training and security risk assessments (each 33%).

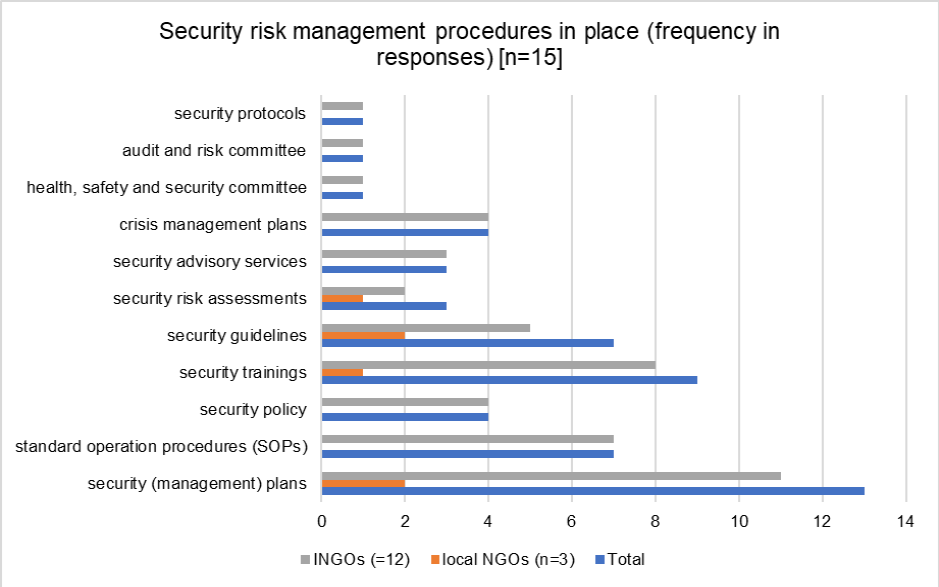


Figure 2: Security Risk Management Procedures in Humanitarian NGOs

For the experts of interview D, effective and person-centered SRM should be inclusive in considering the diverse profile of staff across the SRM process. Among others, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation should be included in security considerations, such as security training.[87]

Even though **not much seems to be known on the frequency and intensity of security training in humanitarian NGOs**, according to expert information, at least for

[84] Interview B, 2019.
[85] Interview A, 2019.
[86] Interview D, 2019.
[87] ibid.

Swiss humanitarian INGOs security training vary in duration from a few hours to 2-3 days and are mainly provided for humanitarian workers appointed to high-risk contexts. Training range from class-room workshops to more extensive HEAT training. The latter is based on simulations in a field setting and usually offered by both private and public providers. Providing internal HEAT training can pose financial as well as logistical challenges for NGOs.[88]

Usually offered to international staff, **security training is often little localized**. Consequently, security training of local staff and volunteers remains very limited in the humanitarian sector.[89] This is paradoxical since local humanitarian actors are usually at the frontline and bear most risks associated with the implementation of programs, especially when local actors and communities unwillingly become part of a conflict.[90] However, some security training providers also offer training to local humanitarian NGOs, sometimes even in local languages.[91]

According to expert A, **monitoring and evaluation of security risks** need to be better institutionalized in most humanitarian NGOs.[92] This observation is reflected in the survey [Q18]. On a scale from 1 (security risks not part of any kind of monitoring/auditing processes) to 10 (security risks fully embraced in monitoring/ auditing processes), representatives of humanitarian INGOs (n=12) rated the monitoring and auditing of security risks with 6.3 and 5.92 respectively. Local NGOs (n=3) ranked the monitoring of security risks at 4.67 and auditing at 5.0.

Organizational Culture and Security Risk Management

The organizational culture of a humanitarian NGO can, to some degree, define SRM at both headquarters and field level.[93] Depending on how SRM is embedded in the organizational culture, SRM may become part of operations and respected throughout all stages of project cycle management.[94] If the organizational culture is, for example, open and tolerant concerning the reporting of security incidents, effective mitigation measures are easier to implement and adapt, while trends can be detected earlier.[95]

Consciousness of the importance of SRM in practices and behavior of the Senior Management (e.g., participation in HEAT training before traveling to high-risk environments) can ensure the seriousness of and commitment to security risk policies and management in the organization.[96] Expert A stressed, however, that SRM is **often "not lived"** in humanitarian organizations.[97]

[88] Interview B, 2019.
[89] Interview A, 2019; Interview B, 2019.
[90] Interview E, 2019.
[91] Interview B, 2019; Interview, E, 2019.
[92] Interview A, 2019.
[93] Interview B, 2019; Interview E, 2019.
[94] Interview A, 2019; Interview E, 2019.
[95] Interview A, 2019.
[96] Interview A, 2019; Interview B, 2019; Interview D, 2019.
[97] Interview A, 2019.

Security Risk Management in Partnerships

International and national humanitarian NGOs increasingly partner with each other or other humanitarian actors to implement programs (e.g. 'Localization of Aid' agenda). However, this approach entails the risk of an open **security risk transfer to local or national implementing partners**.[98] Additionally, security risk transfer is also determined by funding (e.g., discrepancies between international and local staff salaries in implementing contexts) in the larger context of competitiveness in the humanitarian sector.[99] Even though some humanitarian NGOs do not openly admit being aware of a security risk transfer, some do it (un)consciously through a capacity building and localization vision when partnering with local NGOs for implementation.[100]

It is important to highlight that a **certain degree of risk transfer is inevitable in partnerships**, even if a risk-sharing approach is applied. Local partners are per se more at risk when implementing programs in an insecure context.[101] Consequently, the '**Duty of Care'** of the organization leading the cooperation increases. Experts A and E mentioned that before implementing programs, a detailed security risk analysis needs to be conducted by the commissioning organization, which includes, but goes beyond, the reputation of the partnering organizations, and informs the implementing organization of the risks it is taking.[102] Additionally, expert A stressed the responsibility of the commissioning organization to provide or ensure security training to local staff.[103] Besides the widely accepted consensus on the need of capacity building of local NGOs in the humanitarian sector, according to experts D, a debate around capacity convergence – mobilization and integration of existing capacities of local humanitarian NGOs in partnerships with humanitarian INGOs – is missing.[104]

Expert E highlighted that **local/national humanitarian NGOs know the local security context better**. However, better knowledge does not necessarily prevent them from being targeted nor does it justify a risk transfer to these NGOs.[105] Local NGOs are also not necessarily better equipped to conduct SRM compared to INGOs. Better knowledge about the local security context can, however, increase access to hard-to-reach areas which can constitute a mitigation measure itself.[106]

There are several other **challenges regarding SRM in partnerships** of humanitarian NGOs. On the one hand, not all INGOs involved in partnership processes do understand or have SRM processes in place. On the other hand, humanitarian NGOs partnering with several

[98] Interview A, 2019; Interview D, 2019.
[99] Interview C, 2019.
[100] Interview C, 2019; Interview D, 2019.
[101] Interview D, 2019.
[102] Interview A, 2019; Interview E, 2019.
[103] Interview A, 2019.
[104] Interview D, 2019.
[105] Interview E, 2019.
[106] Interview C, 2019.

INGOs might be faced with multiple and different risk management processes to meet partner criteria. Especially local humanitarian NGOs may not always have the capacity to ensure the alignment concerning SRM.[107]

Donor Requirements on Security Risk Management

Activities of humanitarian NGOs depend, besides others, on the requirements of their donors. **Requirements on SRM vary strongly for different governmental and multilateral donors**. While some of these donors include specific budget lines for SRM, ask for security plans or require the submission of country security policies in project/grant proposals, others do not.[108] Besides, donor requirements on SRM are sometimes almost impossible to meet by humanitarian NGOs with limited resources and capacities.[109]

Representatives of humanitarian INGOs (n=12), participating in the survey, mentioned a rough percentage of 62% of **donors that demanded implementation of SRM processes in contract negotiations** [Q14]. For local NGOs (n=3) this percentage was lower with 43%. When asked for the type of donors demanding SRM processes in contract negotiations [Q15], international organizations and governments (each 64%) were mentioned most frequently by humanitarian INGOs (n=12). Representatives of local humanitarian NGOs (n=3) answered with international organizations and civil society organizations (each 67%), before governments (33%). It is important to note that grants of governmental donors (40%) and international organizations (36%) were mentioned as the two main funding sources [Q4] of the NGOs (n=15) in the survey.

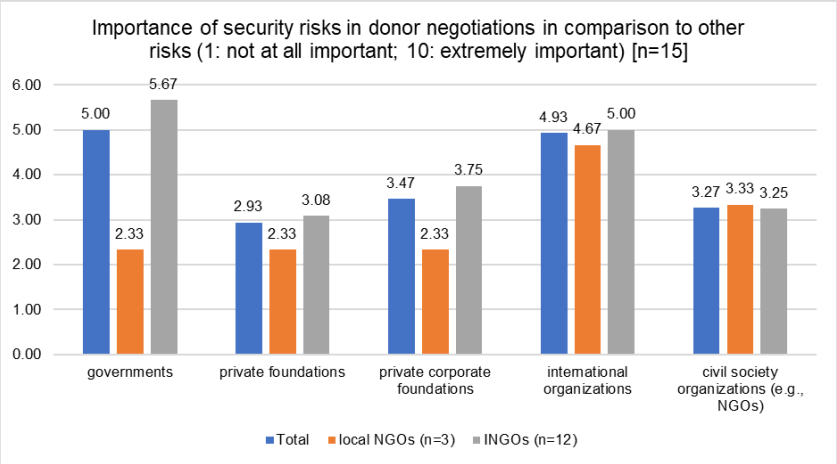


Figure 3: Importance of Security Risks in Donor Negotiations

As Figure 3 illustrates, overall, **security risks do not have major importance compared to other risks in donor negotiations** [Q16].

For the interviewed representatives of donor A (governmental organization) and B (multilateral organization), the **ability of a local NGO to deliver on a project was more important than asking specifically for SRM processes**, although these two aspects were understood as being complementary.[110] For instance, donor A argued that it never speaks about security

[107] Interview D, 2019.
[108] Interview B, 2019; Interview C, 2019; Interview D, 2019.
[109] Interview C, 2019.
[110] Interview H, 2019; Interview I, 2019.

directly with local organizations. It is more concerned with access and the organizations' ability to manage complex environments with different and sometimes competing authorities. Hence, before signing contracts with local NGOs, donor A conducts a partner risk assessment which is less concerned with security issues than questions of access. Specifically, for donor A, an organization's history of working in a specific context and its networks to guarantee access to beneficiaries are more important. This is seen as a way to ensure that the organization will not have any security problems in the future. Therefore, donor A is reluctant to fund local NGOs or INGOs expanding into new locations. [111]

Donor B argued that organizations that can show how they are managing risks have an advantage in the selection process.[112] In contrast, donor A was more concerned with how local NGOs handle their funds to prevent embezzlement and if they had SOPs in place to structure their operations.[113]

Donor C (multilateral organization) does **not ask at all for SRM in contract negotiations**. Furthermore, its representative argued that it can be difficult to assess whether the SRM of an INGO or local NGO is reasonable since they sometimes refuse to share insights, and SRM can vary in methodology and implementation between different organizations. Donor C is trying to identify parameters that can help Security Officers to be reasonably certain that the partner organization can manage the risks associated with implementing a certain project. These parameters are then to be used globally in contract negotiations. This process is not institutionalized yet and is rather ad hoc. Specifically, it is of concern to donor C that some implementing NGOs it partners with might not be able to take care of their security. Hence, the organization sees it as its responsibility to mitigate these risks. Nevertheless, donor C demands due diligence processes regarding legal and financial risks from partner organizations.[114]

According to expert D, only a few (governmental) donor organizations perceive **security training** of humanitarian staff as development or life-saving component. Therefore, especially local NGOs can miss out on this aspect. Even if they are partnering with INGOs, the latter often lack resources to help to build the security capacity of local humanitarian NGOs. Consequently, INGOs frequently opt for, if resources allow, in-house security training with local partner organizations.[115] In some cases, donor C offers training and capacity building to implementing partners. However, donor C has no formalized procedure in place to decide in which cases and contexts training and capacity building should be provided to implementing partners.[116]

Instead of allocating resources for SRM to budgets of humanitarian NGOs, **some**

[111] Interview H, 2019.
[112] Interview I, 2019.
[113] Interview H, 2019.
[114] Interview J, 2019.
[115] Interview D, 2019.
[116] Interview J, 2019.

donor organizations fund umbrella platforms which mainly provide consultancy services such as security information services. It is important to note that these services cannot be understood as substituting for internal SRM nor providing organization specific management and analysis of security risks.[117] SRM measures and guidelines need to be developed and implemented by humanitarian NGOs themselves due to the subjectivity of risk-taking and the organization-specific character of SRM.[118]

Donor A argued that it tends to fund these umbrella organizations since they provide services to all their partners. It further stated that it did not have the capacity to deal with a variety of local partner organizations at once. Although donor A perceives training and capacity building as very important, it does not provide security training to local NGOs directly. It does, however, finance NGO consortia that also train local organizations in SRM.[119]

Donor B distributes funds from a **pool fund** and argued that it can indeed be difficult to increase the money for certain projects to include capacity building measures. However, it stressed that it is willing to try to allocate funding to build or enhance capacity or to find a different solution. To do so, donor B stated that organizations should be transparent in the selection process. For donor B, the successful implementation of a program is the absolute priority and it would try to address these issues in advance to find a joint solution rather than risking problems during the implementation phase.[120]

Donor A is aware of the **need for local capacity building to avoid "risk dumping" or "risk transfer"**. Its representative argued that grants to local NGOs are usually only concerned with the implementation of projects and that they receive less money to spend on the development and maintenance of internal structures, compared to INGOs. To avoid this, donor A sees "twinning" as a possible solution. In this case, INGOs work together with local NGOs, not only for the implementation of a specific project but also to enhance the capacity of their local partners. For instance, funding might be attached to the condition that the local NGO has enough capacities to implement the project following a predetermined "twinning" period. However, donor A acknowledged the limitations of this approach as it is difficult to implement with pool funds since they are usually seen as emergency funds rather than to be spent on capacity building and organizational development.[121]

> *"Let's face it: particularly risk-sharing means that if I am [name of donor organization] working with an NGO and asking them to go there, well I stay here in my office. But it is not only what is done in the field that matters."*
>
> Senior Security Officer at donor organization C on "risk-sharing"

[117] Interview D, 2019.
[118] Interview A, 2019.
[119] Interview H, 2019.
[120] Interview I, 2019.
[121] Interview H, 2019.

Donor C argued they are trying to implement a **"risk-sharing" approach**. Nevertheless, this can be difficult. Donor C is dependent on partnerships to deliver humanitarian aid and relies on the risk acceptance of partner organizations. In theory, donor C is willing to take very high risks in partnerships to reach out to beneficiaries if program criticality is given. However, the organization sometimes struggles to find partner organizations that are willing to accept these risks. Risk-sharing for donor C includes risks for the organization itself such as program failure and the loss of resources which can have an impact on its reputation. If a partner organization of donor C is targeted, it also tries to enter discussions and negotiations with the conflict parties to stop the targeting of humanitarian workers. It also tries to prevent and mitigate attacks through this approach.[122]

Donors can **streamline the reporting of SRM related activities** which can be reassuring for themselves. NGOs might be reluctant to share security information and to be fully transparent while they compete for funding with other NGOs.[123] Expert C mentioned that reporting of security incidents strongly depends on the type of incident. While criminality related incidents are reported frequently, reporting of incidents related to armed groups (e.g., threats, extortion) rarely occurs. This is due to the fear of implications on funding if interactions with armed groups are reported to donors, even though interacting with armed groups is barely prohibited by donors and was acknowledged by donor A as "normal".[124]

Donor A argued that in certain contexts, it is **expected that implementing organizations face security issues and that incidents will occur.** However, security incidents never happen "without a trigger".[125] It is important for donor A that an organization can provide an analysis of what provoked the incident. If this is the case, and the organization subsequently adapts its approach, donor A is not reluctant to continue funding. In some contexts, humanitarian organizations can be randomly targeted, but this is not a concern for donor A if the organization can show in its analysis that it had security measures in place.[126]

As a study by the European Interagency Security Forum (EISF) shows, **no best practice exists on how to best finance SRM in humanitarian NGOs**.[127] Experts B and D confirm that this holds for both donors and NGOs. Instead, resource allocation mainly occurs ad hoc. The practice of adding security costs to general overhead costs in project proposals may be traced to two reasons: i) lack of knowledge of security managers on how to prepare a proper budget, and ii) perception of NGOs that donors do not have an allowance for security risk funding due to their interest in activities that directly benefit people in need. The latter can result in proposal writers being afraid of losing tenders due to

[122] Interview J, 2019.
[123] Interview B, 2019; Interview C, 2019.
[124] Interview C, 2019; Interview H, 2019.
[125] Interview H, 2019.
[126] ibid.
[127] Zumkehr & Finucane, 2013.

putting additional costs for security and thus overhead, instead of asking donors if they would be willing to fund SRM processes.[128] However, as discussed before, some donors are known to be willing to fund the security costs of humanitarian NGOs.[129]

In contrast to the willingness of governmental donors to allocate funds explicitly to SRM, expert A highlighted that **especially small humanitarian NGOs are faced with restricted overhead costs in grant proposals** which poses a challenge to allocate money to SRM as part of these costs. Instead, the interviewee argued that it is the responsibility of donors to ensure transparent budgeting of security risks which, if neglected, can constitute a risk transfer.[130] Similarly, expert C stressed donors' responsibility to analyze the presence of SRM processes in NGOs and blamed the intention of the donor community to prevent asking for reports on security incidents.[131]

In contrast, expert E agreed that donors have a responsibility but argued that in contract negotiations, **donors should not get involved in technical details on security** to prevent donors from steering implementation into a certain direction which might not be in line with an NGO's capacities or willingness. However, a discussion on the existence as well as acceptable levels of risks should take place in contract negotiations, according to expert E.[132]

Additionally, expert C highlighted the **responsibility of donors to assess the capacity of humanitarian NGOs** to work in a certain context. This should be done to prevent NGOs from entering a context they are not prepared for. It might also prevent putting both NGO staff and projects in danger.[133] This was also an important aspect for donor organization C which argued that it can be difficult to find the right balance between the organization's 'Duty of Care' towards its staff and that of implementing partners while fulfilling its "moral obligation" to deliver aid to people in need. According to donor C, the process of deciding who is more at risk implies some trade-offs in the decision-making process.[134]

Finally, regarding the **'Duty of Care' at the organizational level**, expert D stated that some governmental and multilateral donors are reluctant to openly approve security plans or a concrete SRM approach, due to the 'Duty of Care' responsibility and the fear of lawsuits if held accountable.[135]

Security Risk Management and Risk-Taking / Risk Aversion

Risk-taking of humanitarian NGOs is **primarily driven by subjective perceptions** of security risks by staff in

[128] Interview B, 2019; Interview D, 2019.
[129] Interview B, 2019; Interview D, 2019; Interview H, 2019.
[130] Interview A, 2019.
[131] Interview C, 2019.
[132] Interview E, 2019.
[133] Interview C, 2019.
[134] Interview J, 2019.
[135] Interview D, 2019.

charge of managing these risks.[136] Some local NGOs might accept higher risks compared to INGOs due to a strong commitment towards the needs of beneficiaries and a dependence on funding. For instance, some local NGOs fear sanctions by donors or the possibility of losing funding altogether if they do not accept risks or stop operations due to security incidents or threats.[137] This acceptance of higher risks can occur regardless of SRM processes and is especially common in war zones.[138]

> *"The risk appetite is artificially grown for these local NGOs. They would take risks that they potentially wouldn't as individuals."*
>
> Expert C on risk-taking of local humanitarian NGOs

Some organizations might understand SRM as preventing operations and hence see it as a cause of risk aversion. However, it was mentioned across the interviews conducted for this study that SRM should be understood as **enabling operations**. From this viewpoint, risk aversion is neither linked to SRM processes nor its institutionalization. Rather, SRM allows to look at a specific context in a more objective way and to decide which kind of risks are acceptable to take.[139]

> *"Risk aversion is when the whole system is not well understood… Risk aversion is the fallback option for [humanitarian] organizations that often don't have the time or the resources to really get deep into this and just try to secure themselves without thinking about it."*
>
> Expert E on the relationship of security risk management with risk aversion

The **understanding of SRM as an enabler of operations** is also reflected in the survey results (n=15) [Q12]. 93% of survey participants stated that SRM processes and policies in their humanitarian NGOs enhance the quality of humanitarian response. Among others, they mentioned prevention of physical harm to staff (53%), support of response capacities such as timely and more effective humanitarian response (47%), contribution to higher acceptance and better understanding of programs by staff (33%), and increasing access to population in need (33%) as results of SRM processes. A contribution of SRM to higher risk-taking was mentioned by 25% of representatives of INGOs (n=12) but by none of local NGOs (n=3).

[136] Interview B, 2019; Interview D, 2019.
[137] Interview C, 2019; Interview D, 2019; Interview E, 2019.
[138] Interview E, 2019.
[139] ibid.

> *Even if you are doing it [Security Risk Management] from a risk-sharing mentality, organizations have to be very clear they are also transferring risk.*

Expert I, Interview D, 2019

6. Findings and Implications

The main findings of this study and their implications are discussed in the following and embedded within the wider literature on SRM in humanitarian NGOs (see chap. 2).

Institutionalization of Security Risk Management

The previous chapters illustrate that there are different forms of institutionalized SRM and that this report does not argue for a specific kind of SRM. While for one organization SRM might be placed at the Senior Management at headquarter level (centralized), it can be more suitable for another to have a more localized approach (decentralized) or even ad hoc processes in place, depending on the respective organizational structure, resources available, and operational risk environment. Although this report does not argue against ad hoc decision-making on security risk, it does stress the need for objectivity in these processes. Some form of structural SRM should exist to avoid judgments solely based on one individual's perception of security risks.

Different forms of institutionalized SRM influence the level of involvement and responsibility of staff dedicated to managing security risks. For instance, this can range from Security Risk Managers deciding whether to stay in a certain context to having an advisory role to Senior Management which takes these decisions.

Understanding SRM as a participative process across an organization involving not just staff specifically dedicated to security can prevent a disconnect between decisions taken by Senior Management at headquarter level and decisions made by field staff. Integrating staff in the drafting of SRM policies also improves acceptance and is important to ensure understanding and respect of SRM. Thereby, internal transparency within an organization regarding security risks, including accessible security reports and guidelines for all staff, optimally becomes part of an organization's culture.

In any case, context-specific analysis and knowledge must be included in all forms of SRM. This can range from the input of local Security Managers to conversations with partnering NGOs. The information on and analysis of security risks should be part of any decision-making on activities and programs. This is not yet a common practice in all organizations. However, the interviews conducted suggest that this is increasingly the case and that SRM processes are gaining in importance. For instance, organizations are implementing new SRM procedures, and they have started to create positions solely dedicated to SRM. The work of these Security Managers must be supported by staff across the organization to ensure that SRM is sound. Organizations must ensure that these processes are strengthened and allocate the required resources. One way to achieve this is through more transparency in contract negotiations with donors. As Zumkehr and Finucane (2013) suggest, security costs need to be justified and communicated in program design and negotiations with donors.[140] All donors

[140] ZUMKEHR & FINUCANE, 2013, 2 & 6.

interviewed for this report welcomed more transparency in contract negotiations with separate budget lines for SRM. Furthermore, sustaining a comprehensive SRM at headquarter and regional level requires additional money to be spent on the organization. While this might not directly affect aid recipients, the funds are needed to continue operations. Donors should be aware of this.

In INGOs, security training for international staff is widely institutionalized and recognized as an important part of SRM. This seems to be different for local staff, where training is shorter and less frequently offered than that for international employees. Since local staff is often responsible for the implementation of programs in high-risk areas, INGOs and donor organizations must ensure that security training for local staff has the same priority.

How to support local organizations to ensure the safety of their staff continues to be an important issue. While training and capacity building is often understood as the sole solution, it seems that these efforts can remain without a lasting effect if they are not tailored to specific contexts. To the contrary, they can reinforce the dismissal of SRM as a "Western" concept if they are not context-specific. Instead, capacity building should be understood as a joint activity, building on existing capacities and knowledge. In this process, the implementing organization and INGO or donor must work together on equal footing, considering that the former is responsible for the implementation of SRM processes. This includes ensuring that local NGOs have the time and personnel needed for joint capacity building. For instance, INGOs or donor organizations can include funding for a local Security Manager who is familiar with the country and develop an adequate security concept together, thereby ensuring the safety of staff as well as the fulfillment of donor requirements.

As the interview with the local NGO highlighted, one of the most central approaches to mitigate risks constitutes the negotiation of access to beneficiaries. Organizations must ensure that they understand who is in control of a certain area and whom they must negotiate with. This entails not just a context analysis but also an understanding of how the organization and its employees are perceived by actors on the ground. Hence, when partnering with local NGOs, INGOs and donors should ensure that their partners have the networks and contacts in place to ensure safe access. Simply asking for security policies or guidelines without taking questions of access into account can disadvantage small local NGOs that might have the ability to deliver on a project without endangering staff. However, INGOs and donors must be aware that the degree of embeddedness and contact between local NGOs and local communities can also be a source of risk. Before awarding contracts, they must ensure that local NGOs have the capacity to handle the intermingling of personal and professional lives in these settings. INGOs and donors can provide guidance and share their experience on this.[141]

[141] Written correspondence with expert D, 25.11.2019.

Risk Transfer / Risk-sharing

From the interviews conducted, it was clear that despite the adoption of the 'Localization of Aid' agenda and a risk-sharing approach to partnerships, questions about how such an approach can look like in reality persist. Both donors and humanitarian organizations were aware of possible risk-transfers in partnerships and were trying to mitigate risks for local NGOs. However, approaches varied considerably, from addressing security issues of local partners with conflict partners directly, to actively trying to enhance the capacities of local actors.

It is important to note that a certain degree of risk-transfer is inevitable since partnerships usually imply that the implementation of projects in high-risk contexts falls to local organizations. Donors and INGOs must be willing to accept and respect the partner organization's decision on whether the implementation is feasible or not. They must avoid pressuring them into accepting programs and awarding contracts to organizations that do not conduct risk analysis, neither have the experience to operate in a certain context nor the means to negotiate safe access for staff. Furthermore, they should openly address questions of funding for adequate SRM processes in negotiations. INGOs still receive more funding for the development and maintenance of internal structures than local NGOs.[142] The donors interviewed were aware of this. Some were willing to increase funding for local NGOs if the latter included funding for SRM into project proposals or mentioned it during contract negotiations. Local NGOs should be aware of this in an increasingly competitive environment.

The donors interviewed did not hold previous security incidents against implementing partners. Instead, it depended on the type of incident and the ability of an organization to show that incidents were analyzed, and triggers identified to avoid similar situations in the future. Hence, organizations, whether international or local, should ensure that employees can report incidents without having to fear negative consequences. The data collected through internal reporting systems further provide the organizations with an important source of information that needs to be analyzed and find its way into operations.

In line with Cunningham's and Lockyear's (2016) critic of Neuman and Weissman (2016), this report does not argue against some form of quantification of risk, such as using internal security incident databases. All organizations interviewed stated that they had reporting systems in place. They varied in form and content, but they can provide for a better understanding of current security threats and trends that can support SRM processes. Following Cunningham and Lockyear (2016), reporting systems should be understood as useful since they allow for "structure, objectivity, and reference points" to tackle the subjectivity of risk-taking.[143]

[142] Interview H, 2019.

[143] CUNNINGHAM, A. & C. LOCKYEAR. (2016). A Response to Saving Lives and Staying Alive, *MSF Crash Blog*, https://www.msf-crash.org/en/blog/war-and-humanitarianism/response-saving-lives-and-staying-alive [11.11.2019].

Risk-taking / Risk Aversion

This report finds no relation between the institutionalization of SRM and the willingness of an organization to take or avoid risks. For instance, one organization had only one fulltime staff dedicated to SRM but was nevertheless willing to accept high levels of risk. Another organization had a whole department dedicated to SRM and was also willing to accept high levels of risk. Instead, as highlighted by Bickley (2017), the relationship was rather determined by the different understandings of humanitarian mandates, missions and operations.[144]

As identified by Schneiker (2018) and in alignment with the wording used by the interviewed individuals in this study, SRM processes are increasingly labeled as "enabling" programs rather than "preventing" them.[145] For this to be the case, SRM processes again need to be based on an adequate understanding of the context. As Schneiker (2018) argues, if frontline staff sees security guidelines or provisions as impeding their work, they are likely to be ignored.[146] Security Managers must ensure that security procedures are feasible in a certain context and SRM should not be understood to transfer the responsibility for incidences on individual humanitarian workers. Vice versa, humanitarian workers should not see SRM as a substitute for personal risk awareness.

As Neuman and Weissman (2016) highlight in their critical reflection on SRM in the humanitarian sector, zero risk does not exist. The authors further stress the danger of "normalizing" security risks by putting standardized SRM processes in place.[147] Building on their argument, this report argues that SRM processes can positively contribute to the security of humanitarian workers if the previous experience of frontline staff is incorporated in contextualized SRM processes instead of relying on a "one-fits-all" approach. Security Risk Managers should consult with frontline staff on the practicality of certain measures and be willing to include this input in official guidelines. Especially since, according to Roth (2015), risk-taking in the humanitarian sector is shaped by security procedures of aid organizations and can, therefore, be in stark contrast to aid workers' acceptance of risks. She argues that this can undermine aid workers' initial motivation to engage directly with the local population.[148] Furthermore, sound SRM processes might enable or enhance the quality of programs by ensuring that implementation is not disrupted or terminated. Understanding SRM as "enabling" throughout an organization can only be achieved if this is considered and Senior Managers accept SRM as a valuable component of humanitarian action.

On the other end of the spectrum, risk aversion needs to be part of the debate on SRM and should not be deemed as a weakness when communicated openly and justified. This implies that donor and partner organizations have to ensure that artificially grown levels of risk-taking are not

[144] Bickley, 2017, 10.
[145] Schneiker, 2018, 122-123.
[146] ibid., 118-119.
[147] Neuman & Weissman, 2016.
[148] Roth, 2015, 139-155.

reinforced by their (funding) practices. Stoddard et al. (2016) find that the majority of INGOs studied in their research believed that donors influence the type and level of risk that the organization accepts.[149] While this was neither mentioned specifically by interviewees nor by survey participants, one donor organization stated that it had a high willingness to accept risks and that this had complicated finding local partner organizations in some cases.[150]

Contrary to Stoddard et al. (2016) who argue that questions of program criticality are often ignored in risk management of humanitarian NGOs, this report highlights that program criticality plays an important role in humanitarian NGOs when considering security risks.[151] All representatives of humanitarian organizations interviewed argued that the more they interpret a situation as life-threatening, the more willing they are to take risks associated with the implementation of programs.

Integration of Security Risk Management in Wider Risk Management Processes

The findings of this report suggest that especially INGOs still rank other risks such as financial or reputational as more relevant than security risks. However, they are often interlinked. For instance, security incidents due to insufficient or absent SRM processes can influence the reputation of an organization and its ability to secure funding. Hence, organizations should not separate or prioritize one risk over another, and SRM should be a fundamental part of integrated risk management. 93% of the participants in the survey (n=15) mentioned explicitly to have an integrated risk management system in place that embraces security risks. The same is true for the INGOs interviewed for this study.

In contrast, and as mentioned earlier in this report, Stoddard et al. (2016) show that a "siloed" approach to different risk areas – tackling different risks separately – prevails in humanitarian NGOs. The same study identifies security risks as the top priority in risk management in humanitarian INGOs, which stands in contrast to the findings of this report.[152] However, despite complementing our interviews with a survey, this difference might be explained by the limited sample size of this study.

Due to the interconnectedness of different risks, Metcalfe et al. (2011) stress the potential value that the management of operational security risks can have for the assessment and management of other risks.[153] Following this argument, the findings of this report may be considered when analyzing the institutionalization of risk management beyond solely focusing on security risks.

[149] STODDARD ET AL., 2016, 18.
[150] Interview J, 2019.
[151] STODDARD ET AL., 2016, 18.
[152] ibid., 2016, 22.
[153] METCALFE ET AL., 2011, 3.

The problem for us on the ground is that security trainings done by INGOs do often not consider local and traditional rules.

Representative of Organization C, Interview K, 2019

7. Conclusion

This report shows that the institutionalization of SRM within humanitarian NGOs varies from integration in policies and the entire project cycle to ad hoc decisions on security risks. Hence, a one-size-fits-all approach does not exist. Instead, SRM processes depend on an organization's structure and culture as well as the environment it operates in.

While some organizations have a whole department dedicated to SRM, others have just one fulltime position throughout the entire organization. In general, responsibility for SRM seems to be part of the portfolio of different positions within an organization. Furthermore, the existing procedures and their implementation vary considerably. However, security training and security management plans are standard in the majority of INGOs as discussed in this report. For local NGOs, the results were different, and security management plans and guidelines were less frequent. Additionally, security training seems to be little localized, with less training for local staff and volunteers. This hints at a gap between the adoption of the 'Localization of Aid' agenda, as well as partnerships based on a risk-sharing approach, and their implementation. Importantly, the interviews revealed that it remains unclear how a risk-sharing approach can look like in reality.

This report finds no relation between the institutionalization of SRM and risk-taking/aversion. Depending on a humanitarian organization's mandate, mission, operations as well as individual risk perception, an organization is more willing to take or avoid risks. However, this does not necessarily influence SRM processes within a humanitarian organization. For instance, organizations accept high levels of risk regardless of how institutionalized SRM processes are within them.

Additionally, program criticality seems to be crucial for humanitarian NGOs' willingness to accept security risks. The more organizations interpret situations as life-threatening, the more willing they are to accept greater levels of security risks.

Donors interviewed were not specifically asking for SRM processes in contract negotiations but showed a willingness to direct more funding towards SRM and related capacity building processes. Hence, a relation between reluctance to fund humanitarian NGOs that do not have (institutionalized) SRM processes in place could not be established. However, the expert interviews also showed that this depends on the donor. While some ask for SRM processes in contract negotiations, others do not. This finding was confirmed by the survey in which organizations (n=15) stated that more than half of all donors demanded SRM processes.

Compared to other risks, security still tends to get less attention within humanitarian organizations. In negotiations with donors, security risks seem to be less or equally important compared to other risks. However, many humanitarian organizations are deciding to divert more time and capacities towards the management of security risks. Additionally, more organizations now opt for an integrative risk management approach

which also includes considerations of other risks such as fiduciary, legal, and reputational.

The sample size of this report is very limited and, hence, this report cannot be deemed representative of the institutionalization of SRM in humanitarian NGOs. Although this report ensured anonymity, accessing local NGOs for participating in interviews as well as the survey proved to be difficult. Furthermore, governmental donors seemed to be equally hesitant to be part of this study.

Since organizations have different SRM policies and processes as well as organizational structures, the representatives interviewed held different positions with different responsibilities, which made it difficult to compare the information gathered.

Although SRM in the humanitarian sector has increasingly gained the attention of professionals, policymakers, and academia, an assessment of how SRM is included in decision-making processes and how it affects risk-taking/aversion was still missing. Moreover, this especially applies to the inclusion of donors' perspectives. This report provides for a snapshot of the institutionalization of SRM in humanitarian NGOs, and the findings can be used as a basis for both transparent discussion on SRM related practices in the humanitarian sector and further research.

As mentioned before, the underrepresentation of local NGOs as well as certain donors in studies on SRM remains to be a problem. This should be addressed through ethnographic approaches, focusing on international as well as local humanitarian NGOs to better understand how SRM policies and processes impact humanitarian workers on the ground.

Questions regarding risk dumping and security risk transfer in partnerships between or with humanitarian NGOs, and how it can be avoided, remain largely unaddressed in research. Therefore, SRM processes must be part of policy discourses on the protection of aid workers to foster knowledge exchange on the issue. As long as local humanitarian organizations and other actors, experiencing risk dumping and risk transfer, are not equally involved in these discourses and exchanges, it is unlikely that meaningful solutions towards a risk-sharing approach can be developed. To achieve meaningful solutions, data transparency and honest dialogues are necessary conditions that need to be considered by all actors within the humanitarian sector.

“

Security is not only about risk management as such, but also a lot about moral and legal duties. It covers the two elements.

Representative of Organization A, Interview F, 2019

8. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the research findings discussed in chapter 6 as well as the broader findings of this report. The recommendations are addressed to local and international humanitarian NGOs, their donors, as well as actors involved in agenda-setting and policy making in humanitarian action.

Internal SRM Processes in Local and International Humanitarian NGOs

Include context-specific analysis and knowledge in all forms of SRM to ensure that security procedures are both feasible and understandable.

SRM processes, understood as a guiding framework, are only of value if different procedures are adaptable to specific contexts. Including context-specific knowledge ensures that humanitarian workers at the implementing level perceive SRM procedures as useful. This requires participative SRM processes, and consultation with frontline staff on the practicality of certain measures.

Have internal security incident reporting procedures in place and ensure that employees can report security incidents without having to fear negative repercussions.

The data collected through internal reporting systems/procedures are to be used as a source of information that needs to be analyzed and find its way into operations and SRM procedures. This data can only be meaningful if employees are encouraged to report incidents that can be ensured through procedures that guarantee full anonymity.

Ensure that SRM prevents the transfer of responsibility for incidents on individual humanitarian workers. Vice versa, humanitarian workers should not see SRM as a substitute for personal risk awareness.

Make SRM a responsibility across the organization. At the same time, informed consent on security risks need to be part of the recruitment procedures of humanitarian workers and the limits of SRM need to be clearly articulated.

Avoid prioritizing one risk over another and include SRM as an important part of integrated risk management approaches.

Since different risks are interlinked, SRM needs to be understood and implemented as part of broader risk management processes, such as integrated risk management systems. Only then can security and other risks be addressed effectively, and comprehensive procedures be applied which consider various risks at the same time.

Partnerships with Local and International Humanitarian NGOs

Ensure project/contract negotiations are more transparent and include separate budget lines for SRM in project proposals.

To effectively include SRM in projects, it needs to be part of planning processes and initial negotiations with donor and partner organizations. Allocating specific budget lines to SRM allows all parties to understand SRM related procedures and to justify them. Transparency concerning SRM processes in project or contract negotiations needs to become a standard in the humanitarian sector to ensure sufficient resource allocation.

Accept and respect a partner organization's decision on whether the implementation of a project is feasible or not.

Partner organizations of humanitarian NGOs and their donors need to avoid pressuring implementing organizations such as local NGOs into accepting programs and awarding them contracts if they do not have the capacity to conduct risk analysis, neither have the experience to operate in a certain context nor the means to negotiate safe access for staff. Only partnerships on an equal footing can prevent risk transfers and artificially grown levels of risk-taking. This requires transparency from all parties involved in a partnership.

Ensure that implementing humanitarian NGOs have the networks and contacts in place that allow for safe access.

Simply asking for security policies or guidelines in contract/project negotiations without taking questions of access into account can disadvantage small local NGOs that might have the ability to deliver on a project without endangering staff. Information on networks and contacts provide relevant insights into how an organization may be perceived in a specific context and can, therefore, be more relevant than lengthy and detailed security policies and guidelines.

Conduct capacity building in SRM for humanitarian NGOs as a joint activity, building on existing capacities and knowledge.

The imposition of SRM processes and procedures which neither consider local realities nor build on existing capacities and knowledge is unlikely to be of use to humanitarian field staff. Having the organization whose capacity is strengthened in the driver's seat during the whole process, can contribute to a participative approach while integrating SRM in already existing processes and making SRM an organization-specific endeavor.

Ensure that context-specific security training for local staff has the same priority as training for international staff.

The fact that local organizations often have few options to withdraw from certain activities and locations needs to be reflected in the offer of security training. Additionally, knowing the local context better does not necessarily come with less exposure to security risks. Including existing knowledge and experience of humanitarian workers in security training allows to respond to an organization's real needs.

Advocacy of SRM

Address SRM processes more explicitly in policy discourses on the protection of humanitarian workers.

To ensure that SRM is institutionalized in humanitarian NGOs and the needed resources are available, SRM processes need to be addressed more specifically in debates on the protection of humanitarian workers. It is the responsibility of actors involved in agenda-setting and policymaking in humanitarian action to stress the necessity of SRM and to improve existing processes by supporting knowledge exchange on SRM within the humanitarian sector, with special consideration to local humanitarian organizations.

Actors involved in agenda-setting and policy making in humanitarian action need to strongly advocate for security risk-sharing processes, thereby ensuring that security risk transfer becomes inadmissible.

Guidance in the humanitarian sector on SRM needs to address the existing practice of security risk transfer and advocate strongly for compliance with a security risk-sharing approach within the sector. Advocacy on this issue is only legitimate if a voice is given to actors suffering from risk transfer in an environment wherein transparency and honest discussions can take place.

Glossary

Acceptance-based security strategies	Refers to strategies that "are based on aid workers being accepted by the local communities".[154] This is built on "the consent, approval, and cooperation from individuals, communities and local authorities".[155]
Deterrence-based security strategies	Refers to a strategy that aims at "reducing the risk by containing the threat with a counter-threat".[156] For instance, the employment of armed guards to protect compounds.[157]
Duty of Care	Legal obligations of humanitarian organizations to ensure safety and security of their employees in the workplace under national (labor) law.[158]
Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT)	Aimed at individuals deployed, traveling to or based in high-risk environments. HEAT is a "threat-specific personal security training, including simulation exercises."[159]
Humanitarian action	There is no universal definition of what constitutes humanitarian action. This study is based on the definition of GHA (2018): "Humanitarian action is intended to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain [and protect] human dignity during and after man-made crises and disasters associated with natural hazards, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for when such situations occur. Humanitarian assistance should be governed by the key humanitarian principles of: humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence."[160] Consequently, this study also considers protracted crises as part of humanitarian action. In contrast, development aid is defined as "long-term aid to peoples in countries, with the main object of poverty reduction and achieving the MDGs [SDGs], democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery, and sustainable development."[161] However, the lines between humanitarian assistance and

[154] SCHNEIKER, 2013, 250.

[155] FAIRBANKS, 2018, 6.

[156] ibid., 7.

[157] SCHNEIKER, 2013, 251.

[158] NEUMAN & WEISSMAN, 2017.

[159] BICKLEY, 2017, 47.

[160] GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE [GHA]. (2018). Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018, *UK Development Initiatives*, http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GHA-Report-2018.pdf [05.06.2019], 56.

[161] SCHNEIKER, 2013, 248.

	development assistance are often blurred since there is no clear cut-off point when the former ends and the latter starts.[162]
Humanitarian aid worker	Employee with an official work contract of an organization which is operationally active in humanitarian action.
International humanitarian NGO	NGO with a humanitarian mandate exercised in a country other than where its headquarters is based.
Local / national humanitarian NGO	NGO with a humanitarian mandate exercised in the country where its headquarters is based.
Organizational Culture	Simply defined as "the way we do things around here".[163] Every organization "has a culture towards security and risks in general".[164]
Program criticality	Willingness of humanitarian actors to "accept greater levels of residual risk for life-saving programming".[165]
Project Cycle Management	Tool used in the development/humanitarian sector to design, implement and evaluate a project in different stages. The project cycle management defined in the online survey contained the following stages: assessment, design, implementation, monitoring & audit, and closure.
Protection-based security strategies	Refers to any strategy deployed by humanitarian agencies to protect its workers and assets. This can range from wearing bulletproofed vests, using armored vehicles to removing all labels of the organization from its cars or offices and using the same cars as the local population.[166]
Security incident	Refers to "any situation or event that has caused, […], harm to staff, associate personnel or a third party, significant disruption to programs and activities, and substantial damage or loss to organization's property or its reputation".[167]
Security risk management procedures	Specific or prescribed ways to undertake parts of the security risk management process. They can, for example, include internal security guidelines or policies.
Security risk management process	Process which encompasses all tasks, procedures or methods related to security risk management.

[162] SCHNEIKER, 2013, 248.
[163] BICKLEY, 2017, 11.
[164] ibid., 11.
[165] STODDARD ET AL, 2016, 4.
[166] SCHNEIKER, 2013, 244; 250 & 255.
[167] FAIRBANKS, 2018, 6.

Standard Operating Procedures	Established procedures within an organization that are based on instructions to regulate/standardize a certain process within an organization.

List of Literature

BEERLI, M. J., & WEISSMAN, F. (2016). Humanitarian Security Manuals: Neutralising the human factor in humanitarian action. In Neumann, M., & Weissman, F. (2016, March 29). Saving Lives and Staying Alive: Humanitarian Security in the Age of Risk Management. *MSF Crash*. Chapter 2 [online book], https://www.msf-crash.org/en/publications/war-and-humanitarianism/saving-lives-and-staying-alive-humanitarian-security-age-risk [24.10.2019].

BICKLEY, S. (2017). Security Risk Management: a basic guide for smaller NGOs. *European Interagency Security Forum* (EISF), https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2157-EISF-June-2017-Security-Risk-Management-a-basic-guide-for-smaller-NGOs.pdf [15.09.2019].

BRUDERLEIN, C. & P. GASSMANN. (2006). Managing Security Risks in Hazardous Missions: The Challenge of Securing United Nations Access to Vulnerable Groups, *Journal of Human Rights* 19, 63-93.

CUNNINGHAM, A. & C. LOCKYEAR. (2016). A Response to Saving Lives and Staying Alive, *MSF Crash Blog*, https://www.msf-crash.org/en/blog/war-and-humanitarianism/response-saving-lives-and-staying-alive [11.11.2019].

DANDOY, A. & M. A. PEROUSE DE MONTCLOS. (2013). Humanitarian workers in peril? Deconstructing the myth of the new and growing threat to humanitarian workers, *Global Crime* 14:4, 341-358.

DANY, C. (2019, May 14). How Germany advocates for the protection of aid workers in the Security Council. *PRIF Blog*, https://blog.prif.org/2019/05/14/how-germany-advocates-for-the-protections-of-aid-workers-in-the-security-council/ [24.10.2019].

DAVIS, J. ET AL. (2017). Security to go: a risk management toolkit for humanitarian aid agencies (2nd edition), *European Interagency Security Forum* (EISF), https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2124-EISF-2017-Security-to-go_a-risk-management-toolkit-for-humanitarian-aid-agencies-2nd-edition.pdf [05.06.2019].

DUFFIELD, M. (1997). NGO Relief in War Zones: Towards an Analysis of the New Aid Paradigm, *Third World Quarterly* 18:3, 527-542.

DUFFIELD, M. (2010). Risk-Management and the Fortified Aid Compound: Everyday Life in Post Interventionary Society, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 4:4, 453-474.

FAIRBANKS, A. (2018). Duty of Care under Swiss Law: How to improve your safety and security risk management, *European Interagency Security Forum* (EISF), https://www.cinfo.ch/sites/default/files/duty_of_care_eisf.pdf [15.09.2019].

FAST, L. (2014). Coping with Danger: Paradigms of Humanitarian Security Management, in L. Fast (ed.), *Aid in Danger: The Perils and Promise of Humanitarianism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 173-225.

FAST, L., FREEMAN, F., O'NEILL, M., & E. ROWLEY. (2015). The Promise of Acceptance as a Security Management Approach, *Disasters* 39:2, 208-231.

GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE [GHA]. (2018). Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018, *UK Development Initiatives*, http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GHA-Report-2018.pdf [05.06.2019].

HARMER, A., STODDARD, A., HARVER, K., VAN BRABANT, K., FENTON, W., & FOLEY, M. (2010). *Good Practice Review 8: Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* (revised ed.), London: Overseas Development Institute, https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/GPR_8_revised2.pdf [24.10.2019].

HOLTZ, T. H., SALAMA, P., LOPES CARDOZO, B., & C. A. GOTWAY. (2002). Mental Health Status of Human Rights Workers, Kosovo, June 2000. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 15:5, 389-395.

HOPPE, K., & C. WILLIAMS. (2016). Dennis vs. Norwegian Refugee Council: Implications for Duty of Care, *Humanitarian Practice Network*, https://odihpn.org/blog/dennis-vs-norwegian-refugee-council-implications-for-duty-of-care/ [15.09.2019].

MACKINTOSH, K., & P. DUPLAT. (2013). Study of the impact of donor counterterrorism measures on principled humanitarian action, *UN OCHA and Norwegian Refugee Council*, https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/CounterTerrorism_Study_Full_Report.pdf [05.06.2019].

MARTIN, R. (2003). An Introduction to NGO Field Security, in: K. M. Cahill (ed.) *Emergency Relief Operations.* New York: Fordham University Press.

METCALFE, V., MARTIN, E., & S. PANTULIANO. (2011). Risk in humanitarian action: Towards a common approach? *Humanitarian Policy Group [HPG] Commissioned Paper*, https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6764.pdf [05.06.2019].

MUJAWAR, S. (2009). Security Management in Humanitarian Agencies, *European Interagency Security Forum* (EISF), https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/0375-Mujawar2009-Security-Management-in-Humanitarian-Agencies.pdf [05.06.2019].

NEUMAN, M., & WEISSMAN, F. (2016). Saving Lives and Staying Alive: Humanitarian Security in the Age of Risk Management. *MSF Crash*, https://www.msf-crash.org/en/publications/saving-lives-and-staying-alive-humanitarian-security-age-risk-management. [26.10.2019].

NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL [NRC]. (2015). Risk Management Toolkit: In Relation to Counterterrorism Measures, http://interagencystandingcomittee.org/file/8226/download?token=OPXTzarI [05.06.2019].

ROTH, S. (2015). Aid work as edgework: Voluntary risk-taking and security in humanitarian assistance, development and human rights work, *Journal of Risk Research* 18:2, 139-155.

SCHNEIKER, A. (2013). The Vulnerable Do-Gooders: Security Strategies of German Aid Agencies, *Disasters* 37:2, 244–66.

SCHNEIKER, A. (2018). Risk-Aware or Risk-Averse? Challenges in Implementing Security Risk Management Within Humanitarian NGOs, *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy* 9:2, 107-131.

SHARP, T. W. ET AL. (1995). Illness in Journalists and Relief Workers Involved in International Humanitarian Assistance Efforts in Somalia, 1992–93, *Journal of Travel Medicine* 2:2, 70–76.

STODDARD, A., HARMER, A., & V. DIDOMENICO. (2009). Providing aid in insecure environments: 2009 Update, *Overseas Development Institute*, https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4243.pdf [05.06.2019].

STODDARD, A., HAVER, K., & CZWARNO, M. (2016). NGOs and Risk: How international humanitarian actors manage uncertainty, *Humanitarian Outcomes & InterAction*, https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/ngo-risk_report_web.pdf [05.06.2019].

STODDARD, A., CZWARNO, M., & L. HAMSIK. (2019). NGOs & Risk: Managing Uncertainty in Local-International Partnerships. Global Report, *Humanitarian Outcomes & InterAction*, https://reliefweb.int/report/world/ngos-risk-managing-uncertainty-local-international-partnerships [05.06.2019].

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS [OCHA]. (2014). Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow: Managing the Risk of Humanitarian Crises. *OCHA Policy and Studies Series*, https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/OCHA%20SLTT%20Web%20Final%20Single.PDF [05.06.2019].

VAN BRABANT, K. (1998). Cool Ground for Aid Providers: Towards Better Security Management in Aid Agencies, *Disasters* 22:2, 109-125.

VAN BRABANT, K. (2001). Mainstreaming the Organizational Management of Safety and Security: A review of aid agency practices and a guide for management, *Humanitarian Policy Group*, https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/297.pdf [05.06.2019].

ZUMKEHR, H. J., & FINUCANE, C. (2013). The Cost of Security Risk Management for NGOs. *European Interagency Security Forum (EISF)*, https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2007-ChristopherFinucane-2014-EISF_Cost-of-Security-Risk-Management-for-NGOs.pdf [20.10.2019].

List of Interviews

Interview	Type	Background of Interviewee	Duration	Date
A	Expert	Professional humanitarian aid worker currently working as program officer for a humanitarian NGO with national and international mandates. Frontline work experience with security responsibilities all around the world (incl. high-risk environments) for more than a decade at a large international humanitarian organization. Responsible for security concept development and security risk management for governmental staff at a national development cooperation organization for 5 years.	60min	17.07.2019
B	Expert	Senior coach, adviser and trainer for international cooperation professionals and part of a national security network for humanitarian organizations. Over 15 years of working experience as professional humanitarian aid worker (incl. positions in high-risk environments) at a large international humanitarian organization. Early career as newspaper correspondent. Academic background in social sciences.	42min	05.09.2019
C	Expert	Country director with previous experience as safety advisor of an international NGO advising on and advocating for safety and security in the humanitarian and development sector for several years. Previously worked as political affairs officer for an UN office in the same country as current position. Academic background in social sciences.	34min	10.09.2019

D	Expert	Expert I: Security advisor and researcher for a security forum of international cooperation and humanitarian organizations for almost 10 years. Nearly 15 years of working experience as professional humanitarian aid worker for international humanitarian NGOs in positions of engineer and project officer in numerous high-risk environments. Several years of experience as security trainer at a private security provider/training organization. Academic background as mechanical engineer. Expert II: Researcher of a security forum of international cooperation and humanitarian organizations. Professional experience in the field of mediation and migration in the humanitarian and development aid sectors. Academic background in Human Rights, peace and conflict studies, and international affairs.	39min	18.09.2019
E	Expert	Security management advisor for more than three years and various field positions (incl. in high-risk environments) as a professional humanitarian aid worker with security responsibilities for over 10 years at a large international humanitarian organization. Previous experience in logistics in the humanitarian aid sector. Academic background in international law, economics, business, and crisis management.	45min	04.10.2019

Interview	Type	Background of Interviewee	Duration	Date
F	Large international humanitarian NGO (organization A)	Global Security Manager with a police and special forces background and degree in a related program. More than 10 years' experience in Security Risk Management at various NGOs and in the private sector. The organization he works for now is based in Western Europe with more than 7,000 staff members worldwide. The major security risks the NGO is directly exposed to in most of its operational contexts include collateral damage in conflicts and assaults.	30min	30.08.2019
G	Large international humanitarian NGO (organization B)	Global Security Advisor with a background in Development Studies. Held various positions (Project/Program Manager; Area/Field Coordinator) within the organization prior to becoming Senior First Project Manager. The organization is based in Western Europe with just above 2,000 staff members worldwide. Major security risks the organization is exposed to are collateral damages, attacks due to "being at the wrong place at the wrong time", and exposure to armed groups.	60min	30.08.2019
H	Governmental donor organization A	Donor organization A is a Western European governmental development agency that also implements its own projects. However, we are focusing here on its role as a donor to humanitarian NGOs. Our interviewee is a Deputy Head of a Regional Office.	40min	16.09.2019
I	Multilateral donor organization B	Donor organization B is a multilateral organization that is implementing projects as well as funding projects by other organizations. It depends on international funding and usually distributes pool funds to international and local humanitarian NGOs. Our	30min	30.09.2019

		interviewee is responsible for the management of implementing partnerships and has an academic background in law.		
J	Multilateral donor organization C	Donor organization C is a multilateral donor organization that is both implementing projects as well as funding projects by INGOs and local NGOs. Our interviewee is the Senior Security Advisor. Two regional Security Advisors also joined the conversation. The organization has its own SRM structure with a team of Security Officers at the headquarter level in Western Europe and domestic security teams. The Senior Security Advisor has a military background.	40min	31.10.2019
K	Local humanitarian NGO (organization C)	Two local employees working for an organization which operates in a country that is considered a "high-risk" context for humanitarian action. Major security risks the NGO is directly exposed to include exposure to armed groups, security threats when refusing clientelism and corrupt practices, and accusations posing a direct threat to the security of employees. One of the interviewees is a Program Manager while the other is Project Manager and Deputy Head of Missions for one region of the country. Both have been responsible for implementing projects in high-risk areas. It is funded by multilateral donor organizations and INGOs (some of which were interviewed for this study) as well as private foundations. Apart from local staff, the organization also employs expat staff. The headquarter of the organization is based in the country of operation. It is also registered in three Western countries and it is in the process of establishing a head office in Western Europe.	60min	24.10.2019

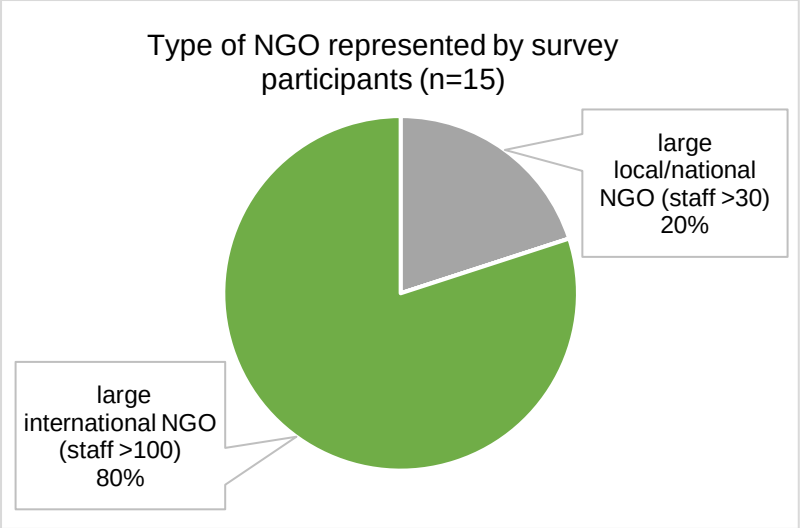
Appendices

I Online Survey: Presentation of Results

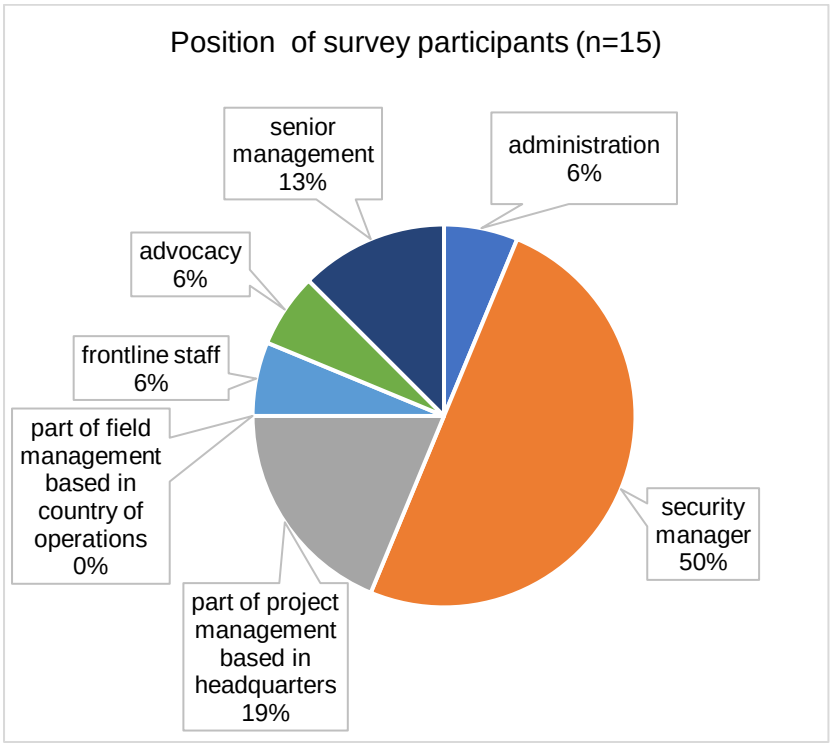
As part of this research project, an online survey with a total of 21 close-ended, open-ended, and multiple-choice questions was prepared in QuestionPro by the authors. The survey was disseminated through the ICVA Bulletin on September 10, 2019 and by the head of the Swiss Security Forum for humanitarian organizations to its member organizations in September 2019. The survey was explicitly addressed to staff of humanitarian NGOs with knowledge and operational experience in security risk management in the humanitarian sector. Full anonymity was given to all survey participants.

The following charts present the findings of the online survey, in which 15 representatives of humanitarian NGOs participated. The results were mainly segregated according to the nature of the NGOs: local and international.

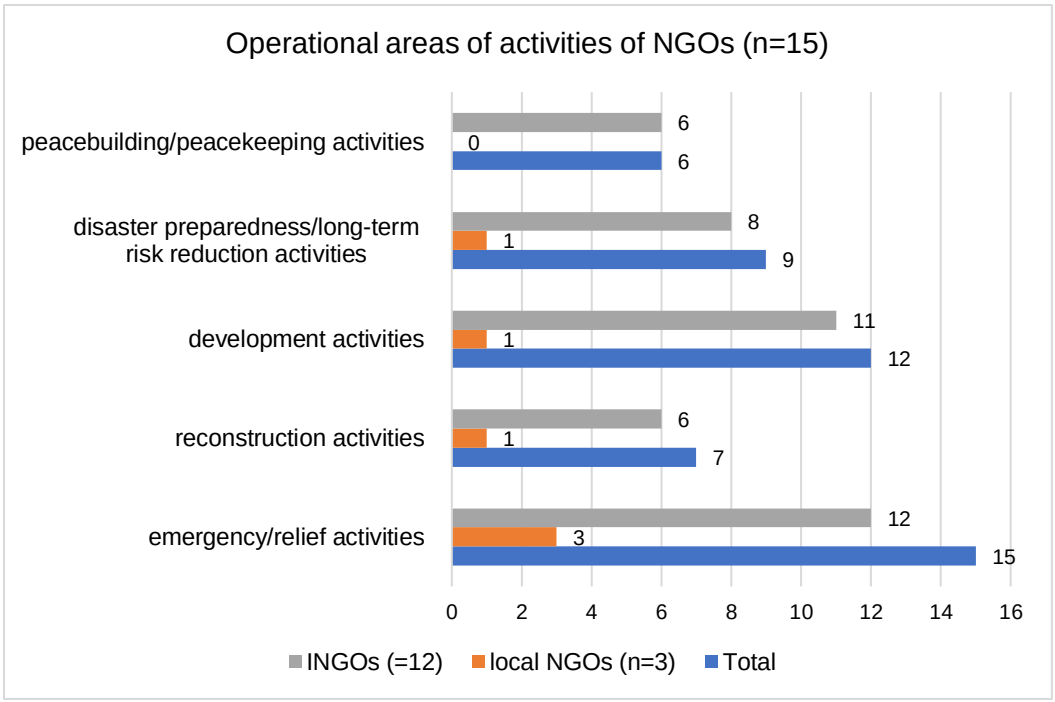
[Q1] Which type of humanitarian NGO do you represent?



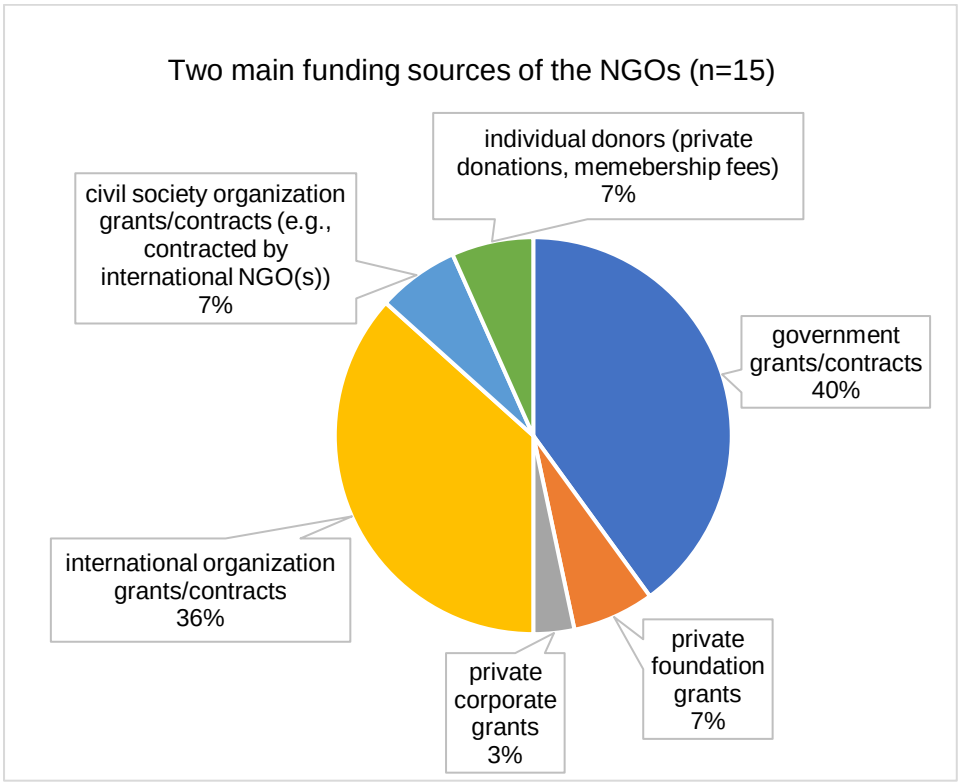
[Q2] What is your position in the organization you work for?

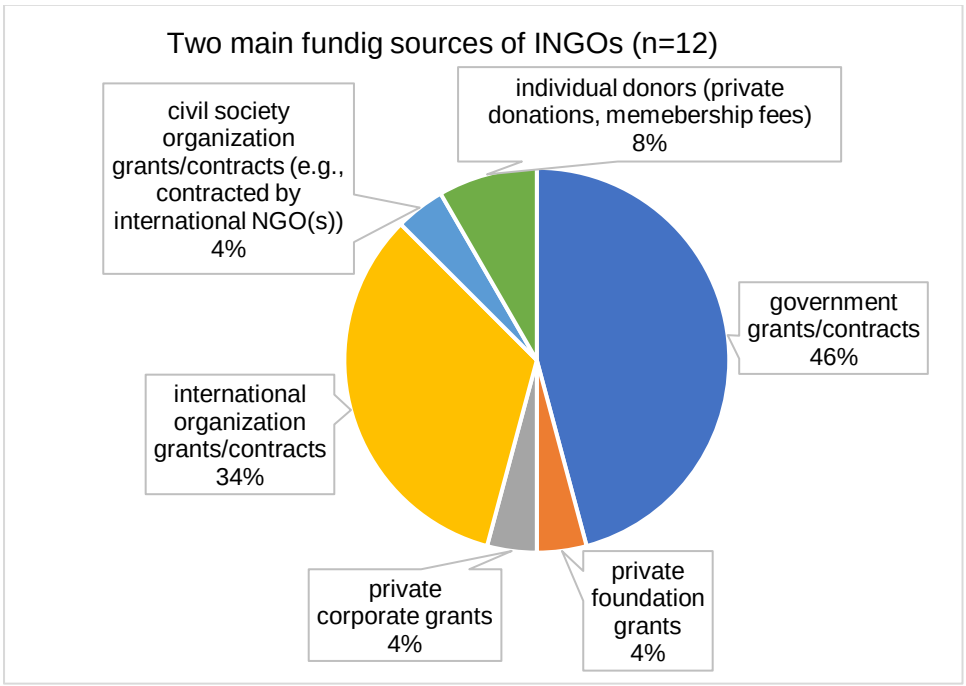


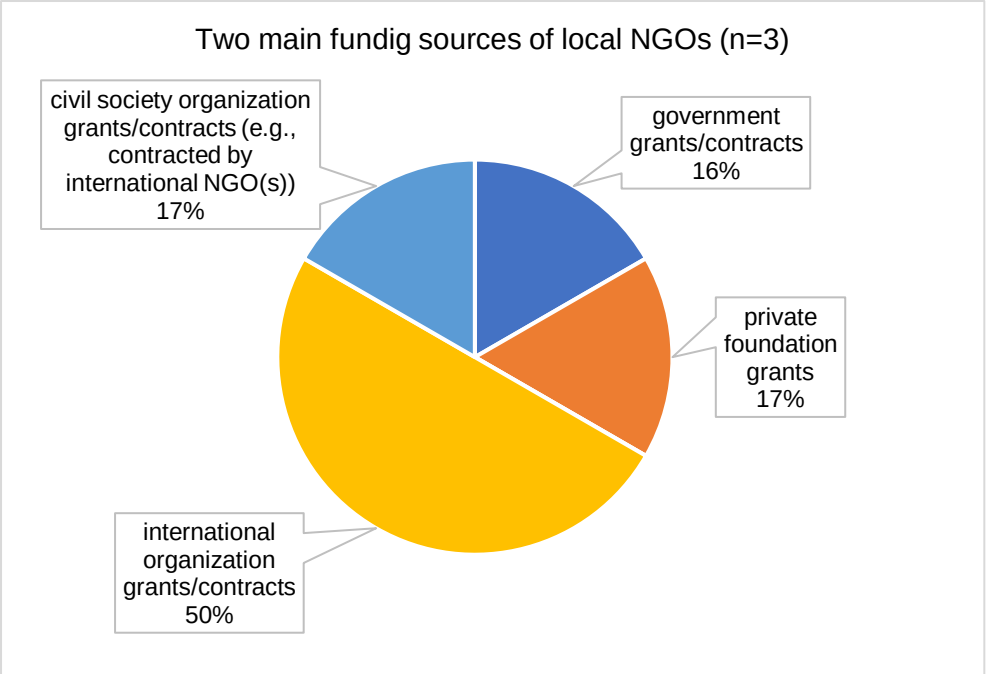
[Q3] What kind of activities is the NGO you are working for operationally involved in? Multiple answers possible.



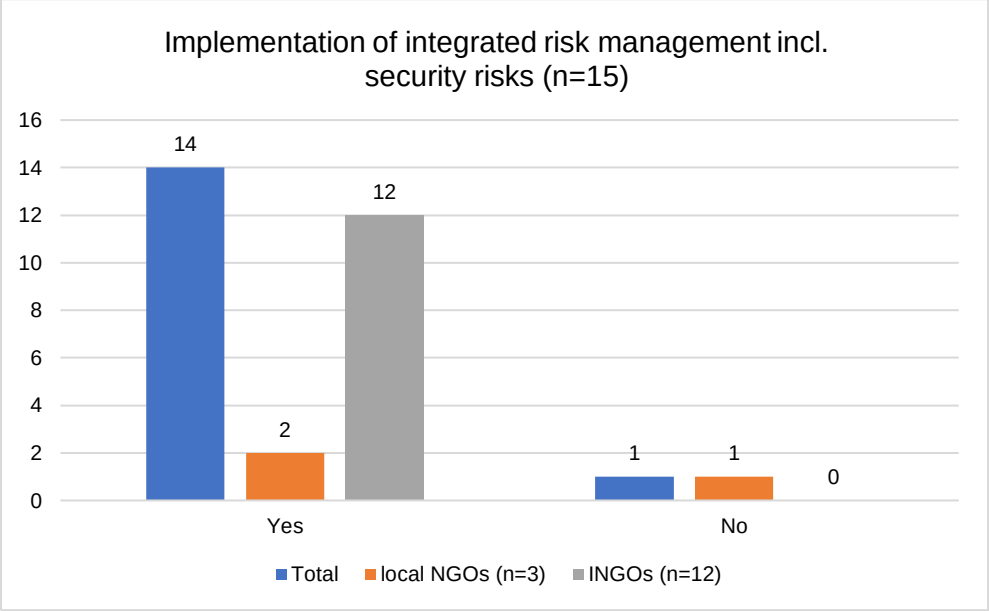
[Q4] What are the two main funding sources of your organization?



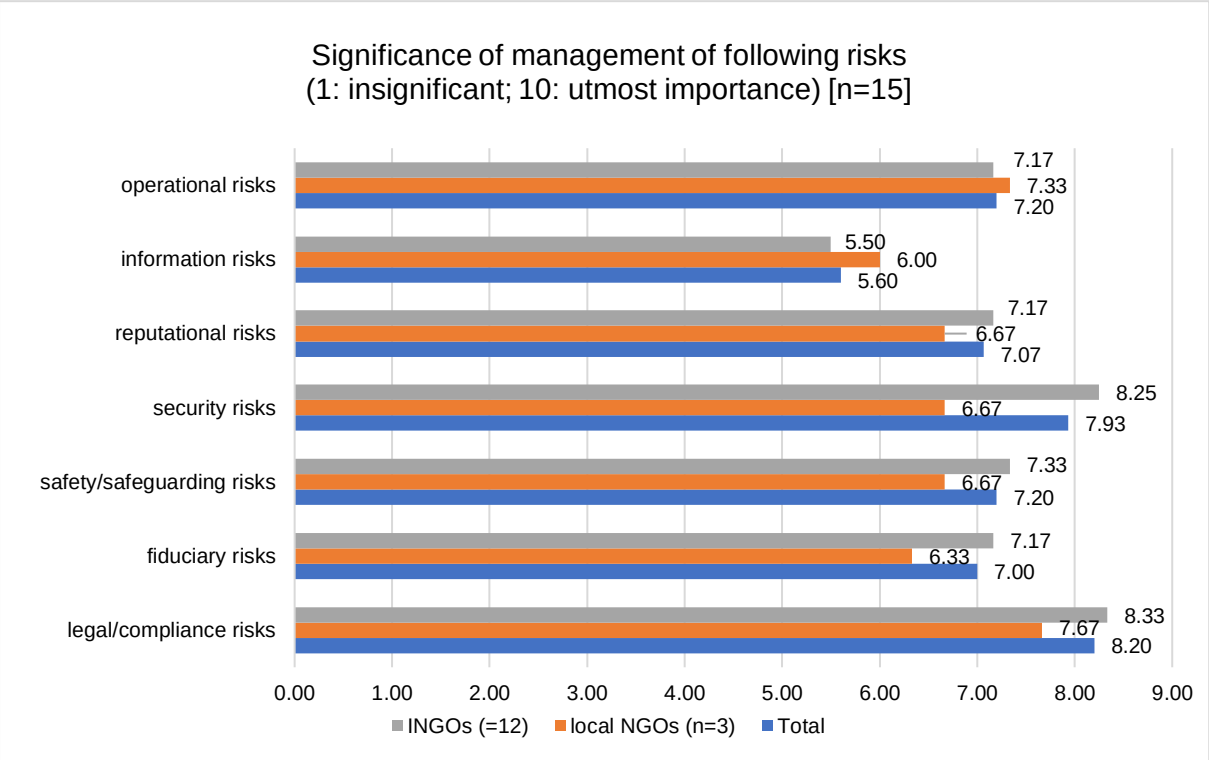




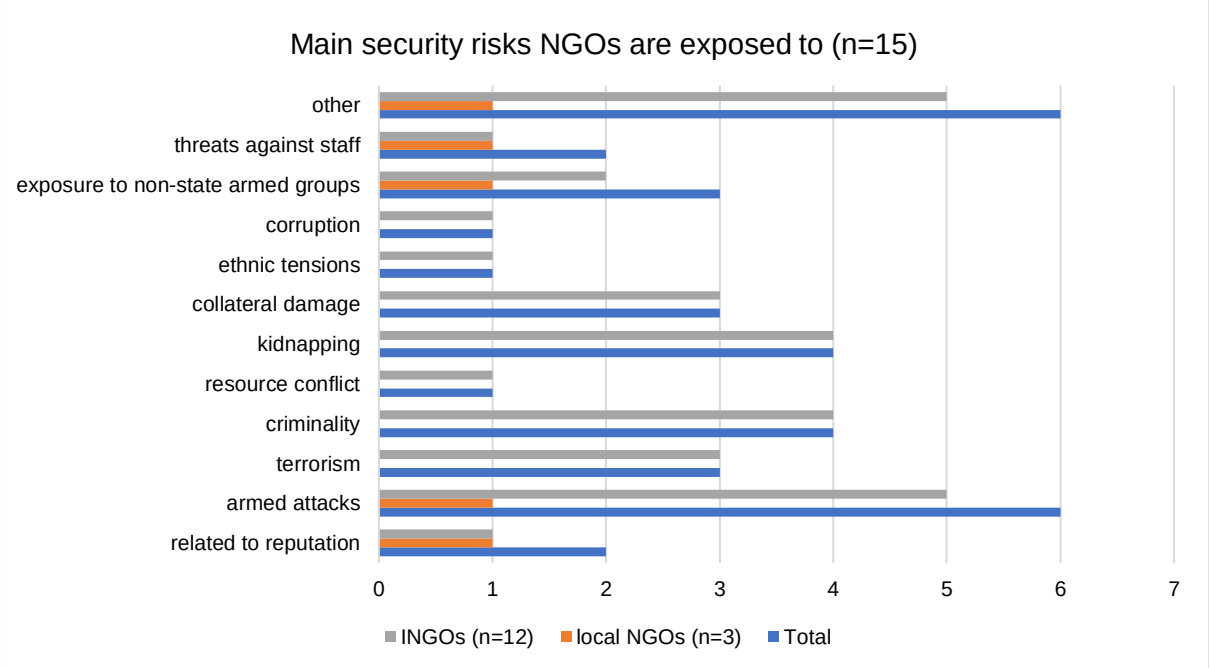
[Q5] Does your NGO have an integrated risk management function in place that addresses a broad variety of risks, including security risks?



[Q6] How significant (currently) is the management of the following risks in your NGO? For each possible answer, scale from 1-10 (1: insignificant; 10: utmost importance).

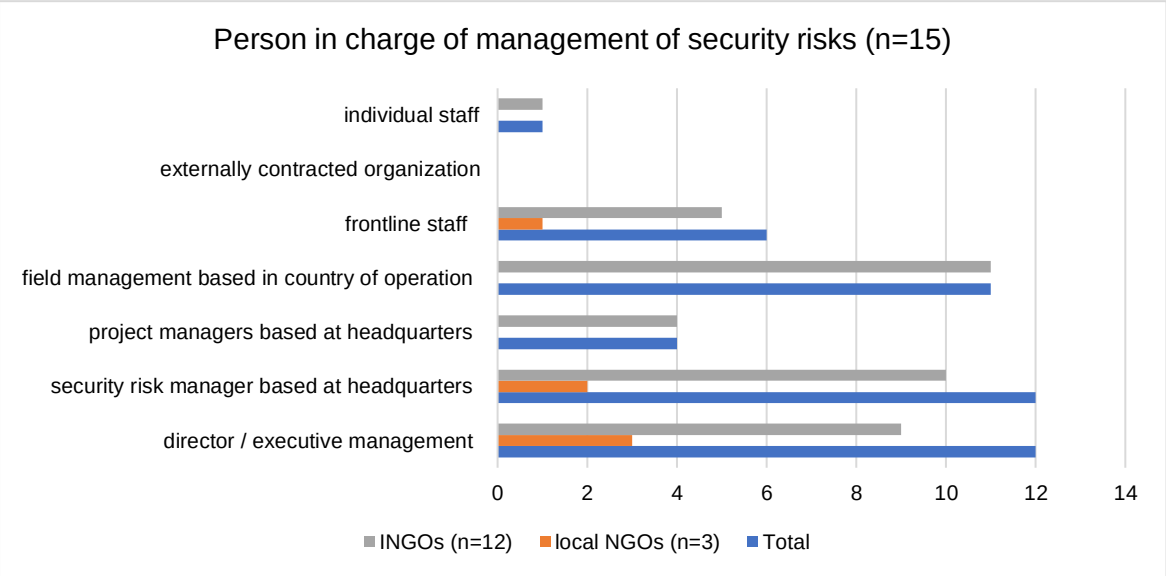


[Q7] Which kind of security risks would you say your NGO is mainly exposed to? [open question]

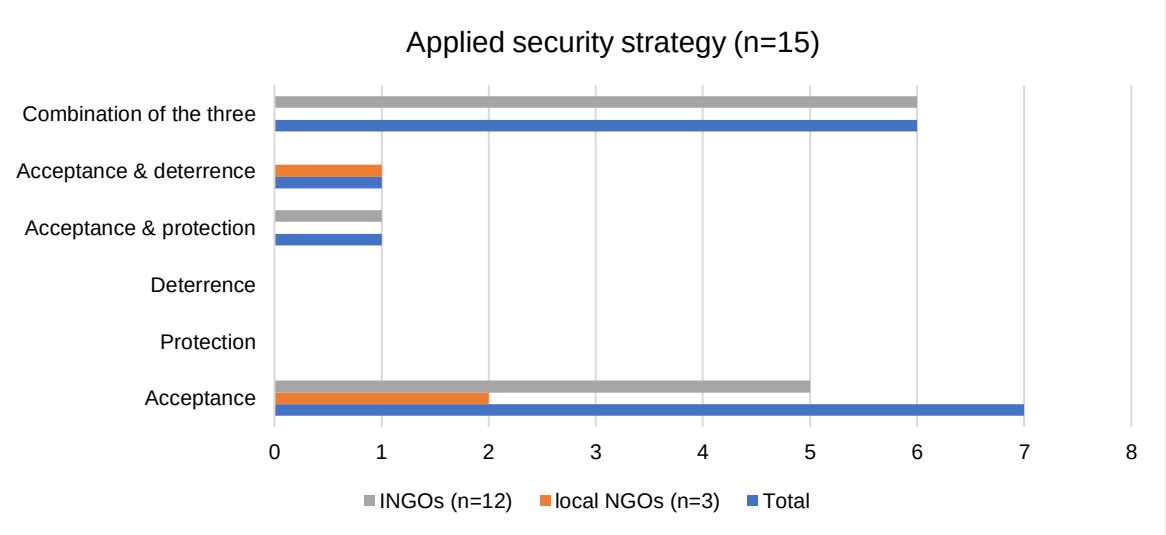


Other security risks include: delivery risks (1), fiduciary (1), car accidents (1), politicization (1), arbitrary arrests (1), SEA (1)

[Q8] Who is in charge of the management of security risks at your NGO? Multiple answers possible.

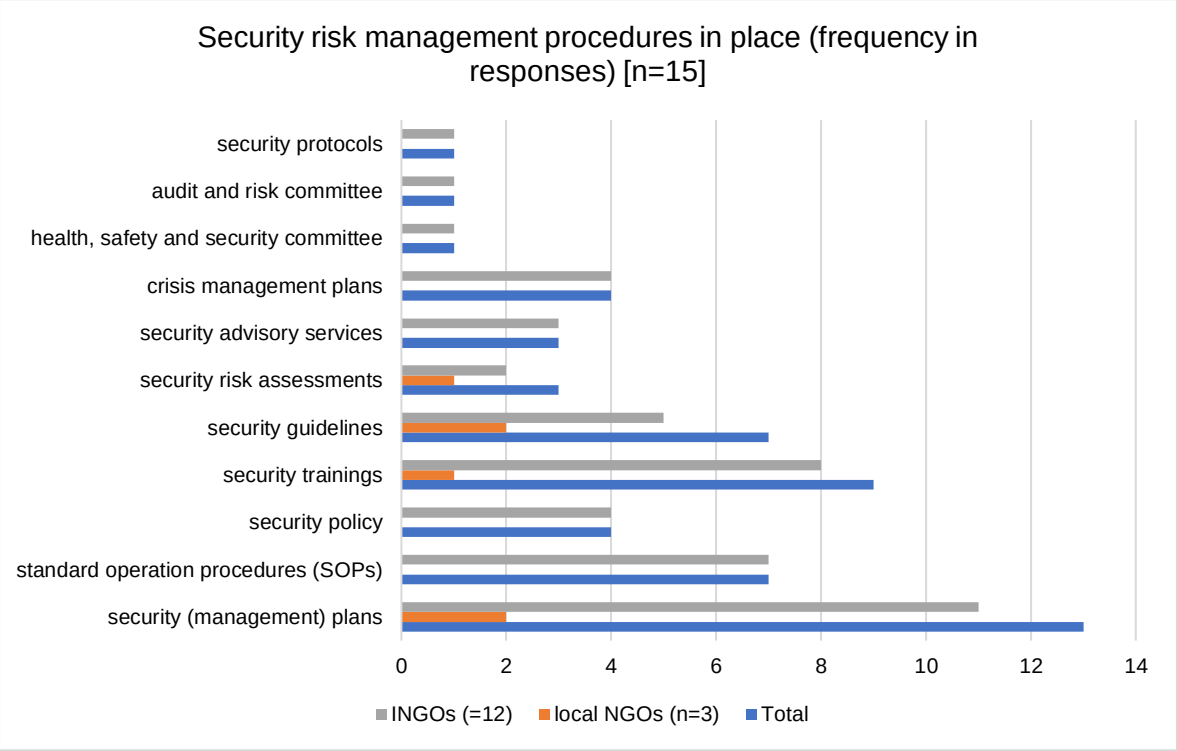


[Q9] Which security strategy does your organization mostly apply? (e.g., acceptance, protection, deterrence)

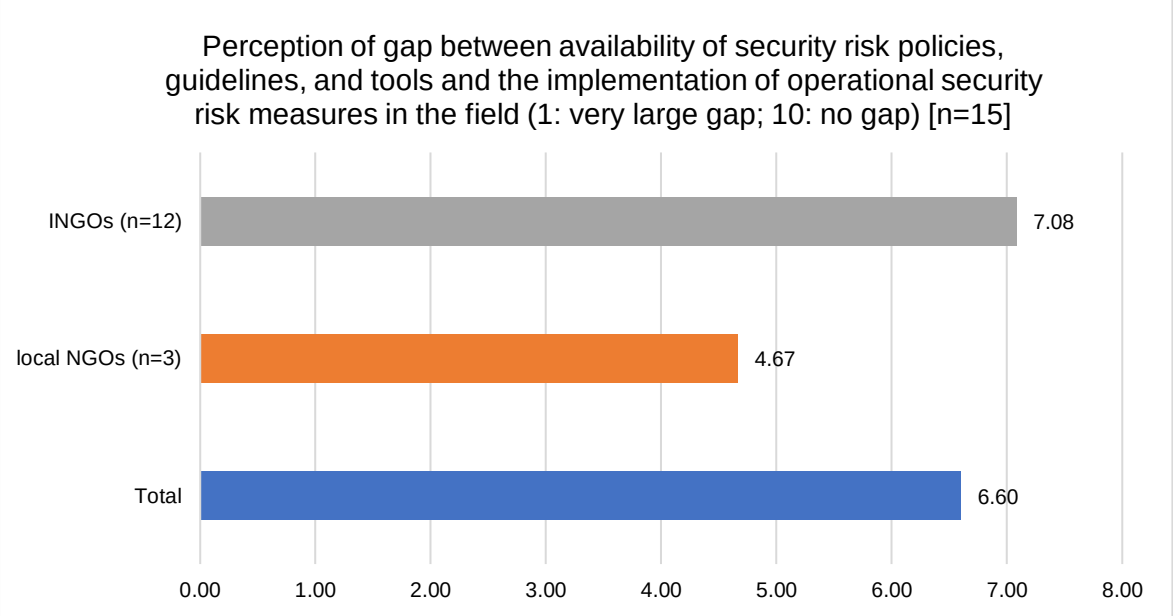


[Q10] What kind of security risk management procedures does your organization have in place? (e.g., security plans / guidelines / training etc.). [open question]

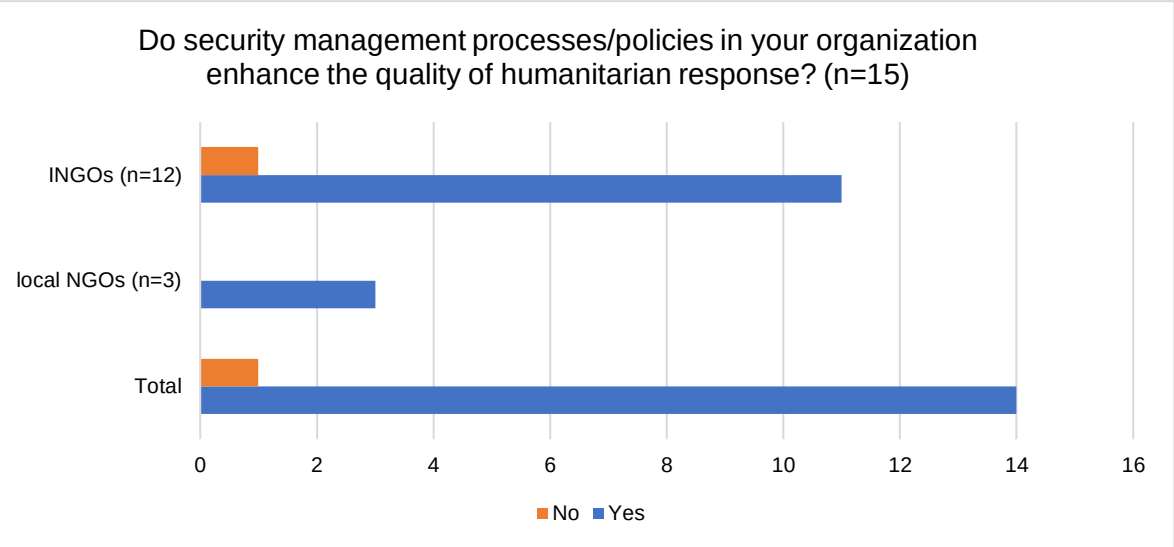
Note: We differentiate between risk management and incident management. Risk management is understood as a preventative measure, focusing on identifying risks, managing, and mitigating them to an acceptable level. In contrast, incident management is focusing on appropriate responses to security incidents after they happen.

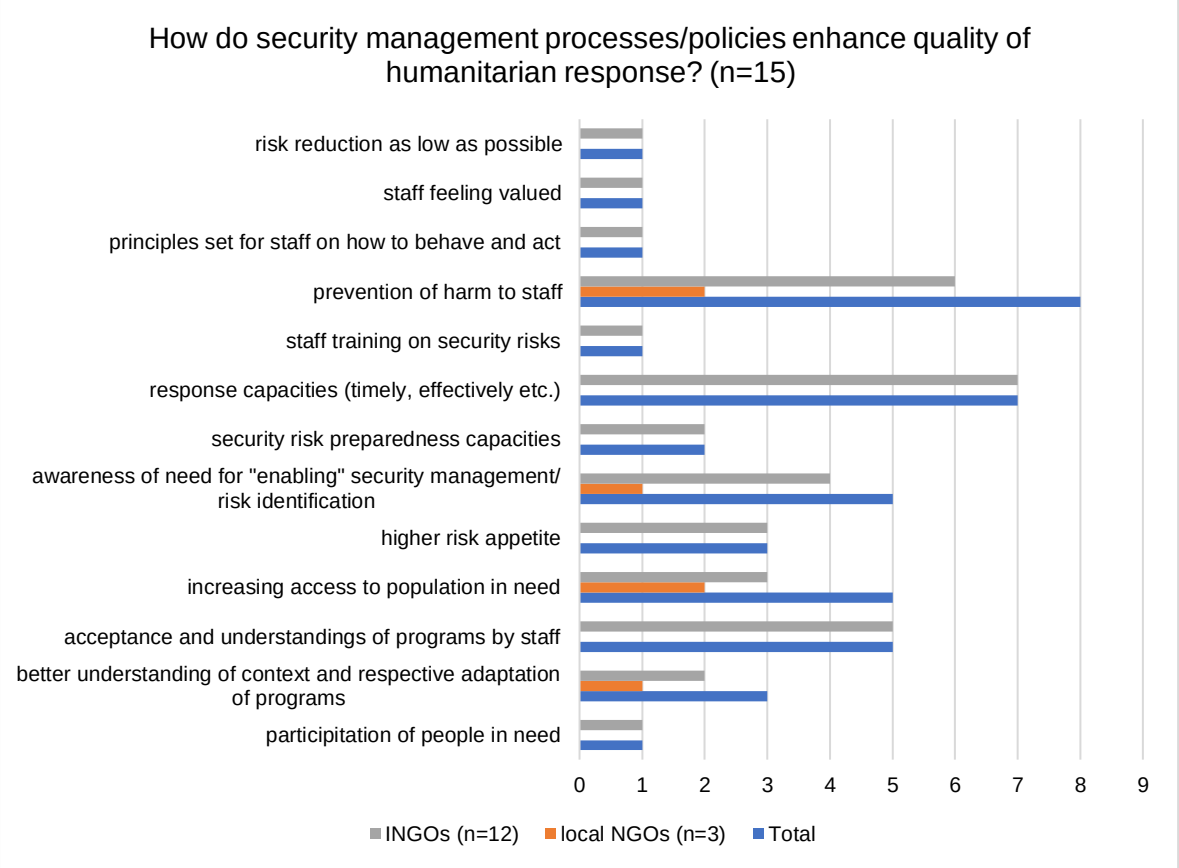


[Q11] In your organization, do you feel there is a gap between the availability of security risk policies, guidelines, and tools and the implementation of operational security risk measures in the field? Scale from 1-10 (1: very large gap; 10: no gap).

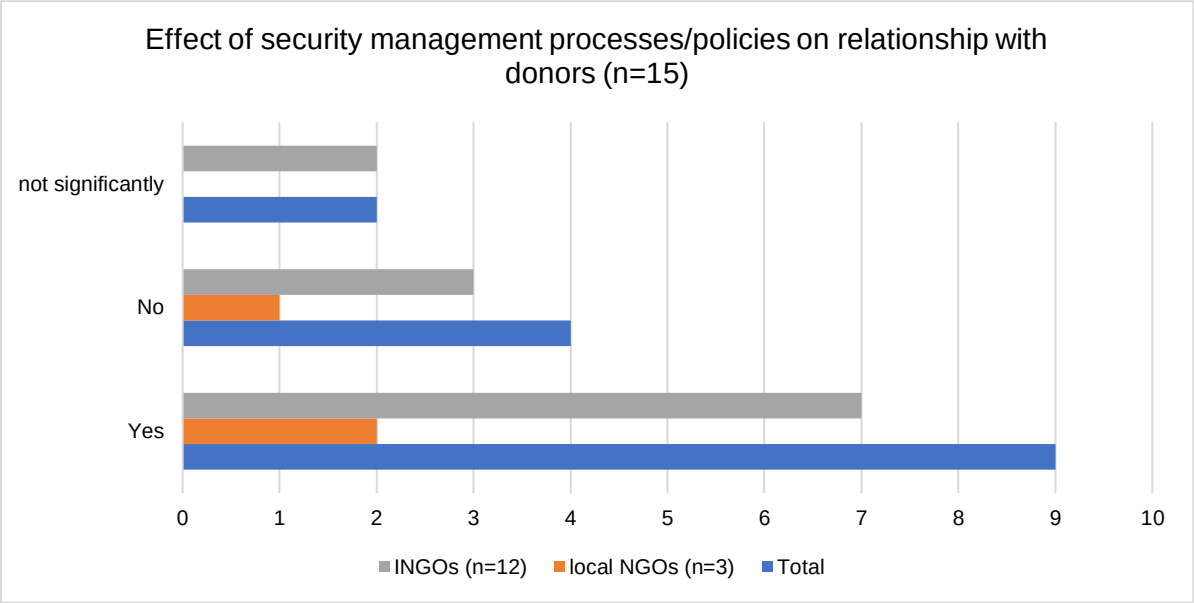


[Q12] Do security management processes/policies in your organization enhance the quality of humanitarian response, and how? [open question]

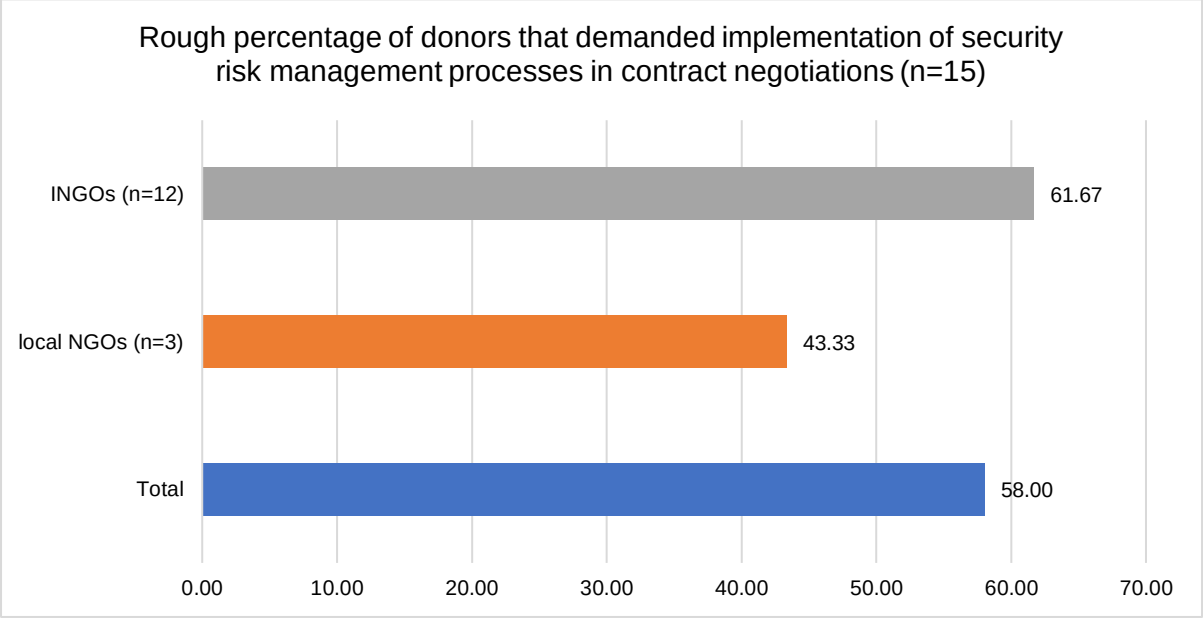




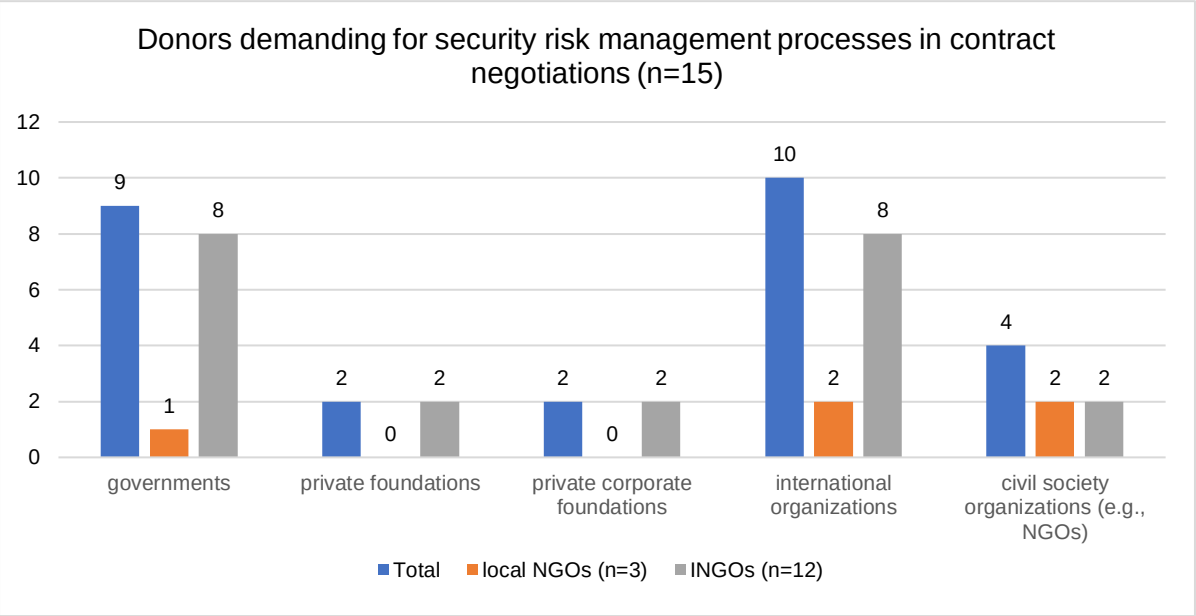
[Q13] Do security management processes/policies in your organization have any effect on your relationship with donors?



[Q14] As a rough percentage, how many of your donors have demanded the implementation of security risk management processes in contract negotiations?

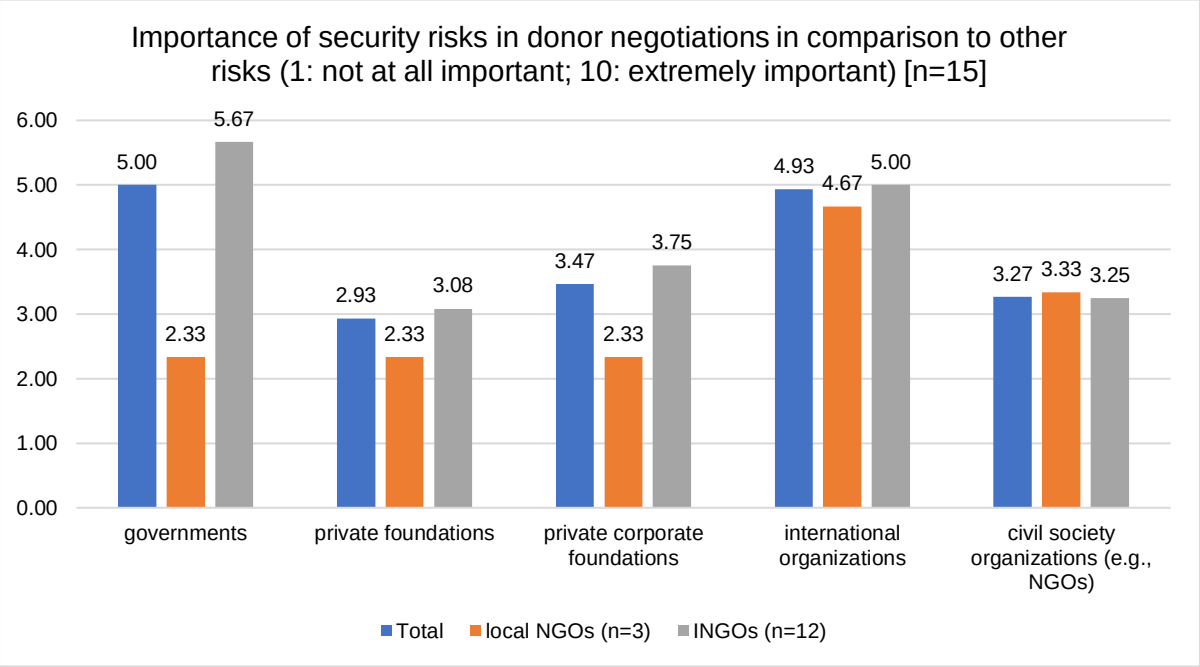


[Q15] Which donors have demanded security risk management processes in contract negotiations? Multiple answers possible.

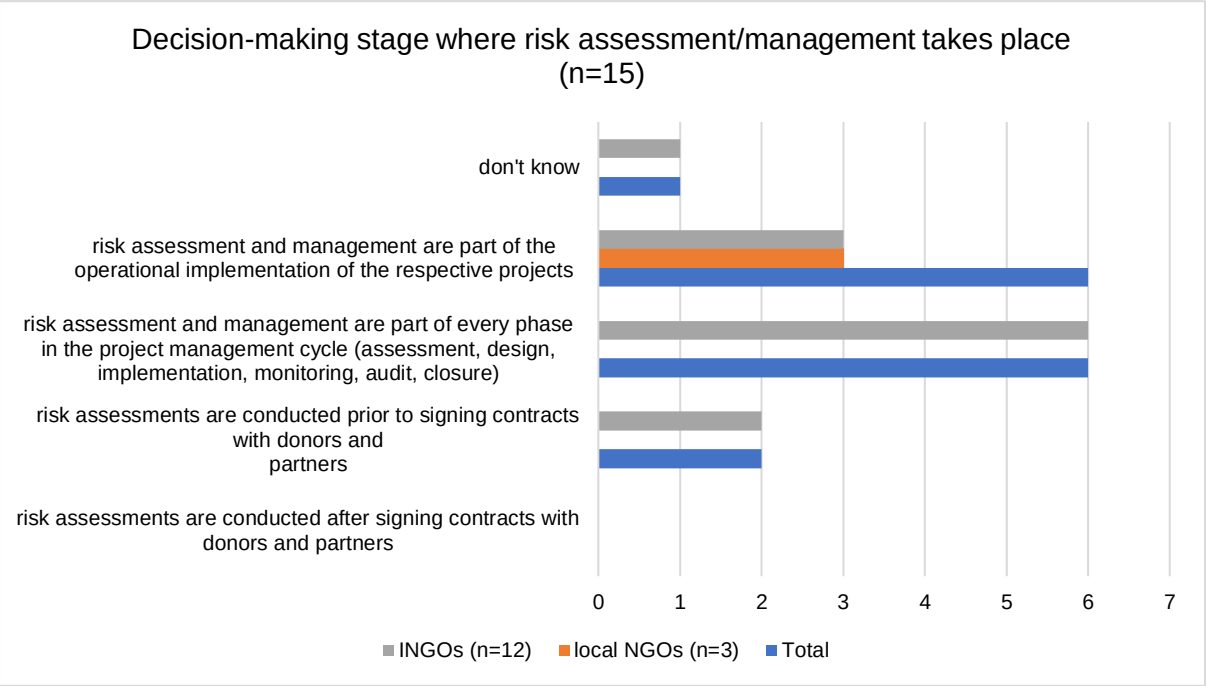


Note: Comment made by one INGO representative: “No specific information, none that I am aware of but happens at country/contract level.”

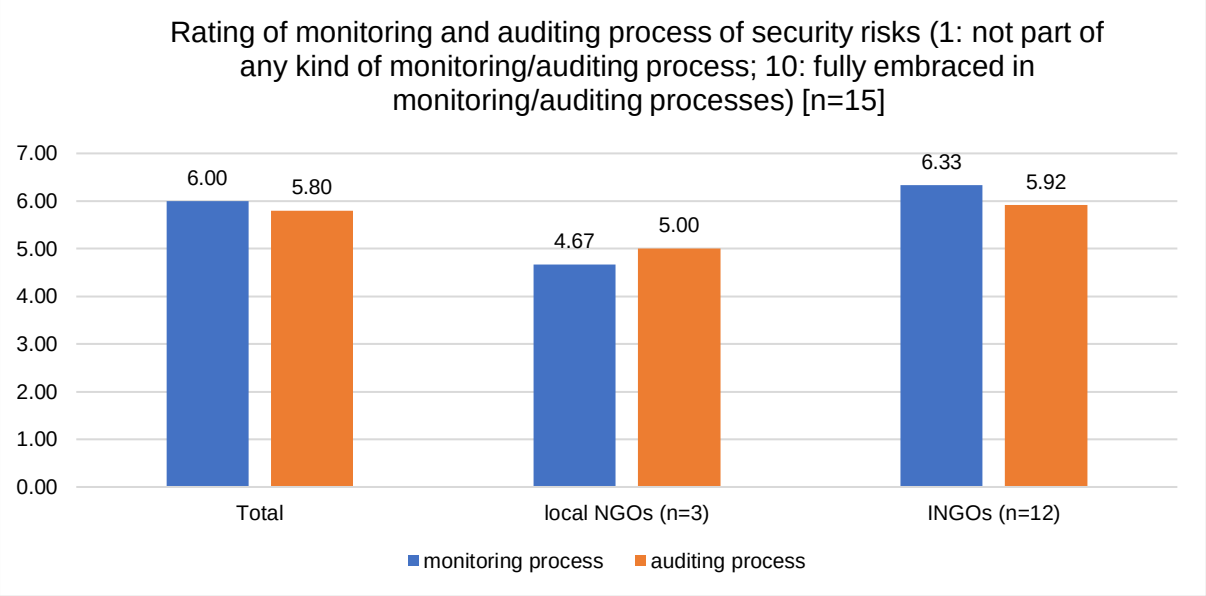
[Q16] What is the importance of security risks in donor negotiations in comparison to other risks? Scale from 0-10 (1: not at all important; 10: extremely important).



[Q17] At which stage of decision-making does risk assessment/management take place at your NGO? Multiple selections possible.



[Q18] How do you rate the monitoring and auditing process of security risks at your NGO? Scale from 1-10 (1: security risks not part of any kind of monitoring and auditing process; 10: security risks fully embraced in monitoring and auditing processes).



[Q19] Which measures have been efficient and effective concerning the management of security risks in your NGO? Why? Comments/Suggestions: [open question]

INGOs (n=9)
Increased negotiation and acceptance
Networking with other INGOs: allows for comparable risk analysis and establishing good practice; Regular risk assessment: keeps awareness of risks high and creates informed consent; Conflict sensitive project management: calibrates everyone‘s sensors for detecting sources of risks; SOP for field trip planning & execution: keeps everyone sharp and allows for latest update of risk assessment
Training and awareness building, the buy-in of the senior management and leadership, the no-exceptions rule to applying the protocols, the retirement of the generation of humanitarian cowboys who didn't think it was important, the increasing number of females (30% globally) in the workforce.
low profile/visibility policy; target hardening; strict access control and screening; armed guards; equipment
Briefing documents and briefings during induction
better support and capacity for local NGOs - reducing the risk of our staff - allowing us to continue to work in a fragile context with reduced risk to staff
training and capacity building of local partners and staff
Initially it was a comprehensive security / safety policy, later thorough and consistent security risk assessments and concise security management plan for each country of our operations. Key engine behind that has been our very experienced, hardworking and practical senior security adviser and a multiyear focus of the management on the security issues.
Security focal groups and points, participative security risk analysis, country visits and audits, training and awareness raising.

local NGOs (n=3)
Partnerships with several ministries have been signed. Operations on the ground must always be conducted with green light from the local administration
Relying on local and contextualized security assessments as opposed to a centralized procedure.
We have just set up an internal audit function, which we hope will bring more systematic analysis of risks and help us put in the appropriate measures.

[Q20] What could/should be improved concerning security risk management in your NGO? Why? Comments/Suggestions: [open question]

INGOs (n=8)
Standardised risk assessment training for managers and local security officers; would allow for better comparison between countries
More training is needed, more dedicated funding. Much more needs to be done than we can afford.
more equipment (ETB, PPE, PEP, Radio) and training
Risk assessments as part of needs assessments for new proposals
stronger elements within the program design - the limited capacity does not enable to effectively be in every discussion with the program and funding team.
Security-related information management within and outside the organizations
More stable pool of the field security officers, which could rotate among the country programs & more consistent and regular context analysis
More consistent application of practice, more focus on the security risk management capacity building for partners, measures to reduce the risk of sexual assault and also for minority profiles.

local NGOs (n=3)
Psychosocial support should be upgraded with the staff
Training of all staff on the existing procedures (to reinforce the contextualized approach).
Making risk management a part of the organizational culture is a challenge. We need more awareness and tools.

[Q21] Do you have any additional comments? Comments/Suggestions: [open question; n=2]

INGOs (n=1): Security should be a stand-alone sector or department.

Local NGOs (n=1): I am fuzzy about safety and security.

II Template: Structure of NGO Interviews

In bold, the most relevant questions that were asked first are highlighted. This template questionnaire has been adapted to each interview in terms of order and content of the questions. The latter has been adapted according to the interviewee's background, her/his current position, and the mission of the organization she/he is currently working for.

Introduction

- Explain briefly who we are
- Explain briefly our project (highlight that focus not on security risk management tools but on how security risk management is embedded in decision-making and its institutionalization as such)

- Mention that this interview will be used for illustrative/more detailed parts in the final report

Procedure of Interview and Use of Data

- Ask for available time of interviewee and that interview planned to last between 30-60min
- Ask if it is okay if from now on, we record the interview: explain that would contribute to the coding methodology we apply & mention that full transcript would be sent back for counterchecking before we make use of the information
- Ask if the interviewee/interviewee's organization should be mentioned anonymously in report or if okay, if mentioned by name: option to send report to interviewee before submission.

Interview Questions

1. **What is your current position at the organization you work for and your personal background/major responsibilities (especially with focus on security risk management)? [mention that resumé checked, but ask specifically for background in security risk management]**
2. **On an operational level, which kind of security risks is your organization mainly exposed to?**
3. **What kind of security risk management procedures does your organization have in place? (e.g., security plans / guidelines / training, etc.)**
4. Which security strategies does your organization usually apply? (acceptance, protection, deterrence, etc.)
5. **How would you describe the institutionalization of security risk management in your organization? How, if so, is it embedded in decision-making processes and the organizational culture?**
   - **5.1 Who is in charge of the management of security risks at your organization? (both at administrative and implementing/operational level)**
   - **5.2 How do you establish/draft security risk management concepts? (e.g., participative process vs security experts/advisors at HQ)**
   - **5.3 At which stage of decision-making does risk assessment/management take place at your organization?**
   - **5.4 Are security risks (management) monitored and evaluated at your organization?**
   - **5.5 How open is your organizational culture concerning the reporting of security incidents? Do you have a standard process in place for reporting security incidents?**
6. **How do(es) (the institutionalization of) security risk management processes compare to the management of other risks (e.g. fiduciary / legal risks)?**

6.1 Has your organization an integral risk management in place that includes a broad variety of risks, including security risks? Which risks does it include?

7. Concerning your organization, how would you comment on the existence of security risk tools, guidelines, and trainings and the implementation of security risk measures in the field? (e.g., How "localized" are security risk trainings?) [try to understand if NGO is doing risk management or incident management]

8. **Do security management processes/policies in your organization enhance the quality of humanitarian response, and how?**

9. **Do you feel that the NGO you work for has set an appropriate willingness to accept security risks? (i.e. a good balance of risk aversion, willingness to accept risk (risk tolerance), and management of potential risks) [match of risk appetite (willingness to accept risk) with risk tolerance (ability to manage risks)?]**

10. **Do security risk management processes at your organization have any effect on the relationship with/ (risk aversion of) donors?**

11. **Which kind of donor does demand security risk management processes in contract negotiations and is implementation usually followed up by them? Are there differences in the kind of measures the different donor organizations usually require?**

    11.1 When you contract other organizations, do you require security risk management processes?

12. Which measures have been efficient and effective concerning the management of security risks in your organization? Why?

13. What are major challenges concerning security risk management in your organization? What could/should be improved?

14. What could/should be improved concerning security risk management with regards to expectations of donor organizations? Why?

15. **Do you have anything you would like to add? Do you know about documents/reports which might be of interest to us?**

Closure

- Ask if possibility to contact again per email/Skype and mention that interview transcript will be sent back for validation
- Thanks for taking your time to talk to us!

III Template: Donor Interview Questionnaire

The introduction, procedure of the interview & use of data, and closure are identical to the structure for the NGO interviews as mentioned in Appendix II. In bold, the most relevant questions that were asked first are highlighted. This template questionnaire has been adapted to each interview in terms of order and content of the questions. The latter has been adapted

according to the interviewee's background, her/his current position, and the mission of the organization she/he is currently working for.

Interview Questions

1. **What is your current position at the organization you are working for and your personal background/major responsibilities (especially with focus on security risk management)?**
2. **Which importance does security risk management have for your organization as an implementor and donor?**
3. **At which stage of your organization's decision-making process / Project Cycle Management does security risk management become relevant?**
4. **As a donor, how do you balance meeting humanitarian needs vs ensuring the security of humanitarian aid workers ('Duty of Care') of implementing partner organizations?**
5. **As a donor, does your organization require (humanitarian) aid agencies/NGOs to have security risk management systems in place as a condition for funding?**
6. **If so, does your organization ask for specific security strategies to be implemented or what kind of security risk management are you requesting/proposing?**
7. **Has your organization ever been hesitant to fund due to lacking or insufficient security risk management provisions by aid agencies?**
8. **Do you at your organization check an aid agency's history of security incidents and other potential risks before funding?**
   - 8.1 **If so, by whom and how is it done and are organizations with prior security incidents less likely to secure new contracts?**
9. **Is your donor organization willing to increase funding to ensure that efficient security risk management is in place or to sustain it?**
10. **Would you as a donor prefer that INGOs and local NGOs are more transparent with regards to security risk management?**
11. **Compared to other potential risks that might affect implementing partner organizations, how important are security risks in project/contract negotiations?**
12. Which measures have been efficient and effective concerning the requirements with regard to security risk management for (partnering) NGOs? Why?
13. What are major challenges concerning security risk management (related requirements for partnering organizations) for your organization? What could/should be improved?
14. **Do you have anything you would like to add? Do you know about documents/reports which might be of interest to us?**

IV Template: Expert Interview Questionnaire

The introduction, procedure of the interview and use of data, and closure are identical to the structure for the NGO interviews as mentioned in Appendix II. In bold, the most relevant questions that were asked first are highlighted. This template questionnaire has been adapted to each interview in terms of order and content of the questions. The latter has been adapted according to the interviewee's background, her/his current position, and mission of the organization she/he is currently working for.

Interview Questions

1. **What is your background with regards to security risk management?**
2. **In general, what are the major challenges concerning security risk management in the humanitarian sector?**
3. **How does the management of security risks compare to the management of other risks? What is your opinion concerning the integration of security risks in an integrated risk management system that includes other risks as well?**
4. **How should security risk management optimally be designed and implemented in humanitarian organizations?**
   - **4.1 From an organizational perspective, who should be responsible for security risk management?**
   - **4.2 How should security risk management be embedded in the decision-making processes and organizational culture of humanitarian organizations?**
   - **4.3 How can the implementation of security risk management in "the field" (incl. local staff/volunteers) optimally be ensured?**
5. **When humanitarian organizations cooperate with each other/other stakeholders, who should be responsible for security risk management and should an agreement on the implementation of security risk management be a necessity before partnering with each other?**
6. From your experience in the humanitarian sector, are there some general differences concerning the institutionalization/implementation of security risk management between local/national and international NGOs?
7. **In general, what is your perception concerning the impact of institutionalized security risk management in humanitarian organizations on risk aversion within these organizations as well as their donors?**
8. **From your experience, how would you comment on donor requirements with regard to security risk management policies / processes in humanitarian NGOs? Are these requirements in relation to available funds for administrative budgets / overhead costs / or even organizational development?**
9. **Do you have anything you would like to add? Do you know about documents/reports which might be of interest to us?**

V Project Brief

This project brief was used as communication material to contact potential interviewees and was also attached to the online survey.

Project Brief

Security Risk Management and Risk Aversion in the Humanitarian Sector: Assessing Decision-Making Processes in Local and International Humanitarian NGOs

Why this project?

This research project is commissioned by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and part of the interdisciplinary master's program in Development Studies at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. The so-called Capstone Project is to be conducted by students in collaboration with a selected partner organization. The aim of the project is that students gain direct research experience working on real-world research projects and global challenges, contributing to impactful solutions for the partner organizations which approach the university with their research topic.

Research Question

The project's primary research question is: How are security risk management processes institutionalized in local/national and international humanitarian NGOs and what is its relation to risk-taking/ aversion within these NGOs and donor organizations? Thereby, we understand security risks as direct threats to life by external acts of violence or crime (random or targeted) to humanitarian aid workers.

Why this question?

Our preliminary literature review shows, that the institutionalization of security risk management in the humanitarian sector and its role with regards to decision-making processes and risk aversion is under-researched. With our project, we aim to understand different forms of institutionalization of security risk management processes in local and international humanitarian NGOs to assess if and how these processes impact risk aversion of donors and within these NGOs, thereby making a difference on the effectiveness of aid delivered to the most vulnerable.

How we conduct our research

We apply the grounded theory methodology, conducting semi-structured expert interviews, an online survey, and review of literature and, if possible, an analysis of reports, records and other primary sources from the participating organizations. Interviews – of around 45-60min, taking place in person or via Skype – with security risk managers / project coordinators/managers handling security risk management processes are key to our research to provide an in-depth understanding of the issue.

Which organizations participate in our project?

We plan to interview two-three local/national and two-three international humanitarian NGOs which are involved operationally, but not exclusively, in emergency/relief activities, that optimally respect the four humanitarian principles of humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality. In addition, we seek to interview two gov./multilateral donor agencies. The online survey will be open to various humanitarian NGOs active in emergency/relief activities.

What do you gain by participating?

Your input contributes to our final report, which aims to help create efficient security risk policies, addressed to senior management, project managers, and aid workers of humanitarian

NGOs and the wider sector, including UN agencies and donors. By better understanding the institutionalization of security risk management processes, you support our aim of contributing to safer and more effective humanitarian assistance on the ground.

Who are we?

We are two master's students in Development Studies (2018-20) at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, with a strong interest in humanitarian action. Silvan (silvan.oberholzer@graduateinstitute.ch) holds a B.A. HSG in International Affairs from the University of St.Gallen and has gained practical experience in the development cooperation and humanitarian aid sector. Emanuel (emanuel.hermann@graduateinstitute.ch) graduated from the University of Heidelberg with a B.A. in Political Science and History. He has extensive experience in conflict research. If you wish further information, do not hesitate to contact us by email.