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ESRC End of Award Report

For awards ending on or after 1 November 2009

This End of Award Report should be completed and submitted using the **grant reference** as the email subject, to reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk on or before the due date.

The final instalment of the grant will not be paid until an End of Award Report is completed in full and accepted by ESRC.

Grant holders whose End of Award Report is overdue or incomplete will not be eligible for further ESRC funding until the Report is accepted. We reserve the right to recover a sum of the expenditure incurred on the grant if the End of Award Report is overdue. (Please see the ESRC Research Funding Guide for details.)

Please refer to the Guidance notes when completing this End of Award Report.

Grant Reference	RES-167-25-0439		
Grant Title	Achieving Policy Coherence in Challenging Environments: Risk Management and Aid Culture in Sudan and Afghanistan**.**		
Grant Start Date	1 October 2010	**Total Amount Expended:**	£471,073.40
Grant End Date	31 January 2013		
Grant holding Institution	School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies (SPAIS) University of Bristol		
Grant Holder	Prof Mark Duffield		
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Co-Investigators (as per project application):		**Institution**	
Dr Sarah Collinson		Overseas Development Institute, London	

1. Non-technical summary

Please provide below a project summary written in non-technical language. The summary may be used by us to publicise your work and should explain the aims and findings of the project. *[Max 250 words]*

Since the 1990s, UN, non-governmental and private aid agencies have expanded their work in war-affected fragile states, pursuing ambitious programmes of social and political transformation and humanitarian assistance. This has both raised their profile and increased the security risks they face. The research focused on how international agencies and aid workers have adapted to working in challenging environments, looking at perceptions of and responses to increased risk and the implications for achieving stated policy goals.

This 28-month project (1 Oct 2010 to 31 Jan 2013) was jointly managed by the Global Insecurities Centre (GIC), University of Bristol and the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), Overseas Development Institute, London. South Sudan and Afghanistan were the case-studies. Local research partners were contracted to record the attitudes of host communities to the international aid system, and two postgraduate Research Assistants (RAs) undertook around 9 months' fieldwork in the two countries, drawing on a range of ethnographic methodologies.

Although aid *organisations* are determined to remain in these environments, their international managers are often bunkered within separated and protected gated complexes and fortified compounds, increasingly reliant on professional security advisers. Forms of *remote management* have emerged involving arm's length arrangements operating through an array of national and international intermediaries working outside the strict security protocols of larger agencies. The expanded levels of mediation and subcontracting that now separate policy intent from application on the ground raise a host of poorly recognised programmatic and strategic hazards for aid agencies that go beyond the more immediate security risks.

2. Project overview

a) Objectives
Please state the aims and objectives of your project as outlined in your proposal to us. *[Max 200 words]*

The primary objective of the research was to examine the extent to which risk management among UN agencies and international NGOs challenged their ability to achieve transformational policy goals in conflict-affected fragile states. Specifically,

Research objectives:
- to provide an ethnographic analysis of the integrated and multi-agency programmes operating

South Sudan and Afghanistan
- examine the spread of field-security training and the role of security experts as a complement to the physical 'bunkering' of the aid system
- explore how enhanced risk management shapes interactions between international agencies and local NGOs, private security companies and the military; how enhanced risk management influences coverage and programme design; and how it affects beneficiary groups and conflict dynamics.
- examine the implications for achieving coherent or comprehensive policy outcomes.

Academic objectives:
- address the relative absence of research and debate on the material and spatial effects of the international system
- provide an ethnographically grounded account of the workings of the development-security nexus

Policy objectives:
- examine the tension between universal goals and the tendency towards local fragmentation within the aid system.
- draw out the wider implications of the culture of risk management for comprehensive programming in fragile states.
- use an ethnographically informed account of the aid system as an opportunity for debate and innovative policy change.

Impact objectives:
- support the career development of the project's two RAs
- support the work of the local partners in South Sudan and Afghanistan
- establish a Stakeholder Reference Group for each case study country and in UK.
- work with ODI's RAPID team, and the ODI-based ALNAP group, to produce a tool for strategic decision-making in integrated programmes.
- publish and disseminate the project's policy reports, and related policy briefs, through ODI's HPI Network, and spin-off publications in academic journals.
- Hold multi-stakeholder workshops, an ODI public meeting in London and GIC workshop in Bristol.
- Maintain dedicated GIC and ODI webpages.

b) Project Changes

Please describe any changes made to the original aims and objectives, and confirm that these were agreed with us. Please also detail any changes to the grant holder's institutional affiliation, project staffing or funding. *[Max 200 words]*

All major changes have been communicated and agreed with ESRC.

Research objectives:
Examining the spread of field-security training and the effects of risk management on conflict dynamics was not possible in any depth for a variety of reasons including difficult working environment and resource constraints.

Impact objectives:
In South Sudan difficulties were experienced in finding a suitable local partner. While a partner was eventually contracted toward the end of the fieldwork period, overall local partner input in South Sudan has been limited.

The difficult working environment meant that the planned South Sudan and Afghanistan

in-country stakeholder groups were not formed. Reliance was placed on existing aid forums and bilateral relations. The policy and practice tool eventually became an interactive Hazard Assessment Framework to guide discussion with stakeholders around issues of risk and security. This was piloted in Kabul, while in Juba, the preliminary research findings were presented.

Extensions and Staffing Issues:

The project was granted two no-cost extensions from 30 September to 30 November 2012 and then 31 January 2013. Besides overrun issues, it proved necessary to hire a consultant for six weeks to produce additional South Sudan output.

This required one of three budget virements. The other two concerned RA contract extensions and some extra ODI input into the impact plan.

Regarding institutional changes, Dr Collinson left ODI in November 2011 but, as an ODI Research Associate, retained CoI status.

Due to unforeseen difficulties, the planned public launch of the overview Paradoxes of Presence report at ODI in January 2013 was postponed. It has now been rescheduled for 8 November 2013.

c) Methodology

Please describe the methodology that you employed in the project. Please also note any ethical issues that arose during the course of the work, the effects of this and any action taken. *[Max 500 words]*

South Sudan and Afghanistan are challenging environments for research. Not least, because both RA's operated outside the security and logistical systems of the international aid industry. While independence was maintained, it exacerbated problems of access and movement. Over 28 month life of the project, both RA's completed a total of nine months fieldwork each.

Besides documentary collection and analysis, the main research methodology comprised formal and informal interviews supplemented with participant observation among a wide range of aid agencies, contractors, aid workers and indigenous groups operating or living inside the capital cities and outside locations. A photographic archive was also built up. All research locations were considered security risks by professional advisers. In both countries, the security of the RAs was paramount and precautions, especially regarding travel, were applied at all times.

Gaining access to agency and private company staff proved relatively easier in South Sudan than Afghanistan. South Sudan offered greater opportunities for informal contacts and 'door-stepping' agency offices. In Afghanistan, due to heightened security, access required more formal and often slower procedures; in some cases demanding HQ clearance or,

especially with private contractors, approval from donors. Entry to social aid gatherings, an important site of participant observation, needed the approval of the security 'gatekeepers' that compile the lists restricting and vetting attendance.

In South Sudan, more than a hundred interviews were conducted, together with numerous informal conversations and many opportunities for participatory observation. While mainly working in Juba and Rumbeck, Bentiu, Bor and Wau were also visited. In Afghanistan, besides informal conversations and observation, around ninety interviews were completed, mainly in Kabul. Short visits to Mazar-e Sharif, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Heart were also made.

In both countries, local partners were contracted to collect data on host community perceptions of the aid industry. This was more successful in Afghanistan than South Sudan (see Changes Made). In Afghanistan the Peace Training and Research Organisation (PTRO) conducted 158 interviews, using a question guide developed jointly by PTRO and the RA. This involved a sample of districts in Herat, Balkh, Kabul, Nangarhar and Helmand Provinces, chosen to give a range of aid presence. Interviewees included local state officials, maliks, mullahs, teachers, NGO workers, and community members. In Sudan, the Juba-based Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Capacity Building Consult, South Sudan (SMECOSS) carried out individual and focus group interviews in locations in Juba, Bor and Wau.

Toward the end of 2012, a well-qualified Consultant was hired for six weeks to conduct further research in Juba, Bor and Boma. In total, over 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with some 16 organisations including UN agencies, NGOs and national and international staff, in addition to a number of informal discussions and observations.

d) Project Findings

Please summarise the findings of the project, referring where appropriate to outputs recorded on the ESRC website. Any future research plans should also be identified. *[Max 500 words]*

The research documented the growing remoteness or physical separation of international aid workers from the societies in which they work. While the emergence of fortified aid complexes provide obvious examples, 'bunkerisation' also has more subtle and perfomative characteristics associated with life-style, ethnicity and risk transfer. The research confirmed the growth of risk aversion among international aid agencies as regards their international personnel and its normalisation, especially by the UN, donors and larger NGOs, through an expert system of security management and institutional behavioural expectations that act to restrict the movement of international aid workers and reduce their contact with beneficiaries.

The research explored the consequences of bunkerisation, including, the rise of 'remote

management', involving attempts by managers to maintain aid programmes through various forms of arm's length subcontracting and risk transfer. Besides reliance on national aid workers and local NGOs, this also includes private contractors and consultants. Indeed, a whole raft of new private players has entered the aid industry. These actors often operate outside the restrictive security protocols limiting the movement of international staff working for the larger agencies.

The increasing layers of subcontracting and mediation that now separates the level of policy intention from actual implementation on the ground has increased problems relating to monitoring and evaluating projects and programmes and has highlighted the difference between national and international aid workers. While remote management is often argued to empower national staff, the insistence on international oversight and legitimation tends to reproduce their subordinate position and exposes them to proportionately higher levels of security risks without the same level of protections that international staff enjoy.

At the same time, a narrow focus on immediate security management risks drawing attention away from the more fundamental or higher-order dilemmas and hazards that define the uncertain realities of being present and engaged in complex and challenging security environments. Recognising the liabilities associated with 'staying and delivering' depends on agencies adopting a broadened risk agenda.

The contradiction between the expectation that agencies maintain or expand their operations in conflict-affected countries, and the countervailing pressures to limit exposure of international staff seems irreconcilable. The fundamental contradiction between 'staying' and 'staying safe' suggests that bunkeristion and remote management are not only here to stay, the contradiction itself is being resolved by the growing sophistication of remote management. The tensions between organisational and individual risk acceptance and 'resilience' cannot be resolved simply through recourse to better or smarter operational security management.

The above issues are explored in the project outputs listed below and on ROS.

Remote management has led to an interest in remote sensing and the attempts to overcome physical separation of international managers by reconnecting with aid beneficiaries digitally. As a spin-off from this research, the PI is currently exploring the rise of 'cyber-humanitarianism' and the growing use of geospatial and Big Data technologies in disaster management. While yet to be proven, these technologies promise to overcome the growing crisis of ground truth by involving and empowering aid beneficiaries in new ways.

e) Contributions to wider ESRC initiatives (eg Research Programmes or Networks)

If your project was part of a wider ESRC initiative, please describe your contributions to the initiative's objectives and activities and note any effect on your project resulting from participation. *[Max. 200 words]*

The PI participated in two RCUK Global Uncertainties workshops in 2012/13. This was useful in clarifying ESRC and DFID expectations.

3. Early and anticipated impacts

a) Summary of Impacts to date

Please summarise any impacts of the project to date, referring where appropriate to associated outputs recorded on the Research Outcomes System (ROS). This should include both scientific impacts (relevant to the academic community) and economic and societal impacts (relevant to broader society). The impact can be relevant to any organisation, community or individual. *[Max. 400 words]*

All relevant items have been recorded on ROS

Immediate fieldwork outputs

RAs completed End of Fieldwork reports for South Sudan and Afghanistan respectively (see, GIC project website at http://www.bristol.ac.uk/global-insecurities/esrc-dfid/).

PI trip reports Juba and Kabul (GIC project website)

Consultant report, *Working in Challenging Environments: Field Report South Sudan,* Juba, Dec 2012 (GIC project website)

PI/CoI synthesis report, *Paradoxes of Presence: Risk Management and Aid Culture in Challenging Environments,* London, ODI, March 2013 (GIC website)*.* Electronic copies of the report are being circulated through the ODI, Humanitarian Policy Group practioner network. It includes an annex outlining a Hazard Assessment Framework which is intended to support critical debate and discussion that openly acknowledges the uncertain and difficult nature of the hazards that organisations and their employees may face. It is designed to be used as a dynamic and continuing prompt for aid actors to pose critical questions, highlight challenges and seek to identify and examine the dilemmas and trade-offs involved. The framework is intended to be applicable and adaptable to a diverse range of decision-making and operational levels and situations.

Engagement and feedback

The project was introduced at two externally convened London workshops (by ODI and Saferworld) in October 2010. Audiences included a wide cross-section of UN, NGOs, donor and academic representatives.

An International Reference Group was established with over thirty members providing a cross-section of national and international aid, policy and academic communities. Co-hosted by Bristol and ODI, this group met three times in London for briefing and feedback (March & Oct 11, Sept 12). Since half of the membership was based overseas, this group had a virtual element.

Several agency feedback workshops, organised through existing aid consortia, were held in Juba and Kabul in April 2012. The Kabul meetings also piloted the Hazard Assessment Framework.

An academic workshop, attracting a student audience, was held in Bristol in June 2012.

The Sept 12 International Reference Group meeting at ODI, London also presented the Hazard Assessment Framework *(Annex 1, Paradoxes of Presence)*.

Press and opinion

The Afghanistan RA produced three pieces for *Nieman Watchdog* Project, Harvard (May 12) and *The Scotsman* (March 12).

Academic Outputs

In 2011/12 the PI published three referred journal articles in *The South Atlantic Quarterly, Security Dialogue* and *Development Dialogue.*

 Conferences:

In 2011/12 the PI presented at three international conferences (Ireland and Berlin) and nine national workshops and seminars, including a public lecture at British Academy, London (Nov 12).

b) Anticipated/Potential Future Impacts

Please outline any anticipated or potential impacts (scientific or economic and societal) that you believe your project might have in future. *[Max. 200 words]*

Academic outputs

Three draft journal articles are currently being finalised by the PI/CoI, Consultant and Afghanistan RA for 2013 submission dealing with risk management in challenging environments.

Policy Briefs

The Afghanistan RA is currently working on a policy brief

Engagement and Feedback

The launch of the *Paradoxes of Presence* report is now planned for 8 November at ODI, London

Future Research

As a spin-off from this research, especially, the increasing remoteness of international aid workers from the societies in which they work, the PI is currently working on the rise of cyber-humanitarianism and the growing use of geospatial technologies in disaster management.

You will be asked to complete an ESRC Impact Report 12 months after the end date of your award. The Impact Report will ask for details of any impacts that have arisen since the completion of the End of Award Report.

4. Declarations

Please ensure that sections A, B and C below are completed and signed by the appropriate individuals. The End of Award Report will not be accepted unless all sections are signed. Please note hard copies are **not** required; electronic signatures are accepted and should be used.

A: To be completed by Grant Holder

Please read the following statements. Tick **one** statement under ii) and iii), then sign with an electronic signature at the end of the section (this should be an image of your actual signature).

i) The Project

This Report is an accurate overview of the project, its findings and impacts. All co-investigators named in the proposal to ESRC or appointed subsequently have seen and approved the Report.	x

ii) Submissions to the Research Outcomes System (ROS)

Output and impact information has been submitted to the Research Outcomes System. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted as soon as they become available. **or**	**x**
This grant has not yet produced any outputs or impacts. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted to the Research Outcomes System as soon as they become available.	☐

iii) Submission of Data

Data arising from this grant have been offered for deposit with the UK Data Service. **or**	x
Data that were anticipated in the grant proposal have not been produced and the UK Data Service has been notified. **or**	☐
No datasets were proposed or produced from this grant.	☐