

# Delivering aid in highly insecure environments

---

A critical review of the literature, 2007–2012

**Lisa Schreter and Adele Harmer**

**18 February 2013**

**Contents**

- Acronyms ..... 3
- Executive Summary..... 5
- Introduction and background ..... 9
  - 1.1 The threat environment and trends in security for humanitarian operations ..... 9
  - 1.2 Objectives and research questions ..... 12
  - 1.3 Methodology..... 12
  - 1.4 Caveats..... 15
  - 1.5 Structure ..... 15
- 2 Approaches to secure access – lessons and good practice..... 16
  - 2.1 Approaches to secure access ..... 16
    - Acceptance-based approaches ..... 17
    - Red lines and guiding principles..... 20
    - Mitigation measures ..... 21
    - Devolving responsibilities – remote management ..... 23
  - 2.2 Policy, planning and design..... 24
  - 2.3 Sectoral approaches and assessing the most vulnerable ..... 25
    - Cash transfers as a programming tool ..... 25
    - Specific sectors..... 26
    - Assessing needs of the most vulnerable ..... 28
  - 2.4 The critical role of partnerships in insecure environments ..... 29
    - National staff..... 30
    - Local organisations and other non-Western assistance actors ..... 30
    - Private-sector engagement..... 32
  - 2.5 Monitoring and evaluation in insecure environments ..... 32
    - Monitoring ..... 32
    - Evaluations ..... 33
  - 2.6 Conclusions and gaps in the evidence ..... 34
- 3 Principles and collaboration – lessons and good practice ..... 36
  - 3.1 Operationalising humanitarian principles in insecure environments..... 36
    - Donor governments: good donorship in insecure environments..... 38

Humanitarian principles: national aid workers and other non-Western assistance actors .....	38
The rise of resilience and the challenge to humanitarian principles .....	39
3.2 Collaboration and coordination .....	41
The cluster approach in insecure environments .....	41
NGO field-level security collaboration .....	42
Saving Lives Together .....	43
3.3 Conclusions and gaps in the evidence .....	43
4 Governance, accountability and value for money – lessons and good practice .....	44
4.1 The role of the host state: does governance matter in insecure environments? .....	44
4.2 Accountability in insecure environments .....	46
Donor policy and accountability approaches in insecure environments.....	46
Capturing perceptions and maintaining accountability to beneficiaries.....	47
4.3 Measuring aid effectiveness and value for money .....	48
4.4 Conclusions and gaps in the evidence .....	49
5 Innovation and technology – lessons and good practice.....	50
5.1 New technology and innovation .....	50
Geospatial mapping .....	50
SMS and cell-phone technologies.....	51
5.2 Conclusions .....	52
6 Conclusions and gaps in the evidence .....	53
Annex 1: References .....	57
Annex 2: Research Questions .....	68

## Acronyms

ANSO	Afghanistan NGO Security Forum
AWSD	Aid Worker Security Database
CPI	Clear Path International
CDAC	Communicating with disaster affected communities
DG ECHO	European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
GANSO	Gaza NGO Safety Office
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
GPS	Global Positioning System
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Project
HERR	Humanitarian Emergency Response Review
HIF	Humanitarian Innovation Fund
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group (of the Overseas Development Group)
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Humanitarian Affairs
ICAI	U.K. Independent Commission for Aid Impact
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
iMMAP	Information Management and Mine Action Programs
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Network of the UN
LNGO	Local Non-Governmental Organisation
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSP	NGO Safety Program (of the Somalia NGO Consortium)
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OiC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
Paksafe	Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) Pakistan Safety Initiative
RTE	Real Time Evaluation
SiND	Security in Numbers Database
SLT	Saving Lives Together
SMS	Short Message Service
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
VfM	Value for Money
WFP	World Food Programme

## **Executive Summary**

This report offers a synthesis of the global evidence on delivering aid in highly insecure environments. It summarises the past five years of primary and secondary literature. In particular, it examines the evidence of strategies and approaches to maintain secure access for aid operations, including how to enable the effective delivery of aid when operating by remote management. It examines the role that humanitarian principles play in guiding aid operations, and analyses the impact of the wider governance and accountability environment on secure access. Lastly, it discusses how recent innovation and advances in technology can support effective aid delivery in insecure contexts.

### **Quality of the literature**

Much of the literature on delivering aid in highly insecure environments is self-published, including policy studies, good practice guides and evaluations. It has a practitioner focus, and relatively little has been published in academic journals. While this practitioner focus makes the literature accessible and relevant to operational actors, there are implications as regards methodology and academic rigour – including limited academic engagement in the design and methodology of the studies, as well as in peer review. Because the subject-matter is sensitive for agencies, the tendency has been to undertake single-agency (often in-house) evaluations not widely shared in the public domain. In addition to undermining joint lesson learning, that also hints at a lack of independence in the findings. Overall, there is only a relatively small pool of authors, researchers and evaluators working in this subject area.

In terms of methodology, much of the operational research and evaluations work has been based on limited budgets and time periods, and nearly all efforts have faced significant obstacles in conducting detailed field research, particularly beyond major capitals. This limits the scope and findings of much of the literature. The literature is also primarily qualitative, relying heavily on literature reviews, interviews and case studies. There is a lack of empirical evidence and quantitative analysis, or combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. In turn, this reflects a broader general weakness in the humanitarian literature as regards empirical evidence and quantitative analysis. This is due to a combination of the difficulties involved in collecting hard data in unstable settings, and the general tendency in humanitarian research toward more qualitative and ‘soft’ social science approaches.

The findings from the present literature review are summarised below under the four main themes addressed in the report, followed by a summary of areas in need of further research.

### **Approaches to secure access**

Over the past five years, aid actors have made significant changes in their approaches to providing aid in highly insecure environments. A wide range of practices have been documented and critiqued. The literature shows that active acceptance-based approaches are considered more successful in providing assistance to beneficiaries than approaches that rely on heavy protection – so-called ‘bunkerisation’. Aid agencies are still struggling with some very basic challenges in implementing programmes by remote management, however. Operational guidance on these issues is limited, both within organisations and at the inter-agency level. Nearly every evaluation, donor review and good-practice guide reviewed for

this study has highlighted the need for better preparedness and planning for remote management options, and for sharing of good practice in delivery mechanisms.

The literature examining the effectiveness of interventions, the appropriateness of programming, and the comparative risks of operating in different sectors in highly insecure contexts, including what works at scale, is limited. Partly as a response to the significant access constraints associated with in-kind aid, agencies are increasingly employing cash transfers as an alternative, primarily as a substitute for food aid. There has been less utilisation of cash for other needs, such as health or shelter. In highly insecure environments, there has been limited sharing of knowledge on targeting and the choice of implementing partners for cash transfers and other forms of remotely managed interventions. Quality control, monitoring and evaluations of remote-managed projects remain challenging; and while this review finds a few important multi-country studies and examples of innovations (many linked to technological advances), humanitarian actors generally lack a shared understanding of what mechanisms are most effective for ensuring quality and accountability.

Local partners and other national assistance actors, such as faith-based organisations, are becoming increasingly important in working with affected populations. However, there has been little research on the nature and scope of the role of local organisations in highly insecure environments. This includes basic information such as the size of the local aid presence in a given country, how local partners are selected, how they are able to scale up, how they manage their risk environment, and if and how practices differ between types of organisation and across regions.

### **Humanitarian principles and collaboration**

There is a considerable body of literature on the role of humanitarian principles and ‘humanitarian space’ in highly insecure contexts. Much of it underscores the importance of the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence in underpinning acceptance approaches and providing a basis on which warring parties may accept humanitarian action in situations of active conflict. Many recent publications also document the increasing challenges involved in maintaining humanitarian principles, and the implications for humanitarian access. There are two main weaknesses with the state of the evidence: most of it is qualitative, general analysis and think-pieces rather than empirical, field-based research over an extended timeframe with concrete findings and guidance for operations. Second, the research generally lacks support in quantitative evidence. For example, despite a focus on the increasing politicisation of aid, this is rarely linked to firm evidence measuring the impact on humanitarian access. Notably lacking in the literature is an understanding of how principles are put into practice, as well as a mapping of patterns of access in insecure environments, with basic information on the aid presence.

Through a resilience framework, aid actors are seeing greater potential for shared programming across the humanitarian/ development divide to address the needs of the most-vulnerable populations. There is however a growing recognition of the difficulties involved in applying multiple sets of aid principles – including the Paris, fragile states and humanitarian principles – in insecure environments. There has

been limited detailed analysis on the implications of this, and whether and how the overlapping principles can be reconciled.

The literature on collaboration and coordination in highly insecure environments highlights several challenges related to the UN-led cluster approach. INGO collaboration, however, has gained an increasingly important status, particularly through the establishment of NGO-led field-level security platforms. These mechanisms are recognition of the front-line role NGOs play in delivering assistance in highly insecure environments, and the need for greater collaboration and information sharing on security and access trends. A significant gap in the literature and in practice is an understanding of how local organisations collaborate in managing their risk environment, and how the international coordination system should support these efforts.

### **Governance, accountability and value for money**

The literature reflects growing interest in engaging host states more effectively in humanitarian response. However, much of this has focused on natural disaster contexts, with very little on the role of the state in supporting aid operations in highly insecure contexts. Recent literature concludes that aid workers need to be much more aware as to host-state capacities and limitations as regards providing a secure environment for humanitarian action, and should base their security planning on the level of state-support actually available.

Accountability issues will keep growing in importance in insecure environments, not least as long as corruption and quality issues continue to be highlighted in independent research and agency evaluations. Currently, the formal requirements as to donor accountability for aid projects in insecure areas are similar to other, more stable environments. This indicates a need for greater policy development on the part of donors to focus their support to partners in high-risk environments and provide a more detailed framework of whether and how additional support will be provided, as well as a realistic appraisal of accountability and reporting requirements for different contexts.

While there has been some adaptation of beneficiary accountability mechanisms in highly insecure environments, the literature is generally weak on the broader questions of beneficiary perceptions of their needs and the aid they receive in insecure environments. Questions that deserve particular attention include how people are affected by insecurity, how this affects the aid presence and effectiveness of aid actors (i.e. what determines secure access), as well as the usefulness of the kinds of aid received.

### **Innovation and technology**

Aid agencies are increasingly making use of innovations in information and communication technologies to improve remote engagement with partners and beneficiaries, and in project monitoring. Practitioner analysis and guidance on these issues is proliferating, but various constraints remain with regard to the use of technology in insecure environments, and much of the technology is still in its infancy. This is not so much a gap in the literature as a reflection of the pace of innovation and change.



## **Research gaps**

Maintaining secure operational access for aid providers is an evolving area of policy and practice. While there is a growing evidence base and body of research, there remain some significant gaps in our understanding. This review concludes by suggesting eight priority areas for additional research (a more detailed rationale for each is included in the concluding sections of the report and in the overall conclusions):

1. *Quantitative analyses and mapping of access trends, including country-level data on aid presence (coverage)*
2. *Detailed, technical guidance on good practice in remote management*
3. *Analyses of the effectiveness of differing sectoral interventions, and whether and how certain sectors can operate 'at scale' in high insecurity and under remote management*
4. *Detailed analyses of the role of local partnerships in insecure environments*
5. *Analyses of the operational implications of the principles that guide the approaches of different aid actors in insecure environments*
6. *Examination of the principles and practice regarding the aid activities of non-Western assistance actors in insecure environments*
7. *Analyses of donor policy and accountability practices for remote-managed assistance in insecure environments*
8. *Beneficiary perceptions of how their most urgent needs are being met, or not, in insecure environments, and the value of beneficiary accountability mechanisms.*

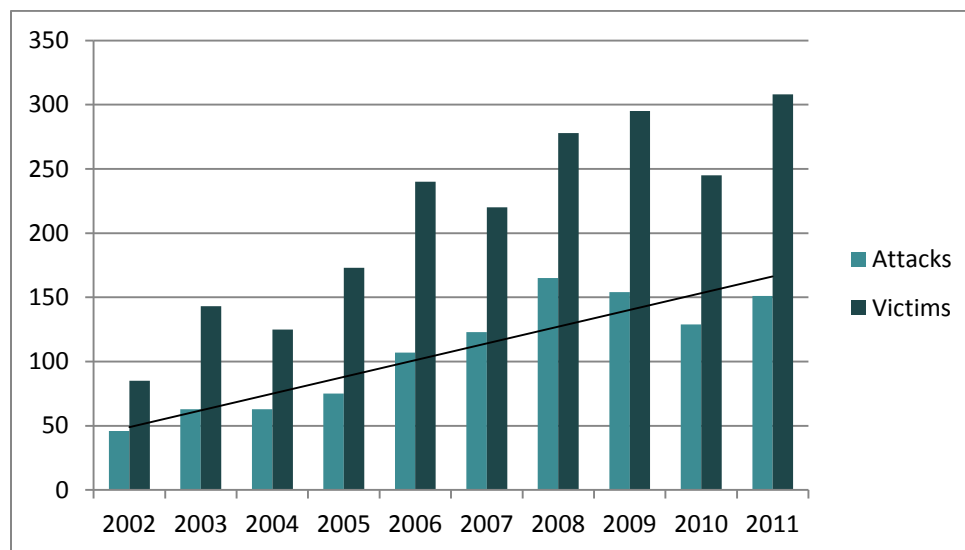
## Introduction and background

Providing assistance to civilians amid conflict or generalised violence has always been dangerous and difficult (Egeland et al., 2011). Humanitarian aid providers have long experience with security-driven adaptations to their traditional means of programming. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as the operational presence of international aid organisations in conflict areas increased, they faced a range of threats, including collateral violence, the presence of armed opposition groups, and generalised crime and violence. In response, the organisations variously employed cross-border programming and ‘quick-runs’, low visibility and increased reliance on national staff, local agencies and private contractors (Karim, 2006; Stoddard et al., 2006). They also invested in collective principled approaches to negotiated access, established common ‘red lines’, and made partnership arrangements with local authorities (Bradbury, 2000; Leader, 2000).

### 1.1 The threat environment and trends in security for humanitarian operations

Over the past decade, the operating environments in the most dangerous humanitarian contexts have become even more challenging, due to increasing political impediments to humanitarian access and targeted attacks against aid workers and their operations (AWSD, 2012; Steets et al., 2012). Findings from the Aid Worker Security report (2012) show that aid worker casualties have tripled since 2002, reaching over 100 deaths per year; in 2011, 308 aid workers were victims of major attacks – the highest yearly number yet recorded. Analysis shows that even taking into account the growing number of aid workers in the field, the overall *rate* of violence is increasing year by year (ibid.).

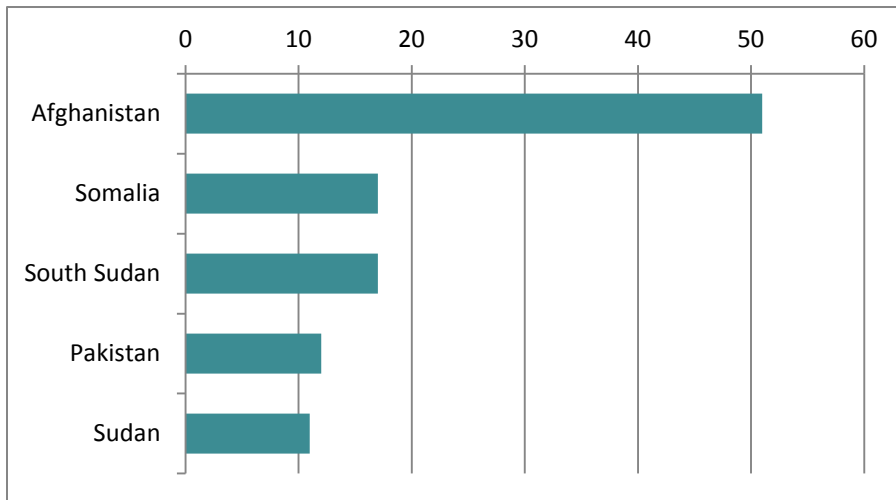
**Figure 1: Major attacks on aid workers and numbers of victims, 2002–2011**



Aid Worker Security Database, [www.aidworkersecurity.org](http://www.aidworkersecurity.org)

The majority of attacks (72 per cent) took place in a small number of countries: Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan and Sudan. The world’s newest country – South Sudan – entered the category of most violent humanitarian settings, ranking as number three.

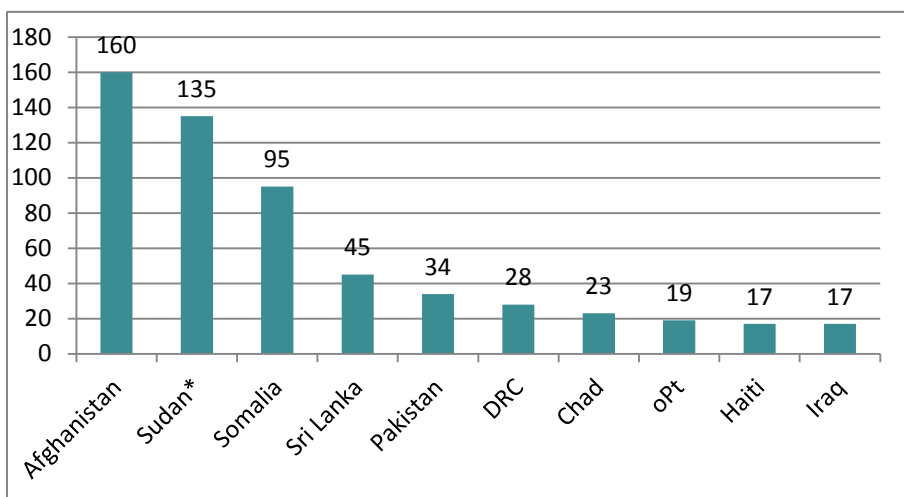
**Figure 2: Countries with the highest number of attacks on aid workers, 2011**



Aid Worker Security Database, [www.aidworkersecurity.org](http://www.aidworkersecurity.org)

As shown in Figure 3, the concentration of incidents in a few aid settings has been evident since 2006, and these continue to represent the most difficult and volatile operating environments for aid workers.

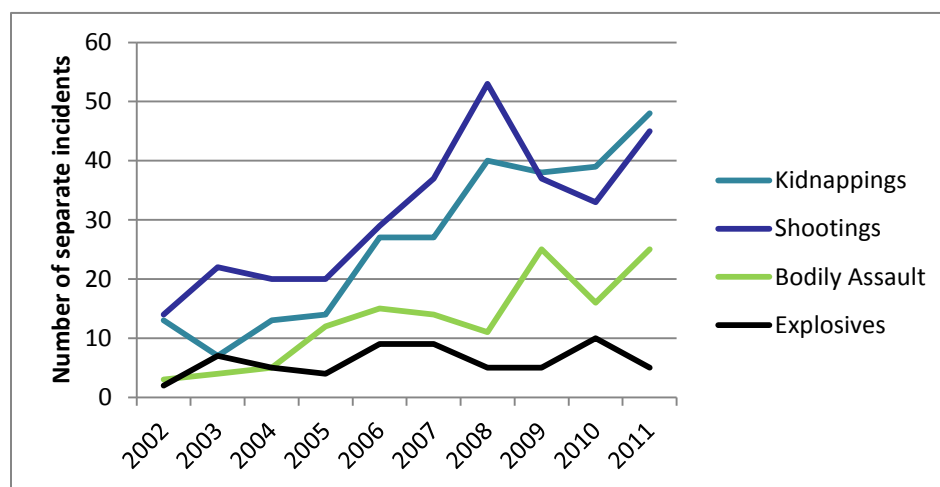
**Figure 3: Ten highest incident settings, 2006–2010**



Aid Worker Security Database, [www.aidworkersecurity.org](http://www.aidworkersecurity.org)

Attacks in many settings have also grown more lethal and sophisticated, and the number of kidnappings has risen dramatically. Since 2009, kidnappings have become the most frequent means of violence against aid workers, showing the steepest and steadiest rise of all tactics over the past decade (ibid.). The motives for attacks have both political and criminal intent.

**Figure 4: Trends in means of violence**



Aid Worker Security Database, [www.aidworkersecurity.org](http://www.aidworkersecurity.org)

Although we have no comprehensive hard data on humanitarian access trends (a significant gap in the evidence), country-level analysis in several contexts indicates that access has worsened, particularly for international aid presence over the past few years (AWSO, 2011).<sup>1</sup> Access has diminished as a direct result of violence and as a consequence of the obstacles and conditions created by militaries, governments, and non-state actors that hinder the impartial provision of aid. A further factor has been greater aid agency caution in the face of violent attacks.

Recognising the need to maintain a presence and continue to deliver assistance, aid actors have sought to reframe their ways of dealing with the insecurity of aid operations. In particular, instead of avoiding risk, the emphasis is now on *managing* risk in relation to identified humanitarian needs. To this end, assistance actors have strengthened their risk management capabilities. The UN, for example, has embraced an ‘enabling approach’, which seeks to ensure that life-saving programmes (based on a programme criticality exercise) proceed, even in increasingly dangerous environments. Aid agencies have also explored old and new strategies and operational adaptations aimed at creating greater acceptance for their activities and improving their access to affected populations. This shift in approach

<sup>1</sup> UN Report of the Secretary General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 22 May 2012, Annex: Constraints on humanitarian access. S/2012/376.

has given rise to the term ‘secure humanitarian access’, which emphasises a dual process whereby humanitarian actors gain access to affected civilians, and those civilians gain access to the aid they need, without it bringing increased risk (Egeland et al., 2011).

Despite these attempts to maintain a presence, growing insecurity has often affected the quality and quantity of aid, with beneficiaries suffering from the conflict and violence as well as from reduction in assistance (Stoddard et al., 2006; 2009). This has prompted increasing use of ‘remote management’ programming approaches which include withdrawing international staff, altering management structures to give more responsibility to national or local staff remaining in situ and/or forming new operational arrangements with local partners or contractors (Egeland et al., 2011). Despite some criticisms of this shift and the overall objectives of the aid enterprise (see for example, Duffield, 2012) few would disagree that it is imperative to find solutions to delivering aid in insecure environments, so as to support the survival and well-being of people in need.

Maintaining secure access for aid providers is a rapidly evolving area of policy and practice. There is a growing evidence base and body of research, but much more is needed, particularly for understanding the practices of a wide and diverse range of assistance actors. The present study maps out existing knowledge in this area, analyses the quality of the research, and indicates areas where further research is most urgent.

## 1.2 Objectives and research questions

The objectives of this study are to:

- provide a rigorous review of current evidence relating to humanitarian programming in insecure environments;
- identify the most salient lessons and best practices on the effective delivery of aid in insecure environments, based on current knowledge;
- comment on methods for assessing the relative effectiveness of different approaches to aid delivery in insecure environments – how to define ‘what works’; and
- identify the most pressing gaps in evidence, to enable priority-setting in the commissioning of new research.

The literature review has aimed to synthesise available information and publications according to four categories: approaches to secure access; principles and partnership; governance, accountability and value for money; and new technology and innovation. Research for each category has been guided by a set of specific research questions, found in Annex 2.

## 1.3 Methodology

**Type of documents reviewed:** The study reviewed both secondary as well as primary/grey literature (where readily accessible) produced since 2007. Of the 118 documents consulted, over half (69) were research studies, good practice guides or policy reviews that employed literature reviews and fieldwork

as the main methodology (over half involved fieldwork). Of the additional materials reviewed, 28 were evaluations: 16 single-agency evaluations, four donor evaluations, four real-time evaluations (RTE) and four inter-agency evaluations. A small number of the evaluations and lessons learned were shared confidentially. Articles from the media (e.g. IRIN and AlertNet) were consulted as supplementary sources when they offered new information or perspectives.

Documents were systematically compared using a spreadsheet matrix according to type of source, type of document, geographical scope and countries covered, timeframe, type of initiator, and quality of the literature (methodologies used and contribution to the field).

**Source of documents reviewed:** The documents were compiled from bibliographies in recent key publications, direct from evaluation websites like ALNAP's Evaluative Reports Database (ERD), ECHO, and several UN agencies and INGOs, as well as those of NGO security consortia and networks, like the European Interagency Security Forum, and from the researchers' own networks. Humanitarian practitioner-oriented journals like *Disasters*, *Forced Migration Review*, *International Review of the Red Cross* and *IDS Bulletin* were also consulted. Most of the literature was identified through key-word searches, including *aid in insecure environments*, *remote programming* and *remote management*.

The review also encompassed documents and grey literature which practitioners provided to the researchers, so that their perspectives could be included. Some of the materials referenced were shared on a confidential basis, and are cited accordingly.

Most evaluations do not focus explicitly on the practice of remote management: programming adaptations are embedded in evaluation findings. This makes it challenging for practitioners to benefit from lessons learnt on remote management from other country or agency experience. Based on this literature review, and to assist in lesson-sharing, ALNAP established two new keywords on the ALNAP ERD: *remote programming* and *remote management*.<sup>2</sup>

Translated materials were sought in order to include perspectives from outside the Anglophone humanitarian literature, although this material is very limited. The review also attempted to include documents from a range of assistance providers, including faith-based organisations, military entities and private sector actors. The aim was to draw relevant lessons from other sectors, although, given the scope of the inquiry, these sources were limited. Further detailed study might be warranted here.

**Timeframe:** The review focused on documents published from 2007 onwards, with an emphasis on the last two to three years to capture the most current issues and trends. Pre-2007 documents were consulted to demonstrate some of the longer timeframes of analysis or practice.

**Geographic scope:** Country-specific documents from countries with the highest number of incidents of violence against aid workers in recent years (as reported in the Aid Worker Security Database) were consulted, notably Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Pakistan, Somalia, South

---

<sup>2</sup> See: [www.alnap.org/tag/523.aspx](http://www.alnap.org/tag/523.aspx)

Sudan and Sudan, as well as regions hosting major humanitarian operations in the last five years, including Haiti, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. In order to examine practices in other environments, for example, highly criminalised urban or protracted conflict settings, materials were also sought from contexts such as southern Philippines, Yemen, Colombia, Papua New Guinea and several Central American nations. This material is, however, limited.

**Quality of the evidence:** Much of the literature is self-published (including policy studies, good practice guides and evaluations) and has a practitioner focus. Relatively little has been published in academic journals. While the practitioner focus may add a positive dimension to the overall pool of aid and security literature, it has implications as regards methodology and academic rigour. Policy studies are often peer-reviewed – of the literature reviewed approximately, 70 per cent made specific mention of undergoing quality assurance processes such as a peer review, feedback consultations or triangulation of evidence – but these peer review processes were for policy and practice relevance more than academic rigour. The practitioner orientation also means a lack of more academic engagement in study design and methodology. As noted in the caveats section below: the subject matter is sensitive for agencies and has promoted a tendency to undertake single-agency, often in-house, evaluations not widely shared in the public domain. In addition to undermining joint lesson learning, this may also mean a lack of independence in the findings. Overall, we find a relatively small pool of authors, researchers and evaluators working in this subject area, which lacks a diversity of voices.

In regards methodology, much of the literature is primarily qualitative, relying on literature reviews, interviews and case studies. There is a lack of empirical evidence and quantitative analysis, and of combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. Approximately 30 per cent of all sources reviewed referred to or presented quantitative research, although well over half of these sources aggregated data from secondary and/or primary materials. Of these, most sources highlight the difficulty in compiling data. Some are based on a relatively small sample size of data gathered. Only some 10 to 15 per cent build on primary quantitative research, mainly quantitative data on violence against aid workers.<sup>3</sup>

Much of the operational research and evaluation work operates with limited budgets and time periods, and nearly all face significant obstacles in conducting detailed field research, particularly beyond major capitals. This limits the scope and findings of much of the literature. Indeed, the literature frequently highlighted limited access to beneficiary populations and/or the site of programme implementation as the greatest obstacle (see for example, Bonard et al., 2012; House, 2012; Steets et al., 2012; Johnson, 2010; Martínez & Bascarán). Where beneficiary consultations had been conducted, there was limited discussion of how beneficiaries and local partners were chosen for interviews and workshops.<sup>4</sup> While there has been some recent innovation in evaluative techniques for highly insecure environments, evaluations highlighted the challenges in soliciting feedback via other means such as SMS from

---

<sup>3</sup> Two widely used sources are the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSDB), a product of Humanitarian Outcomes and accessed at [www.aidworkersecurity.org](http://www.aidworkersecurity.org), and Insecurity Insight's Security in Numbers Database (SiND), accessible at: [www.insecurityinsight.org](http://www.insecurityinsight.org).

<sup>4</sup> Two notable exceptions were Fast et al., 2011 and Mullany, 2009.

beneficiaries, in particular from women and the elderly (NRC, 2012; RCUSA, 2011). Only 35 per cent of the literature examined the cross-cutting issues of sex, age and/or disability.

## 1.4 Caveats

The subject matter is sensitive for agencies, for several reasons. First, operational approaches to engaging in insecure environments often involve decision-making regarding the security of staff and assets, as well as programming choices. This information is often treated as confidential and not widely shared. Second, given the operating constraints, programming approaches and outcomes tend to be far from optimal – quality and standards are often not met, and as a result agencies may choose not to promote their experiences in the public domain. As a result of these sensitivities, combined with the general tendency for agencies to continue to conduct single-agency evaluations (rather than joint or inter-agency evaluations) that are often not made public, there were far fewer documents to review than what probably exists.

The study sought to review documents translated from French, Portuguese, Spanish or Arabic, in an attempt to review the contents of literature from as many global actors as possible. There were, however, a limited number of such documents available. In addition, despite the growing diversity of actors taking part in global discussions on aid principles and aid effectiveness,<sup>5</sup> it is still difficult to acquire materials on, for example, the practice of Islamic charitable organisations in general, or the response of a wide range of non-traditional actors (e.g. the private sector) to a given crisis. The implications of the possible gap in information-sharing between differing humanitarian actors, from the perspective of policy, principle and programmatic approaches, are discussed in the report.

Lastly, the most recent relevant literature relied on for this study is from the 2011 Horn of Africa response. The gravity of the failure to prevent or react sooner to the famine in Somalia has prompted significant lesson learning, and there is a general increased interest in lesson-sharing on remote management and other practices, which were both strong features of the Horn of Africa response.

## 1.5 Structure

*Section 2* analyses recent approaches for securing access in highly insecure environments. It examines planning, design, targeting, and implementation issues, as well as types of aid, sectors and cross-cutting issues, and the role of national staff and local partners. *Section 3* examines the role of humanitarians – including why they are important in highly insecure contexts, how they are operationalised, the role of national actors and partners in upholding principles, as well as broader inter-agency collaboration and coordination. *Section 4* looks at issues of governance, accountability and value for money, including the role of the host state, as well as approaches to increasing accountability, measuring aid effectiveness and value for money. *Section 5* focuses on the role of technology, its recent emergence in good practice and lessons learned, assessing new technology and innovation as well as what the future of technology in implementing aid in insecure environments might hold. *Section 6* concludes the report, highlighting

---

<sup>5</sup> For example, events hosted by the Humanitarian Forum, the 2012 Istanbul Peace Summit and the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Busan, Korea, in 2011



salient lessons and practices of recent years. It specifies the most pressing gaps in the evidence base, gaps that must be filled in order to improve programming in highly insecure environments so as to meet the needs of beneficiaries and the communities in which they live.

## 2 Approaches to secure access – lessons and good practice

### 2.1 Approaches to secure access

In recent years, aid actors have significantly changed their approaches to providing aid in highly insecure environments. To protect their staff against security threats posed by armed groups and criminal gangs, humanitarian organisations have restricted staff movements in highly volatile contexts while also investing a range of other strategies.

The literature documenting and analysing these operational adaptations in highly insecure environments dates back to 2000. Much of it is operationally focused and comes in the form of good-practice reviews, policy reviews and evaluations. Most of this literature is written from the perspective of aid organisations, donor and host governments – not beneficiary populations, or armed groups. In part, this may be due to access constraints, like difficulties in undertaking field research, particularly outside the capital. It also reflects the short timeframes within which most of the research has been commissioned, as well as lack of innovation in ways of capturing a broader range of perspectives.

One of the most comprehensive operational guides is ODI's revised Good Practice Review (GPR) *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* (ODI, 2010). The review is based on a literature review of policy and practice in the field of security management, and on interviews with specialists in this field. It explores the key concepts and principles of security management, as well as strategic and operational approaches, including approaches to risk assessment. The 2011 OCHA-commissioned report *To Stay and Deliver: Good Practice for Humanitarians in Complex Security Environments* (Egeland et al., 2011), analyses the security management approaches documented in the GPR in more contextual detail. The study draws on a combined qualitative and quantitative methodology, including 255 interviews and fieldwork in six highly insecure environments (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, DRC, occupied Palestinian Territories and Somalia, although access constraints for Somalia resulted in the analysis being undertaken in Nairobi). The Egeland study found that most aid organisations operating in particularly dangerous environments rely increasingly on two specific measures in combination: (1) highly localised operations staffed exclusively with people from the immediate area, and (2) a low-profile stance. The first measure enhances acceptance within the local community; the second protects against opportunistic targeting by belligerents and would-be attackers on the road and in unfamiliar areas. The notable exception has been the ICRC (as well as one or two INGOs), which has made 'significant investments in building capacity and putting in the staff hours for negotiating security guarantees and, as a function of that negotiated access, maintains a visibly

identifiable presence' (Egeland et al., 2011, p. 18). The report divides current practice into the following five strategies:

- acceptance-based approaches
- negotiating access
- red lines and guiding principles
- mitigation measures, including low-profile approaches, protection and deterrence measures
- remote programming.

A more recent ECHO-commissioned evaluation (Steets et al., 2012) examines humanitarian access strategies in DG ECHO-funded interventions, and elaborates on the practices described in the ODI and OCHA reports. The evaluation is based on literature reviews, five field studies (Afghanistan, Myanmar, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan), and an extensive number of interviews, particularly with NGOs.<sup>6</sup> The study identifies three groups of activities that humanitarian organisations can undertake to expand or preserve access: (1) seek to tackle constraints at their source by trying to persuade those in control to allow more access; (2) mitigate and manage security risks, to continue their assistance; (3) finally, where access is restricted, humanitarians can operate through remote management.

In addition to these comprehensive reviews, various inter-agency and agency-specific guides and policy studies have been undertaken. The literature is consistent in pointing out that while the operational strategies (and the tactics used to implement them) represent good practice, they are by no means a blueprint, but require adaptation within the specific context (Egeland et al., 2011; ODI, 2010). The nature of the violence that a community is experiencing, the national and regional setting, the type of response and the relationships that an agency has/ has not cultivated with the community and beneficiaries – all these will influence the choice of strategy. Without a nuanced understanding of the culture, conflict and community in which an agency is seeking to provide aid, involvement will likely fail or do unintentional harm (Johnson, 2010; ODI, 2010;).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, these practices are not mutually exclusive, but are typically used in combination, with varying degrees of emphasis depending on the type of aid actor and the operational setting (Egeland et al., 2011; ODI, 2010).

### Acceptance-based approaches

Acceptance-based approaches were first analysed and reflected in the literature in the original ODI Good Practice Review: *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* over a decade ago (Van Brabant, 2000). At the time, and subsequently, many agencies attested to having organisational and security policies grounded in acceptance, but until 2010 there was very little in the literature that

---

<sup>6</sup> Of the 388 interviews for the evaluation, nearly half were conducted with international and national NGOs.

<sup>7</sup> However, the State of the Humanitarian System study found that many agencies are still perceived as quite 'amateurish' in briefing/preparing staff about the overarching political contexts in which they are to work. In Darfur, among many aid personnel deployed, there was very weak understanding of the drivers and impacts of conflict in the communities (Taylor et al., 2012).

examined the application of acceptance approaches.<sup>8</sup> By then, there was growing evidence, in relation to targeted violence against aid workers in various contexts, that acceptance had become much harder to achieve (ODI, 2010; Stoddard et al., 2006; 2009). The criticism that emerged was that acceptance is often assumed, rather than won and maintained (Fast et al., 2011; ODI, 2010; Stoddard et al., 2009).

The OCHA-commissioned research *To Stay and Deliver* is one of two policy papers, in addition to the ODI Good Practice Reviews and several agency-specific reviews, to examine acceptance in detail.<sup>9</sup> It found a range of approaches among agencies, from a default mode of 'passive acceptance' (eschewing any association with political or military actors or other international entities), to an 'active acceptance' posture involving proactive outreach strategies, including direct humanitarian negotiation for access and security guarantees (Egeland et al., 2011, p. 18). The study found that the latter practice is more likely to promote secure access. This and other studies are also consistent in the finding that the fundamental prerequisite for a successful acceptance strategy is competence in humanitarian delivery and the capacity to fulfil commitments and demonstrate tangible results for beneficiaries (Egeland et al., 2011; Fast et al., 2011). Specific acceptance approaches identified in the literature include:

- institutional investments in communications and outreach strategies and structures, including investing in outreach teams, carrying out on-going local consultations, forming strategic partnerships, conducting local broadcasting and publishing materials;<sup>10</sup>
- measuring the success of acceptance;
- community co-ownership of projects, including community MOUs;
- aiding the host community in a camp-based response;
- non-association measures, and 'de-Westernising', most often through diversifying staff and building capacity of local staff and partners.<sup>11</sup>

The second study, *The Promise of Acceptance: Insights into Acceptance as a Security Management Approach* (Fast et al., 2011b), is based on field research in Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda, and is one of few studies in this subject area to involve consultations with beneficiary and host communities.<sup>12</sup> The study found that although acceptance may be promoted from the perspective of security management, the sole purpose of acceptance is not to generate security-related information or to protect agency staff and assets, but to build relationships as the foundation for effective programming. Fast argues that it is

---

<sup>8</sup> The studies by Fast et al. (2011) and Egeland et al. (2011) highlight that while very few NGOs systematically assess whether they have acceptance, many have anecdotal examples of how they determine whether or not they have gained acceptance.

<sup>9</sup> Of those agencies that systematically examine acceptance, the Red Cross movement, MSF and Save the Children have published material related to this.

<sup>10</sup> The ICRC in Afghanistan, for example, was able to reach over 10,000 individuals with their message in the course of one year, through 500 separate meetings.

<sup>11</sup> See for example, Egeland et al., 2011; Hobbs et al., 2012.

<sup>12</sup> The report focused on three central questions: how do agencies gain and maintain acceptance? how do they assess and monitor the degree of acceptance they have achieved? and how do they determine whether an acceptance approach is effective in a particular context? All reports mentioned, and further discussion of the corresponding projects and tools, can be accessed at <http://acceptanceresearch.org>

precisely this dimension of acceptance that distinguishes it from the ‘hearts-and-minds’ programmes implemented by many military forces. For acceptance to be most effective, it must be a ‘*deliberate and systematic process*’ applied to all organisational functions, and not confined to activities and responsibilities solely within a security management silo (ibid., p. 5).<sup>13</sup> This and other studies argue that the short-term model of emergency response and its dependent financing is highly problematic for gaining acceptance (see for example Duffield, 2012). For the vast majority of agencies that operate with donor government financing, the Fast study outlines three areas requiring donor support: ‘willingness to fund acceptance measures, such as staff persons with a joint program and security portfolio; encourage[ing] NGOs to engage in efforts to determine how to gain acceptance by funding individuals or agencies (e.g., NGO safety and security coordinating bodies) to collect examples and document best practices; support[ing] NGO efforts to procure locally-based services and supplies, as part of security management’ (Fast et al., 2011, p. 23).

Most of the analysis undertaken on acceptance relates to protracted conflict contexts, in rural/semi-rural settings. Urban environments affected by conflict or so-called ‘other situations of violence’ perhaps pose a bigger challenge to acceptance. There is a small but growing literature on humanitarian response in highly insecure urban settings (e.g. Ferris, 2012). The ICRC and MSF are two of a number of health/medical agencies that have stated their intention to work in urban centres, but analyses indicate they have only recently started to reckon with what this might mean in practice.<sup>14</sup> Dealing with violence in urban centres is forcing humanitarians to re-examine their modus operandi, given the unpredictability of violence, as well as the intricacies – and time – demanded for work in these settings (Sanderson & Knox-Clarke, 2012). It has taken MSF, for example, a year and a half to gain the trust of people living in what are regarded as the world’s most dangerous streets in the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa.<sup>15</sup> Partnerships are also critical. MSF partners with the more traditional health ministries but also other emergency providers like firefighters, who have capacities for responding to medical emergencies in urban conflict zones. This becomes more complicated, however, when the government is a combatant in conflict, as in Syria.<sup>16</sup> It also necessitates adjustments in how to measure needs, target and monitor progress. Emergency thresholds such as reductions in mortality, for example, may not be appropriate (IRIN, 2013).

### *Negotiating Access*

A good deal of focused research and guidance has been produced in the field of humanitarian negotiation, including such recent documents as the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, *Handbook on Humanitarian Access and Humanitarian Access Field Manual* (2011) and the older UN

---

<sup>13</sup> This includes programme management, human resource management, media and communications, finance and administration, logistics/procurement, and security management

<sup>14</sup> See: [www.irinnews.org/Report/97188/Analysis-Urban-violence-new-territory-for-aid-workers](http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97188/Analysis-Urban-violence-new-territory-for-aid-workers) and

<sup>15</sup> See: [www.trust.org/alertnet/blogs/alertnet-news-blog/how-do-aid-doctors-work-in-worlds-most-murderous-nation](http://www.trust.org/alertnet/blogs/alertnet-news-blog/how-do-aid-doctors-work-in-worlds-most-murderous-nation)

<sup>16</sup> See: [www.irinnews.org/Report/97126/SYRIA-Nowhere-to-run](http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97126/SYRIA-Nowhere-to-run)

*Humanitarian Negotiations with Armed Groups: A Manual for Practitioners*.<sup>17</sup> Despite this, the literature suggests the guidance has been weakly applied at field level. An historical analysis of UNHCR's engagement with non-state armed actors (involving interviews with staff and archival research) also concludes that universal policies or headquarters guidance are very rarely consulted in the field (Keogh & Ruijters, 2012).

The study by Egeland et al. (2011) found that the ICRC and a very few other organisations have been effective in negotiation, as measured by their ability to obtain and sustain secure access in high-risk locations. It outlined a range of good practices for obtaining and sustaining secure access in high-risk locations.<sup>18</sup> The ECHO-commissioned access evaluation (Steets et al., 2012) found that traditional approaches for mobilising national and international public opinion through media campaigns and other forms of external communication were not considered to have been effective; further, that many agencies have largely reverted to less vocal forms of private advocacy and networking 'to persuade rather than pressure' power-holders to grant access. *To Stay and Deliver* (Egeland et al., 2011, p. 22) quotes an aid worker in Afghanistan insisting that this involves 'talking to everyone with a gun.' Doing this effectively requires advanced skills, experience, and capacities; and it has proven to be the primary tool of the ICRC, among a small number of others. In its internal review, UNHCR found that engagement with non-state armed actors was more straightforward in contexts such as the Philippines and Colombia, where there was greater uniformity in the armed opposition, as compared to the fluidity of the situation in Darfur, Somalia or Afghanistan (Keogh & Ruijters, 2012). Jackson & Giustozzi (2012) examine humanitarian engagement with the Taliban. From some 150 interviews with Afghans, aid agencies, Taliban and diplomats, their study found that the greatest guarantee of security for aid workers and those they seek to help is structured engagement with the Taliban – but that achieving this at the local level can be particularly challenging, given the hostile view of aid agencies.

In addition to documenting practice at field level, the literature also highlights the role of aid agency headquarters leadership, which can enable field-level access by fostering contacts among diaspora groups with links to actors inside the countries in question (Egeland et al., 2011). Several studies also argue the need to actively engage relevant non-Western actors in a more strategic manner (see, for example, Binder & Meier, 2011; Oxfam, 2012).

### Red lines and guiding principles

Good practice in identifying 'red lines' (unacceptable actions or conditions beyond which aid providers will not operate) and ground rules vis-à-vis the host country power-holders involves maintaining a

---

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edazen/doc/publi/phumig.Par.0005.File.tmp/FDFA\\_Humanitarian%20Access\\_Field%20Manual.pdf](http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edazen/doc/publi/phumig.Par.0005.File.tmp/FDFA_Humanitarian%20Access_Field%20Manual.pdf). United Nations, *Humanitarian Negotiations with Armed Groups: A Manual for Practitioners* (New York: United Nations, January 2006)

<sup>18</sup> The Egeland study identified a range of good practices including: a) identifying an appropriate interlocutor or intermediary to open negotiations; b) negotiating with host authorities on security; c) increasing regular communications with authorities at the local level; d) the use of access teams; e) identifying and exploiting opportunities and temporary windows for access; f) including individuals with contextualised security expertise in advance teams and assessments; g) red lines and ground rules; and h) practical civil-military engagement with national and foreign forces and peacekeeping missions.

collective position and avoiding operating unilaterally (ODI, 2010). Although there is evidence of good practice in implementing red lines, there are many more examples where red lines have been drawn and redrawn repeatedly as threats to aid agencies mounted (Egeland et al., 2011). Hammond and Vaughan-Lee (2012) examined this in the context of Somalia, where many coordinated 'ground rules' have been attempted in order to ensure that negotiations on access and other issues related to engaging in a local context (like paying registration fees and taxes) can be done consistently, and through collective decision-making.<sup>19</sup> The authors found that an individualistic approach has been exacerbated by lack of trust and competition among multilateral agencies as well as between international and national NGOs. Similarly, the ECHO-commissioned evaluation found that when one individual organisation tries to uphold a rule, there are usually other organisations willing to break it (Steets et al., 2012). On the other hand, individual negotiations may allow for flexibility, and possibly greater access to affected populations, than operating in a more coordinated manner (AWSD, 2012; Steets et al., 2012).

### Mitigation measures

In the most dangerous environments, particularly in high-crime areas, it is unlikely that any organisation can ever rely on acceptance-based approaches and humanitarian negotiation alone. Even if an organisation is well accepted among the local community, immunity from attack is not ensured, especially in fluid situations where non-local actors may be able to exercise force (AWSD, 2009, 2011; Egeland et al., 2011; ODI, 2010; Steets et al., 2012; Stoddard et al., 2006).

Years of 'bunkerisation', where organisations (particularly UN agencies) entrenched themselves in heavily fortified compounds, has brought about a growing realisation that reliance on hard security measures has resulted in a spiralling cycle of increasingly restrictive rules and the isolation of aid workers from the very populations that they are meant to assist (Duffield, 2010; Egeland et al., 2011; Steets et al., 2012). This recognition has led to reform and new policy development. For example, the UN Security Management System recently shifted from focusing on risks to balancing risks and operational goals, essentially embracing an *enabling approach* to allow for secure delivery to achieve lifesaving goals (Egeland et al., 2011). Part of the shift in approach has brought about 'smart' **protective approaches** (utilising protective devices and procedures to reduce vulnerability to a threat, without dealing with the threat itself) which avoid distancing from the community but still add a layer of security to the organisation while minimising negative appearances. This includes, for example, discreet protection measures such as reinforcing the walls of an office from the building's interior and the creation of diplomatic or international enclaves with restricted traffic access (ibid.).

Most security management guidance also recognise that heavier protection can be necessary when a threat of direct targeting exists, especially in cases where violence is perpetrated by economically-motivated criminal groups. **Deterrent measures** are security approaches that attempt to deter threats by posing a counter-threat and are primarily understood to mean the threat of force. Although many

---

<sup>19</sup> Other examples include IASC Somalia, Ground Rules: Advisory Note on Practical Considerations for Negotiations (IASC, 2009) and UNCT Somalia Policy on Humanitarian Engagement (UNCT, 2009). There is also a long history of ground rules in other contexts, including South Sudan Ground Rules, Liberia Codes of Conduct, and the Basic Operating Guidelines in Nepal.

humanitarian organisations are sensitive to the idea of armed security, a study of humanitarian organisations in 2007 found that virtually all agencies have at one time or another used some form of armed protection (Stoddard, Harmer & DiDomenico, 2008). Good practice involves consistent use of established written policies on the use of armed protection that clarify the conditions (normally exceptional) that could justify its use. For instance, a diffuse threat of violent criminality would tend to be more amenable to deterrent solutions than a conflict situation between organised armed groups (ODI, 2010). From an operational perspective, there are many practical considerations, not least that armed protection makes humanitarian response much less flexible in terms of movement: permissions and escorts must be organised in advance, and the capacity and resources for this are not always available (*ibid.*).

While many practitioners have welcomed the shift from risk aversion to risk management, there has also been strong criticism. Duffield (2010, p. 460), for example, sees the shift as a reflection of an 'embedded and dependent aid industry', unable to disengage from the practice of humanitarian interventionism, and thus the choice 'to stay' involves attempting to adapt to the security threats created by Western liberal interventionism. Duffield argues that this has given rise to an institutionalisation of risk management (and an erosion of individual and local autonomy) which has resulted in a civilian aid industry becoming militarised. Also the ECHO access evaluation notes concerns regarding the shift, in particular that the UN's enabling approach has resulted in a tendency to 'outsource large operations to private contractors that operate outside the UN security and coordination systems' (Steets et al., 2012, p.7).

Although a militarised approach is arguably what the policy shift is attempting to avoid, there are significant problems involved in implementing, for example, the UN's 'enabling' approach in the broader field of UN operations. For one thing, integrated mission structures tend to emphasise military and security priorities and may have less risk tolerance when it comes to civilian activities. The study by Egeland et al. (2011) found this to be the case in Sudan and eastern DRC. In such contexts, operating with an armed escort has become more common for UN agencies. This, combined with the reliance on missions to provide air lifts and road patrols, has short- and long-term implications. In the short term, access for UN staff can be severely limited; moreover, missions with armed escorts increase the perception that aid agencies are operating in alignment with the priorities of the mission, rather than on the basis of independent and impartial assessments of actual humanitarian need. In the longer term, aid agencies' increased reliance on peacekeeping assets may mean greater access problems when missions scale down and withdraw.

The study by Fast et al. (2011) argues, however, that that employing particular protective or deterrent strategies does not necessarily imply a lower degree of acceptance. In Kenya, for example, using national police to provide armed escort may assist in 'building acceptance with district authorities because it recognises the authority of district offices, brings financial benefits, keeps the national police well-deployed, and helps to educate district and police authorities about community and NGO activities'



(ibid., p. 13). Protection and acceptance have also been used in tandem, for example, residents in one community formed community policing units to protect NGO staff (ibid.).

### **Devolving responsibilities – remote management**

Remote management has emerged as one of the principal strategies used by humanitarian agencies to maintain access to populations in need. Reducing or restricting movement or withdrawing internationals (or any other staff at particular risk) while shifting responsibilities for programme delivery to local staff or local partners is one of the most common programming adaptations to insecurity, practised in varying permutations in challenging environments around the world (Stoddard, Harmer & Renouf, 2010). It is the most commonly used strategy for extremely insecure areas where international staff and organisations have been targeted, and, as noted, may be applied in combination with other approaches highlighted above.<sup>20</sup> The recent literature on remote management falls into two categories: there are a few policy papers and good practice guidance available (Egeland et al., 2011; ODI, 2010; Stoddard, Harmer & Renouf, 2010), and then a range of lessons emerging from single-agency evaluations and lessons learned. Much of this is not easily accessible, and some of it remains confidential (Freeman et al., 2011; Mullany et al., 2009; Norman, 2012; Sokpoh, 2012; Zyck, 2012).

Remote management has a long history, reflecting practices adopted in conflict areas from the early 1980s. Even so, as recently as five years ago little of practical value had been documented on the subject, partly because agencies saw the practice as a temporary measure and not their norm in programming. From 2004, driven mainly by experiences in Iraq, the approach gained recognition as a new strategy for service delivery in insecure environments (Hansen, 2004; Laurence and Poole, 2005; Stoddard et al., 2006). Much of the literature initially distinguished between a range of different remote management approaches, including ‘remote control’, ‘remote support’ and ‘remote partnership’ and ‘limited access programming’ (Hansen, 2008; Stoddard, Harmer & Renouf, 2010).<sup>21</sup> While categorisation and definitions still vary from agency to agency, most organisations accept ‘remote management’ as common parlance. Early definitions identified remote management as a practice involving reducing *international* personnel from the field and transferring greater programme responsibility to local staff or local partner organisations (Stoddard, Harmer & Renouf, 2010).<sup>22</sup> Recent evaluations promote a more nuanced definition: whether expatriates or nationals manage and monitor operations on the ground should not constitute the defining criterion, rather it should be ‘defined by seniority as a combination of

---

<sup>20</sup> Low-profile measures are adopted in order to continue enabling programme implementation. The practice can range from: a) simple de-branding measures; b) comprehensive blending strategies; c) extreme low-profile or no-visibility approach; d) co-location with local or accepted organisations; e) Avoiding the white four-wheel-drive vehicles; f) business continuity from home contingencies; g) mobile communications; to h) mitigating measures for banditry and other incidents on the road. See Egeland et al., 2011, for more details.

<sup>21</sup> Hansen’s comprehensive research on aid operations in Iraq, for example, delineated three separate definitions: ‘Remote control’, where managers make all programming decisions and very little authority is delegated to the field; ‘Remote Management’, with partial or temporary delegation of decision-making powers to the field; and ‘Remote Partnership’, entailing ‘an equal partnership and a near-complete handover of responsibility to local actors’ (Hansen, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Remote management is not the same as agencies that have longstanding relationships with local partners as their normal way of operating.



years of relevant work experience and exposure to different humanitarian contexts' (Steets et al., 2012, p. 14).

## 2.2 Policy, planning and design

Nearly all the literature on aid delivery in highly insecure environments underscores the importance of preparedness. Stoddard et al.'s *Once Removed* (2010, p. 19) found that for the most part, the initial decision to shift to remote management remains 'a reactive one rather than part of a planned strategy'. Despite this, nearly every NGO programme evaluation, donor policy review and good practice guide consulted for this review has highlighted the need for improved preparedness and project planning.<sup>23</sup>

The recently published Tearfund study, *Monitoring and accountability practices for remotely managed projects implemented in volatile operating environments* (Norman, 2012) finds that of the 14 INGOs examined that were operating remotely due to deteriorating security, only two have developed a formal remote management policy, and far fewer have partnership policies for insecure conditions. This study recommends the development of a remote management strategy that adapts 'all existing systems to the context of remote management' (ibid., p.27). Even where policies exist however, they are not always supported by appropriate systems. An external evaluation commissioned by Action Against Hunger International (ACF) regarding the INGO's response to the Horn of Africa (Martínez-Piqueras & Ruiz Bascarán, 2012) finds that despite the existence of a *Remote Management Policy and Guidelines* in ACF Somalia prior to the famine, systems had not been updated to respond to the changing context, and the INGOs 'remote control tools and protocols' proved inadequate for dealing with the crisis.

The literature highlights a range of good practices in remote management, including:

- establishing highly localised, and static, staffing which may involve an increase rather than a decrease of national staff because reduced mobility results in the need for more staff in more places
- the use of diaspora nationals as international staff<sup>24</sup>
- 'soft' remote management which involves senior international staff having a regular, but not full-time, presence
- methods to enhance accountability and mitigate quality deficits for remote programming, such as web-based monitoring and project verification through third- party triangulation (discussed in Section 2.5).

The Tearfund study (Norman, 2012, p.28) identifies three key factors as critical for success:

- limiting the size and/or scope of the programme

---

<sup>23</sup> For example, in three of Oxfam's Effectiveness Reviews (in Somalia, Ethiopia and Pakistan) the evaluator gave the INGO less than satisfactory marks for preparedness and/or timeliness, noting that better preparation could have led to more effective aid delivery. See <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/methods-approaches/project-effectiveness-reviews> in order to access all three Project Effectiveness Reviews

<sup>24</sup> However, Hammond and Vaughan-Lee (2012) found that diaspora returnees may be 'resented by locals' and accused of 'being out of touch with realities on the ground'.

- ensuring that at least one secure location is selected where direct management is feasible (where a project is implemented across multiple regions)
- pursuing a relationship with local communities and other stakeholders to build acceptance and access to project implementation areas.

The literature suggests that good practice in preparedness and planning involves decentralising organisational authority. This can bring benefits for improved internal monitoring, beneficiary accountability and acceptance, thereby increasing staff security (Egeland et al., 2011; Freeman et al., 2011; Mullany et al., 2009; Norman, 2012; Zyck, 2012). Hammond and Vaughan-Lee (2012) highlighted the consequences of a longstanding problem in maintaining authority outside Somalia, in particular that it has led to mistrust and negative feelings, as Somalis question whether money intended for aid in Somalia is, in fact, being spent on management outside of their borders. On the positive side, another, confidential, evaluation regarding devolving decision-making in the provision of essential medical services found that the empowerment of qualified local/national staff resulted in successful monitoring and peer-training on par with other nations in the region.<sup>25</sup> Several evaluations concluded that planned site-visits from management and support staff stationed outside of the conflict setting serve to promote local capacity and autonomy, coordination, information-sharing, and a sense of mutual trust and ownership of projects (ACF 2012; Mullany et al., 2012; Norman, 2012; Sokpoh, 2012).

### **2.3 Sectoral approaches and assessing the most vulnerable**

There is very little literature on the appropriateness of programming in different sectors in highly insecure contexts, particularly with remote management. Some agencies have maintained that ‘soft services’ like reintegration and psychosocial programmes might be best undertaken by local entities (Stoddard, Harmer & Haver, 2006). However, there has been little documented testing of what works and what does not. Part of the difficulty is that most of the material examining sectoral choices derives from single-agency evaluations and therefore lacks a wider inter-sectoral/cluster assessment of effectiveness. There is also limited literature on the question of scale – and whether and how certain sectors can operate more effectively at scale in remote management than others. Food and more recently cash have been distributed at scale; and recent evaluations indicate that there is the possibility to programme effectively at scale in cash – but this is limited to experiences in Somalia. In highly insecure urban areas, large-scale distribution of any in-kind assistance is not encouraged, due to security and protection concerns (USAID, 2008).

#### **Cash transfers as a programming tool**

Cash transfers have received significant attention generally. They are particularly relevant in highly insecure contexts, whether urban or rural settings. Cash transferred by means of mobile phones can

---

<sup>25</sup> Confidential – Remote Management evaluation (a).

overcome access constraints and reach highly vulnerable populations in remote, insecure areas, as opposed to attempting to deliver bulky and visible in-kind distributions (Harvey & Bailey, 2011; Hermon-Duc, 2012).

While cash transfers and vouchers have been touted as a multi-sectorial solution for delivering assistance in insecure environments, this has primarily been used as a response to food insecurity (Ali & Gelsdorf, 2012; Grubbels, 2011; Sokpoh, 2012). Much of the recent learning on the use of cash in these settings is from Pakistan, Somalia and the Sahel. In Somalia – despite apprehensions regarding inflation and diversion (especially to Al Shabbab), the difficulties of targeting, constraints to information and data collection, and monitoring – proponents of cash transfers were able to eventually convince many that cash transfers were the best, perhaps the only, life-saving measure for reaching populations in remote locations where agencies did not have direct interaction with beneficiaries. It was argued that a large-scale cash programme could make use of the local *hawala* system and traders, fully functional and already in place, a system that had served in previous years to transfer an ‘estimated 1.3 billion – 2 billion US dollars into Somalia each year – including to remote locations’ (Ali & Gelsdorf, 2012, p. 59). Further evidence in support of cash transfers has emerged from projects in the Sahel, where there is considerable interest from development and humanitarian actors alike (Grubbels, 2011).

However, cash is not a panacea for dealing with insecurity. A recent confidential evaluation highlighted evidence of security risks to those receiving cash, particularly for women. Basic guidance on good practice in minimising corruption, diversion and insecurity is available (see for example, Harvey & Bailey, 2011); however, in complex security environments where preparedness is often weak, monitoring is undertaken remotely, and there are risks of switching from in-kind to cash-based assistance or scaling up without pre-existing capacity and clear policy guidance. Issues of ‘gate-keeping’ and other possible manipulation are not well understood, in part because of the degree of remote management and limited monitoring by agencies operating in particularly insecure areas.

### Specific sectors

There has been limited analysis on the delivery of **health care** in highly insecure environments. Of the studies reviewed, one evaluation on health activities found the remote management approach to be a ‘respectable tool’ when carried out at the operational level by national and local staff who have taken part in effective capacity-building activities. The evaluation concludes that the ‘risks ... have to be accepted, mitigated as far as possible and constantly monitored by ‘vigilant’ coordination and project staff,’ due to the reality that, ‘local beneficiaries would have no other recourse for healthcare in the vicinity due to the highly violent context in which they live’.<sup>26</sup> Mobile service points, like the mobile clinics run by MSF, are seen as useful models in Central America (Sanderson & Knox-Clarke, 2012). And along the eastern Thai–Burma border, indigenous community members have been trained in the direct

---

<sup>26</sup> Confidential – Remote Management evaluation(a)

provision of healthcare services. High levels of mobility are part of the reasons for success, alongside efficient procurement systems, technical training and support from INGOs in Thailand.<sup>27</sup>

One of the more rigorous analytical research papers on 'Healthcare in Danger' comes from the ICRC. Its 16-country study combining quantitative and qualitative analysis finds that countries that have suffered sustained periods of conflict have the lowest number of health-care personnel (Coupland et al., 2011). The study found that healthcare facilities are most vulnerable to threats posed by the use of explosives by armed state actors, forcible entry and/or take-over of facilities by armed state and non-state actors, violence committed in an effort to commandeer medical vehicles, and violence perpetrated directly against medical vehicles in transit (ibid.). Part of the challenge in the health sector is that services are also often undertaken by military forces implementing humanitarian-style quick impact projects with counterinsurgency, force protection and intelligence gathering objectives. In Afghanistan, for example, DARA's *Humanitarian Index Report* found that the Provincial Reconstruction Team practice of providing medical assistance or distributing medical supplies to 'win hearts and minds' exposed the medical staff and patients to the threat of attack by insurgents (DARA, 2010; Macdonald & Valenza, 2012). On the more positive side, successful civil-military coordination regarding immunisation campaigns has been documented in the past. 'Days of tranquility', for example, organised by UNICEF and WHO in Afghanistan, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Somalia and elsewhere have allowed these campaigns to be carried out with relative success (Egeland et al., 2011). However, immunisation campaigns have also come under direct attack. In Pakistan, for example, late 2012 and early 2013 saw an upsurge in attacks on aid workers, many linked to a national polio eradication campaign; and UNICEF, WHO and many national partners have suspended their activities.<sup>28</sup>

The limited literature on the provision of **water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH)** speaks to the challenges posed to this sector by highly insecure environments. Oxfam GB, for example, admits great frustrations in trying to meet internal WASH standards in its 2012 Somalia performance evaluation. Limited access made it difficult to carry out assessments and the technical support supplied from across the border in Kenya was of limited use, as decisions regarding adaptations and modifications had to be made on the ground (Oxfam GB, 2011). Another agency found that the lack of consistent access resulted in no marked improvement in the water infrastructure/system.<sup>29</sup> In Afghanistan, there was more success, due in part to a highly decentralised approach, with greater involvement of LNGOs and local partners with strong implementation capacity working in collaboration with the local authorities. Quality assurance and supply delivery, however, remain challenging (Norman, 2012; Zyck, 2012).

In many contexts the provision of **shelter** can take on an extremely political character, depending upon the national government's capacities and response to the conflict. The provision of shelter or building materials to refugees can be a markedly political endeavour, depending on the stance of the host nation

---

<sup>27</sup> Mullany et al., 2009. Confidential – Remote Management evaluation (b)

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97186/PAKISTAN-Growing-risks-for-aid-workers>

<sup>29</sup> Confidential – Lessons learned in Remote Management.

to the influx of foreign nationals. Two security considerations are mentioned in the few materials that address the provision of shelter: first, the desire for uniformity and/or equity of shelter in refugee and IDP camps; and secondly, the imperative that conditions within a camp shall not exceed the conditions of the community living near or around the camp (Egeland et al., 2011; Johnson, 2010).

Violent attacks against educational facilities have drawn international attention to the **education** sector, particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Harmer, Stoddard & DiDomenico, 2011). Educational initiatives in both Afghanistan and Pakistan have made use of low-profile and smart-protection approaches, such as relocating community-based schools to private homes or mosques, or by creating ‘satellite schools’ (ibid). Internal evaluations have also noted good practice in the provision of education in emergencies through community-based organisations in Burma.<sup>30</sup> The Mon Education Committee, for example, a local partner of the Thai Burma Border Consortium, helps children access education in Mon State in Myanmar. Both teachers and independent education monitors are recruited directly from beneficiary communities, so as to create greater ownership and accountability, and increase the safety of children attending classes by not exposing them to the greater risk of traveling between neighbouring towns.<sup>31</sup>

In all settings examined for this study it was found that the sphere of **protection** in particular suffered under remote management. This is not only due to the limited experience of local organisations regarding standards and good practice, but also because protection directly addresses security issues and is linked to the practice of international witnessing and advocacy, which entails risks (Equiza, 2012). Experience in certain operations has also demonstrated that protection-related activities, especially related to internally displaced persons (IDPs) brings civilian operations into direct engagement with military actors undertaking quick-impact projects and support for the displaced, often based on a wider goal of winning ‘hearts and minds’ (Elhawary, 2010).<sup>32</sup> Protection activities also touch on the interests of non-state armed groups, for example regarding forced displacement or the recruitment of children, as in Colombia (Keogh & Ruijters, 2012; Tennant et al., 2010). To maintain a minimum level of support in Somalia, UNHCR shifted its focus to livelihood programming with the aim of improving IDPs’ own capacity to avoid or mitigate the effects of protection risks. The intention was to strengthen IDP households’ assets and capabilities, thereby expanding the range of available livelihood activities while avoiding undesirable ones (Jaspars & O’Callaghan, 2010, in Egeland et al., 2011).

### Assessing needs of the most vulnerable

There is a growing literature on the failure of emergency aid to address the needs of older people and people with disabilities in emergencies, as well as gender dynamics (see for example, Mazurana et al., 2011; HelpAge, 2012). This is not specific to operating in highly insecure environments, but some of the difficulties caused by the lack of disaggregated data, and the implications this has for properly assessing the needs of vulnerable people in emergencies, make this more challenging in highly insecure contexts –

---

<sup>30</sup> Confidential – Remote Management evaluation (b)

<sup>31</sup> Confidential – Remote Management Evaluation (b)

<sup>32</sup> See for example studies from the *Disasters* Special Issue: States of fragility: stabilisation and its implications for humanitarian action (Volume 34, October 2010).

particularly where access constraints are significant.<sup>33</sup> Persaud (2012) notes the absence of disaggregated data as the primary constraint of organisations in addressing gender and vulnerability in a more comprehensive manner. Additionally, the lack of planning and the last-minute ‘scramble for partners’ leaves little time to capture baseline data, embed protection officers with local partners, or ensure awareness of organisational policies and minimum standards particularly for vulnerable populations (Equiza, 2012).

Recent donor reviews conducted in highly insecure settings stress that ‘greater consideration of how to meet the specific needs of women and girls during crisis is needed’ (ICAI, 2012, p. 1; see also Steets, 2012). The European Interagency Security Forum commissioned a study examining gender and security, resulting in published guideline for mainstreaming gender in security risk management (Persaud, 2012). Insecurity Insights have published initial research into the gendered nature of security incidents affecting aid workers and aid delivery (Wille & Fast, 2011), but the study highlights considerable data challenges, as information on gender is not systematically available. The literature on gender and insecurity is limited, but the present review found that agencies are increasingly focusing more on gender issues other on vulnerable groups, such as those with disabilities and the elderly. As noted above, only 35 per cent of the literature reviewed examined the cross-cutting issues of sex, age and/or disability – which would indicate a lack of priority given to these issues in highly insecure settings (Karunakara & Stevenson, 2012).

## 2.4 The critical role of partnerships in insecure environments

A growing body of literature highlights the critical role of national aid workers in insecure environments, and the considerable risk national aid workers bear in these settings (AWSD, 2011; Egeland et al., 2011; Fast et al., 2011). National aid workers form the majority of aid staff in the field – upwards of 90 per cent – and consequently comprise the majority of victims of security incidents (AWSD, 2011)<sup>1</sup>. Data from AWSD shows that in 2011, approximately 13 per cent of victims (28) were international staff and 87 per cent (280) were national staff working for either international or national organisations in their own countries (AWSD, 2012, p.5). Given that international staff account for only roughly four per cent of the global aid worker population, these figures indicate that the attack *rate* for international aid workers is higher than for nationals, although nationals remain the vast majority of victims in terms of numbers (ibid.). The increased reliance on national staff has resulted in ‘risk transfer’ and greater insecurity for nationals which also affects the nature of violence. SiND, for example, has data showing that national staff-members face greater mortality rates during incidents of kidnapping than international staff (Wille, 2010).

The literature also underscores the importance of preparedness for remote management. Several evaluations have concluded that local partnerships, or increased reliance on national staff, cannot be

---

<sup>33</sup> Helpage and the Feinstein Center are attempting to address this in an upcoming paper: ‘Disaggregating data for impartial humanitarian action’ at the 2013 ALNAP Conference.

established on a contingency basis when, for example, donors and INGOs are forced to scramble at a moment's notice to find local partners or engage local staff members on a temporary basis (Khan, 2011; Featherstone, 2012). As reviewers of the Somali 2011 response also noted, 'You can't compensate for a lack of capacity' (Hobbs et al., 2012, p.6) – a point reflected in much of the literature reviewed (Merlin, 2009; Fast et al., 2011; Norman, 2012).

Here, 'national aid workers' include both national staff and local partners. These groups are increasingly treated separately in the literature, due primarily to the legal responsibility that organisations have for their own staff members.<sup>34</sup>

### **National staff**

Many agencies have realised that remote management requires organisations to recruit staff capable of performing their tasks with minimum direct supervision, which in turn means investing in staff professional development (ACF, 2012). This can lead to improvements in beneficiary accountability, internal monitoring and reporting; the retention of key personnel; and an increased level of project ownership and trust in the organisation (Equiza, 2012; Mullany et al., 2008).<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, Tearfund's monitoring guide warns that if the capabilities of national staff are not sufficient and if training and capacity building opportunities to meet the scale of prospective projects are not offered, then managers are actively 'risking deterioration in programme quality and increasing the risk for fraud and corruption' (Norman, 2012, p.28).

The literature also increasingly emphasises the fact that national staff cannot be seen as a homogeneous category in terms of risk, or ability to gain acceptance (AWSD, 2011; Egeland et al., 2011; Fast et al., 2011). And whereas organisations are increasingly giving more thought to managing the differing security risks of national staff, particularly through tailored security training, similar attention is not paid to other inequalities related to benefits packages or overall employee composition (Finucane, 2011).<sup>36</sup> Acceptance research has also noted discrepancies between what NGOs say they are doing about staffing for promoting acceptance, and how stakeholders perceive the situation (Fast et al., 2011). This would seem to indicate a missed opportunity, since research also finds that national and local staff members are key 'multipliers' of acceptance – in terms of their knowledge of the context and connections to the community, and also how their treatment of community members reflects on the organisation (ibid., p.9).

### **Local organisations and other non-Western assistance actors**

Recognition of the critical role local organisations play in highly insecure environments is relatively well documented.<sup>37</sup> Even the international organisations that have demonstrated greatest success in

---

<sup>34</sup> In matters of safety and security, among other things, organisations have a direct duty of care for the national staff they employ. For further discussion see ASWD, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Confidential – Remote Management Evaluation (a) and (b)

<sup>36</sup> AWSD (2011) recommends that agencies conduct comprehensive audits of their security resources for national staff to identify and address inequities, taking into account HR re: insurance, medical care, and access to stress and trauma counselling.

<sup>37</sup> See for example AWSD, 2011; Egeland et al., 2011; Equiza, 2012; Merlin, 2009; Norman, 2012; Tennant, 2010.

maintaining secure access in insecure environments, such as the ICRC, rely considerably on national partners in various contexts. For example, in many parts of Somalia and Syria, the ICRC can work only through the Somali Red Crescent and the Syrian Red Crescent, respectively (McGoldrick, 2011).

Despite this growing reliance, there has been little research into the nature and scope of the role of local organisations and national societies in highly insecure environments. This includes basic information such as the size of the local aid presence in a given country, how local partners are selected, how they are able to scale up, how they manage their risk environment, access patterns, and if and how practices differ across different regions. Part of the problem is that humanitarian organisations generally release very few details as to their preferred management model and structure (Audet, 2011). These organisations – spanning a wide range of faith-based groups, Islamic organisations, and indigenous NGOs – are also often not part of formal coordination structures; as a result, their interventions are not taken into consideration in sector- or system-wide monitoring and evaluation. In Somalia, for example, the OIC Alliance for Relief, a consortium of 32 international and Somali NGOs, implemented a range of programmes in highly insecure parts of south central Somalia; however, as they were not part of international humanitarian coordination efforts, the OIC has not formally monitored or evaluated their work, and thus little is known about their operations.

Studies have found that, while international agencies acknowledge that partnership is central, many admit that they are only just begun to think about their responsibilities in this area (ASWD, 2011). This includes the responsibilities that agencies have to partners regarding security and, linked to this, better understanding their partners' abilities to mitigate the threats and maintain their programming goals.<sup>38</sup> Importantly, little guidance is provided on how to approach this. Tearfund's monitoring guide (Norman, 2012) indicates that INGOs should choose local partners with a historical presence in the location. Conversely, they found that NGOs without an established presence in the community proved less successful in gaining acceptance and providing services.

Similar to the risks of fraud and corruption with national staff in remotely managed projects, also local partnerships face considerable risks in this sphere, and several evaluations have cited evidence of this. The DEC RTE of the 2010 floods in Pakistan identified a range of measures intended to mitigate such risks, including embedding staff within partner organisations, in-depth partner appraisals (for new local partners), strict financial procedures, procurement by main agency, development and inclusion of fraud and code of conduct policies into partner MoUs.

Security training for local partners is vital. However, the literature indicates that it is often neglected, whether on the assumption that partners will inherently know how to deal with violence in local contexts, or that they will not be so vulnerable to higher risk levels simply because they are national or local (AWSD, 2011; Wille, 2010).

---

<sup>38</sup> ASWD (2011) recommended that INGOs become 'proactive in helping their local/national partners analyse their security needs and provide resources to meet them'.



## Private-sector engagement

The practice of sub-contracting the delivery of aid to firms or other private contractors in some extremely dangerous environments, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, increasingly common. However, except for in the sector of private security contracting, there is no quantitative evidence in the literature to support this assumption.

From the few studies that address this issue in relation to humanitarian aid generally, such as Kent and Burke (2011), there is evidence to suggest that private sector actors have added much-needed expertise through logistical support and in-kind contributions.<sup>39</sup> Kent and Burke note that trends in private sector involvement have also been expanding, from the donation of such services towards more active engagement by employing their technical expertise in post-disaster and disaster preparedness through training and fee-for-service logistical support. That said, commercial sector respondents acknowledged that they have generally been reluctant to provide humanitarian support in conflict-affected settings, and few respondents saw much prospect for predictable and consistent partnerships in conflict situations. Collaboration with humanitarian organisations tends to be *ad hoc* and opportunistic, and much remains to be done – not least in establishing an evidence base about ‘what works’, particularly in view of the challenges of operating in insecure environments (Kent & Burke, 2011). Additionally, some donor-commissioned policy evaluations have questioned private-sector engagement, calling for dialogue and the development of IASC guidelines and principles on how and when to work through private contractors in humanitarian operations (Steets et al., 2012; Zyck, 2012).

## 2.5 Monitoring and evaluation in insecure environments

### Monitoring

Monitoring and evaluation is very difficult in highly insecure environments. *Once Removed* (Stoddard et al., 2010) identified this as the single most challenging aspect of remotely managed projects. A lack of quality control as well as less accountability and potential corruption concerns is frequently highlighted as a key concern regarding remote management (ACF, 2011; Egeland et al., 2011; Steets et al., 2012). Those undertaking monitoring may also be exposed to security risks; in Somalia, for example, independent monitors have become direct targets of violence (ICAI, 2012).

The scope of monitoring varies considerably between projects, ranging from a limited focus on programme indicators to a more comprehensive approach involving auditing the project, and a detailed triangulation of evidence involving feedback from beneficiaries, contractors, community leaders, as well as the project team (Stoddard et al., 2010). Much of this has to be done through the use of ‘non-traditional’ methods – such as hiring external (third-party) monitoring agencies and consultants; independent beneficiary feedback systems and reference groups; community feedback mechanisms and local authority monitors (Egeland et al., 2011; Norman, 2012; Steets et al., 2012). Remote monitoring

---

<sup>39</sup> Examples include the global logistics firm DHL’s delivery of relief supplies into conflict zones; KPMG staff members helping to distribute relief items in Kenya; the Veolia Foundation and the French Red Cross partnering in Zimbabwe to develop response strategies.

though mobile phones using photographs and GPS locaters has been used in Iraq, Afghanistan and other insecure areas, with varying success.

Norman (2012) has drawn up a thirteen-point checklist for project monitoring in remote management, including the use of peer monitoring across the national staff of different INGOs working in the same insecure area, in addition to increased reliance on information technology. For some projects – like WASH and education construction projects and activities such as trainings and delivery of services (e.g. immunisation) – visual documentation is considered essential. However, there is mixed experience here: numerous evaluations cite evidence of visual materials being manipulated.

In the 2011 Somalia response, an agency placed full-time staff in a ‘call centre’ assigned to contacting partners and field-based facilities by phone. The agency also increased and broadened third-party monitoring to include market monitoring, including tracking prices and observing whether humanitarian supplies were showing up in the markets. Improved technical monitoring on nutrition and health indicators was also stepped up, albeit remotely, through complementary local mechanisms.<sup>40</sup> Other technological initiatives in monitoring in insecure environments are outlined in Section 5.

Views differ on whether effective monitoring of remotely managed projects is really possible, and if so for how long. Martínez-Piqueras and Ruiz Bascarán (2012, p.25) found that if ‘key indicators related to different systems, above all outputs/performance indicators, cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency indicators’, were put in place along with ‘a systematic monitoring system based on triangulation (or) a system to incorporate feedback from final beneficiaries,’ then the remote management approach might be improved in the future. The ECHO-commissioned access evaluation (Steets et al., 2012, p.57) concluded that ‘the longer that operations are managed remotely, the more restricted implementing organisations and donors are in their ability to judge and see with their own eyes the extent that taxpayer money is reaching targeted beneficiaries.’

## Evaluations

As with monitoring, undertaking extensive and field-based evaluation is challenging in insecure environments. Here we may note two main concerns. First, there are the problems involved in overcoming the constraints of physical access.<sup>41</sup> Second, there is limited sharing of those evaluations that are in fact conducted. Single-agency evaluations are still the norm, especially as regards highly insecure environments. The State of the Humanitarian System study (Taylor et al., 2012) found considerable internal demand for single-agency programme evaluations, mainly driven by donor reporting, whereas inter-agency thematic/sector evaluations are far less common. This is particularly the case in highly insecure environments, where concerns regarding quality and corruption do not encourage open and transparent lesson learning, and serves to increase the number of confidential and in-house evaluations. In view of the significant need for shared lesson learning, this is especially problematic.

---

<sup>40</sup> Confidential -Lessons learned in Remote Management.

<sup>41</sup> A recent WFP evaluation in Afghanistan, for example, found that security constraints were the greatest threat to evaluability (WFP, 2012).

To overcome the constraints of physical access some innovations have been tried, particularly taking advantage of mobile communications technology. One method involves working with a single evaluation team that returns several times on short missions to evaluate a programme over time; this enables flexibility in dealing with possible access constraints, and also for learning and adaptation in the programme (Sokpoh, 2012). Evaluation teams have also experimented with consulting beneficiaries by phone. For example, after insecurity prevented international evaluators from visiting the field, an evaluation team in Niger conducted a telephone survey of 50 persons who had benefited from a mobile cash intervention (Bennett et al., 2011).

Another promising approach developed for a south-central Somalia evaluation involves telephone-based interviews by members of the diaspora living in the UK. The justification was that telephone-based research conducted by Somalis living in the UK but with established networks in southern and central Somalia might provide a useful and complementary means of obtaining information from the field that could be triangulated with other sources of information. Key informants were interviewed – such as local administration and elders, *hawala* agents and traders, beneficiaries and non-beneficiary community members. This has not yet been tried at scale, and needs to be supplemented with other more traditional methods of monitoring and evaluation, but has the potential to overcome constraints of physical access to enable effective use of the extensive social networks that link members of the diaspora to the population living in Somalia.

## 2.6 Conclusions and gaps in the evidence

The literature on security management approaches in highly insecure environments is relatively current and comprehensive. A wide range of approaches have been documented and critiqued. There is clear evidence that active, acceptance-based approaches, alongside negotiated access, are considered more successful in providing assistance to beneficiaries, but that a blend of approaches will often be necessary, depending on the type of aid actor and the operational setting. Much of the literature is based on methodologies involving interviews, field studies and literature reviews, and is often underpinned by quantitative analysis on trends in violence against aid workers. The fact that agency guides and evaluations have adopted this literature, cross-referencing and translating it, would indicate that serves its practitioner-based audience.

Where this literature falls short is in documenting and providing guidance on implementing programmes by remote management, particularly to ensure greater preparedness and planning. It is also weak as regards understanding targeting practices, and examining the comparative risks and appropriateness of programming in different sectors in highly insecure contexts, including what works at scale.

Although more is now known about the role of national staff and the differing risks they face, there is limited literature on the selection, capacities and experience of local/implementing partners. These significant gaps concern basic information such as the size of the local aid presence in a given country, how local partners are selected, how they are able to upscale, how they manage their risk environment, and if and how practices differ across different regions. Such gaps reflect the lack of access to field

operations (beyond the capital) that often thwart research and evaluation teams, and the limited material available from the national organisations themselves.

Given the operational focus of the issues here, this section has relied more heavily on primary material, particularly single-agency evaluations and lessons learned. The limited number of joint evaluations, and the tendency to keep findings confidential, undermines lesson learning in the aid community. Greater sharing of experience would be a significant advantage to the sector.

## 3 Principles and collaboration – lessons and good practice

### 3.1 Operationalising humanitarian principles in insecure environments

Despite being a part of ODA, humanitarian assistance has always been viewed as a special subset of aid which should be guided by its own principles and good practice. Born of the need to protect civilians during conflict, and focused on protecting human life and relieving acute suffering, humanitarian assistance necessarily centres on the needs of individuals. The core principles of humanitarian action – humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality - are enshrined in International Humanitarian Law via the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols. Humanitarian principles were also articulated in practical terms in the Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (1994), and can be found in other joint humanitarian efforts such as the Humanitarian Charter of the Sphere Project.

There is a considerable body of literature on the role of humanitarian principles in highly insecure contexts. Much of it underscores the importance of the core humanitarian principles in underpinning acceptance approaches in insecure environments, and providing the basis on which warring parties can accept humanitarian action in situations of active conflict. Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, and the newly independent South, as well as Pakistan have been the primary contexts of focus of research in recent years.<sup>42</sup>

The literature also documents the increasing challenges in maintaining humanitarian principles in humanitarian action, and the implications for access. This has been prompted in response to post-9/11 concerns regarding the integration of humanitarian policy with international security policy, and has grown subsequently in response to military-led stabilisation campaigns employing counter-insurgency tactics (Collinson et al., 2010; Egeland et al., 2011).<sup>43</sup> Several studies conclude that affected states and donors remain driven by political and security interests rather than objectively defined needs, and that these actions hamper effective support to vulnerable populations (DARA, 2011; Oxfam, 2012; Taylor et al., 2012). Studies have also found that donor governments have created ‘unfavourable conditions and overt obstructions’ on aid actors in efforts to combat terrorism (Egeland et al., 2011; Pantuliano et al., 2011). States have criminalised a range of activities, including ‘material support’ to further the cause of terrorists. Counter-terrorism legislation in the USA, for example, removed the ‘humanitarian exemption’ (the waiving of legislation in order to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance), since the potential diversion of aid might benefit terrorists (Pantuliano et al., 2011). The *To Stay and Deliver* study also argued that the ‘stated or implied policy of some governments and inter-governmental organisations to ban all contact with entities designated as “terrorist” has severely undermined opportunities for humanitarian actors to negotiate access for aid to civilians’ (Egeland et al., 2011, p.4).

---

<sup>42</sup> See for example, Collinson & Elhawary, 2012; Macdonald & Valenza, 2012; Egeland et al., 2011; Grünwald & Collins, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> For earlier work in this area see, for example, Macrae et al., 2003; Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2003; Minear, 2008.

While continuing to call for respect for humanitarian principles, many humanitarian organisations have willingly compromised a principled approach in their own conduct through close alignment with political and military activities and actors (see Egeland et al., 2011). In Somalia, humanitarian principles have been compromised for over a decade in favour of maintaining access: agencies have targeted areas for programming on the basis that they could access them, even if they were not identified as being most in need, and aid has constantly been subject to political manipulation (Hammond, 2012). The ODI study on humanitarian space in Pakistan (HPG, 2009) argued that agencies were faced with a hard choice between restricted action to ensure principled humanitarian action, or compromised (unprincipled) action in an effort to achieve greater humanitarian outcomes within broader political and security agendas. On the positive side, a recent Norwegian Refugee Council study found that agencies that success in achieving secure access do so by managing perceptions through communications as to who they are and what they do, often with either direct or inferred reference to humanitarian principles (Macdonald & Valenza, 2012).<sup>44</sup>

Despite the wide range of material dedicated to the subject, there are weaknesses with the current state of the evidence regarding humanitarian principles. First, most analysis has been in the form of secondary, qualitative, general analysis and think-pieces rather than detailed, empirical, field-level research over a long time-horizon within which an evidence base might produce concrete findings and guidance for future/other operations. Second, the research lacks quantitative evidentiary support. As a result, there are many studies on the politicisation of aid and the implications this has for humanitarian principles, without strong evidence measuring the impact this has on humanitarian access.<sup>45</sup> There has also been limited field-based work which analyses how principles are put into practice. As Harvey (2010) notes, there is a surprising lack of guidance on this subject. Collinson and Elhawary (2012, p. 26) argue that part of the problem is that most discussions of humanitarian space focus on the policies and actions of external players, whereas the issue of ‘shrinking humanitarian space’ is mostly ‘confined to the delivery of material assistance by established agencies’ rather than humanitarian space for affected population. This is a fundamental weakness in nearly all the literature reviewed, with a few exceptions, like Donini’s (2008) detailed perceptions study in Afghanistan undertaken at the start of the timeframe of this review. In order to get to the heart of this issue, we still need a better understanding of access trends in insecure environments, including a mapping of patterns of access in relation to identified needs, and the overall aid footprint in each context.

---

<sup>44</sup> Macdonald and Valenza (2012) identified three approaches: ‘Explicit: principles are communicated at all stages of contact, negotiation and discussion as concepts to which an organisation strictly adheres. Negotiated: principles are integrated into messages about the organisation and explained while discussing programme implementation with stakeholders. Implicit: principles are embedded into an organisation’s best practice, but the fact is not overtly communicated.’

<sup>45</sup> In several contexts OCHA has established monitoring mechanisms to track access constraints, but the data are incomplete in many highly insecure environments. For example, in Somalia, OCHA can track only the UN’s aid presence – not INGOS, the Red Cross/Crescent or LNGOs.

### **Donor governments: good donorship in insecure environments**

Strengthening the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) mechanisms at field level was prominent in the workplan of the GHD group nearly a decade ago, but there is little in the literature to suggest that the GHD initiative has improved donor coordination in highly insecure environments (Taylor et al., 2012). Part of the challenge, as noted above, is that the lack of guidance and documented studies on how donor governments can support partners to operate neutrally and independently in contested environments – particularly if those donor governments have clear political or strategic interests in the outcomes (Collinson & Elhawary, 2012; Harmer et al., 2012; Macdonald & Valenza, 2012).<sup>46</sup>

Problematic for donor engagement in highly insecure environments is the tendency for donors to have ever-larger portfolios and be expected to cover a wider range of activities, providing support to increasingly complex approaches and methodologies (Taylor et al., 2012). Significant for both monitoring and evaluation, there is also the perception that donor representatives, except for those of the few very large donors, are likely to be generalists with shrinking travel budgets (ibid.). This inevitably complicates informed decision-making for principled programming in highly insecure contexts. In response to these challenges, the recent ECHO access review (Steets et al., 2012) recommended that DG ECHO improve its ability to monitor projects directly – including maintaining a strong field presence, and recruiting senior staff holding citizenship in the country (who are less encumbered by administrative access barriers and who can ‘blend in’ with the local environment, ethnically and culturally).

### **Humanitarian principles: national aid workers and other non-Western assistance actors**

Given the increasing reliance on national staff and local actors to operate, often without significant monitoring or support in remote management operations, there is a growing need to understand the role these actors play in upholding humanitarian principles in highly contested contexts. Earlier studies and evaluations have found that senior management in some aid agencies question the ability of their national staff to uphold principles when under extreme pressure, as well as questioning the point of even asking them to do so (Stoddard et al., 2006; 2009).<sup>47</sup> The challenge until recently has been the lack of documentation of the perspectives of national staff and local partners on issues of principles, and a range of other issues regarding their role in highly insecure environments.

These questions were examined in an extensive survey of national staff in 2011 (Egeland et al., 2011).<sup>48</sup> On the question of humanitarian principles, the survey asked:

---

<sup>46</sup> Analysis of the Good Humanitarian Donorship agenda revealed that it was never clear whether governments were making a commitment to be neutral (not take sides in conflicts) or to respect the neutrality of the organisations they fund. The goal of providing humanitarian aid in a neutral manner is particularly challenging if governments are also making commitments to ‘whole of government’ approaches (Harmer, Cotterrell & Stoddard, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Agencies often present this as one of their primary concerns when switching to a remote management mode of operations, particularly in contexts where there is a strong authoritarian state (Stoddard, Harmer & Renouf 2009).

<sup>48</sup> To establish the evidence base, the research team used a multi-language Web-based survey for national aid workers disseminated globally but with special emphasis on the highest-risk countries. The survey reached greater

- did their organisation actively promote the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality?
- and did this enhance the security of national aid workers?

These questions received larger majorities (over 90 per cent for both) than any other question in the survey, and challenged previous assumptions not only of the practical usefulness of the principles, but also their perceived role in keeping national aid workers safe in insecure conditions across different cultural settings. Conversely, to the question of what factors contribute to insecurity, ‘lack of respect for principles’ was the third-largest contributor to insecurity (out of seven) in the opinion of respondents, following ‘incompetent organisations taking unnecessary risks’ and ‘lack of experience and cultural awareness’ (Egeland et al., 2011, p.47; see also AWSO, 2011).

There has also been increasing interest in the role of non-Western organisations in operating in highly insecure environments, and whether and how humanitarian principles are applied to maintain access in these contexts. There is a general assumption that their conceptions of ‘humanitarianism’, their motives for supporting aid, and the terms of their support reflect a humanitarian approach different from that of established organisations and donors and more concerned with respecting the sovereignty of the state receiving the aid (Bernard, 2011, p.893). There is no definitive evidence here, however, and the literature is generally weak in documenting the operational approaches of non-Western organisations in dealing with insecurity and negotiating access, despite their growing role in recent conflicts (De Cordier, 2008; Binder & Meier, 2012). During the response to the famine in south-central Somalia, for example, Western agencies suffered severe access constraints, and international Islamic organisations (as well as local partners) were perceived to be filling some of the gaps (ICG, 2012).<sup>49</sup> However, very little has been documented as to how access was negotiated and maintained. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), for example, has not undertaken an evaluation of its interventions in Somalia or Yemen, despite the significant scale of its activities in these contexts. The 2012 *State of the Humanitarian System* study noted that for Islamic organisations there might be less emphasis on neutrality, ‘because they don’t see their Western counterparts practicing it’ (Taylor et al., 2012, p.81). This and earlier studies have noted that international Islamic organisations focus more on the efficiency of aid than on transparency, although this is also partly related to the mechanisms for giving in Islamic cultures (Binder & Meier, 2012; Harmer & Martin, 2009; see also IRIN 2012e, 2012g).

Much more research is needed to explain the nature and scale of this assistance, and its effectiveness in highly insecure contexts. This current gap in information-sharing has implications for policy, principle, and programmatic approaches.

### **The rise of resilience and the challenge to humanitarian principles**

This literature review also undertook a limited analysis of other (non-humanitarian) types of assistance provided in highly insecure environments, assessing this in relation to the promotion of aid principles.

---

numbers of nationals than are typically represented in research interviews and consultations (which, incidentally, is why many such studies tend to skew toward the international view).



Not surprisingly, the literature shows that in some environments, humanitarian aid, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), resilience programming, recovery, and development assistance are often channelled at the same time. Resilience, as a potentially unifying framework bridging humanitarian, DRR, and development goals, entered the aid lexicon many years ago but came into the spotlight in 2011 through the recommendations of the UK government's *Humanitarian Emergency Response Review*. Governments and donors are keen to see 'more resilience-minded' responses, especially after a much-delayed reaction to the Horn of Africa famine in 2011 (ICAI, 2012; Sandison, 2012; Save the Children and Oxfam, 2012). Through a resilience framework, aid actors are seeing greater potential for shared programming across the humanitarian/ development divide to address the needs of the most-vulnerable populations. This is evident in the literature on Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Sahel, Somalia and Yemen.

Duffield (2012) is sharply critical to this trend, arguing that the rise of security management and the resilience agenda signal one and the same thing: the growing remoteness of traditional (Western) assistance from affected populations in highly insecure settings. Arguably, the complex and effective resilience programming found in much more stable contexts like South Asia, will be difficult to translate in highly insecure environments, so the programmatic implications of Duffield's thesis might not play out. There is, however, some evidence that resilience-type programming (often described as livelihoods or self-help projects) might be utilised by aid agencies as an alternate means of channelling assistance where large emergency relief might not be possible.<sup>50</sup> This might be a sign of a lack of innovation in alternative approaches.

The shift towards resilience programming also introduces a wider challenge as to what principles should guide assistance in undertaking resilience work. This has special significance for humanitarian action in conflict settings in which resilience programming is also undertaken – to ensure that humanitarian principles, particularly in conflict settings, are upheld (Harmer, 2012).

There is a limited understanding of how principles concretely guide the approaches of different aid actors in conflict contexts. This includes the core humanitarian principles of donor commitments to the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and Paris principles, as well as the principles informing the growing interest in resilience programming. It is important to understand how these various principles are applied, whether they are complementary or contradictory and to what extent the simultaneous application of various sets of principles makes programming more challenging. This gap became evident during the present literature review, but was also noted in initial research on principles, undertaken by Humanitarian Outcomes for DFID in 2012 (Harmer et al., 2012).

---

<sup>50</sup> Egeland et al. (2011) documented instances of small-scale, targeted livelihood and self-help projects which some agencies consider to be an alternate means to channel assistance, as well as to mitigate the effects of protection risks, where large-scale emergency relief might not be possible. UNHCR's 'Protection and Livelihood' programming in Somalia, for example, aims to improve IDPs' own capacity to avoid or mitigate the effects of protection risks. Protection risks are reduced through projects that strengthen IDP households' assets and capabilities, with the aim of expanding the range of livelihood activities available to them.

## 3.2 Collaboration and coordination

Inter-agency cooperation in highly insecure environments has never been an easy operational pursuit, and the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms, including strategies to cope with threats and constraints, remains context-dependent. In some contexts, organisations remain are still wary of collaborating (much less coordinating) and sharing information, partly for fear that it may compromise their own security, but also because of the general tendency to protect information. That said, there have been some important shifts in recent years, along with a more nuanced understanding that, given the significant inter-dependence with regard to any highly insecure operational environment, collaboration is in everybody's best interest.

At headquarters level, collaboration among NGOs, and between NGOs and the UN, has progressed in recent years. There are now two regional NGO inter-agency security forums: Interaction's Security Advisory Group (SAG), based in Washington DC serving the US NGO community, and the European Interagency Security Forum (EISF) based in London, serving the European NGO community. More recently, the International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO), which hosts various field-level security mechanisms such as ANSO, has also been established. These forums foster information-sharing, awareness-raising, advocacy, training and policy development. They are recognised as valuable for encouraging and promoting good practice as well as sharing lessons learned and providing country-specific information in near to real-time. Since 2007, UNHCR and OCHA have co-chaired an IASC working group on challenges to humanitarian space and how to preserve it (Tennant, Doyle & Mazou, 2010). This has facilitated the adoption of more consistent policy approaches to delivering aid in insecure environments.

### The cluster approach in insecure environments

The two IASC cluster evaluations have not been fully positive on the role of the cluster approach in highly insecure environments, as has other literature in this field. The establishment of the clusters in late 2005 introduced a more predictable and accountable means of humanitarian coordination by formalising the lead role among particular agencies and organisations in each sector (Stoddard et al., 2007). At the field level, cluster lead agencies are, in theory, responsible not only for the performance of their own programme but also for the entire sectoral response. While this is a welcome and more accountable departure from previous models of coordination, it can prove problematic in highly insecure contexts if the cluster lead agency has a limited field presence – as is often the case with the more restrictive security policies of the UN, as compared to NGOs. It is also challenging if the lead agency is multi-mandated and is closely aligned to government priorities *and* the government is also a party to the conflict. A case study for the IASC Cluster II evaluation found that in Chad there was an overall lack of respect for humanitarian principles due to the increased dominance of the UN in humanitarian action, particularly the reliance on UN logistics and security advice (Grünwald & Sokpoh, 2010). The ability of obstructive agents to block aid operations that are over-reliant on a central delivery channel has emerged as a recent problem, including in Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and South Sudan. A recent study by ODI and the Stimson Centre and another by the NRC on UN integration arrangements found

that while the use of mission logistical assets and the provision of area security by UN peacekeeping forces and military escorts had increased access in DRC, achieving agreement amongst cluster members was difficult, due to differing risk thresholds and security approaches, for example, on armed protection (Metcalf et al., 2011; Glad, 2012).

On the positive side, the second IASC cluster evaluation found that clusters can play a useful role in facilitating contacts between UN agencies, which often face severe access problems related to insecurity, and NGOs that are active on the ground (Steets et al., 2010). Other studies have highlighted the significant potential of clusters for attracting funding for security needs (Stoddard & Harmer, 2010). Where clusters are co-led by an NGO, such as the education cluster, there are also greater opportunities for field-based leadership, but this can be challenging, given the need to merge two very different organisational cultures (Steets et al., 2010; Stoddard et al., 2007).

Until recently, security management approaches to implementing sector activities (such as undertaking a collective risk assessment for the sector or assessing the issue of risk transfer to partners) have not been considered a part of the cluster lead's responsibilities. Studies indicate that security is still dealt with largely at the agency level, not cluster-wide, and is not part of the cluster lead's thinking (Harmer et al., 2011; UNICEF, 2010). Although it might seem appropriate for the cluster lead to take on the role of facilitating effective and *secure* functioning of the sector to function both, not all see the possibility of achieving consistent risk management approach through an inter-agency mechanism (Harmer et al., 2011).

There are also additional challenges for cluster leads in pursuing advocacy vis-à-vis the host government. Cluster lead agencies must juggle the need to cooperate with the authorities in order to maintain access for programmes, while monitoring and speaking out against specific government-created impediments to cluster members' programming. These difficulties are often a reflection of how contested government policy is, and its ability to provide security (discussed in Section 4). Navigating them requires a much more sophisticated inter-cluster coordination that has proven elusive, thus far.

### **NGO field-level security collaboration**

NGO field-level collaboration on security has improved in recent years. This has been aided by various forums, including Saving Lives Together (SLT) – a UN-NGO collaborative effort – as well as context-specific NGO-run security platforms. These context-based platforms, like ANSO (Afghanistan), NSP (Somalia), PakSafe (Pakistan), South Sudan NGO Forum, and GANSO (Gaza), are regarded as highly effective – providing a range of security services such as incident reports, security trends analysis, and training – and worthy of replication in other field settings (Currion, 2010; ODI, 2010; Steets et al., 2012).<sup>51</sup> All need greater representation and participation of national NGOs.<sup>52</sup> Host states can be less

---

<sup>51</sup> For a detailed discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of NGO security coordination platforms see ODI/HPN's Good Practice Review on Operational Security in Violent Environments (ODI, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> AWSD (2011) recommends three areas of improvement in security collaboration: aid agencies prioritise national participation in risk assessment in field-based security platforms; engage in on-going dialogue in w/ staff about risk

accommodating of the establishment and operational goals of these platforms, however: and those that have been most successful in their establishment and continued existence have been in contexts where the state has limited oversight ability, as in Afghanistan, Gaza and Somalia (AWSO, 2012; Steets et al., 2012).

### **Saving Lives Together**

Collaboration between UN and NGOs in highly insecure environments has often been fragile. This is partly due to the broader challenges of the UN's political role, and the challenges it faces in supporting the independence of operational partners, as well as tensions regarding resource-sharing.<sup>53</sup> Saving Lives Together is a joint UN-NGO initiative designed to improve security collaboration between the UN and IASC-engaged NGOs at the field level. Additional security resources deployed under the SLT umbrella have primarily been deployed to high-risk environments such as Darfur, Pakistan and Somalia (the latter based in Nairobi). In Darfur, where there was no success in establishing an NGO-led security platform, SLT has filled a significant gap, and NGOs cite significant benefits in the security advice, inter-agency collaboration and information-sharing that has developed from the SLT programme (InterAction, 2010). To date, however, the initiative has lacked sufficient resources and senior-level engagement to ensure that these deployments can be sustained (Christian Aid, 2010).

A broader challenge to effective collaboration in highly insecure environments is lack of participation of smaller INGOs and LINGOs, which are often the main service providers in highly insecure environments. This was highlighted as a particular difficulty in both IASC cluster evaluations, as well as evaluations from the 2011 Horn of Africa response, and anecdotal evidence indicates this currently poses challenges in Syria. There are general challenges regarding the way in which national actors become involved in in-country coordination mechanisms, such as language constraints, but also specifically related to security cooperation and information-sharing. For example, it is particularly difficult where the host government imposes strict controls on national staff access to security information.

### **3.3 Conclusions and gaps in the evidence**

There is a considerable body of literature on the role of humanitarian principles and 'humanitarian space' in highly insecure contexts. It varies in quality, but in terms of methodology is generally qualitative in nature, relying on secondary sources. There are only a few rigorous studies that are based on field-level research over longer timeframes. Members of the affected populations are rarely involved in informing the research on principles, with a few exceptions.

---

perception and humanitarian principles; forging a common understanding and fomenting continued discussion of risk-assessment.

<sup>53</sup> For example, *To Stay and Deliver* (Egeland et al., 2011) found that resources for security in UN agencies were not filtering downward and outward through their NGO implementing partners. Only a few of the large UN agencies have recently started more systematically reviewing security measures, contingencies, and capacity-building with their implementing partners as a matter of policy and ongoing programme management (p. 44). See also Stoddard and Harmer, 2010, *Supporting Security for Humanitarian Action: a review of critical issues for the humanitarian community*. Humanitarian Outcomes

Despite the volume of material on principles, there has been scant analysis of how principles are implemented in practice, and little evidence as to the impact on humanitarian access. More fundamentally, we still have only a limited picture of coverage – the extent to which aid actors manage to reach populations in need. Operating in insecure contexts is made more difficult by the fact that there are different and sometimes conflicting sets of principles underpinning the work of aid agencies. In some contexts where Western actors face security risks, local and non-Western assistance actors are increasingly providing aid, but there has been little analysis of their overall effectiveness and whether their work is in line with humanitarian principles.

The literature on collaboration and coordination in highly insecure environments has highlighted various challenges related to the UN-led cluster approach, although INGO collaboration has become increasingly sophisticated, particularly through the establishment of field-level security platforms. UN-NGO security collaboration, under the banner of SLT, has also served operational needs in a few contexts where independent platforms have not been possible. The significant gap in the literature and in practice is in understanding how local organisations collaborate in managing their risk environment, and how the international coordination system should support these efforts.

## **4 Governance, accountability and value for money – lessons and good practice**

### **4.1 The role of the host state: does governance matter in insecure environments?**

In recent humanitarian literature and policy dialogue a strong theme has emerged: the importance of engaging host states more effectively in humanitarian response, in order to achieve better access, more efficient utilisation of local capacities, and more coherent response (IFRC, 2008). Much of this has focused on natural disaster contexts. There has been less detailed discussion of the role of the state in humanitarian operations when dealing with protracted crisis or conflicts, and the perspectives of national authorities on these issues is weakly documented.<sup>54</sup> The recent briefing paper from the Aid Worker Security Database (2012) partly addresses this gap by examining whether the nature of governance in the host country contributes to levels of violence against aid workers (although it is also based on a very limited range of interviews with host state officials). It also sought to test the general assumption that the presence of active conflict corresponds to a rise in casualties among aid workers.<sup>55</sup> Using formal statistical analysis, the study found that the presence or absence of armed conflict matters the most. Meaningful correlations were also identified between aid worker violence and low levels of political stability, high scores on ‘state fragility’, institutional weakness of the regime, and low levels of the rule of law (ibid.,p.5). Weak government institutions, whether democratic or autocratic, proved to

---

<sup>54</sup> See for example Harvey (2009) and Harvey and Harmer (2011).

<sup>55</sup> For the methodology of the regression analysis see: <https://aidworkersecurity.org>

be more predictive of aid worker attacks than either entrenched dictatorships or strong institutional democracies. Conversely, the AWSO briefing paper found no correlation between aid-worker killings and the general homicide rates in host countries, despite the considerable difficulties entailed in working in countries with high rates of violent crime, such as Honduras,<sup>56</sup> nor was there a significant relationship between government corruption and violence against aid workers (ibid., p.5).

The responsibilities of the host state government as regards the protection of aid workers is a highly sensitive issue. The UN's *Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises Worldwide* (Brahimi, 2008) found that member states were not equally well-equipped to provide security – and that those countries where capacity was modest or lacking were precisely those where the most serious risks existed. In response to the Panel's recommendations, the UN Secretary-General called upon member states to address the unlawful arrest, detention and harassment of UN staff and restrictions on the freedom of movement of UN and other humanitarian workers, to end impunity for crimes against aid workers, and to refrain from public statements that could jeopardise the safety and security of aid staff.<sup>57</sup> It is difficult for international actors to play a strong advocacy role in holding host states to their responsibilities, however, when any suggestions that the government may be failing to provide security can be politically damning. Additionally, in cases where the government in question is a party to the conflict, humanitarian actors will be reluctant to accept its direct protection, for reasons of principle. In these scenarios agencies prefer to see investments in the provision of ambient security (ODI, 2010; Stoddard, Harmer & Haver, 2006).<sup>58</sup> At worst, aid workers can themselves be caught or directly targeted in government forces' hostilities, as well as be exposed to government retaliation, interrogation, and sometimes physical abuse and expulsion from the country (InterAction, 2010).<sup>59</sup> The literature also documents a range of other scenarios where, through overbearing or ill-advised use of their security forces, host governments have impeded humanitarian action. This includes restricting the movements and activities of aid workers, imposing security measures that run counter to maintaining perceptions of neutrality, such as requiring agencies to use armed protection, and imposing prohibitions on formal contact with groups designated as 'terrorist' and thus seriously hindering humanitarian negotiation (InterAction, 2010; see also ASWD, 2012; Cosgrave et al., 2010; HPG, 2009; Pantuliano et al., 2011).

While these tendencies might paint a bleak picture for agencies operating in these most violent of environments, another conclusion to be drawn is that where the state and its institutions are more effective, the role of the state in supporting the protection of aid workers can be a critical factor (AWSO, 2012). Understanding the nature of the host's capacity and will to protect and assist aid workers, both

---

<sup>56</sup> See for example: <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/blogs/alertnet-news-blog/how-do-aid-doctors-work-in-worlds-most-murderous-nation>

<sup>57</sup> *Report of the Secretary-General on the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated Personnel*, A/65/344, 2010

<sup>58</sup> 'Ambient security' is the general security environment in which humanitarian work takes place.

<sup>59</sup> For example in relation to Sri Lanka: Petrie, C., 2012. Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka. November; and in relation to Syria: [www.irinnews.org/Report/96952/SYRIA-UN-shrinks-staff-and-movement-amid-insecurity](http://www.irinnews.org/Report/96952/SYRIA-UN-shrinks-staff-and-movement-amid-insecurity)

national and international, is critical for operational security. Localised security dialogue with authorities (and where relevant, other *de facto* power-holders) can provide the basis of a strategy within which additional forms of risk management can then be adopted (ibid.).

## 4.2 Accountability in insecure environments

### Donor policy and accountability approaches in insecure environments

Among humanitarian providers there has been repeated criticism that too much of the accountability focus is on donor headquarters, with not enough attention to aid recipients (Taylor et al., 2012). The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but thus far the research on highly insecure contexts has invested more in understanding the concerns of donors than those of beneficiaries and host communities. Donors perceive considerable risk particularly regarding corruption, diversion and abuse of aid. The Somalia RTE found that accountability remains a major issue for donors (Darcy et al., 2012). The study found that there were concerns regarding the reliance on ‘remote control’ and the high level of dependence on untried local partners leading to questions on accountability. In particular, the study noted that donors were sceptical to claims by agencies that they could effectively monitor through third parties. The accountability agenda also had a bearing on the types of programmes funded. For example, many donors found it difficult to switch to cash because of the extreme pressure on accountability (cash being an area of more limited donor experience), even though there had been serious allegations of mismanagement and diversion of food aid.<sup>60</sup> The main trigger for cash intervention was the lack of access for food distribution and the need for a rapidly scaleable form of programming. The Somalia RTE found, however, that the ‘post-famine’ period since December 2011 saw a noticeable change of attitude (if not an immediate change of policy) by donors in stepping back from the ‘aid risks’ taken in 2011, noting the likelihood that donor governments were ‘likely to get tougher on reporting in 2012’ (ibid., p. 47).

Despite experience of remote management dating back to Iraq from 2003 onwards, donor support for remote management has remained widely debated. The lack of literature documenting policy development in this area, and the presumed lack of policy itself, hinders decision-making, and entails a greater emphasis on standard accountability processes arguably not achievable in highly insecure environments. The ECHO access evaluation, for example, has highlighted how managing projects remotely means reducing control and oversight, which increases the risk of aid diversion and reduces project quality (Steets et al., 2012). And the UNHCR concluded that there was a need to change donor expectations of upward accountability:

*With an increased reliance on national and local partners operating in areas where our own*

---

<sup>60</sup> The report from the *Monitoring Group on Somalia* to the Security Council in 2010, for example, estimated that 30 per cent of all food aid was skimmed off by local partners and local staff of WFP, 10 per cent by ground transporters and between five and ten per cent by armed groups (UN Monitoring Group report, March 2010). However, these claims were rejected by the WFP.



*access is difficult or impossible, it may be difficult to maintain our current type and level of detail of audit and donor reporting. Donors will need to be convinced of the changes that would be needed in accountability processes. (UNHCR, 2009)*

As far as the literature indicates, ECHO is the only donor to formulate a position on remote programming, although it varies from context to context.<sup>61</sup> The evaluation by Steets et al. (2012, p.14) recommended adopting a common position on remote management defined as ‘an approach that can allow organisations to continue some activities in situations where access is limited by transferring management and monitoring responsibilities to less experienced national or local staff members and/or external partners’.

### **Capturing perceptions and maintaining accountability to beneficiaries**

Despite the challenges of engaging with beneficiary and host communities in remotely managed programmes, the literature consistently links effective aid in highly insecure environments with increased accountability to beneficiaries and community participation. This also relates to better preparedness. CARE Niger, for example, has found that four of the six key conditions determining the degree of effectiveness of a response are directly related to increased beneficiary accountability (Grubbels, 2011).<sup>62</sup> Yet despite agreement, the literature is less clear about how the humanitarian community has met beneficiary accountability standards in insecure contexts, particularly through remote management (Norman, 2012; Zyck, 2012). The *State of the Humanitarian System* study (Taylor et al., 2012) found that some NGOs are establishing methodologies centred on the views of aid recipients under the ECB umbrella, applying the People First Impact Method Assessment methodology which can be undertaken by beneficiaries themselves. It was used, for example, in an evaluation of West Darfur, undertaken by Darfuris (O’Hagan, 2011, in Taylor et al., 2012). Other ways that agencies have attempted to circumvent security impediments in recent years is through the use of technology, including mobile phones. In Somalia, a consortium of agencies created hotlines for feedback, and others through SMS texting and the use of social media (NRC, 2012; Equiza, 2012). These systems have not necessarily improved accountability, however, particularly regarding instances of corruption or diversion. One recent confidential evaluation found that beneficiaries tend to use more familiar, trusted,

---

<sup>61</sup> For example, in 2007 several agencies reported difficulties in securing funding from the European Commission for humanitarian operations in Iraq. In South Sudan, for 2012 funding proposals, ECHO advised that ‘remote control’ operations will only be accepted as a temporary measure and never as a continued ‘modus operandi’ (ECHO, 2012). However in Somalia, there was greater flexibility: ‘though residual risks may not reach zero, adequate mitigation measures must be put in place; partners must have a proven record of implementation capacity in a given sector/area, supported by carefully designed and tested remote management and monitoring modalities’ (ECHO, 2011)

<sup>62</sup> The six key conditions determined, listed in relevance to beneficiary accountability, were: 1) community access to information and its ability to produce information itself; 2) establishing institutional alliances and relationships at every possible level, including at the village level; 3) building necessary capacities at the community level, internally and externally; 4) identifying as many types of potential crises as possible and taking appropriate and timely measures at the community level; 5) developing a strong linkage with the actors in the government’s formal EWS through information exchanges; and 6) defining a range of actions to be implemented, depending on the type of potential crisis and the warning levels (Grubbels, 2011).



local mechanisms such as elders or imams, and that agencies had missed the opportunity to find ways to work more closely with these more traditional structures.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, in Pakistan, the 2010 DEC evaluation of the floods response cited the use of technology in identifying corruption cases: ‘beneficiaries had filmed these acts of fraud or corruption in relief distributions on their mobile phones’ (Murtaza, 2010, p.27). Other recent policy guidance has suggested that NGOs create designated staff position(s), such as a Beneficiary focal point positions or Acceptance Officers so as to institutionalise beneficiary accountability and in turn increase the information base for monitoring and the likelihood of improved security through acceptance (Fast et al., 2011; Norman, 2012).

Security approaches can also have negative impacts on beneficiary accountability. The DEC RTE of the 2010 Pakistan floods response, for example, found that the security situation in certain districts and provinces had ‘guided agencies towards a blanket no-branding policy to reduce their visibility in an attempt to increase their security’ (Murtaza, 2010, p.17). The same policy, however, led to ‘very weak downward accountability to beneficiaries, with few even knowing organisations names or mandates’ (ibid., p.18). It recommended agencies to find more creative ways to proactively inform, consult and engage with beneficiaries while maintaining a low-profile stance – through verbal communication and handbills. Similar accountability challenges based on low-profile approaches to programming have been identified in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia (Stoddard et al., 2010).

### 4.3 Measuring aid effectiveness and value for money

Some major donors have become increasingly concerned with cost- efficiency, or ‘value for money’ (VfM) in the last few years, and have institutionalised more complex proposal and reporting tools to satisfy these concerns (Taylor et al., 2012). The Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR), for example, commissioned by the UK government, called for DFID to renew its focus on VfM, through ‘focusing on achieving the best outcomes for affected people... and [driving] radical change, for instance in the supply chain’ (Ashdown, 2011, p.51). From a different direction, some Islamic organisations have embraced efficiency and criticised what they see as high overhead costs within the UN, particularly in the Somalia famine response, and cite their own cost-effectiveness as one of the critical differences in their interventions (IRIN/Lough, 2012; Taylor et al., 2012).<sup>64</sup>

Partly because of methodological difficulties, evaluations and the wider literature have typically paid little attention to questions of cost-effectiveness (Harvey et al.2010: 43; Taylor et al., 2012). There also remains significant scepticism, confusion and resistance among humanitarian providers to the concept of ‘value for money’. In contexts such as South Sudan, where operations have been complex and expensive because of access constraints (due to the extremely poor state of infrastructure and related transportation options, as well as insecurity and restrictions on movement), aid agencies argue that

---

<sup>63</sup> Confidential evaluation (c)

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/03/somalia-turkey-idUSL5E8GP2LP20120603>

‘saving lives in South Sudan is incredibly costly’ (Taylor et al., 2012, p.75). Beyond the practical difficulties in applying the concept of value for money, the State of the Humanitarian System study also found that that it is seen by some as antithetical to better understanding of impact, risking putting monitoring and evaluation ‘on the back burner’ (ibid., p.76).

Still, there may be situations where the extremely high costs of operating in an insecure environment are not justified by the benefits in terms of impact on the affected populations, and this should be part of the VFM analysis. The ICAI report on ‘Approach to Effectiveness and VFM’ (2011) as well as the ‘DFID’s Approach to VFM’ (2011) do not comment on security issues, which might indicate that contexts of high insecurity are not at a priority: On the other hand, the ICAI Review of DFID’s response to the drought in the Horn of Africa found that, ‘Humanitarian interventions in Somalia show that value for money is not simply about cutting costs. Security and access challenges make it expensive to operate while also making it more difficult to ensure that funds are spent appropriately’ (ICAI, 2012, p.14).

#### **4.4 Conclusions and gaps in the evidence**

Governance issues will continue to grow in importance in the literature on insecure environments, particularly while corruption and quality issues continue to be raised in agency evaluations. Until recently, the role of the host state in insecure environments has attracted limited direct attention in the literature – and in particular the voices of host state and local authorities. The growing policy dialogue on the importance of engaging host states more effectively in humanitarian response should contribute to filling some of the gaps in this area.

Evidence of the need for upwards accountability to donors is similar to other, more stable environments and indicates there is a need for greater policy development on the part of donors. As an example, it would be helpful to analyse how donors have supported partners in differing high-risk environments, including examining support to different types of interventions and the nature of accountability requirements. This could serve as a starting point toward a more consistent policy approach among donors, offering a more detailed framework for partners of how support will be provided, and the nature of donor accountability requirements.

While there has been some adaptation of beneficiary accountability mechanisms in highly insecure environments, the literature is generally weak on the wider questions of beneficiary perceptions of their needs and the aid they receive in insecure environments. Important questions here include how beneficiaries are affected by insecurity, how this affects the aid presence and effectiveness of aid actors (i.e. what determines secure access), the utility of the types of aid received, and whether assistance goes to both women and men as well as sometimes marginalised groups like the elderly and disabled.

## 5 Innovation and technology – lessons and good practice

### 5.1 New technology and innovation

Modern technology seems set to play a large role in the evolution of aid delivery in highly insecure environments (Norman, 2012). Thanks to social media, global positioning system (GPS) mapping, voice-over-internet protocol (VOIP) technologies like Skype, and Short Message Service (SMS), humanitarian actors and beneficiaries can communicate with one another with a growing frequency and reliability impossible a decade or even five years ago. The evidence presented in the following sub-sections indicates some of the benefits that technological innovation may bring, particularly in assessment, monitoring and accountability, and in increasing beneficiary feedback. However, technology is not the sole remedy for insecurity and access constraints. There are significant challenges involved in relying on technology in some remote locations; cultural issues have been identified, as have security and privacy issues, as well as the general drawback of technology not entirely compensating for the physical divide created by insecurity and restricted movement.

Over the last few years, new and innovative projects making use of technology have emerged; and practitioner guidance on remote management has noted the value of investing in information and communication technologies so as to further enable remote engagement with beneficiaries, or project monitoring (Norman, 2012). Partly because of the nature of the subject-matter, there also seems to be greater sharing of lessons learned on the use of technology in insecure environments between agencies and through the use of social media.

#### Geospatial mapping

GPS and satellite imagery have enabled the use of interactive mapping of situations on the ground, including in responses to the Haiti earthquake, and in Somalia and Afghanistan (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, 2011, in Taylor et al., 2012; Meier, 2012). While much current attention has focused on natural disaster contexts (see for example, Kawasaki, 2012), conflict-affected areas have also been explored. In Afghanistan, Clear Path International (CPI), an INGO that provides victim assistance for landmine survivors, has partnered with Information Management and Mine Action Programs (iMMAP), to make use of interactive mapping and database software. It works with local NGOs and supports roughly 300 remote project sites throughout the country with this technology (Norman, 2012). Using iMMAP's OASIS software programme, CPI remotely compiles performance data and examines results of impact surveys collected from beneficiaries living in mine-affected communities, in order to triangulate verification of aid delivery. Based on the current success of iMMAP software in Afghanistan, there are plans to expand to insecure environments in which they operate (ibid.). As another example, the Humanitarian Innovation Fund is supporting a joint project by OCHA and Ushahidi on 'Integrating Local Media and ICTs' into humanitarian response in the Central African Republic.<sup>65</sup> And in Somalia in 2011 UNHCR activated a network of volunteers to run a comprehensive analysis of satellite imagery to help identify where IDPs were located, in order to inform planning (Meier, 2012).

---

<sup>65</sup> See: [www.blog.ushahidi.com](http://www.blog.ushahidi.com).

### SMS and cell-phone technologies

SMS and cell-phone technologies have been used in the promotion of community and beneficiary feedback and accountability, and in order to send cash directly to beneficiaries. Much of the technology has been used to improve accountability to, and communication with, aid recipients (Taylor et al., 2012). Initiatives such as the Communicating with Disaster affected Communities (CDAC) and its members, including Internews, Frontline SMS, and BBC Media Action, have increased engagement with the views of affected populations, as well providing information as a vital form of aid in emergencies. There is, however, less evidence in the literature to indicate that this new resource of ground-level information is being used strategically to improve humanitarian interventions (ibid.).

Several agencies increasingly use SMS as a mechanism for beneficiary feedback and upward accountability (particularly in the Horn of Africa response in 2011), and some have published findings regarding its effectiveness.<sup>66</sup> While generally positive, the findings also note the shift to SMS technology is not always practical, in view of the literacy levels of beneficiaries. The Danish Refugee Council found:

Women are in charge of the everyday management of the tanks and most of them are illiterate. They are used to getting staff to sit down with them to collect their feedback and therefore were keen to talk more than write an SMS with the detailed feedback we are asking.<sup>67</sup>

As an alternate strategy, Oxfam contacted 10 to 15 per cent of its beneficiaries by cell phone to increase accountability and also provided a 'beneficiary hotline' for calling or texting to provide feedback directly to Oxfam staff. The Oxfam evaluation noted that most calls received were from women, 'to request information about the programme, to raise additional need and to provide feedback on programme activities' (Featherstone, 2012, p.13). However, the monitoring report also found that that in the two programme areas, only 43 per cent and 61 per cent of beneficiaries interviewed were aware of the mechanism.

Additionally, some agencies have increased transparency through real-time social media and information-sharing on Twitter, Facebook and its corresponding project websites and blogs.<sup>68</sup>

SMS text and mobile devices have also been used for crowd sourcing, research and assessment. For example, in 2011, Internews undertook an information assessment in Dadaab camps, through Open Data Kit (ODK), using mobile phones, software and traditional means (Taylor et al., 2012). The perceived success of such initiatives has led to increased investment in their use, such as the Humanitarian

---

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, DRC's Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF), and Oxfam GB incorporated SMS text and cell-phone technologies to reach beneficiaries in remote locations in their project implementation (Featherstone, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Danish Refugee Council: Piloting Accountability Systems for Humanitarian Aid in Somalia Project, [www.humanitarianinnovation.org/projects/large-grants/drc-somalia](http://www.humanitarianinnovation.org/projects/large-grants/drc-somalia)

<sup>68</sup> See for example, [www.somcdrd.org/hif/](http://www.somcdrd.org/hif/) and [www.drc.dk/news/news/artikel/innovative-use-of-modern-technologies-in-somalia-relief-efforts/](http://www.drc.dk/news/news/artikel/innovative-use-of-modern-technologies-in-somalia-relief-efforts/)

Innovation Fund's recent announcement of a joint project between Internews, Ushahidi, the Association of Journalists for Human Rights in Bangui and UNOCHA–RCA.<sup>69</sup> According to HIF, the project represents:

An innovative system that will foster a bounded network of trusted local media organisations to gather real-time first-hand information from affected populations to create a two-way communication flow with humanitarians that improves emergency response, community participation & community resilience. (HIF, 2012)

However, as CDAC has pointed out, traditional means like radios and call centres are more appropriate in some contexts. In Pakistan, the aid community used SMS in the 2008/2009 displacement crisis to good effect, but this proved 'less appropriate during the flood response in the southern provinces, since people there were less literate, the local script didn't translate on the phone and some castes and tribes had proscriptions against the use of this technology. Gender issues were also cited: women don't have equal access to phones' (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 73).

Researchers are also beginning to use SMS for field-based surveys of aid recipients. The State of the Humanitarian System report used this technology for the first time in a survey of aid recipients in Haiti, Pakistan and eastern DRC, through partnership with NGOs and Mobile Accord (Taylor et al., 2012).

## 5.2 Conclusions

Apart from cash transfers, for which there are well-documented lessons, the application of much of the technology in insecure environments is still in its infancy, and it will be a few more years before the literature begins to reflect on what works and what does not. This is less a gap in the literature itself than a reflection of the pace of innovation and change. There is a real appetite for lesson-learning in this sector, so we may expect ongoing, shared assessments and critiques of its role. The present report has no specific recommendations for future research on this point.

---

<sup>69</sup> Titled, The Integrating Local Media and ICTs into Humanitarian Response in CAR. See [www.humanitarianinnovation.org/projects/large-grants/internews](http://www.humanitarianinnovation.org/projects/large-grants/internews)

## 6 Conclusions and gaps in the evidence

In the past five years, aid agencies have made significant changes in their approaches to operating amid insecurity, shifting more and more to remote management as security deteriorates. There is a growing base of evidence to indicate that some strategies are more effective than others in securing access: for instance adopting an approach of risk management as opposed to avoidance, actively negotiating access and acceptance, and using less heavy-handed, 'smart' protection measures when appropriate. And yet aid actors still struggle to manage insecurity, and consistently under-prepare for remote management situations.

Innovations in technology (especially mobile communications) are starting to improve agencies' abilities to manage, monitor and even sometimes evaluate projects remotely. But considerable concerns remain as regards accountability, particularly from the donors' point of view. While there is a growing literature on the use of cash transfers in insecure environments (also as a multi-sector tool), much less analysis is available on the effectiveness of different sectors of programming, as well as on reaching the needs of the most vulnerable.

Operating in insecure contexts is made more difficult by the fact that there are different and sometimes conflicting sets of principles underpinning the work of aid agencies. Despite a significant literature on the importance of humanitarian principles and of threats to 'humanitarian space', there has been scant analysis of how principles are implemented in practice, and little evidence on the impact on humanitarian access. More fundamentally, we still have only a limited picture of the extent to which aid actors are able to reach populations in need (coverage) at country level. Linked to this is inadequate attention at the operational level to the security and capacity needs of national staff, and an incomplete overview of the scope and role of local NGOs. In some contexts where Western actors face security risks, non-Western actors are increasingly providing aid, but there as yet has been little analysis of their overall effectiveness.

Maintaining secure operational access for aid providers is an evolving area of policy and practice. While the literature review indicates a growing evidence base and body of research, there remain significant gaps in our understanding. The following eight areas are suggested as priorities for further research. Addressing these research gaps would have utility for aid agencies, host and donor governments, and would strengthen the dialogue between aid agencies and recipients on supporting their needs in insecure environments. In view of the methodological challenges in undertaking research of this nature, consideration should be given to incorporating flexibility in the duration and scope of the research.

## **Approaches to secure access**

1. *Quantitative analyses and mapping of access trends, including capturing country-level data on the aid presence (coverage)*

The ability of aid groups to reach affected populations can be severely impacted by access constraints caused by insecurity. There is a significant gap in our knowledge as to the actual level of organisational aid presence in insecure environments and how this changes in response to changing conditions and to government- or agency-imposed constraints. For example, there is currently no field-level organisational mapping that covers the entirety of aid organisations' operations/programmes. In most insecure settings, such information is unavailable or partial.

2. *Detailed, technical guidance on good practice in remote management*

While there is increasing knowledge and interest in sharing lessons on remote management, the literature remains patchy, and operational partners have underscored the need for guidance on good practice. Such guidance would be particularly helpful for understanding targeting and monitoring, as well as addressing the limited published literature on delivering assistance through key sectors like WASH and protection. This latter gap is also partly a reflection of limited inter-agency thematic or sector evaluations which are needed to inform good programming.

3. *Analyses of the effectiveness of differing sectoral interventions, and whether and how certain sectors can operate 'at scale' in remote management*

The literature examining the comparative risks and appropriateness of programming in different sectors in remotely-managed projects in highly insecure contexts, including what works 'at scale', is scant. There is also limited sharing of knowledge on targeting.

4. *Detailed analyses of the role of local partnerships in insecure environments*

Despite the evidence of increased reliance on local partnerships in many operations in insecure environments, there has been little research on the role of local organisations – including basic information like the size of the local aid presence in a given country, how local partners are selected, how they are able to upscale, how they manage their risk environment, and if and how practices differ across regions.

## **Principles and partnership**

5. *Analyses of the operational implications of the principles that guide the approaches of different aid actors in insecure environments*

Despite a considerable range of material on the role of humanitarian principles and 'humanitarian space', there is a limited understanding of how principles concretely guide the approaches of different

aid actors in conflict contexts. This includes the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence; donor commitments to the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and Paris Principles; as well as the principles informing the growing interest in resilience programming. It is important to understand how these various principles are applied, whether they are complementary or contradictory, and to what extent the simultaneous application of various sets of principles makes programming more challenging. This point has been shown by the present literature review, and also draws on initial research undertaken on principles for DFID in 2012 (Harmer et al., 2012).

*6. Examination of the principles and practices of non-Western actors in insecure environments*

Studies on non-DAC donorship and on non-Western assistance actors have not examined field-level practice in highly insecure contexts, and much of what exists in policy and practice is anecdotal. The literature review has revealed few materials on, for example, the practices of Islamic charitable organisations in dealing with insecurity, despite their growing role in recent conflicts. This gap in information-sharing has implications for policy, principle and programmatic approaches. Some non-traditional actors may approach negotiating for access and acceptance in different ways, and undertake effective programming, but there is little detailed evidence to support this.

**Governance, accountability and value for money**

*7. Analyses of donor policy and accountability practices for remote-managed assistance in insecure environments*

Despite experience of support to remote management activities dating back nearly a decade, there has been no comprehensive mapping of donor policy in this area. The literature points to a single donor policy on remote management. This obstructs decision-making and indicates considerable inconsistency in approach between countries and possibly between different partners. It also undermines aid agency preparedness. It could be useful to have analyses of how donors have supported partners in differing high-risk environments, including examining support to various types of interventions, types of partners, and the nature of accountability requirements. This could assist in developing a more consistent policy approach among donors, and provide a more detailed framework for partners as to how support will be provided, and the nature of donor accountability requirements. It would also serve to promote greater preparedness on the part of implementing agencies.

*8. Beneficiary perceptions of how their most urgent needs are being met, or not, in insecure environments, and the value of beneficiary accountability mechanisms.*

Increased means to engage with beneficiaries in insecure environments, particularly through systematic surveying, offer the potential for deeper understanding of the perspectives and needs of aid recipients and surrounding communities. While some organisations have undertaken this type of monitoring and



surveys, independent research on populations receiving assistance in highly insecure contexts remains scant. Questions that deserve particular attention include how people are affected by insecurity, how this affects the aid presence and effectiveness of aid actors (i.e. what determines secure access), the effectiveness of the types of aid they receive, and whether assistance is received by both women and men as well as by sometimes marginalised groups like the elderly and disabled.

Taken together, the above areas suggested for further research point to a general weakness in the humanitarian literature as regards empirical evidence and quantitative analysis. This is due to a combination of the difficulties of collecting hard data in unstable and underdeveloped settings, and a general tendency in humanitarian research toward more qualitative and 'soft' social science approaches. Decision-making would benefit from more specific, quantifiable information and rigorous analysis for all areas of humanitarian action; and if we accept the adage that 'you cannot manage what you cannot measure', it would seem that security is a highly appropriate area for emphasis.

## Annex 1: References

- ACF International.** (2012). *Learning Review 2011*. May.
- Agence France-Presse.** (2012). Aid workers kidnapped in Niger freed, Report, November.
- Africa Review.** (2012). 'Turkish intervention in Somalia is selfish', says Al-Shabaab. February.
- Aid Worker Security Database.** (2011). *Aid Worker Security Report, Spotlight on security for national aid workers: Issues and perspectives*. Humanitarian Outcomes. Available at:<http://www.aidworkersecurity.org>
- Aid Worker Security Database.** (2012). *Inhospitable conditions: How host states help make or break humanitarian operational security*. Humanitarian Outcomes. Available at: <http://www.aidworkersecurity.org>
- Ali, D. & Gelsdorf, K.** (2012). *Risk-averse to risk-willing: Learning from the 2011 Somalia cash response*. Global Food Security. July. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2012.07.008>.
- Ashdown, P.** (2011). *Humanitarian Emergency Response Review*, March. London: DFID.
- Audet, F.** (2011). What future role for local organizations? A reflection on the need for humanitarian capacity-building. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 93(884) pp. 1151–114.
- Barry, N., Barham, J., Le Gouais, A. & Ward, R.** (2012). *Review of existing practices to ensure participation of disaster-affected communities in humanitarian aid operations*. Final Report, May. Brussels: ECHO.
- Bennett, C. & Schulte-Hillen, C.** (2010.) *Evaluation of Concern Worldwide Niger Food Security and Nutrition Emergency Intervention*. Humanitarian Outcomes.
- Bernard, V.** (2011). Editorial: the future of humanitarian action. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 93 (884) 2011. pp. 891–897
- Binder, A. & Meier, C.** (2011). Opportunity knocks: why non-Western donors enter humanitarianism and how to make the best of it. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 93 (884) 2011. pp. 1135–1149
- Bonard, P., Solé, R., Hidalgo S. & Posada, S.** (2010). *Evaluation of DG ECHO's Actions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, Final Report, October. Madrid: DARA.
- Bradbury, M., Leader, N. & Mackintosh, K.** (2000). *The Agreement on Ground Rules in South Sudan*, HPG Report 4. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

**Brahimi, L.** (2008). *Towards a culture of security and accountability*. Report of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of UN Personnel and Premises Worldwide. June.

**Burde, D. & Linden, L.** (2010). *Going to school in Ghor: Community-based schools and the key to eliminating gender disparities in Afghanistan*. Unpublished paper.

**CARE International.** (2012). *Guidance for designing, monitoring and evaluating peacebuilding projects: using theories of change*. June.

**Carl, A. & Haspeslagh, S.** (2010). 'Why criminalise dialogue with terrorists?' July. Available at: [www.opendemocracy.net/print/55259](http://www.opendemocracy.net/print/55259). July.

**Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.** (2003). *Politics and humanitarianism: Coherence in crisis?* HDC Report, February, Geneva.

**Christian Aid.** (2010). *Saving Lives Together: a review of the security collaboration between the United Nations and humanitarian actors in the field*, Christian Aid. London. June. Available at: <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/savinglivestogether.pdf>

**Clarke, D.** (2010). *Independent evaluation of UNICEF Education programme: Improving access to quality basic education in Myanmar (2006-2010)*, Final Report. December.

**Collinson, S., S. Elhawary and R. Muggah** (2010) 'States of fragility: Stabilisation and its implications for humanitarian action'. *Disasters*, 34, no. 3.

**Collinson, S. and S. Elhawary.** (2012). *Humanitarian space: a review of trends and issues*. HPG Report 32, April 2012

**Colombo Page News Desk** (2012). Sri Lanka: 'Sri Lanka takes objection to leaking UN internal review report prior to release.' November.

**Cosgrave, J., Polastro, R. & Zafar, F.** (2010). *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of The Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis*, Final Report, Commissioned by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. DARA, August.

**Coupland, R., Wille, C., Taback, N. & Regard, S.** (2011). *A sixteen-country study: Health care in danger*, ICRC, July.

**Currion, P.** (2010) *Strength in numbers: A review of NGO coordination in the field. Case study: South Sudan 1996 – 2010*. ICVA. Available at: <http://southsudannngoforum.org>

**Danish Refugee Centre.** (2012). 'Innovative use of modern technologies in Somalia relief efforts', <http://www.drc.dk/news/news/artikel/innovative-use-of-modern-technologies-in-somalia-relief-efforts>.

- Darcy, J., Bonard, P. & Dini, S. (2012).** *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of The Humanitarian Response to the Horn of Africa: Somalia 2011–2012*, Commissioned by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. VALID, May.
- Darcy, J. & Charles-Antoinne Hoffman. (2003).** *According to Need: Needs assessment and decision-making in the humanitarian sector*, HPG Report. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- De Cordier, B. (2009).** Faith-based aid, globalisation and the humanitarian frontline: an analysis of Western-based Muslim aid organisations. *Disasters*, 33 (4), 608–628, October 2009.
- DFID (2011)** *DFID's approach to value for money*. London: DFID.
- Donini, A. (2006).** *Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles Power and Perceptions – Afghanistan Case Study*, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, Somerville, MA.
- Duffield, M. (2012).** Challenging environments: Danger, resilience and the aid industry, *Security Dialogue* 43: 475. <http://sdi.sagepub.com/content/43/5/475>
- 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 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17502971003700993>
- Duffield, M. & Collinson, S. (2012).** *Meeting notes: Achieving Policy Coherence in Challenging Environments: Risk Management and Aid Culture in Sudan and Afghanistan*. International Reference Group Meeting – ODI, 4 March 2011.
- ECHO. (2011).** *Operational Recommendations for Funding Proposals in Somalia in 2012*. Brussels: ECHO.
- ECHO. (2012).** *Operational Recommendations for Funding Proposals in South Sudan in 2013*. Brussels: ECHO.
- Egeland, J., Harmer, A. & Stoddard, A. (2011).** *To stay and deliver: Good practice for humanitarians in complex security environments*. OCHA Policy and Studies Series. New York.
- Equiza, F. & Kabelo, A. (2012).** *Oxfam GB project effectiveness review management response, Somalia*. September.
- Fast, L., Rowley, E., O'Neill, M. & Freeman, F. (2011b).** *The promise of acceptance: Insights into acceptance as a security management approach from field research in Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda*. Save the Children International Federation.
- Featherstone, A. (2012).** *Evaluation of Somalia drought response 2011/12*, Oxfam GB Programme Effectiveness Review. October.
- Ferris, E. (2012).** *Urban disasters, conflict and violence: implications for humanitarian work*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

- Freeman, F., O'Neill, M., Aura, P., Kingston, M., Mutuku, J., Omwanga, C. and Tharao, M. (2011).** *Kenya country report: Key findings from field research on acceptance in Kenya*, Save the Children International Federation.
- Finucane, C. (2011).** Humanitarian safety and security: Obligations and responsibilities towards local implementing partners. Available at: <http://www.eisf.eu/resources/item/?d=4403>
- Glad, M. (2009).** *Knowledge on fire: Attacks on education in Afghanistan: Risks and measures for successful mitigation*. Ottawa: Care Canada/World Bank/Afghanistan Ministry of Education.
- Glad (2012).** *A Partnership at risk? The UN-NGO relationship in light of UN integration*. Oslo: Norwegian Refugee Council.
- Grubbels, P. (2011).** *Escaping the hunger cycle: Pathways to resilience in the Sahel*, Report published by the Sahel Working Group. September.
- Grünewald, F. (2012).** *Sahel: Responses which are having trouble finding their bearings*, Groupe URD, Humanitarian Aid on the move, Review No. 10. October.
- Grünewald, F. & Collins, O. (2010).** *The three pillars of humanitarian space in Chad*, Groupe URD, Humanitarian Aid on the move, Review No. 6. September.
- Hammond, L. & Vaughan-Lee, H. (2012).** *Humanitarian space in Somalia: a scarce commodity*, Humanitarian Working Paper. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- Hansen, G. (2004).** *Remote management of humanitarian programmes in Iraq*, Workshops report. December.
- Hansen, G. (2008).** *Adapting to insecurity in Iraq. Focus on operationality*. Briefing Paper 1. Series of Briefing Papers on NGOs' and others' humanitarian operational modalities in Iraq. 1-6. NCCI. Retrieved from <http://www.eisf.eu/resources/item.asp?d=1577>
- Harmer, A, Stoddard, A. & Cotterrell, L. (2004).** *From Stockholm to Ottawa: a review of progress on the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative*. HPG Briefing Paper No 18. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- Harmer, A, Stoddard, A., Haver, K. & Schreter, L. (2012).** *Identifying common principles in aid for building resilience: A pilot study for DFID*. Humanitarian Outcomes.
- Harmer, A., Harvey, P. & Odhiambo, M. (2012).** *Food assistance integrity study: Analysis of the 2011 drought response in Kenya*. Transparency International – Kenya
- Harmer, A., Stoddard, A. & DiDomenico, V. (2011).** Aiding education in conflict: The role of international education providers operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. *Prospects. Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* 41, pp. 205–222.

**Harvey, P.** (2009). *Towards good humanitarian government: The role of the affected state in disaster response*. HPG Report 29. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

**Harvey, P. & Harmer, A.** (2011). *International dialogue on strengthening partnerships in disaster response: Bridging national and international support*. Background paper 1: Building Trust. *Challenges for national authorities and international aid agencies in working together in times of disaster*. Humanitarian Outcomes. September.

**HelpAge.** (2012). *Ending neglect of older people in the response to humanitarian emergencies*. HelpAge International.

**Hermon-Duc, S.** (2012). *MPESA project analysis: Exploring the use of cash transfers using cell phones in pastoral areas*. May.

**Hidalgo, S. & Pascale-Théodate, M.** (2011). IASC Inter-agency real-time evaluation of the humanitarian response to the earthquake in Haiti, 20 months after. January. Available at: <http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/policy/thematic-areas/evaluations-of-humanitarian-response/reports>

**Hobbs, C., Bogart, B. & Gordan, M.** (2012). When business is not as usual: Decision-making and the humanitarian response to the famine in South Central Somalia, *Global Food Security*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2012.07.005>

**House, S.** (2012). *Evaluation of Pakistan Drought Response 2011/12*, Oxfam GB Programme Effectiveness Review. October.

**Humanitarian Innovation Project.** (2012). Danish Refugee Council: Piloting Accountability Systems for Humanitarian Aid in Somalia Project. <http://www.humanitarianinnovation.org/projects/large-grants/drc-somalia>

**IASC.** (2009). *Somalia: Ground Rules, Advisory Note on Practical Considerations for Negotiations*. March.

**IASC.** (2010). *Saving Lives Together Task Force Report on the Revision of Saving Lives Together*, IASC Steering Group on Security. March.

**ICAI.** (2011). *ICAI's Approach to Effectiveness and Value for Money*. Independent Commission for Aid Impact. September. London.

**ICAI.** (2012). *DFID's humanitarian emergency response in the Horn of Africa*, Independent Commission for Aid Impact. September. London.

**ICG** (2012). *Policy briefing: Assessing Turkey's role in Somalia*, International Crisis Group, Africa Briefing No. 92, October.

**IFRC.** (2008). *Introduction to the guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance*, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

**IFRC.** (2011). *Geneva: World disasters report 2011, focus on hunger and malnutrition*. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

**InterAction.** (2011). Security collaboration, best practices guide: *Transitioning from a culture of 'need to know', to one of 'need to share'*. November.

**IRIN.** (2012a). Analysis: Aid access challenges for Indonesia's Papua region, September.  
<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/96324/Analysis-Aid-access-challenges-for-Indonesia-s-Papua-region>

**IRIN.** (2012b). Analysis: Aid to Syria – winning friends and influence. November.

**IRIN.** (2012c). DRC: Tough bargaining with armed groups. October.

**IRIN.** (2012d). Philippines: Clan violence adds to displacement in Mindanao. August.

**IRIN.** (2012e). Analysis: A faith-based aid revolution in the Muslim world? June.

**IRIN.** (2012f). Sahel: What went right in the crisis response? October.

**IRIN.** (2012g). Somalia: Turkey steps in to troubled Somalia. June.

**IRIN.** (2013). Analysis: Urban violence – new territory for aid workers. January.

**Jackson** and Giustozzi (2012) *Talking to the other side: humanitarian engagement with the Taliban in Afghanistan*. Humanitarian Policy Group Working paper, December. London: ODI.

**Jaspars, S. & O'Callaghan, S.** (2010). *Challenging choices: Protection and livelihoods in conflict*. Humanitarian Policy Group Briefing Paper, ODI.

**Johnson, C.** (2010). *HelpAge international evaluation of phase 1 of DEC funded response to North Kivu Crisis*. January.

**Karim, F.** (2006). *Providing aid in insecure environments: trends in policy and operations: Afghanistan Background Paper*. Humanitarian Policy Group. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and New York: Center on International Cooperation, New York University.

**Karunakara, U, & Stevenson, F.** (2012) *Ending neglect of older people in the response to humanitarian emergencies*. PLoS Med 9(12).

**Kawasaki A., Berman, M. & Guan, W.** (2012). The growing role of web-based geospatial technology in disaster response and support. *Disasters*. London.



- Keen, D.** (2012). *Aid and development in the context of conflict: Some problems and pitfalls*. Food Insecurity in protracted Crisis, High Level Forum. Rome, 13–14 September.
- Kent, R. & Burke, J.** (2011). *Commercial and humanitarian engagement in crisis contexts: Current trends, future drivers*, Humanitarian Futures Programme, King's College, London. June.
- Keogh, S. & Ruijters, Y.** (2012). *Dangerous liaisons?: A historical review of UNHCR's engagement with non-state armed actors*. UNHCR, December.
- Laurence, C. & Poole, L.** (2005). *Service delivery in difficult environments: Transferable approaches from the humanitarian community*. London: Merlin.
- Lautze, S., Bell, W., Alinovi, L. & Russo, L.** (2012). Early warning, late response (again): The 2011 famine in Somalia. *Global Food Security*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2012.07.006>
- Leader, N.** (2000). *The politics of principle: the principles of humanitarian action in practice*. Humanitarian Policy Group. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- Macdonald, I. & Valenza, A.** (2012). *Tools for the job: Supporting principled humanitarian action*. Commissioned by Norwegian Refugee Council and Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute (ODI). October.
- McGoldrick, C.** (2011). The future of humanitarian action: an ICRC perspective. *International Review of the Red Cross* 93 (884) December, pp. 965–991..
- Martínez-Piqueras, A. & Ruiz-Bascarán, M.** (2012). *ACF International's response to the Horn of Africa crisis 2011*, External evaluation commissioned by ACF International, May.
- Mazurana, D., Benelli, P., Gupta, H. & Walker, P.** (2011). *Sex and age matter: Improving humanitarian response in emergencies*. Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, Somerville, MA, August 2011
- Meier, P.** (2011). New information technologies and their impact on the humanitarian sector. *International Review of the Red Cross*. 93 (884), December , pp. 1239–1263.
- Mendoza, M. & Taylor, V.** (2010). *Challenges to human security in complex situations: The case of conflict in the Southern Philippines*, Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network.
- Metcalf, V., Giffen, A., & Elhawary, S.** (2011). *UN integration and Humanitarian Space: An Independent Study Commissioned by the UN Integration Steering Group*. Washington, DC: Stimson Center
- Minear, A., Fast, L., Hansen, G., Harris, S., Minear, L., Mowjee, T., & Wilder, A.** (2008). *The State of the Humanitarian Enterprise: Humanitarian agenda 2015 Final report*. Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, Somerville, MA



- Mullany, L., Teela, K., Lee, C., Palae-Paw, E., Masenior, N., Maung, C., Beyrer, C. & Lee, T. (2009).** Community-based delivery of maternal care in conflict-affected areas of eastern Burma: Perspectives from lay maternal health workers, *Social Science & Medicine*, 68 (7), pp. 1332–1340.
- Murtaza, N., Mohammed, N., Harrison, S., Akhtar, S., Bhaati, S. & Ferretti, S. (2011).** *Pakistan floods 2010: The DEC real-time evaluation report*. ThinkAhead. March.
- NAO. (2008).** *DFID: Operating in insecure environments*. National Audit Office, Comptroller and Auditor General, London October.
- NGO Security. (2011).** *Interview: Christine Persaud on Gender and NGO Security*. NGOSecurity.blogspot.com. November.
- Norman, B. (2012).** *Monitoring and accountability practices for remotely managed projects implemented in volatile operating environments*, Tearfund. June.
- OCHA. (2012).** *Afghanistan: Common Humanitarian Action Plan 2013*. Geneva.
- ODI. (2009).** *Humanitarian action and the search for stability in Pakistan, A clash of principles?* HPG Policy Brief 36. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- ODI. (2010)** *Good Practice Review: Operational security management in violent environments*, Humanitarian Practice Network. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- OFAC U.S.A. (2010).** *Somalia Sanctions Regulations, Final Rule, U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, Federal Register/Vol. 75, No. 86/Wednesday, May 5, 2010/Rules and Regulations*. May.
- Oxfam International and Merlin (2009).** *Remote programming modalities in Somalia: Discussion Paper*. Drafted by Oxfam International and Merlin for NGO Consortium, EISF. January
- Oxfam UK. (2011).** *Real time evaluation Somalia drought response*. September.
- Pantuliano, S, Mackintosh, K. Elhawary, S. & Metcalfe, V. (2011).** *Counter-terrorism and humanitarian action*, HPG Policy Brief 43. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- Pedersen, M.B. (2009).** *Setting the scene: Lessons from twenty years of foreign aid*. Paper prepared for The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) 'Burma/Myanmar: Views from the Ground and the International Community'. May.
- Persaud, C. (2012).** *Gender and security: Guidelines for mainstreaming gender in security risk management*, EISF Briefing Paper. August.

**RCUSA.** (2011). *Living on the edge: Colombian refugees in Panama and Ecuador*, Refugee Council USA Report. 2011.

**Reliefweb.** (2012). ShelterBox returns to help families in Niger. September.

**Reliefweb.** (2012). ShelterBox in Sahel: Niger and Mali. September.

**Reliefweb.** (2012). Télécoms Sans Frontières in the Sahel region: 6 months of actions on the Mali borders. October.

**Roweley, E., Arbogat, J., Byaruhanga, J., Etik, D., Lochap, R., Oling Olang, G., Okiror, S., Sabiiti, H. & Walusaga, E.** (2011). *Uganda country report: Key findings from field research in Uganda*, Save the Children International Federation, Inc.

**Sandison, P.** (2012). *Evaluation of Ethiopia drought response 2011/12*. Oxfam GB Programme Effectiveness Review, March.

**Save the Children and Oxfam.** (2012). *A dangerous delay: The cost of late response to early warnings in the 2011) drought in the Horn of Africa*. Joint Agency Briefing Paper.

**Sokpoh, B.G.** (2012). *Sahel: Adapting a rehabilitation programme to a crisis situation in Burkina Faso*. Groupe URD, Humanitarian Aid on the move. Review No. 10. October.

**Souness, C.** (2011). *Monitoring and beneficiary accountability in remote management locations: An assessment of Tearfund's monitoring and accountability to beneficiaries in Kandahar Afghanistan*, Tearfund Afghanistan. October.

**Steets, J., Reichhold, U. & Sagmeister, E.** (2012). *Evaluation and review of humanitarian access strategies in DG ECHO funded interventions*. GPPI. June.

**Stoddard, A., Harmer, A. & DiDomenico, V.** (2008). *The use of private security providers and services in humanitarian operations*. HPG Report. London: Overseas Development Institute.

**Stoddard, A., Harmer, A., & DiDomenico, V.** (2009). *Providing aid in insecure environments, 2009 update: Trends in violence against aid workers and the operational response*. HPG Report. London: Overseas Development Institute.

**Stoddard, A., Harmer, A., & Haver, K.** (2006). *Providing aid in insecure environments: Trends in policy and operations*. HPG Report. London: Overseas Development Institute.

**Stoddard, A. & Harmer, A.** (2010). *Supporting security for humanitarian action: A review of critical issues for the humanitarian community*. Humanitarian Outcomes.

**Stoddard, A., Harmer, A. & Renouf, J.** (2010). *Once removed: Lessons and challenges in remote management of humanitarian operations for insecure areas*. Humanitarian Outcomes. February.

**Taylor, G., Stoddard, A., Harmer, A. Haver, K. & Harvey, P. (2012).** *ALNAP: State of the humanitarian system*. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI). July.

**Tennant, V., Doyle, B. & Mazou, R. (2010).** *Safeguarding humanitarian space: a review of key challenges for UNHCR*. February. Geneva.

**Tsitrinbaum, Y. (2012).** *Humanitarian partnerships under fire: A case study of Somalia*, Dissertation for Master of Advanced Studies in Humanitarian Action, Geneva Centre for Education and Research, Graduate Institute of International and Developmental Studies, University of Geneva. June.

**Turnbull, M. (2012).** *Evaluation of Kenya drought response 2011/12*, Oxfam GB Programme Effectiveness Review. October.

**UN Report of the Secretary General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 22 May 2012,** Annex: *Constraints on humanitarian access*. S/2012/376

**UN Office of the Secretary General. (2012).** *Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka*. November.

**UNDP. (2010).** *Assessment of development results Somalia: Evaluation of UNDP Contribution*. July.

**UNDSS. (2012).** *Global support for Saving Lives Together 2012*

**UNHCR. (2009).** Outcome and action from a UNHCR workshop on Preserving and Expanding Humanitarian Space, Montreux. 1–6 November 2009.

**UNHCR. (2012).** Despite insecurity, logistical obstacles, aid effort in Syria makes some progress News Stories, November. <http://www.unhcr.org/50927b5c9.html>

**UNICEF. (2011).** *Independent review of UNICEF's operational response to the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti*. September.

**UN Panel of Experts and Monitoring Group on Somalia (2010)** Report submitted in accordance with Resolution 1916 (2010). S/2011/433. <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/751/mongroup.shtml>

**Walker, P. & Stevenson, F. (2012).** *Proposal for presentation at the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of ALNAP: Evidence and Knowledge in Humanitarian Action*, The Feinstein International Center and HelpAge International 2012. Working title: *Disaggregating data for impartial humanitarian action*. November.

**Watt, J. & Poulsen, L. (2010).** *Evaluation of DG ECHO's assistance to vulnerable groups affected by the crisis in the Central African Republic during the period 2007 – 2010*. Brussels: ECHO.

**Wille, C. (2010).** 'The six Ws of security policy making', Humanitarian Exchange 47. June.

**Wille, C. & Fast L., (2010).** *Is terrorism an issue for humanitarian agencies?* Security Management Initiative, Perspectives 3. November.

**Wille, C. & Fast, L. (2010).** *Security facts for humanitarian agencies: How do security events affecting humanitarian agencies differ between rural and urban environments?* Insecurity Insights. Geneva. June. Available at: <http://www.insecurityinsight.org>

**Wille, C. & Fast, L. (2011).** *Security facts for humanitarian agencies: Aid, gender and security: The gendered nature of security events affecting aid workers and aid delivery.* Insecurity Insights. Geneva. November. Available at: <http://www.insecurityinsight.org>

**Zyck, S. (2012).** *Remote Control Project Management in Insecure Environments*, Civil Military Fusion Centre, Series on Afghanistan in Transition. September.

## Annex 2: Research Questions

The literature review aims to synthesise available information and publications according to five categories. Research for each category was guided by specific research questions.<sup>70</sup>

### Approaches to secure access

- How has the range of different strategies for secure access being used by aid organisations evolved over the past few years? Which approaches are now being prioritised and why?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches to the delivery of aid in insecure environments?
- Have any new good practices or operational innovations been identified, particularly in the area of remote management?
- Is there evidence of more planning and preparation for remote management approaches?
- What emphasis have aid organisations placed on gaining the acceptance of community members and recipients? How has this evolved in the past several years?
- How well have organisations adhered to accepted best practice in security management?

### Principles and collaboration between actors

- What role do the fundamental humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and humanity play in aid organisations' strategies for reaching affected populations in highly insecure environments?
- How has adherence to these principles amid insecurity evolved in the past few years?
- What is known about the challenges in delivering on different sets of principles relevant in some contexts (e.g. Paris commitments, fragile states principles, peacebuilding/statebuilding, Good Humanitarian Donorship, etc.)?
- What emphasis have aid organisations placed on gaining the acceptance of armed actors? How has this evolved in the past several years, including through guidance?
- What types of inter-agency collaboration and coordination occur in highly insecure environments?
- What role can the clusters play enabling programming; what is the evidence of clusters considering security risks and undertaking sector-based risk assessments?
- What role do donor governments – including in their different capacities as political and security actors – have in influencing the security of humanitarian aid organisations?

### Governance, aid effectiveness, accountability and value for money

---

<sup>70</sup> The report merged the section on 'Training, capacity building and national actors' into 'Principles and partnership' to enable comparison and consolidation of findings.

- Does the governance environment matter, particularly the role the host state plays in providing assistance and creating an enabling environment for external assistance?
- Has programming in highly insecure environments included means to ensure aid accountability (to aid recipients and communities)? What accountability / beneficiary feedback mechanisms are used and how effective are they?
- What types of monitoring and evaluation strategies are being used in insecure environment? How effective have they been? Is there any evidence of joint monitoring / evaluations?
- How do agencies and donors measure aid effectiveness and value for money in insecure environments?

#### **Training, capacity building and national actors**

- What innovations have taken place in training and capacity building in recent years? To what extent have international aid organisations prioritised this area?
- Have there been any notable recent changes in practices with regard to the security of national staff and national organisations?
- How far have leadership and management responsibilities been devolved in remote management programming, and what are the lessons?

#### **Technology and security**

- What new technologies are being used by aid organisations in operating in insecure environments?
- What have been some of the benefits and drawbacks of these technologies?
- What types of technologies have a potential for future development?