Security of Humanitarian Staff

"Designing Security: Methods for Improving Security Management Practices and Security Coordination Among Humanitarian Organizations"

Executive Summary

Humanitarian organizations operate in increasingly hostile environments. Although authoritative statistics are scarce, anecdotal evidence suggests that aid workers face life-threatening risks that are exacerbated by the growing number of humanitarian organizations operating in the field with varying mandates, without common professional security standards and with limited success with inter-agency security coordination. The ability of humanitarian organizations to fulfill their mandates in the future, will be depend in part on their individual success in improving internal security management practices and in finding ways to coordinate their efforts on building common security standards and security coordination across agencies. To meet this challenge, humanitarian organizations must implement improved security management methods and finds ways to coordinate their security operations and planning. Despite broad acceptance of the need to develop better security management and coordination, many humanitarian organizations remain ambivalent about coordinating their security activities and few have instituted robust measures for improving their own security management practices. Further, efforts to improve security management practices are hampered by a critical lack of basic empirical knowledge about the field security environment. In discussions about humanitarian staff safety and security, the least common denominator continues to be cumulative anecdotal evidence provided by the many security personnel working for humanitarian organizations in the field. This policy brief reviews the literature on humanitarian organization security management, highlighting common misconceptions about the field security environment, reviews the main structural and procedural issues impeding more effective security management, and illustrates why current initiatives to improve security management practices will remain only partial successes if they do not include a serious effort to replace anecdotal reporting on the field security environment with systematic collection and analysis of field security data. It argues that staff security requires a common professional approach based on sound security expertise adapted to meet the operational needs of humanitarian organizations. A model is developed for creating a network of security professionals responsible for guiding the design and implementation of common security standards and security information sharing protocol.

Bibliographical Resources

Key Terms and Concepts

Specialized Training on Security Management

http://www.atha.se/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=709&parentID=541&nodeID=3