



Aid Worker Security Report 2014

Unsafe Passage: Road attacks and their impact on humanitarian operations

Humanitarian Outcomes

Summary of key findings

- ▶ The year 2013 set a new record for violence against civilian aid operations, with 251 separate attacks affecting 460 aid workers.
- ▶ Of the **460 victims, 155 aid workers were killed, 171 were seriously wounded, and 134 were kidnapped**. Overall this represents a 66 per cent increase in the number of victims from 2012.
- ▶ The spike in attacks in 2013 was driven mainly by escalating conflicts and deterioration of governance in Syria and South Sudan. These two countries along with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sudan together accounted for three quarters of all attacks.
- ▶ The majority of aid worker victims were staffers of national NGOs and Red Cross/Crescent societies, often working to implement international aid in their own countries.
- ▶ Year after year, more aid workers are attacked while traveling on the road than in any other setting. In 2013, over half of all violent incidents occurred in the context of an ambush or roadside attack.
- ▶ The advances in humanitarian security management have failed to effectively address this most prevalent form of targeting. While some good practice exists in protective and deterrent approaches to road security, more collective thinking and action is required, particularly in developing 'kinetic acceptance' strategies for negotiating safe access in transit.

Introduction

This fifth edition of the *Aid Worker Security Report* provides the latest verified statistics on attacks against aid workers from the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD), and examines the particular security challenge of road travel. Although vehicular accidents are a common source of injury and death to aid workers, this report is not focused on road *safety*, but rather on issues of security (i.e., managing the threat of deliberate violence). Over a decade's worth of data show that ambushes and IED attacks on the road have consistently outnumbered other forms of violence (such as raids on compounds or attacks on projects). Yet despite this marked vulnerability, little new thinking or investment has been devoted to innovating new and better road risk mitigation measures.

Part 1 of this report provides a trend analysis on aid worker security incidents worldwide, followed by an in-depth look at violence affecting humanitarian personnel and materials in transit. Part 2 discusses how different organisations have been addressing the issue and ways in which mobility constraints have affected aid programming. Part 3 suggests potential areas for exploration intended to jumpstart the dialogue on road security and encourage new strategies to better reduce aid workers' vulnerability to these attacks.

Table 1: Major attacks on aid workers: Summary statistics, 2003-2013

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of incidents	63	63	74	107	123	165	155	130	152	170	251
Total aid worker victims	143	125	172	240	220	278	296	254	309	277	460
Total killed	87	56	53	87	88	128	109	72	86	70	155
Total injured	49	46	96	87	87	90	94	86	127	115	171
Total kidnapped*	7	23	23	66	45	60	93	96	96	92	134
International victims	27	24	15	26	34	51	75	46	29	49	59
National victims	116	101	157	214	186	227	221	208	280	228	401
UN staff	31	11	27	61	39	65	102	44	91	60	110
International NGO staff	69	69	112	110	132	157	129	148	141	87	130
LNGO and RCS staff	35	43	28	55	35	46	55	47	77	105	191
ICRC staff	8	1	3	10	4	5	9	10	5	3	14

Aid Worker Security Database, www.aidworkersecurity.org

*Victims killed in the course of a kidnapping are counted in the 'killed' totals.

The Aid Worker Security Report is a series of briefing papers on security for humanitarian operations, based on latest data from the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD). The AWSD is a project of Humanitarian Outcomes, supported by a grant from USAID. It is available online at www.aidworkersecurity.org and www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/awsd.

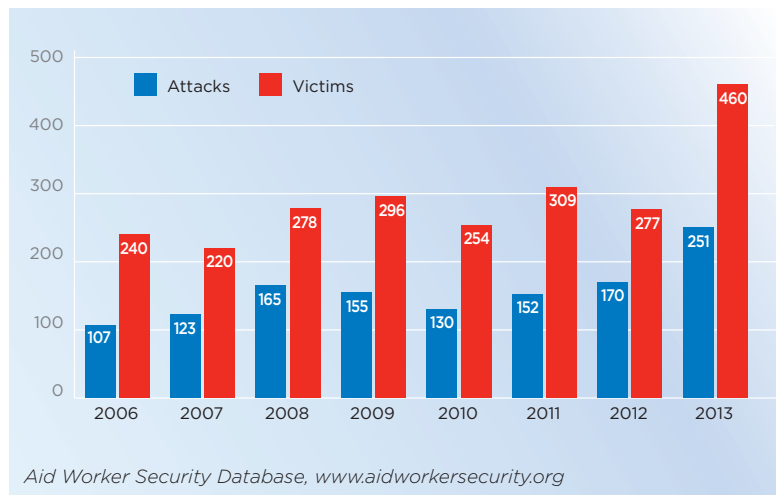
Aid worker attacks: Latest statistics

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1.1 Global trends

Worsening crises in Syria and South Sudan, combined with continued high levels of violence in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sudan, made 2013 another record-breaking year for violence against aid workers. Both the numbers of attacks on humanitarian aid operations and the victims they claimed reached their highest point since data has been systematically collected. Compared to the previous year, total separate attacks rose by 48 per cent, and total victims by 66 per cent, which also represents the largest single annual upswing seen in several years.

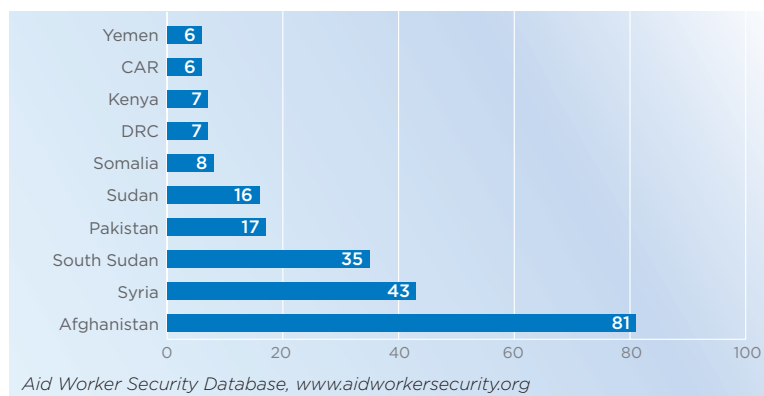
Figure 1: Yearly totals of separate attacks and aid worker victims, 2006-13



1.2 Country contexts of aid worker violence

Our prior analysis of this data has shown that aid worker attack rates are higher in countries experiencing armed insurgencies and/or failures of governance and rule of law. The dramatic spike in overall attack numbers can be largely explained by the state collapses of Syria and South Sudan. The active combat in urban settings within Syria has taken the worst toll on national Red Crescent workers who serve as the first responders and implementers of much of the international aid getting into the county. Even before armed conflict broke out across South Sudan at the end of 2013, worsening conditions of lawlessness had contributed to ambient

Figure 2: Countries with the most attacks on aid workers, 2013



violence as well as the targeting of aid workers and their assets. Attack numbers also rose in Sudan and the Central African Republic during 2013.

Violence against aid workers occurred in 30 countries, but three quarters of all attacks took place in just five settings: Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, Pakistan, and Sudan. Afghanistan, where a long-running Taliban insurgency shows no sign of weakening, remains the

setting with the most attacks affecting aid workers, and incident numbers also increased in that country by 45 per cent from the previous year. As reported in last year's *Aid Worker Security Report*, a large percentage of these incidents are short-duration kidnappings that are a manifestation of militants' acquisition and demonstration of control over territory.

For the first time in many years, Somalia is no longer in the top five countries with the highest numbers of attacks, but this should not be taken as a sign that this context is any safer for humanitarian operations. On the contrary, the reduction in incidents speaks more to a diminished aid presence, often with highly curtailed movement, in South-Central Somalia that is occurring precisely because of the untenable security conditions and impunity of the perpetrators of violence. This was underscored in 2013 by the wholesale withdrawal of Médecins Sans Frontières after 22 years of running medical programmes in the country.

Importantly, the rise in attacks does not reflect a growing worldwide trend of targeting aid workers, but is mostly limited to this small number of cases where conflict has broken out and/or governance and rule of law has broken down.

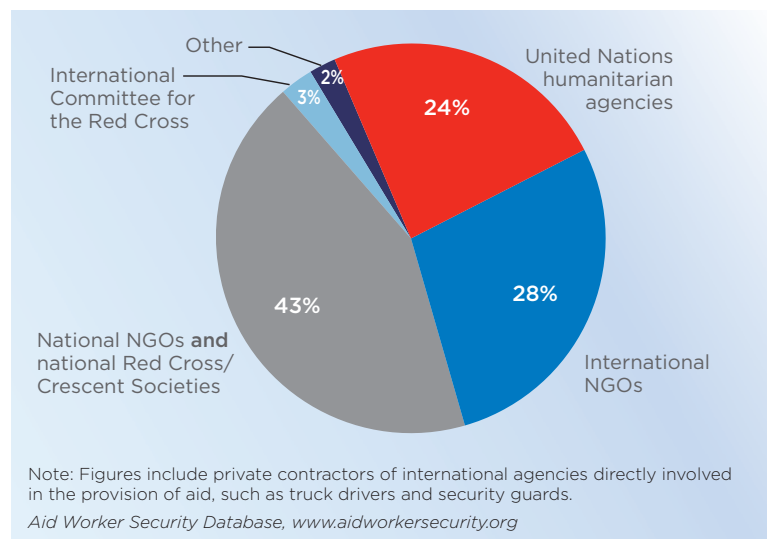
1.3 Victims

A total of 460 aid workers were victims of deliberate violence in 2013, an increase of 66 per cent over the previous year's total of 277. The 2013 victims include 155 who lost their lives, more than double the number killed in 2012. In addition, 171 were seriously wounded and 134 were kidnapped.

Most of these aid worker victims (401, or 87 per cent) were national staffers, i.e., people providing aid within their own countries, employed either by international or national organisations. The other 59 victims were internationals; a far smaller overall number, but at 13 per cent of the victims, it illustrates a greater rate of attack when compared to their numbers in the field (it is estimated that less than 8 per cent of humanitarian staff in the field are internationals).

Of the different organisational entities working to provide humanitarian assistance in crisis-affected countries, those that suffered the greatest number of attacks were local NGOs and national Red Cross/Crescent Societies. This is not surprising since these actors tend to be the front-line responders in the deep field; this is even more the case in highly insecure operational environments, where international agencies are often forced to limit their activities and movements of staff.

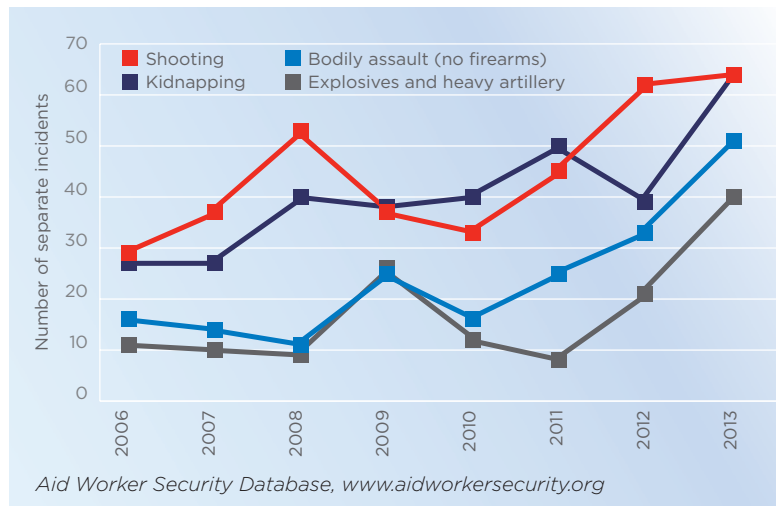
Figure 3: Aid worker victims in 2013, by agency type



1.4 Tactics

Shootings and kidnappings remain the most prevalent types of major violence seen in attacks, followed by assaults with non-firearm weapons or no weapons. Although it is still the least common form of attack affecting aid workers, the use of explosives showed the steepest rise of all tactics recorded, roughly doubling from 2012 to 2013. These included 18 incidents of aerial bombardment and grenade strikes, four suicide bombings with body-borne IEDs, eight roadside and eight vehicle-borne IEDs, and six landmine detonations.

Figure 4: Aid worker attacks in 2006-13, by violence type



In addition to the above forms of violence, in 2013 there were five 'complex attacks', which involve a combination of explosives and shooting. Typically, a car or truck driven by a suicide bomber detonates outside a facility, and then armed raiders penetrate the building or compound.

In 2013 there were two incidents of violent sexual assault and also 25 incident reports in which the means of attack could not be determined.

Security on the road

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The AWSD classifies reported incidents of major violence affecting aid workers not only by the direct means of harm to the victim (e.g., shooting, kidnapping) but also by context and location types. Attack context refers to the broader tactical or situational frame in which the violence takes place. For instance, an aid worker may be shot or kidnapped in the context of a raid or an outbreak of mob violence. The location might be the victim's home, a project site, or the aid organisation's office, for example.

The value of distinguishing these features of attacks is in identifying particular areas of exposure or vulnerability of aid operations and personnel. Since the AWSD first began tracking violent incidents, the clearest and most consistent message from the data is that

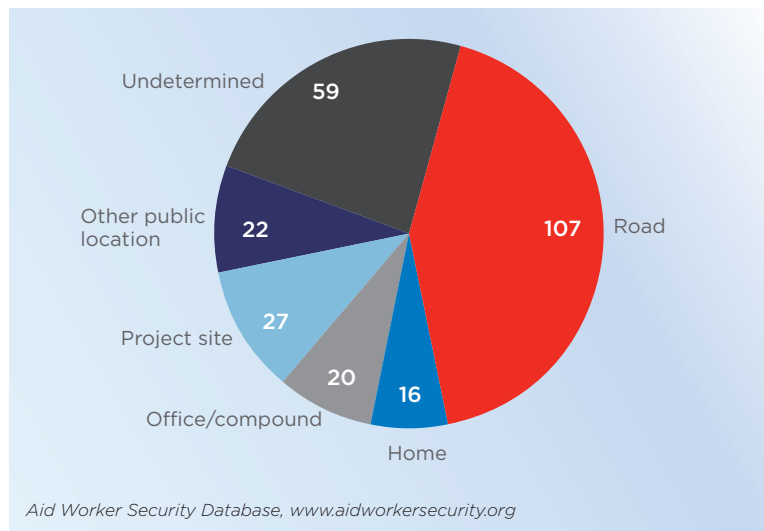
Table 2: Attack classifications recorded by the AWSD

Means of attack (violence type)	Attack context
<p>AB: Aerial bombardment / missile / mortar / RPG / lobbed grenade</p> <p>BA: Bodily assault / beating with no weapons or non-firearm weapons such as a knife or club</p> <p>B: Bombing (set explosives with a stationary target: building, facility, home)</p> <p>BBIED: Body-borne IED</p> <p>RIED: Roadside IED</p> <p>VBIED: Vehicle-borne IED (unknown whether by remote control or suicide)</p> <p>VBIED-RC: Vehicle-borne IED (remote control detonation)</p> <p>VBIED-S: Vehicle-borne IED (suicide detonation)</p> <p>K: Kidnapping (released or escaped)</p> <p>KK: Kidnap-killing</p>	<p>Am: Ambush / attack on road</p> <p>C: Crossfire from combat or police operations</p> <p>IA: Individual attack or assassination</p> <p>MV: Mob violence, rioting</p> <p>R: Raid (armed incursion by group on home, office, or project site)</p> <p>D: Detention (by official government forces or police, where abuse takes place)</p>
	Location
	<p>H: Home (private home, not compound)</p> <p>OC: Office / organisation's compound or project site</p> <p>PS: Project site (village, camp, distribution point, hospital, etc.)</p> <p>P: Other public location (street, market, restaurant, etc.)</p> <p>R: Road (in transit)</p> <p>C: Custody (official forces / police)</p>

most violence occurs in the context of an ambush or roadside attack, and that aid workers are most vulnerable to attack when they are traveling on the road.

Although this finding may come as no surprise, it is made more striking considering how little it seems to be reflected in organisations' operational security investments and priorities. Humanitarian personnel interviewed for this report consistently stated that very little discussion or new thinking has taken place in this area, and that generally their organisations devote more effort and resources to improving site security (i.e., at offices and project sites) than to road movement. This section takes a closer look at threats for aid workers on the road and explores this seeming disconnect in the otherwise advancing and professionalising sphere of humanitarian security risk management.

Figure 5: Location of attack, 2013



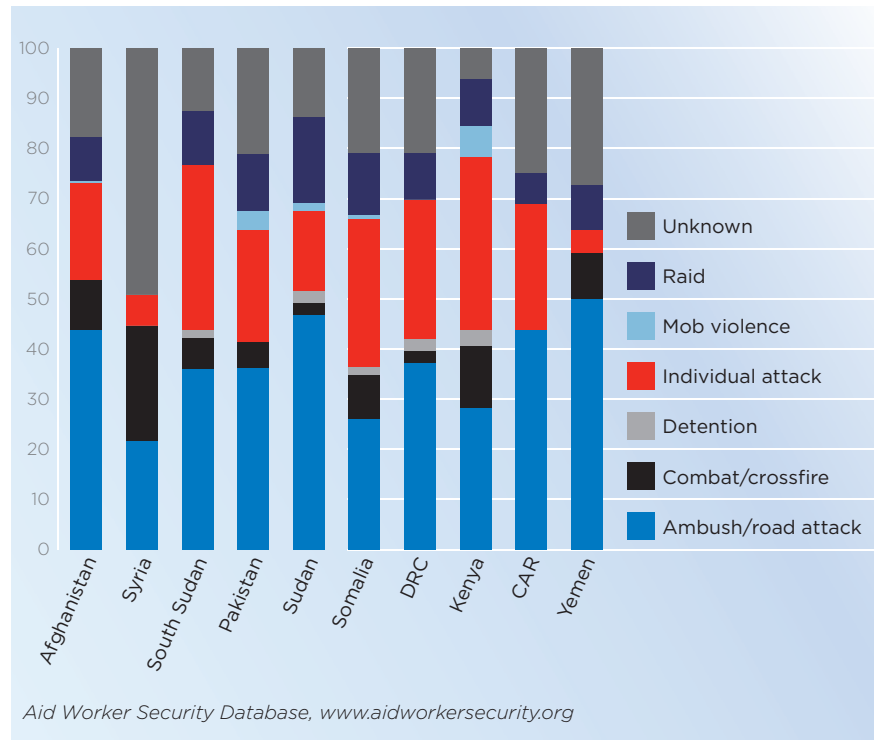
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2.1 Trends in road violence

Attacks on the road are the most prevalent out of all attack contexts in seven of the top ten countries (Afghanistan, South Sudan, Pakistan, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), and Yemen). In those seven countries, the proportion of road attacks relative to all other attack contexts range from 36 to 50 per cent.

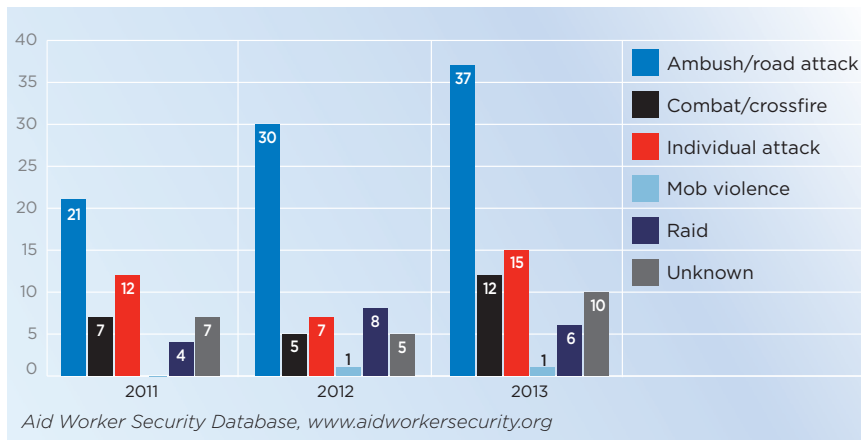
Of the 155 aid workers killed in 2013, about one third (51 aid workers) were killed in road attacks. The cumulative number of deaths in 2006-13 stands at 795, and again, approximately 33 per cent (263 aid workers) took place in road ambushes.

Figure 6: Breakdown of attack contexts



Because road attacks target military and other actors as well, some incidents in which aid workers were affected were due to their proximity to those actors on the road – a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. This has been seen particularly in Afghanistan where aid worker deaths represent collateral damage in some attacks on the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Afghan National Army vehicles. It has not been the case, however, that the withdrawal of ISAF has made aid actors any less vulnerable to threats on the road. On the contrary, since ISAF began withdrawing troops in mid-2011, the number of incidents has increased,

Figure 7: Attacks in Afghanistan, 2011-13



from 51 in 2011 to 81 in 2013. Similarly, as shown in Figure 7, the number of ambushes and attacks on the road steadily increased from 21 to 37 incidents. Aid actors are facing more security challenges because of increased insurgent activity, and possibly because they represent one of a now smaller set of targeting options.

2.2 The ‘real estate of roads’ and the particular challenge of securing humanitarians in transit

Frequent travel by road is essential to humanitarian work. Whether commuting between the organisation’s headquarters and far-flung project sites, visiting new locations to undertake needs assessments, or making the rounds of local community leadership and coordination meetings, most humanitarians will spend some part of nearly every day on the road.

The exposure this creates is obvious — personnel are outside the protection of gates and walls; they are visible, observable, and hence vulnerable to opportunistic and premeditated attacks as well as incidental violence. And although aid workers may present a moving target, they are much more of a challenge to protect. As one aid worker put it, roads represent ‘massive real estate’, and it is impossible for most governments, much less one that is undergoing crisis and lacks basic security sector capacity, to effectively police or survey entire stretches of road.

Although the word ‘ambush’ is technically defined as a sneak attack, it has become closely linked to any attack on a road where vehicles are forced to stop and are effectively trapped. This can be achieved with crudely improvised road blocks, or the more formal-looking illegitimate ‘checkpoints’. Geographic features can add to the risk by creating natural choke points and hidden staging areas that facilitate this kind of attack.

Other types of attack on the road include drive-by shootings where gunmen on motorcycles or other cars fire into moving vehicles or attempt to run them off the road. Carjacking, where the victim is killed or injured (or sometimes just held for a period of time under threat of death to ensure there is no tracking device), is another form of road attack, as is the detonation of IEDs either placed in other vehicles or on the roadside.

All of these attacks can be accomplished with light weaponry and do not require complex planning or a great deal of manpower. Moreover the gain to perpetrators can be significant, potentially garnering them vehicles, looted aid materials or cash, hostages, media attention, or political leverage. As such it has been a favoured tactic by militants involved in asymmetric warfare as well as common bandits.

Whatever the motives of road attacks, aid organisations are vulnerable to the threat merely by being recognisable as what they are. Organisations that have worked hard to build trust and forge acceptance for their presence and work within communities fear that once their staff leave the area and take to the open road all bets are off, particularly on long supply routes. They are no longer known and appreciated; any negotiated acceptance and security agreements they may have achieved in situ no longer apply; and their options for mitigating the threat are viewed as few and often inadequate.

2.3 Current practices in prevention and mitigation

Preventing a serious incident on the road requires a dual focus on the safety and security of staff and assets. An often-repeated claim is that more aid workers are killed by traffic accidents than any other cause, but no recent comprehensive data supports this, and two studies contradict it.¹ While it is likely that a larger number of vehicle accidents and accident-related *injuries* occur each year, the severity of security incidents (attacks), including the number of resulting *fatalities* from intentional attacks, is greater.

1 The original source of this claim appears to be a retrospective study of fatalities among Peace Corps volunteers between 1983 and 2003 (Nurthen and Jung, 2008) in which, out of 185 deaths, motor vehicle accidents numbered highest among all causes (22, or 33 per cent), followed by homicides (at 11, or 17 per cent). However, two separate studies based on more recent data and broader samples of aid organisations concluded to the contrary that the majority of aid worker deaths were caused by intentional violence – 69 per cent between 1985 and 1998 (Sheik et al., 2000) and 60 per cent between 2002 and 2005 (Rowley et al., 2008).

That said, safety and security incidents are in some ways interrelated. Some safety incidents lead to security concerns, for example when an aid agency vehicle hits a child, which can prompt hostility from the family and wider community and result in violence. There are also difficult trade-offs between security and safety. In certain contexts, maintaining a low-profile approach — utilising local vehicles, not wearing seatbelts, or not having radios or other communications equipment — to blend into the local community flouts what are otherwise considered important safety rules.

Despite the prevalence of road violence, few advances in security measures have been made to address this threat. The technical literature on the subject of road security is limited to Overseas Development Institute's Good Practice Review on security management (2010), and organisations' internal security guidance and related standard operating procedures (SOPs). The subject also receives limited intersectional discussion among humanitarian practitioners and security experts. As one interviewee noted, 'We almost never talk about it in the community.' The limited sharing of practice may have contributed to the narrow range of alternatives and lack of innovation within the community. It has brought the issue of road security to an intellectual dead end, with humanitarian professionals feeling that, as one put it, 'The only way to deal with the risk is not to move.'

In contrast, far more analysis and input have gone into the design and protective elements of static security, including office compounds and residences. This has perhaps inadvertently also increased the inclination not to move, aided perceptions of 'bunkerisation', and increased the sense in which vehicles are a 'softer target' as a result.

The standard set of security procedures and practices for road travel, such as radio check-ins and rules for convoy movement, have not changed significantly over the past 10 years (ODI, 2010). Even so, a lack of staff compliance to policy and procedures is part of the problem. Drivers cannot be directly observed and supervised when they are out on the road, and when a long period has passed without incident, humans by nature become complacent and less diligent about security procedures.

As shown in the box below, SOPs cover a wide range of topics, from training to movement-request procedures.

Sample SOP topics for road movement

- Defensive driver training (for drivers and staff) and broader training including negotiation skills
- How-to guides (including good practice at check-points and roadblocks, under crossfire, during armed robbery or kidnapping, when engaging with local authorities, etc.).
- Travel / movement request procedures, based on programme criticality
- Check-in and check-out procedures
- Curfews and no-go areas
- Two-car rules and vehicle-spacing guidelines
- Passenger policies including the use of local community leaders to accompany movement of staff
- Routine changes in routes and times, often on a daily basis
- Use of high-frequency radio and satellite equipment during long-distance movements

Source: ODI, 2010.

For highly insecure contexts, these standard measures may be enhanced or adapted. In doing so, agencies will differentiate between approaches to transporting staff versus moving goods or cash, particularly for long supply routes. There are however exceptions, such as in contexts like Syria where international staff need to be present to negotiate checkpoints in the movement of assets.

Road security in high-risk settings requires advance preparation, substantial logistics capacity, programming flexibility, adaptability, and increased resources. Planning is also time-consuming and can result in a decision to not move, meaning that the process of assessment, and its related logistics, has to start over.

Agencies have invested in a range of specific practices to differing degrees. These include road reconnaissance, traveling in armoured vehicles, traveling in convoys, taking a low-profile approach, only travelling in specific makes of vehicles, alternating routes, using specific types of technology, choosing to fly rather drive, outsourcing the movement of goods, and traveling with an armed escort.

Road reconnaissance is common practice in a number of countries, involving either sending a team a few days in advance to conduct situational awareness or utilising field officers in situ to do the same. Threat assessments are developed based on this information.

Armoured vehicles. For the UN, travelling in convoy in hard-skin vehicles has become the only way to move on the road in most high-risk settings where the organisation is a known target. Armoured vehicles are not within most NGOs' fleet budgets and come with their own risks related to increased visibility and potentially decreased community acceptance, but many NGOs recognise they have their place in certain contexts.

Convoys. Travelling in convoy is also often considered riskier than the benefits it brings, but many agencies have a two-car policy. This requires obtaining more cars than needed for operational response, an example of how insecurity can drive up operational costs. An alternative is to use 'bleed and chase' cars, involving driving an empty, typically white, Land Cruiser in front, and following 15 minutes behind in an old, local car with the staff or assets. As one interviewee explained, 'This is the canary idea: if the Land Cruiser is stopped, he can alert the car behind him.'

A low-profile approach is increasingly favoured by some organisations in insecure areas. To mitigate against strong surveillance and opportunistic targeting, they will eschew the standard white 4x4 vehicles and instead use taxis or rented vehicles, rotate license plates, or only approve travel on public transport.

Specific vehicle types can also be important where some vehicles make less-desirable targets for theft and carjacking, including vehicles that require specific training to drive or hard-to-get spare parts, or that stand out and are easily identifiable. To reduce the likelihood of carjackings in Darfur, one NGO used pink cars because they were unattractive and no one wanted them; another utilised a truck that required specialised training to drive. Vehicles that have hard-to-get spare parts are seen as effective but can also be expensive for the agency to maintain.

Alternating routes is a standard practice but made more difficult in small urban areas where alternatives are limited for getting to places that need to be visited frequently. In Mogadishu and cities throughout Afghanistan, for example, changing route, day, or time of travel, as well as the number of staff and where they sit in a vehicle, is critical. To reduce predictability further, one agency's staff members visit programme areas first and then return to the office at different times during the day so that fewer people are taking known routes at regular times.

Technology on the road has enhanced practices for aid agencies operating in high-risk areas, but solutions are fewer than advocates might suggest. GPS, for example, despite its capability, cannot prevent an ambush or kidnapping. All it can do is provide 'live' tracking of vehicles for the purposes of recovery. Kill switches can limit the distance vehicles can be taken but do not prevent attacks. Agencies raise significant concerns about these devices, in particular that in highly contested environments militants have banned such gadgets for fear they are being utilised to coordinate air strikes. Therefore militants may be suspicious about, and violent towards, anyone traveling in a vehicle with a GPS or other tracking device.

Technological adaptations such as the use of drones or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), and 'flying cars' are currently considered beyond what is possible and acceptable to most humanitarian aid workers.² The capacity of UAVs, for example, is largely limited to assessment, information collection, and monitoring, although they could also potentially yield information on security threats. While some aid agencies in the DRC (the UN peacekeeping mission there has been the first to utilize UAVs) see the technology as potentially useful for their operations, others fear the implications of being associated with a tool that is perceived as a mechanism for military intelligence.

Flying rather than driving is seen as the best preventative measure for staff security, but is contingent upon resources and impacts programming scale, presence, and acceptance. For the UN in some high-risk countries, including Afghanistan, parts of Sudan and South Sudan, and Somalia, flying is the only means of transport between major hubs. NGOs recognise it decreases opportunities for engaging with local communities but will weigh this against available resources and risk tolerance.

Outsourcing the movement of goods to third parties is a well-established modus operandi in humanitarian logistics and in highly insecure settings has the advantage of passing the security risk to local companies. Interviewees note that local transport companies are often better able to manage security risk, being more familiar with what is happening on the ground. In some cases commercial trucking is less susceptible to attack or theft than aid agency convoys because aid goods are seen as a 'free for all', which is less the case for commercial goods. In this sense it is also designed to manage fiduciary risk and liability issues. Cash-on-delivery policies also provide the transporter with a clear incentive to ensure safe shipment of goods, alongside inputs such as trackers and code of conduct and simulation training for private contractor teams.

Similarly, agencies have pushed the risk of moving cash into other service areas, like the Hawala system, for example, or by utilising banking, mobile phone, and postal systems. When cash has to be physically transported, good practice involves a very discreet process, including dummy runs, nondescript vehicles, splitting the consignment between two or three vehicles, utilising armed security, and in some contexts, movement by helicopter.

Armed escort is generally used only as a very last resort (and many NGOs will cease operating before they resort to travelling under armed protection) or when required by host government authorities in certain areas. Like with some of the heavy protection measures, this deterrent approach can potentially bring more risks of inciting violence than it prevents, and is antithetical to the humanitarian ethos and desired public image.

2 IRIN, 2014; SciDev.Net, 2014.

3 The road ahead: Increasing security in transit

Operational measures to increase road security have tended to favour two sides of the security triangle: protection and deterrence (ODI, 2010). This has been done on the assumption that building acceptance outside a static setting is difficult, particularly while travelling in areas not being served by humanitarian agencies. In some highly volatile conflicts, and particularly in urban areas with a multitude of militant interests, that assumption might be correct: armoured vehicles, armed escorts, or low-profile protection may indeed be the safest way to move. But in many situations, there is a need for greater thinking in what a mobile, or 'kinetic acceptance' strategy might look like. Some agencies have developed some early practices in this regard and are exploring how to extend community agreements to provide advice and information on when and how to travel. These also involve empowering staff and drivers to utilise their judgment, observe local practice, and be proactive in soliciting information on who and what is moving along the road. Investment in innovating and developing good practice in these areas, including training, could benefit aid operations and is an appropriate way for donor governments to support aid agencies implementing humanitarian assistance. This could also apply to protective approaches, including the choice of vehicles. The type of vehicle driven can have a significant bearing on perception and requires highly contextual advice and decision-making.

Staff compliance to internal policies and SOPs also has room for improvement. A more deliberate focus of both safety and security guidance in transit, as well as a review of the clear trade-offs or contradictions that some written (or unwritten) policies imply — such as not wearing seatbelts to blend into the local context — is needed. A combined assessment potentially has the dual positive impact of increasing the safety and security of staff and assets.

Finally, the starting point for addressing the significant and worrying trend of targeted attacks in transit is to increase a collective dialogue on the topic and to invest in joint initiatives to address the problem. Particular forums, such as the logistics cluster or interagency security forums, could usefully bring agencies together to begin a discussion on collective approaches, potentially also drawing on private sector actors (including those local to the environments agencies are working in) to support this effort.

NOTE ON DATA DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGY

AWSD Incident Data

The Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD) compiles information on major incidents of violence against aid workers worldwide, including killings, kidnappings, and armed attacks that result in serious injury. All incidents are compiled from public reports and verified or supplemented with information provided directly from relevant organisations, agencies, and field-level security consortia on a regular basis.

The AWSD defines ‘aid workers’ as both international and national employees and associated personnel of non-profit aid agencies that provide material and technical assistance in humanitarian relief contexts. UN peacekeeping personnel; human rights workers; election monitors; or those associated with purely political, religious, or advocacy organisations are not counted within this definition. Agencies include those solely mandated for relief functions, as well as those authorised for both relief and development operations. These are: NGOs, the International Movement of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, donor agencies, and UN agencies belonging to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO), plus IOM and UNRWA.

Interviews and literature review

The research for the report included semi-structured interviews with members of 21 organisations including aid agencies, the UN (including UNDSS), and headquarters and field-based security consortia, including those with programmes in the most violent settings for 2013. It draws on operational security guidance, other security research, and media reporting, as referenced.

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