



# Aid Worker Security Report 2013

## The New Normal: Coping with the kidnapping threat

Humanitarian Outcomes

## Summary of key findings

- ▶ In 2012, there were 167 incidents of major violence against aid workers in 19 countries.
- ▶ These attacks resulted in 274 aid workers killed, kidnapped, or seriously wounded.
- ▶ The number of victims relative to the estimated total number of aid workers (the attack rate) continued to rise.
- ▶ Aid worker kidnappings have quadrupled over the past decade; since 2009, more aid workers have been victims of kidnapping than of any other form of attack.
- ▶ Aid organisations have invested considerable resources in managing the response to kidnappings, but have not adequately addressed the threat itself.
- ▶ Aid agency decision-making is overly focused on whether or not to pay cash ransom, neglecting the broader challenge of negotiating concessions in high-risk environments.

# Introduction

This fourth edition of the Aid Worker Security Report provides the latest verified statistics on global violence against aid workers, and takes an in-depth look at kidnapping, which in 2012 affected more aid workers than any other form of major violent attack. Although kidnapping outcomes are less lethal than other means of violence (over 80 per cent of aid worker kidnap victims survive) the growing prevalence of kidnapping and its unique potential to disrupt operations warrant special consideration. The ordeal of the two Spanish MSF workers, kidnapped in 2011 near the Kenya–Somali border and held hostage for 21 months, illustrates the high human cost the kidnapping threat entails.

Part 1 of this report updates the statistics on attacks against aid workers worldwide. Part 2 examines kidnapping trends more closely, looking at geographic and other patterns, and the ways in which kidnapping poses individual, organisational, and collective threats to humanitarian action. Part 3 discusses the various ways aid organisations approach risk management for kidnapping, including mitigation measures and crisis response, and the difficult issue of ransom payment. The report concludes with a series of recommendations.

**Table 1: Major attacks on aid workers: Summary statistics, 2000–2012**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of incidents	42	29	46	63	63	75	107	123	165	155	129	151	167
Total aid worker victims	91	90	85	143	125	173	240	220	278	296	245	308	274
Total killed	57	27	38	87	56	54	87	87	127	107	72	86	67
Total injured	23	20	23	49	46	96	87	87	91	95	86	127	115
Total kidnapped*	11	43	24	7	23	23	66	46	60	94	87	95	92
International victims	21	28	17	27	24	15	26	35	51	75	37	28	49
National victims	70	62	68	116	101	158	214	185	227	221	208	280	225
UN staff	31	28	18	31	11	28	61	39	65	102	44	91	57
International NGO staff	45	48	54	69	69	112	110	132	157	129	139	140	87
LNGO and RCS staff**	5	2	5	35	43	28	55	35	46	55	47	77	105
ICRC staff	9	11	7	8	1	3	10	4	5	9	10	5	3

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

\*Victims survived or not yet determined (those killed while kidnapped are counted under 'killed' totals)

\*\*Local (host country) nongovernmental organisations and National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies

The Aid Worker Security Report is a series of briefing papers based on the latest data from the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD). The AWSD is a project of Humanitarian Outcomes, made possible by grants from the Canadian, Irish and US governments, and currently supported by a grant from USAID. It is available online at [www.aidworkersecurity.org](http://www.aidworkersecurity.org).

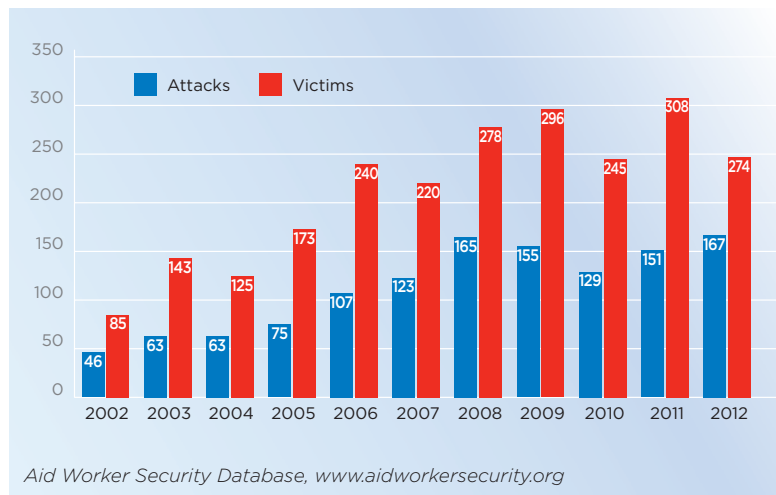
# Attacks on aid workers: Latest statistics

1

Worldwide, the number of attacks against aid workers rose again in 2012, with 167 major incidents of violence reported (see methodology note at the end for incident parameters and definitions). This is the highest number of attacks recorded to date. However, the total number of aid worker victims of these attacks, 274, represents a decrease of 12 per cent from the previous year which, at 308, was the highest yet recorded. Of the 274 attack victims in 2012, 67 were killed, 115 were seriously wounded, and 92 were kidnapped.

The divergence seen in 2012 – more attacks but fewer victims than the previous year – is explained in part by the absence in 2012 of any mass casualty attacks, such as the suicide bombing of the UN House in Abuja Nigeria in 2011, and the complex attack (raid and bombing) of an NGO compound in Pakistan in 2010. The means of violence used against aid workers in 2012 were predominantly of types that target smaller numbers, such as individual attacks/assassinations – and, above all, kidnappings.

**Figure 1: Separate attacks and aid worker victims, 2002-2012**



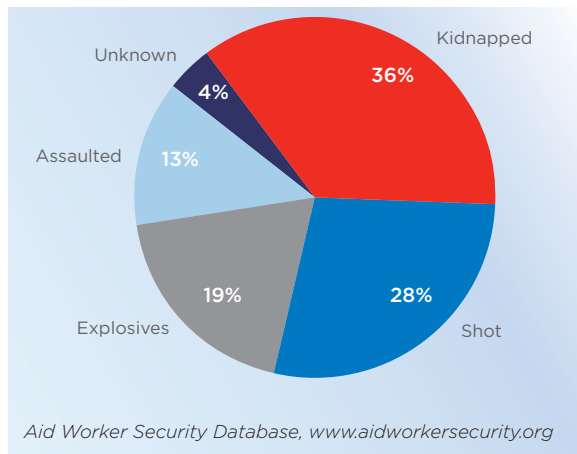
**Figure 2: Attack rates per aid workers in the field, 2006-2012**



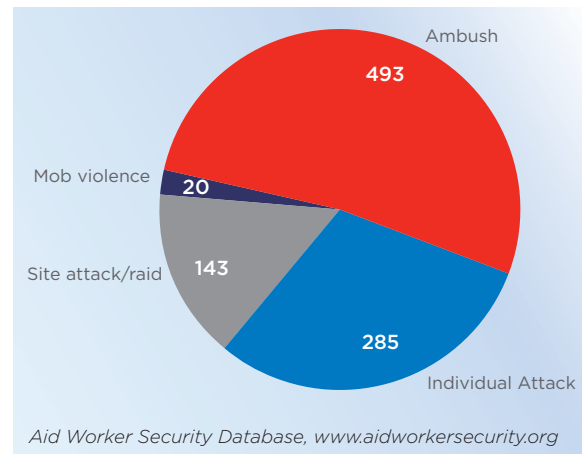
These figures come with the caveat that an over-emphasis on the yearly totals can obscure more meaningful indicators of aid worker security, i.e. *rates* of violence. The Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD) research has sought to estimate the global population of aid workers in the field each year. Taking the number of aid worker victims against their estimated population reveals a modest rise in the long-term trend in attack rates (see Figure 2).

The great majority of aid worker victims in 2012 (82%) were national staffers working on aid projects in their home countries. International staff comprised only 18 per cent of victims, but because they number far fewer in the field than their national staff colleagues, the attack rate was more than twice as high.

**Figure 3: Victims in 2012, by type of violence**



**Figure 4: Contexts of attacks, 2002–2012**



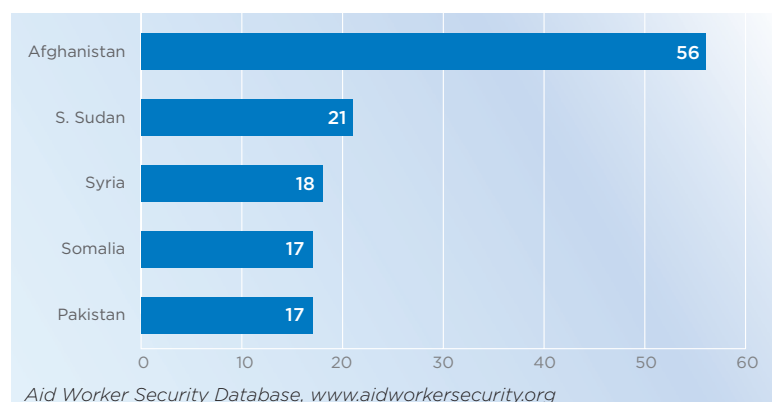
While all forms of violence against aid workers have increased, kidnappings have seen the steepest rise over the past decade. The number of kidnapping incidents has quadrupled since 2002, with an average increase of 44 per cent each year. Kidnapping has become the most common type of major attack against aid workers, with kidnapping victims surpassing the number of victims of shootings, serious bodily assault, and all types of explosives. Kidnappings comprised nearly a quarter of all major attacks on aid operations in 2012, and an even greater percentage of aid worker victims (36%).

Ambushes and attacks on the road remain the most prevalent context of violence against aid workers, far outnumbering site-specific attacks such as raids or bombings of facilities (see Figure 4). Many kidnappings, as well as killings and incidents involving serious wounding, take place in the context of ambushes on the road, where aid workers and their cargo present easy targets. The particular vulnerability and exposure of aid workers on the road speaks to the need for innovative solutions to the problem of transit of aid personnel and materials in lawless or volatile areas.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, South Sudan, and Somalia continued to rank among the most violent contexts for aid operations in 2012. **Although Afghanistan leads in absolute number of attacks, it is Somalia, with its comparatively very low presence of aid workers in country, that has the highest attack rate.** From the year of its independence in 2011, attacks on aid workers surged in South Sudan, continuing to rise in 2012.

Syria entered the top five most violent aid contexts in 2012 with 18 reported incidents in which 22 aid workers were killed or wounded, many of whom were caught in shelling and crossfire. Other cases where civil conflict has intensified into major combat, such as Gaza and Sri Lanka in 2009, experienced a surge of aid worker casualties, falling off dramatically once major military operations had ceased. This type of threat requires aid agencies to take a different approach from that applied in chronically high-violence environments where aid workers are systematically targeted for political and/or economic purposes. It remains to be seen whether Syria will follow that pattern and drop off the 'most-dangerous' list, or become like Afghanistan, where aid workers are used as proxy targets in the context of sustained, low-intensity conflict and asymmetrical warfare.

**Figure 5: Highest number of attacks on aid workers, 2012**



### 2.1 The (fuzzy) global picture

Global data on kidnappings among the general population are very soft. Accurate counts of kidnappings are not kept in some of the places they occur most often: failed, fragile, and conflict-affected states. Not surprisingly, many of the statistics on global kidnapping trends that are readily available, for example from security and insurance firms, are un-sourced and/or extrapolated from a small number of country cases.

This makes it difficult to gauge global kidnapping trends with any rigor. An informal consensus, gleaned from a literature review and interviews conducted for this report, seems to hold that the region with the most kidnappings remains Latin America (driven by the drug trade as well as ideological militant groups such as the FARC in Colombia), but that its proportional share is falling with the rise of kidnappings in Asia and the Middle East/North Africa.

In any case, a global geographic analysis may have little practical use for individuals or organisations, as patterns and motives can vary widely even within countries. For example, insurance providers differentiate kidnappings done for political/ideological reasons (e.g., to secure the release of prisoners, or to send a message) from those done for strictly monetary reasons. Both types can be found within the same country, targeting different profiles of victims, and in different areas. Although many kidnappings will have mixed motives, the more ideologically oriented ones tend to be of longer duration, involve more complex negotiations, and often result in more harm to the victims.

### 2.2 Aid worker kidnapping trends

Tracking of aid worker security incidents shows that the kidnapping threat has grown in recent years. Not only have kidnappings increased in absolute numbers and as a proportion of overall attacks on aid workers, but also the average global rates of kidnapping among the field population of aid worker have risen by 28 per cent in the past three years compared to the prior period.

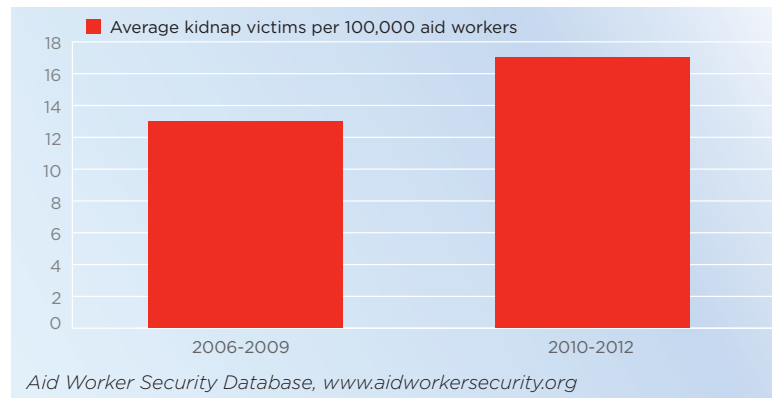
Of all aid worker kidnappings recorded since 1997 (a total of 372 incidents), only 51 of these (14%) have had fatal outcomes, with a total 80 victims killed either in the course of the abduction, while in captivity, or during an escape/rescue attempt. Of the remainder, apart from a small percentage that were successfully rescued by police or military, the majority were released after varying periods of captivity (see Figure 7). Understandably, ransom payments are seldom mentioned in public reports of kidnapping events, but the dataset has four reported cases where Western governments made ransom payments to secure the release of their nationals (anecdotally, there are several more). It is not reported, but generally understood, that in many cases private ransom payments have been made, from families and organisations of the kidnapped aid workers, as well as from their home governments. This practice is discussed in further detail in Section 3.

As with attacks generally, the kidnapping rates for international aid workers (who number far fewer in the field) are a good deal higher than for national staff. Even acknowledging the possibility that additional kidnappings of national aid workers may have gone unreported by their organisations or families, or unnoticed at the international level, it seems clear that international staff are often the preferred target. It is not hard to see why this might be so.

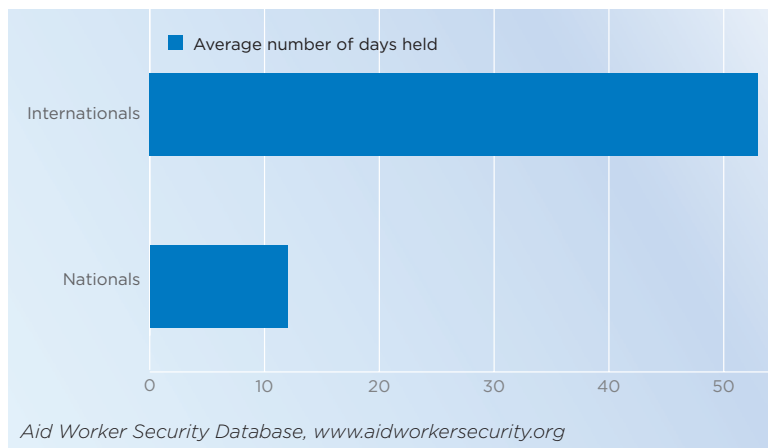
Internationals tend to be easier to spot, are generally perceived as fetching higher ransoms – and, for kidnapers seeking visibility, international victims draw greater media and political attention.

International staff are more likely to be held for longer periods than national staff (see Figure 7), illustrating the often steeper terms of ransoms or concessions demanded and the complexity of negotiations. Based on kidnapping reports going back to 1997, the average duration of international staffers’ captivity was 53 days, as compared to 12 days for national staffers.

**Figure 6: Average kidnapping rates of aid workers, 2006–2012**



**Figure 7: Duration of kidnappings**



A small number of cases with very long durations (such as the 644-day captivity of two Spanish MSF workers kidnapped in Kenya by Somali militants) drives up the averages. The most frequent duration of kidnappings is under ten days for both types of staff, but with internationals still held for more than twice as long as nationals.

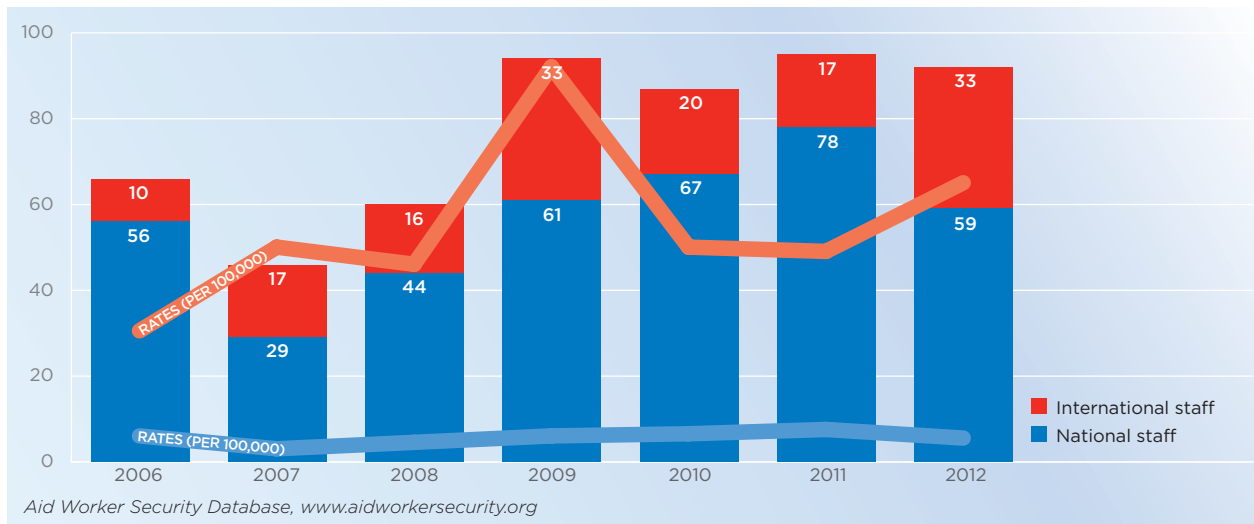
That is not to suggest that local aid workers are safe from kidnapping – on the contrary,

scores are kidnapped each year. Nationals employed by international organisations are often identified as having more money than the average local inhabitant, or are politically targeted for their association with the foreign entity. Militant groups in Afghanistan and Somalia have demonstrated detailed and sophisticated knowledge of the employees, activities, and even the donors of international aid organisations.

In 2012, aid workers were kidnapped in Afghanistan, Libya, Niger, Pakistan, Somalia (including from the Kenyan side of the border), South Sudan, and Yemen. As with other types of attacks, aid worker kidnappings in Afghanistan in 2012 outnumbered those in all other countries combined, with 49 people kidnapped in 21 separate incidents. Yemen was second highest, with 10 people kidnapped in four incidents.



Table 2: Absolute figures and rates, 2006–2012



In many cases, it can be difficult to determine the motives. However, reports in the AWSD reveal that, of the incidents where motives are known or can be reasonably inferred, aid worker kidnappings skew towards motives that encompass political intentions, as opposed to purely economic incentives. The standard kidnap-for-ransom model may occur in the same countries (as in Afghanistan) and in greater numbers, but these crimes cluster in urban areas and not the rural settings where aid workers tend to be, and wealthy businesspeople are the main targets.

## Managing the risk 3

### 3.1 Prevention

In kidnapping as with any other serious incident, prevention is the primary security objective for aid agencies.

Reducing staff exposure to prevent kidnapping has not changed significantly from some of the original aid agency security guidelines developed over 10 years ago. For most agencies it involves varying travel times and routes when moving between residences and offices, as well as in off-hours activities, and strict observance of entry/exit control from premises. Many will also reduce visibility, by removing markings or using local vehicles, so that staff-members are not identifiable when travelling. Agencies may also declare certain areas temporarily off-limits (ODI, 2010).



Risk management requires detailed risk assessment, specialised training with a view to preparing staff for the eventuality of a kidnapping, specific security plans, and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Equally critical is that staff consistently observe the procedures and take basic precautions, such as varying their routes and travel times. Aid practitioners interviewed for this report made the point that kidnappings generally happen to individuals who are not following SOPs for risk avoidance – often because they have grown complacent after working in the context for a long time. Diligence is difficult to sustain over an extended period of time, and is inevitably more challenging for national staff, for whom the security standards at work will be higher than they are otherwise accustomed to, and more difficult to follow in their off-hours private life.

Pre-empting a planned, targeted kidnapping (as opposed to an opportunistic seizing) is more difficult, and hard to measure in terms of its effectiveness. Sometimes there is an escalation of threats, such as warning letters or threatening visits, that agencies can then attempt to address in dialogue with local leaders and, if possible, with armed militant groups that might pose a threat. Counter-surveillance is also critical: agencies must remain on the lookout for anyone who appears to be observing their facilities and staff movements. This can be aided by a strong local network of supporters and informants. But even having critical information indicating a planned kidnapping might not prove sufficient, especially if the attack involves heavily armed militants.

A kidnapping can indicate a significant breakdown or gap in an agency's acceptance strategy. It might highlight how stakeholders in the community, including local leaders, with whom agencies negotiate their access, can be the same people who tolerate or are directly involved in violence against them. For some agencies this threat underscores the need for physical protection. The challenge with a more protection-based approach, however, is that such measures must be carefully designed so as not to limit contact, and alienate the host community.

On the positive side, and counter-intuitive as it may seem, some kidnappings may actually signal that an agency's acceptance strategy is working. In Afghanistan, for instance, the documented quick release of aid agency personnel from a kidnapping situation often shows a pattern of intervention by community elders who negotiate release on behalf of the agency. This indicates that the community knows and appreciates the agency's projects and staff, and needs the services to continue. The kidnappers (mostly local Taliban forces), for their part, do not wish to completely alienate the local population by eliminating much-needed aid projects, so they concede to the release – but not before flexing their muscles before both the local inhabitants and the aid community, and using the detention period to question the aid workers at length about their activities and intentions. Indeed, these short-lived kidnappings in Afghanistan have been referred to as the Taliban's 'informal registration' of NGOs.

Perhaps the final aspect of an organisation's responsibilities in risk management and ensuring that the risks of kidnapping are reduced to tolerable levels, is the duty to inform staff of the risks they face: and that in turn, the staff accept a degree of risk after having been made fully aware of the extent. This is establishing 'informed consent'. The challenge in the case of kidnapping, as one aid agency security adviser pointed out, is that people are not good at calculating low-probability, high-impact scenarios. It is almost impossible to conceive of the consequences fully – made harder by the fact that, understandably, victims of kidnappings generally tend not to share their often highly traumatic experiences in the public realm. Taking the decision to work in a high-risk environment is therefore often done with an incomplete picture of what a kidnapping incident might entail and how the individual would cope if it happened.

## 3.2 Crisis management

While most risk-mitigation procedures have not changed significantly over the past decade, what has changed is the management of the agency's response to a kidnapping. Placing a priority on this indicates acknowledgement of the growing threat, as well as the documented high costs, and critical impact it can have on a relatively well-prepared organisation, let alone an ill-prepared one. The impact of a kidnapping is often vastly more debilitating for the organisation and the individuals involved than any other type of incident – especially because this is not a one-off event that is over as soon as it occurs, but is a potentially prolonged crisis that must be managed. In addition, the process of identifying and negotiating with the perpetrators can be fraught; the stress on those involved is often significant; and the duration can be long, with multiple phases including the period of captivity, negotiations, and release/rescue, followed by after-care for the victims and their families. Moreover, this often unfolds in the public spotlight, which, in the age of social media, means a heightened need to manage sensitive information very carefully.

Organisations differ in their approaches to crisis management according to their relative size and available resources. For the UN, one interviewee noted that kidnappings used to have the biggest impact of all incidents, even more than staff losing their lives, and generally led to cessation of all operations in the area. In recent years, however, a comprehensive crisis management response system has been established which is automatically activated when a UN staffer is kidnapped, and field operations continue. For many NGOs, however, particularly medium-sized and smaller ones, a kidnapping can have a crippling effect. Staff assigned to the crisis management team must be able to put aside other duties, and would ideally be rotated every few weeks. Long-duration kidnappings (e.g. several months) can place a significant resource burden on the organisation. Crisis management tasks involve not only negotiating with the kidnappers (perhaps multiple sets of those if the victims are 'sold on' to another group of captors) but also engagement with the victims' families, their governments, and the host government.

For crisis managers, the most challenging scenario is when people of different nationalities and/or from different agencies have been kidnapped together, or are being held by the same captors. Different home governments and families will be involved, and the agencies affected will need to work hard to establish a collaborative approach.

Interviewees had mixed experiences as to the role played by home governments. They noted some examples of sensitive, supportive behaviour, logistical support, and intelligence advice – but also cases of grandstanding and those aimed solely at getting the victims released at any cost (i.e. meeting the ransom demands), without considering the consequences for other programmes or aid agencies. There have been anecdotal instances where prisoners were released or exchanged as a form of ransom acceded to by governments in order to obtain the release of the kidnapped aid workers.

Some organisations have reached out to commercial providers for security advice and technical support, recognising that the skills for dedicating expertise and resources to the task are not available internally. Commercial options include taking out insurance provisions against the threat of kidnapping as well as ransom requests, which pose additional challenges.

Outside expertise in crisis management and negotiations can undoubtedly be helpful, but it is likewise important for agency staff to be well trained and prepared for such events. Calling kidnapping 'the new normal', one NGO leader observed that every agency working in unstable environments can reasonably expect to experience a kidnapping at some point, and it is part of their due diligence to grapple with what this will mean in practice. Are they truly prepared to accept this as a high-likelihood risk? Do they have policies and procedures in place for dealing with it when it occurs?

## Crisis management for national staff

Most organisations acknowledge that managing a response to the kidnapping of a national is a different process. Interviewees noted that organisations may utilise their same policies but adapt them and localise the crisis response in a low-profile way, in particular providing support to families of the victims and allowing them to take the lead. As one interviewee explained, while it is ‘not politically correct, .... our concern is not to “create a business” for nationals if we are too open about our kidnapping policies and practices’. Others noted that the families themselves want the agencies to stand back, as the profile of an international agency can complicate negotiations over ransom or other solutions.

Of those agencies interviewed, all noted the importance of post-crisis support, including psycho-social support and counselling for families, as well as providing additional leave and a subsequent offer of another posting at HQ or a more comfortable location, where possible.

## Insuring against the threat

Kidnap and ransom (K&R) insurance has become increasingly common in recent years. One insurer noted that the awareness of the threat and demand for K&R insurance has actually risen faster than the incidence of kidnapping among clients. This is due in part to the absence of hard statistics on kidnapping risk in unstable environments, as well as to greater recognition of the significant personal and corporate toll that kidnappings can exact.

Standard K&R insurance policies cover ransom payments as well as ‘ancillary benefits’ including crisis management costs such as a negotiation advisor, rehabilitation expenses for individual afterward, the costs of reconnecting family and friends, and dismemberment benefits, if relevant. Legal liability is also an important element in many of these policies, as lawsuits often follow cases where international staff have been kidnapped.

The cost of insurance ranges significantly. And despite perceptions of significant sums being paid in ransom, in fact ransom (when it is paid) is often the smallest expense of all the expenses covered by the policy, compared to the sizable post-release expenses, such as medical and psychological care, and litigation expenses.

Many organisations insure their national staff, which reflects increasing appreciation of the duty of care and moral responsibility to those working on the front lines. There are restrictions, however. Some providers cover national staff only during working hours, whereas internationals will have 24-hour coverage. This is done to limit exposure, but also reflects the reality that an organisation’s policies cannot restrict the movements of national staff in the same way as those of international staff. Local partners are generally not covered by international agencies, and little is known as to whether they have their own insurance, or whether international partners assist and support them in cases of kidnapping.

There are no data on the number of organisations that operate with or without K&R insurance. Interviews indicated a surprising number with little or no cover. While donors rarely comment on the nature of organisational security provision, due to their own liability concerns, some interviewees argued that donors do have a role to play as regards insurance, and that they could do more by putting pressure on organisations to insist on greater security support and insurance for field staff working in high-risk zones, particularly those working on high-risk activities.

## **Paying ransom and negotiating release**

In their policy documents and public communications, governments and aid agencies often state that they will never pay ransoms or make substantial concessions to resolve a kidnapping (ODI, 2010). Publicly, of course, it could not be otherwise. Openly stating that ransoms will be paid would be ‘tantamount to declaring open season on your agency and its staff’ (ODI, 2010 p.232). In reality, however, money is often paid – by families, private companies, governments, and aid agencies. Usually this is done through indirect means, using a range of intermediaries (even bank accounts), so as to preserve the ‘official’ claims that no money exchanged hands between agency and perpetrators.

The evidence would suggest that a public policy of not paying ransom has not proven a significant deterrent. Even if no money is on the table, a ‘ransom’ can be paid by agencies in the form of meeting other demands, like agreeing to cease work in a given area, or to refrain from a certain activity (e.g. girls’ education). This demonstrates the need to approach kidnapping negotiations with a broader, more nuanced perspective on negotiating release: acknowledging that acceptance and the ability to negotiate secure access have broken down, and must be rebuilt with all parties in order to continue or resume operations.

This also points to a broader challenge facing aid agencies in contexts where the perpetrators are not local to the context in which an agency is negotiating access and seeking to build acceptance. As one interviewee explained:

*The local community may or may not have involvement in the fate of kidnapped staff. More importantly, whether you pay or don't pay has little or no bearing on them, or their perception of you. Those collecting the big cash are sitting in Kismaayo [Somalia] and are divorced from the community an NGO is there to serve.*

## **After action reviews**

Despite the importance of documenting and sharing lessons learned, After Action Reviews (AARs), while often conducted, are rarely shared in detail, because of the sensitivity of the information and concern for the victims. Interviewees point to AARs encouraging tough discussions about risk thresholds. Having gone through a crisis in one country, one organisation decided that it had to lower its risk threshold in all other countries, deeming it not possible to operate in more than one high-risk environment where there was a high probability of having to deploy crisis management.

Policy changes can also occur, including strengthening security guidelines, changing security plans, and developing more extensive policies on risk management. Staff re-training is almost always seen as essential, although it is often not properly targeted at those in at-risk activity categories or working in high-risk areas.

It is rare for an organisation to leave a country completely after a kidnapping incident – including during the crisis response, which would have the effect of removing the organisation from the very sources of information and networks which might assist in securing release. However, operations will often cease temporarily, and restart once release has been secured (unless major violence was involved or the threat communicated was exceptionally serious), although not necessarily in the same location. Agencies may also restrict movement, or use more remote management. The latter will require careful assessment and decision-making concerning the level of exposure to be passed on to local staff and local partners, so as not to simply transfer the risk to less well-resourced entities.

Kidnapping is a fairly low-cost tactic, relative to the political impact and financial gains it can bring the perpetrators. For this reason it is increasingly used by criminals and militants alike, often in collusion with each other. Its probability and the severity of consequences on affected agencies have made kidnapping a significant risk, and one unlikely to abate in the near future. Investment in additional insurance policies is not sufficient: agencies must also focus efforts on additional elements within prevention and response. The following three broad recommendations may provide a starting point:

- **New thinking on road security**

There is a pressing need for new thinking on travel/transport options in dangerous environments. The activities/location of greatest exposure deserve significant policy and programmatic attention. Keeping aid workers safe in transit warrants new donor funding for innovation, and a collective initiative with humanitarian and private sector actors to seek solutions, beyond simply adding armed security.

- **More communication for critical information and collective lesson-learning**

Information sharing around kidnappings is critical. Agencies must balance the need for sensitivity or secrecy during crisis management with the need to communicate important information with colleagues before, during, and after the event. There is considerable need for greater sharing of information and contextual analysis on the motives, nature, and consequences of kidnappings. Field-based security consortia are uniquely placed to take this forward with their aid agency partners.

- **A more nuanced approach to negotiation strategy**

Finally, agencies should consider the implications of negotiating concessions with hostage-takers, rather than focusing solely on the question of cash ransom payments, recognising that both may provide incentives to further kidnappings. Crisis management must be complemented by crisis strategy. There is a wealth of guidance on the practicalities of running a crisis response team, but little to help an agency to determine the optimal endgames and strategic paths to take to secure a release. Whatever policy approach is agreed, and regardless of whether the agency remains operational in the area, any kidnapping should be treated as a major pause point: it is essential for the agency to reflect on the state of its acceptance and overall security stance, and identify necessary actions and adjustments.

## 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 Database 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 the 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.

### National Crime and Kidnapping Rates

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

### Interviews and literature review

The research included semi-structured interviews with aid agencies, including those with recent experience of kidnapping incidents; field-based security consortia; the UN and an insurance firm that supports insurance arrangements for many humanitarian organisations. It draws on other recent security research and current literature, as referenced.

### References

- Aikins, Matthieu (2010) The big business of kidnapping in Afghanistan. 20 October.  
[http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/10/20/the\\_big\\_business\\_of\\_kidnapping\\_in\\_afghanistan](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/10/20/the_big_business_of_kidnapping_in_afghanistan)
- Apps, P. (2011) *Factbox: Global kidnap hotspots and ransom costs*. 17 February.  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/02/17/us-crime-kidnap-hotspots-idUSTRE71G42D20110217>
- Buth, P. (2010) *Abduction Management*, European Interagency Security Forum (EISF)
- Buth, P. (2010) *Crisis Management of Critical incidents*, European Interagency Security Forum (EISF)
- IRIN. (2013) *Aid worker kidnappings rise, fuelling debate over ransom*. March  
<http://www.irinnews.org/report/97697/aid-worker-kidnappings-rise-fuelling-debate-over-ransom>
- ODI. (2010) *Good Practice Review: Operational security management in violent environments*, Humanitarian Practice Network. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- UNODC. (2013). Statistics on crime, Kidnapping (Downloaded on 29/07/2013).  
<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime.html> .
- Wallis, D (2012) *The Business of Dealing With Kidnapping Abroad*. 2 May.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/03/business/kidnapping-becomes-a-growing-travel-risk.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

Adele Harmer, Abby Stoddard, Kate Toth

October 2013

## Humanitarian Outcomes

[www.humanitarianoutcomes.org](http://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org)

[www.aidworkersecurity.org](http://www.aidworkersecurity.org)

