

Information from the European Interagency Security Forum (EISF) for organisations with staff working abroad in high risk areas

EISF

EISF was created to encourage a more prominent role for security management among international humanitarian operations. It provides a space for NGOs to collectively improve security management practice, and facilitates exchange between members and other bodies such as the UN, institutional donors and research institutions.

EISF fosters dialogue, coordination, and documentation of current security management practice through biannual meetings, workshops, research, and contextual alerts.

Lisa Reilly is security co-ordinator of the EISF and she provided the following information and advice that could be useful for organisations with staff working abroad in high risk areas.

Information

EISF's membership is 95% NGOs and 5% think tanks. Universities cannot become full members, but could be associate members. The benefits of membership include ad hoc information sharing (for example members can contact the secretariat or other network members to find information on a particular country or location or on security policies and documents).

EISF provide security alerts to non-members, which it is possible to sign up for. Other security alerts come from OSAC (US Government Service), Oxford Research Group and INSI (useful for independent travellers).

Basic personal security courses tailored to an organisation's needs are a good idea. If individuals are travelling to particularly dangerous areas they could have specific hostile environment training.

Organisations should discuss risk thresholds at board level and should have the following documents:

- a) Crisis management documents. These should deal with risk levels and probabilities and should be linked to the board's decisions on risk thresholds;
- b) A threat assessment document for each country. This should consider the type of traveller and the resources available if things went wrong.

c) Statements of practice and contingency plans. These documents should be in place before travel takes place.

Organisations should triangulate risk information; they should not rely on in-country risk information from one source alone. Organisations should also consider external advice or advice from other actors operating in the area (e.g MSF), as the local organisations that research institutions rely on might say an area was safe to enable research to be undertaken when actually the area was risky.

A [paper](#) by the Security Management Initiative is useful on the question of when management can be sued in relation to risk assessment¹. In this regard decisions on risk should be carefully documented in addition to the sources of information drawn upon when decisions are made.

Information on employees' next of kin and passwords should be easily accessible in the event of a problem.

¹ Please see the fifth document down for an English version