eisf

Family First

Liaison and support during a crisis

eisf

EUROPEAN INTERAGENCY SECURITY FORUM

Contents

European Interagency Security Forum (EISF)

The European Interagency Security Forum (EISF) is an independent platform for Security Focal Points from European humanitarian agencies operating overseas. EISF members are committed to improving the safety and security of relief operations and staff in a way that allows greater access to and impact for crisis-affected populations.

Key to EISF's work is the development of research and tools which promote awareness, preparedness and good practice.

EISF is an independent entity currently funded by the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and member contributions.

www.eisf.eu

Acknowledgements

Disclaimer

Abbreviations

CMT Crisis Management Team

FLO Family Liaison Officer

HR Human Resources

ICT Information and Communication Technology

Medevac Medical evacuation

PEP Post-exposure Prophylaxis

POL Proof of Life

R+R Rest and Recuperation

Introduction

Why 'Family First'?

'Having a family member or close friend kidnapped, injured or killed is a frightening experience. A victim's family will need support, information and advice.' [i]

If an aid worker is in the news, the chances are it is because he or she has been injured, kidnapped or killed. Critical incidents involving field workers have increased in recent years. According to the European Union,

More than 800 [aid workers] have been killed trying to deliver aid to those in need in the last decade and another 1300 have been kidnapped or wounded. Over the same period there has been a three-fold increase in security incidents where humanitarians have been targeted. [ii]

When critical incidents do occur, however, they affect not only the workers directly involved, but also their family and friends. Increasingly, agencies are recognising that their obligations to their field staff also extend to families who, though directly affected by events, have sometimes been overlooked in the midst of a crisis response.

Providing family liaison and support can be vital in the resolution of a crisis, ensuring that the agency can lead a coordinated response, information is effectively managed, and the agency's duty of care obligations to the staff member and their family are fulfilled.

'Family First' offers generic guidance on the planning and provision of family liaison and support in a crisis involving one or more members of national or international staff. Support to a field worker's family is a pillar of crisis management [iii] and a component of good corporate ethics and risk management.

What is family liaison and support?

'We cannot predict, but we can be prepared.' [iv]

'Family liaison and support' refers to the information, advice and support an agency provides to a field worker's family during and after a crisis.

Agencies will take different approaches in different circumstances but common aims should be preparedness, the provision of timely, sensitive and professional support, as well as the management of information which may help in resolving the crisis.

Who should read 'Family First'?

EISF good practice guides are intended as tools for managers and practitioners. 'Family First' is aimed at those in headquarters, regional and field offices who are likely to be involved in leading, planning and providing crisis management and family support following a critical incident.

Security and Human Resources managers are normally among those closely involved. As Table 1 indicates, however, crisis management is a cross-cutting issue for organisations hence a range of leaders and managers across the agency are likely to contribute to family liaison and support.

While responsibility for providing this support will be shared among different specialists, agencies are increasingly seconding a dedicated staff member at the start of a crisis to liaise with, support and signpost assistance for, the field worker's family. This staff member is generally the first point of contact for the family within the agency. NGOs use different titles for staff in this role, for example, Family Focal Point, Family Liaison Contact, Family Liaison Officer, etc. This document uses the term Family Liaison Officer (FLO).

The contents of this document are generic. They should be adapted to an agency's needs and circumstances and may be used as a checklist. Key concepts and definitions of terms used are listed in the Glossary.

Wider aspects of personnel security and crisis management lie outside the scope of 'Family First'. Information on these topics can be found at **http://www.eisf.eu**

How to use 'Family First'

The guide is divided between three stages of Planning, Provision and Review of family liaison and support. At the start of each chapter, a navigational chart highlights in purple which stage of the process will be discussed.

Throughout the text:

- crucial points and tips are indicated with
- expert accounts are indicated with
- tables are indicated with
- cross references to other parts of the guide are indicated with ▶
- hyperlinks are provided for easy navigation

At the end of this guide are a number of practical tools. These are referenced where applicable with the tool icon shown below:

Tool 1: Policy and procedure: some issues to consider
Tool 2: Sample information for a personal file
Tool 3: Proof of Life
Tool 4: Some do's and don'ts for a Family Liaison Officer

The tools are also available in editable format from www.eisf.eu
Tools need to be modified to suit each organisation and context.

Planning

'Once they are needed it is too late to start writing the policy and considering the 'what if's.' [v]

For swift and effective liaison and support during a crisis, response and procedures should be planned before it occurs. For many agencies family liaison is part of critical incident, crisis or risk management. Whatever the process, areas in dark purple below should be addressed when planning.

Leadership

Policy and procedure	Personnel	Resources and partners

Provision

Review
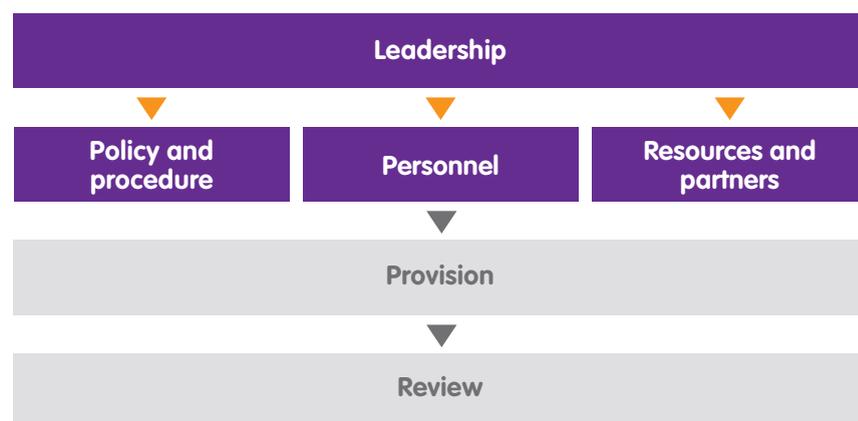
1.1	Leadership
1.2	**Policy and procedure**
1.3	**Personnel**
1.3.1	**Terms of reference for a Family Liaison Officer**
1.3.2	**Identifying and screening candidates**
1.3.3	**Training candidates**
1.3.4	**Building support and aftercare for the Family Liaison Officer**
1.4	**Resources and partners**

1.1 Leadership

'I was working for a firm in London on the day of the bombing. The director was away and I was in charge. He had done a Crisis Management Plan. I was never so grateful to anyone.' [vi]

A crisis is a source of corporate risk. By definition, it requires leadership and coordination from senior management.[vii] Senior managers should therefore take the lead in planning and ensure organisational preparedness.

1.2 Policy and procedure

'Organisations must have internal protocols, clear understanding of what constitutes an incident or a crisis, and standard procedures for activating the Crisis Management Team and family liaison and support.' [viii]

Use the planning phase to develop, document and share policy and procedure on local and international family liaison and support. This process will involve directors and managers responsible for security, international programmes, HR and staff health.

1.3 Personnel

Family liaison and support is an organisational responsibility. Personnel from different departments and regions are likely to play a part in effective provision of family support during a crisis and contribute to its planning.

In addition, at least one person will be dedicated to liaising with and supporting the family of the field worker(s) directly involved. Use the planning phase to:

- Develop terms of reference for a Family Liaison Officer (FLO)
- Identify and screen candidates for the role
- Train candidates
- Build support and aftercare for the FLO.

Tool 1

Policy and procedure: some issues to consider

Table 1

Agency personnel roles in planning family liaison and suppport

1.3.1 Terms of reference for a Family Liaison Officer

Each crisis, context, family and agency is unique. In practice, an FLO's tasks are likely to include but not be confined to these:

- Be the bearer of bad news (although often not 'first contact' with family)
- Act as sole channel of communication between agency and family
- Establish and maintain regular contact
- Keep the family informed about what the agency is doing to resolve the crisis
- Be on call 24 hours a day if a field worker is missing, abducted or kidnapped
- Ensure the family knows what to do
  - if contacted by press and media
  - if advised to close down social networking sites
  - if contacted by kidnappers
- Arrange for salary payments and/or hardship funding
- Advise on / arrange / provide other support for the family
- Keep records of discussions held, decisions made and action taken
- Convey requests and information between the family and Crisis Management Team
- Liaise with others involved in crisis response and resolution
- Assist in meeting the needs and wishes of a bereaved family
- Handle and share information, taking into account sometimes conflicting requirements such as
  - transparency
  - security
  - data protection[ix]
  - wishes of the field worker

Tool 2

Sample information for a personal file

The FLO should identify the external stakeholders relevant to the family. The CMT should determine who, within the organisation, is best placed to liaise with these stakeholders, and if required, empower the FLO to do so.

However, the CMT must remain in control of operational strategy and retains ultimate responsibility for ensuring correct lines line of communications.

Table 1 Agency personnel roles in planning family liaison and support

Personnel	Possible role in planning
CEO Senior Manager	- Lead on policy development, resourcing and crisis management planning - Learn how to deliver bad news
Security	- Play major role in crisis management planning, policy development and security of information - May identify potential FLOs for standby rota - Ensure field worker is briefed on security risks
HR	- Play major role in policy and internal communication - May identify potential FLOs for standby rota - Advise line managers on release and shadowing of FLOs - Arrange training, staff support and shadowing - Ensure field worker is briefed on security risks - Advise field worker on family support policy - Ensure field worker personal information files are up to date - Ensure agency policy / procedures comply with duty of care
Press office	- Advise on how to plan for and respond to media approaches to family
Occupational health / psychosocial support	- Screen potential FLOs - Play major role in policy development - Advise on psychosocial support for family, children, FLOs other staff
Field worker (+ accompanying dependents)	- Provide personal information, Proof of Life and Emergency Contact details - Let Emergency Contacts know that their details have been given to the agency for use in a crisis and in what circumstances the agency might contact them directly.
Premises management	- Allocate temporary work space and equipment (computers, printers, phones, etc.) for use by FLOs - Arrange for out of hours office access and catering
ICT	- Advise on security of electronic information and closing of social media sites
Accounts Salary	- Protocol on salary payments to field worker / family - Arrangements for rapid authorisation / provision of cash float
Travel	- May be required to make travel arrangements for FLOs / family
Other departments Advisors & Partners	- May provide advice on legal, religious, insurance, repatriation issues.

1.3.2 Identifying and screening candidates

'It you think you will be good at this role, there is a likelihood that you're the wrong person!' [x]

In most agencies the FLO is from an internal pool of candidates on standby. In some cases he or she may be selected from an external rota of candidates who are trained and screened and know the agency and sector. The job of an FLO is a demanding one and all candidates should be screened by an occupational health or psychosocial support advisor before being accepted for the rota.

In general, a successful candidate is likely to be:

- Familiar with the agency or sector
- At mid- to senior- management level or equivalent
- Available full-time, whether externally appointed or seconded from within the agency
- A strong communicator
- A good listener
- Capable of empathy
- Resilient: able to work with families in an emotional and stressful situation
- Capable of representing the agency and the family
- Able to build and maintain trust and confidence
- Able to prioritise tasks
- Prepared to be on call 24/7 if necessary
- Able to work in uncertainty
- Able to respect and maintain confidentiality
- Good at record-keeping

1.3.3 Training candidates

'[Staff in Jakarta] had already undergone some training and simulation exercises related to a terrorist strike. This quickly and easily lent itself to a response to natural disasters.' [xi]

Depending on his / her background, an FLO will need training (including workshops, simulations, coaching, mentoring, briefing, etc.) on, for example:

- The agency's family liaison and support policy and procedures
- How the Crisis Management Team works
- What decision-making / budgetary authority the FLO has
- Personal safety and risk assessment, for example when travelling / visiting the family
- How to deliver bad news
- Family support in diverse cultures
- Management of sensitive / confidential information
- Agency / internal sources of family support for example press office, ICT, salary administration.

- External sources of support
- Exit scenarios and strategies
- How to manage personal stress and avoid burn-out

In some agencies it is considered good practice for a chief executive or other senior manager to break bad news to the family. In these cases, the news breaker should undertake training for this task and ensure s/he reinforces the role of the FLO who remains the primary channel of two-way communication.

1.3.4 Building support and aftercare for the Family Liaison Officer

'[There was] no follow-up counselling. [I was] waking up in the middle of the night with bad dreams. No one was involved once the temporary duty was over. Some sort of recognition not only for the officers but also for their families would have been welcome.' [xii]

'It's very important to provide support to the supporters. The pressure you can be under is huge.' [xiii]

> **Good screening, selection and training contribute to resilience and safety. Debriefing and counselling for FLOs should be available as needed during deployment, and should be mandatory once a year for staff on standby, and at the end of each deployment.**

Consider:

- Deploying FLOs in pairs: this can reduce the pressure on individual staff and provide cover for breaks
- Rotating the role between a group of trained FLOs
- Passing the role to an outsourced service, for example:
  – if a crisis becomes protracted
  – if there is no appropriate FLO in the country where the incident has occurred
  – if the agency has no other staff in the country where the family is based

However, any changes should be discussed with the family to ensure their continued trust in the organisation and the Crisis Management Team.

'London's Metropolitan Police [Service] deploys FLOs in pairs. This helps to maintain the necessary distance between the family and the FLO, improve resilience, ensure better notes and provide back-up. Is this feasible for NGOs?' [xiv]

Table 2

Providing family liaison and support

1.4 Resources and partners

Resources may include money, time, space and equipment.

- Money for:
  - additional staff to shadow/cover the FLO's normal role
  - training of FLO and shadow staff
  - psychosocial and/or psychological support for family and FLO
  - travel
  - equipment
- Time for:
  - training
  - shadowing
- Space for:
  - FLO to work with confidential information and without interruption
- Equipment for:
  - computer and printer for FLO
  - mobile phones for FLO and family
  - vehicle hire

Partners are individuals and organisations that can provide the agency with resources or expert advice and services. They may include:

- Advisors on religious customs and rites
- Counselling organisations
- Government
- Hostage crisis management experts
- Media/communications specialists
  - Medevac service providers
  - Occupational health advisors

Family liaison and support can be very resource-intensive. However, agencies should consider the costs of *not* providing family liaison, which might include negative impacts on crisis management, staff welfare, and the agency profile.

2 Provision

'Minor delays in the provision of support can assume gargantuan dimensions and result in emotional responses that are detrimental to the resolution of the crisis.' [xv]

Leadership		
Policy and procedure	Personnel	Resources and partners

Provision

Review
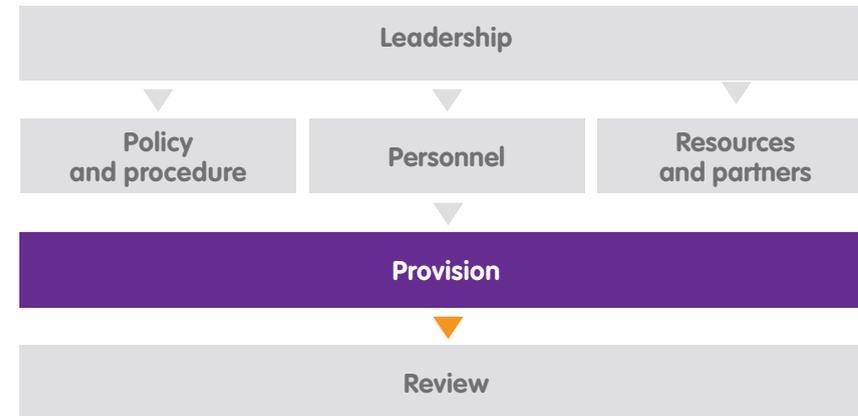
2.1	Identify the Emergency Contact
2.2	Select the news bearer and Family Liaison Officer
2.3	Break the news without delay
2.4	Explain the role of the Family Liaison Officer
2.5	Assess and meet the family's immediate needs
2.6	Set up a contact schedule with the family
2.7	The family and the Crisis Management Team
2.8	Information flow
2.9	Other internal and external services/advisers
2.10	Written records
2.11	Exit strategy

2.1 Identify the Emergency Contact

- Identify the Emergency Contact named in the field worker's personal information file
- Check the field worker's stated wishes, for example, in case of:
  – sexual assault or rape
  – an Emergency Contact who is in poor health
  – a culture where it is inappropriate for a stranger to break bad news

> **The field worker may have identified different Emergency Contacts for different types of critical incident, e.g. sexual assault or abduction.**

Tool 2

Sample information for a personal file

Be aware that family structures are not always straightforward. In some cases, a family may be split, for example, because the parents of a field worker have separated. In others, a field worker's partner may be unknown to his / her relatives or not recognised by them as a partner.

A crisis can bring a family together or further divide it. If it emerges that a field worker's family is split, the FLO must assess how news can be delivered to the different members and whether additional family liaison and support and/or an additional FLO is needed.

The roles and tasks of leaders, managers and the FLO involved in provision of family liaison and support are summarised opposite.

Table 2 **Providing family liaison and support** – summary

Leaders	Crisis Management Team /HR	Family Liaison Officer
Select news bearer	Assess needs. Request news bearer and FLO	
	• Identify Emergency Contact • Select FLO	
	Brief news bearer and FLO	
• Break news to Emergency Contact without delay • Introduce FLO to the family	Ensure special expertise, e.g. media, is available to FLO and family	• Visit family • Explain own role • Assess and meet immediate needs
	Ensure support is available during and after deployment for FLO	
		Set up regular contact schedule with family
	Provide regular briefing for FLO to share with family	Set up liaison schedule with Crisis Management Team
Receive regular briefing on family liaison and support	Provide regular briefing on family liaison and support to leaders	
Ensure other internal and external advisers / service providers are available as required	Manage other internal and external advisers / service providers	Facilitate contact with other internal and external advisers / service providers
		Maintain and log contact with family
	With FLO, prepare exit strategy	With CMT/HR, prepare exit strategy and aftercare for family
Break news to Emergency Contact without delay.	Ensure aftercare is available for family and FLO	In line with exit strategy, take leave of family / hand over at end of deployment
	Conduct after-action review	Participate in after-action review
Aftercare and collective emotional debrief	**Aftercare and collective emotional debrief**	**End-of-deployment aftercare for FLO and collective emotional debrief**

2.2 Select the news bearer and Family Liaison Officer

'The biggest learning for us is that you can't do family liaison and do your day job. It just doesn't work like that. It's something you do all day every day.' [xvi]

A trained news bearer should first be selected from among senior managers.

When selecting an FLO, the agency may need to consider whether, in addition to generic competences, the FLO:
- Has a skill-set or experience appropriate to the current crisis
- Is free to travel abroad
- Will be able to travel safely in the area where the family lives
- Is a native or near-native speaker of the family's language
- Is familiar with cultural and religious norms and dress codes

A potential FLO should not be selected if s/he:
- Is undergoing or recovering from personal stress or a major life event
- Has a prior personal involvement with the family
- Has a personal or a poor working relationship with the field worker
- Cannot be spared from his or her normal job

2.3 Break the news without delay

'[Sarah] picked up a phone message… conveying sympathy after hearing about "the tragedy" on television. They turned on their TV set to find, scrolling across the bottom of the screen, the words: "Activist killed in Gaza Strip." Sarah thought: if it's Rachel, why haven't Mum and Dad called me? Then she thought: they don't know.' [xvii]

'A UK police chief has said she regrets that the father of an Indian student killed on Boxing Day found out about the murder on Facebook. [She] confirmed that the victim's father read a Facebook post before officers were able to deliver the news.' [xviii]

> **Do not delay breaking the news: whenever possible, the family should hear first from the agency.**
>
> **WHY?** The relationship between the family and organisation will be affected by how the family first receives the news. If trust is broken at the beginning, effective communication for a successful resolution of the crisis will be difficult.

> **Aim to tell the family face-to-face: use a telephone call as the next best option.**
>
> **With the spread of mobile phone technology and social media, the time available for breaking the news face-to-face is likely to be limited.**

- Give the news bearer as much information as possible. S/he should know:
  – the facts the agency has
  – what media reports are saying
  – as much as possible about the field worker involved
  – relevant organisation policy and procedures
- Have the news bearer and FLO develop the message together
- Have the news bearer and FLO visit the Emergency Contact together
- Break the news to the Emergency Contact named in the field worker's personal information file unless otherwise advised
- Tell the family what the agency is doing to resolve the situation
- Speak to the Emergency Contact even if s/he has already heard the news from other sources
- Explain why the agency is contacting them now

Tool 2

Sample information for a personal file

2.4 Explain the role of the Family Liaison Officer

The FLO should explain to the family what his/her role is, how and when s/he can be contacted and what s/he can and cannot do for the family. Some agencies provide an information pack containing the FLO's contact details and those of others in the organisation and the country who can provide specialised support. [xix]

▶ *See Section 1.3.1: FLO Terms of reference*

Tool 4

Some do's and don'ts for a Family Liaison Officer

2.5 Assess and meet the family's immediate needs

Immediate needs might include:
- Advice on dealing with the media
- Advice on closing down social networking sites
- Advice/script in case the family is contacted by hostage-takers or the field worker
- Help to break the news to others in a split family
- A mobile phone, pre-loaded with credit and the FLO's phone numbers
- A pre-paid phone card
- A hardship payment

2.6 Set up a contact schedule with the family

- Aim to have a single point of contact within the family
- Give the FLO's direct line and mobile numbers
- Establish the frequency and time of contact
- Maintain the contact schedule even if there is no new information to share
- Assure the family that if there is news outside these hours the FLO will inform them
- Assure the family that the FLO is on call 24 hours if a field worker is missing, abducted or kidnapped

2.7 The family and the Crisis Management Team

The FLO is not normally a member of the CMT. In this way, s/he can focus fully on the needs of the field worker's family. However, the FLO provides a channel for information between family members and the CMT.

▶ *See Figure 1: Providing family liaison and support*

The FLO and the CMT's information manager should liaise to:
- Pass information/requests from the family to the CMT
- Convey information/requests from the CMT to the family
- Let the family know about media statements before the agency issues them

Figure 1 Providing family liaison and support
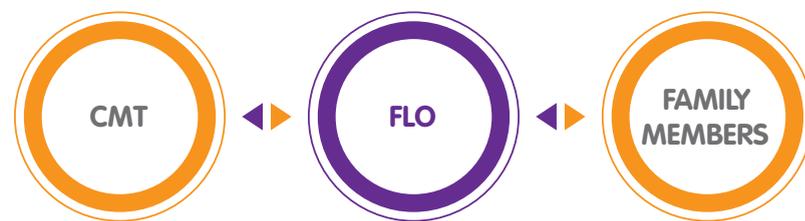
2.8 Information flow

There is no single answer for what information should be shared in all situations. It is important to remember that families or family members in the country or region where the crisis occurs will have their own information networks, which may be more extensive than those of the agency. The CMT must give consideration to:

- The relationship between the family and the FLO
- Building and maintaining trust between the organisation, the FLO and the family
- The possible impact on crisis management if information is shared by the family
- What is likely to come into the public domain from other sources

> **It is important for relations between the FLO and the family that the FLO can be completely honest. An FLO may find it difficult not to share pertinent information with the family, and if the family feel that the FLO is withholding information the trust between them will be broken.**

Information shared with the family is effectively in the public domain. The CMT must therefore take the decision on which information can or cannot be shared with the FLO.

It is important to consider the justification for not sharing a piece of information with the family. The family has a right to as much information as possible, and the agency should aim for maximum transparency. Information which reaches the Crisis Management Team may include unconfirmed, untrue or confidential details (for example, information relating to a hostage situation or negotiations).

Nevertheless, agencies must be realistic about information control. Premature or inaccurate media reports not only hinder response but are also sources of distress for the family. In this case, it may be better if the family is informed by the FLO first, rather than through public sources.

'Relatives of two British aid workers held hostage in Chechnya have reacted with caution to new reports that the captives are soon to be released. According to the Russian Itar-Tass news agency, the Chechen paramilitary opposition leader has said the couple are on the verge of being set free. However, the sister of one of the captives who has been at the forefront of a campaign for the pair's release, described the report as 'unsubstantiated rumour'. 'For half an hour I really thought something might happen but the Foreign Office checked it out and told us it was nothing more than a rumour', she said. 'It is always desperately depressing because secretly inside your hopes are lifted, and then you learn it is just speculation. So we know now not to get too excited.' [xx]

Revealing information to others outside the family may impact negatively on the outcome of the crisis. Rumours and media reports from any source can reveal personal details that endanger life or make negotiation harder. The family should therefore be strongly encouraged to minimise the sharing of information.

▶ *See Figure 2: Possible effects of media interest*

In some cases, there has been a deliberate strategy of maintaining a high media profile. However, if this is the case, it must be carefully managed and coordinated.

> **Families should always think carefully before talking to the media. In most cases, it is not advisable to speak to the media because of the potentially negative impact media coverage can have on the hostage. It can raise the 'value' of the hostage, especially in kidnap for ransom cases, which can, in turn, prolong the negotiation process.[xxi]**

Figure 2   **Possible effect of media interest in a hostage crisis**

The situation escalates

Media interest increases

Public interest increases

Hostage becomes more valuable
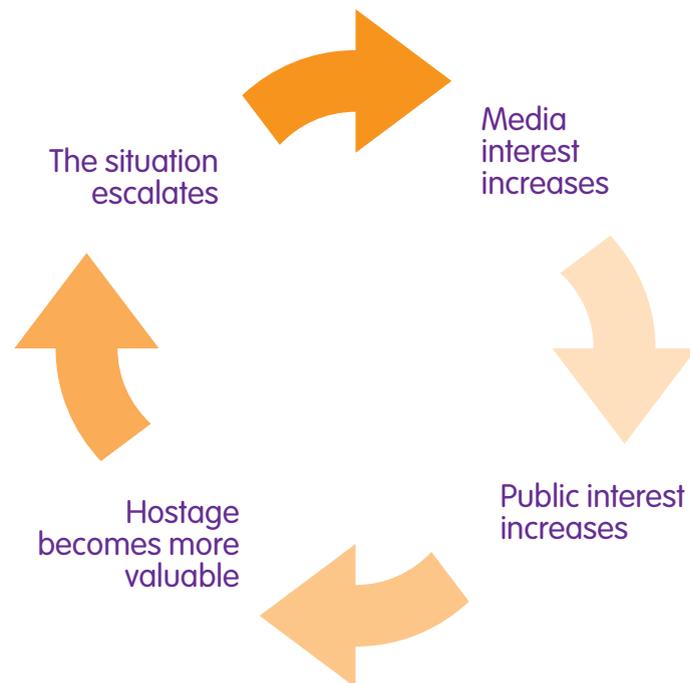
2.9   Other internal and external services/advisers

At the family's request, the FLO should arrange for contact to be made with other relevant advisers and sources of support inside and outside the agency, for example:

- Social services
- Press office
- Hostage UK
- Counsellors
- Child support
- Bereavement counselling
- Government Foreign Office

2.10   Written records

Throughout the deployment, the FLO should maintain written records of all conversations with the family and decisions made. Records should be securely stored. They may be needed by the CMT, if support is handed over to another FLO, or if a claim against the agency is made. They are also important to ensure lessons learnt are captured in the final review.

The family may find it helpful to have updates provided in writing, as they are likely to forget details. The FLO should agree with the family which conversations to confirm in this way.

> **The family may find it helpful to keep a journal to give to the field worker on their return.**
>
> **WHY?** **The journal shows the field worker that their family was thinking of him / her during the time apart and can explain any family developments, assisting the reunion.**

2.11 Exit strategy

The exit strategy needs to be agreed and explained early on in the response.

- Consider what the agency will do if:
  – The crisis is resolved and the field worker returns
  – The field worker dies
  – The crisis remains unresolved
- Explain to the family what the agency can do in each case
- Discuss the field worker's and the family's wishes
- Liaise with news bearer on delivery of news
- Ensure written records are complete and up to date
- Include important dates in written records for, for example, memorial services
- If required, hand over to another FLO or service, and take leave of the family
- Whatever the outcome, ensure continuity within the agency so that, even in the long term, on-going family liaison and support or aftercare are available to the family.

③ Review

Leadership		
Policy and procedure	Personnel	Resources and partners

Provision
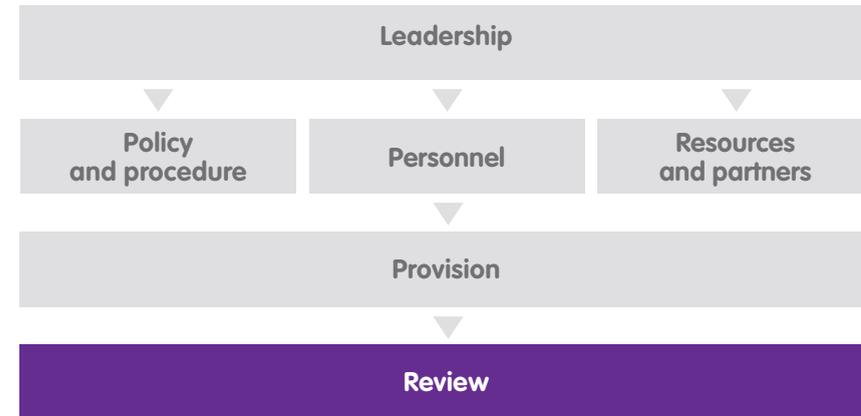
Review

Following response to any crisis, a review should take place. Operational focus should be on assessing what happened and how the CMT and the wider agency responded to the situation rather than individual responsibilities.

Depending on the agency and the situation, internal reviews of family liaison and support planning and provision may take place either:

- at the end of the FLO's deployment
- after the CMT has finished its work, as part of after-action review

Field workers and family members who were involved in the crisis may wish to participate in the review or in briefing those planning future family liaison but they should not be pressed to re-live events if unwilling or unready. Review findings should be documented, and recommendations shared in order to strengthen future planning of family liaison and support.[xxii]

Tool 1 Policy and procedure: some issues to consider [xxv]

'The organisation must have internal protocols, clear understanding of what constitutes an incident or a crisis, and standard procedures for activating the CMT/FLO.' [xxiv]

- **What is the purpose of family liaison and support in your agency?**
  For example:
  – commitment to staff and their families
  – minimising distress
  – agency ethics and values
  – effectiveness
  – legal duty of care
  – local / international reputation
  – compliance with donor / insurer requirements
  – other

- **In what circumstances will the agency offer family liaison and support?**
  For example:
  – illness
  – accident
  – crisis

- **Which department(s) will 'own' the policy?**
  For example:
  – security
  – HR
  – staff health
  – psychosocial support
  – others

- **Which office, team or department will request and select an FLO?**

- **Which procedures will be outsourced to partners?**

- **What is the agency's policy on payment of ransoms?**

- **What is the agency's policy on salary payments to staff / family of staff unable to work in a crisis?**

- **How will family liaison and support be funded? Are there items that may not be adequately funded by insurers?**
  For example:
  – family liaison and support for national staff
  – hardship payments to family
  – additional R&R or psychosocial support for family / FLO

- **How will policy be shared (transparency vs. security of information)?**

- **Are there time or financial limits on provision of family liaison and support in a crisis?**

- **Does the agency have procedures in place in case of the death of a field worker?**

- **What is the exit strategy?**

- **How will policy serve the needs of staff in regional and country offices, and local or third country staff?**

- **Will policy and procedures go immediately global or begin in high-risk regions/countries?**

- **How does policy conform to voluntary codes?**

- **How do procedures comply with data protection law and good practice?**

- **How robust is policy in terms of duty of care and corporate risk management?**

- **How/when will policy and procedures be updated and evaluated?**

Tool 2 Sample information for a personal file [xxv]

'The wishes of survivors and the bereaved should also be established and followed regarding the sharing of any information with their family or others known to them.' [xxvi]

1. **Full name and nickname**

2. **Job title**

3. **Nationality, passport number, age, date of birth**

4. **Mobile phone number(s)**

5. **Colour photo**

6. **Physical characteristics**
   a   Height
   b   Colour of hair
   c   Colour of eyes
   d   Distinguishing marks
   e   Jewellery habitually worn

7. **Health information**
   a   Blood group
   b   Ongoing medical treatment
   c   Vaccinations
   d   Prescribed drugs
   e   Allergies
   f   Attitude to blood transfusion
   g   Attitude to Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)
   h   Attitude to emergency contraception

8. **Religion**

9. **Proof of Life (PoL) questions and answers in a sealed envelope**

Tool 3
Proof of Life

10. **Sample of handwriting**

11. **Languages spoken**

12. **Passwords to social networking sites, for example Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn**

13. **Emergency contact: person to be contacted in case of a critical incident**
    a   Name
    b   Relationship to field worker
    c   Date of birth
    d   Is the emergency contact the next of kin?
    e   Private address
    f   Work address
    g   Private telephone
    h   Work telephone
    i   Mobile phone
    j   E-mail

> **Have more than one emergency contact, with order of preference that they should be contacted. There may be different Emergency Contacts listed for different types of critical incident.**

14. **Additional personal information the field worker / dependent would like to add, for example,**
    a   Does s/he consent to disclosure of information about rape or sexual assault?
    b   In case of the field worker's death, should the agency use this Emergency Contact or an intermediary?

> **The personal file needs to be regularly updated. An individual's preferences or attitudes and may change following a critical incident.**

15. **Next of kin: (if next of kin is not the named Emergency Contact)**

a   Names
b   Relationship to field worker
c   Date of birth
d   Private address
e   Work address
f   Private telephone
g   Work telephone
b   Mobile phone
c   E-mail

16. **Financial dependent(s): (person(s) normally supported by field worker)**

a   Name
b   Relationship to field worker
c   Date of birth
d   Is the financial dependent the next of kin?
e   Private address
f   Work address
g   Private telephone
h   Work telephone
i   Mobile phone
j   E-mail

17. **Date information collected**

18. **Consent to store personal information for use in case of critical incident**

> **Additional forms should be completed for each person accompanying the field worker.**

Tool 3 **Proof of Life**

Proof of Life (PoL)[xxvii] is used to confirm that a captive is alive and enables verification of captors' claims that they are holding him / her. The best proof of life is a phone call. Other proofs include the correct answer to a PoL question and a sample of handwriting.

A PoL question is one that only an individual and his / her close family and friends could answer. PoL questions should be collected before a field worker is deployed, and stored within the personal information file in a sealed envelope.

The field worker should be encouraged to share PoL questions with the emergency contact prior to deployment so that this issue does not come as a shock to the family during a crisis.

Choose questions with answers that:
- Are available to a small group only
- Are easy for the hostage to remember in times of stress.
- Recall happy times and lift the hostage's morale, for example,
  – What was the name of your childhood holiday home in Scotland?
  – What was your first car?
  – Where did you meet your husband / wife?
  – What is your brother's / sister's nickname?

Avoid questions on topics which a captor may find provocative, for example, about:
- Religion
- Politics
- A lifestyle that might be viewed as 'decadent'
- A previous job, for example with military connections

Avoid questions to which the answers are easily found on social networking sites, for example:
- Date of birth
- First school
- Name of boyfriend / girlfriend

If more than one hostage is being held, the PoL questions must refer to a time before they knew one another. If not, one hostage may be pressed into guessing the answer for another's proof of life.

If PoL questions are unavailable, the Emergency Contact and/or family should be asked to help. This can also help build a relationship and enhance trust with the family.

Tool 4 **Some do's and don'ts for an FLO** ^{xxviii}

Do

- Ensure that you clarify your role with the family even if the news bearer has introduced you.

- Work with the press office / ICT department and the family to encourage closure of the field worker's social networking sites. This should be done as soon as possible.

- Be prepared to listen and learn.

- Be empathetic not sympathetic. Be a sounding board not a therapist.

- Be aware of the family's cultural, religious / personal beliefs and traditions. *The Needs of Faith Communities in Major Emergencies*^{xxix} may be helpful.

- Only make commitments you can deliver.

- Make sure you do deliver on those commitments, for example, be available to call when you say you will.

- Aim to establish the family's trust early on. If possible and appropriate, invite the family to visit the office to meet the people dealing with the incident. In this case, consider what information may be on view and make sure all staff are aware that the family will be visiting.

- Ask the family what they want to know. Some families want every detail, some only certain information.

- If more than one field worker is involved in the crisis, give each family identical information, where doing so would not breach either field worker's privacy.

- Use the same words when delivering messages to different families. Subtle differences may be analysed by families looking for underlying meaning in the terms used.

> **Different families may ask for different levels of information, but be aware that they may talk to each other.**

- Know that it is OK to say 'I don't know' or 'I will have to go and find out' in response to a question. Always ensure that you do follow up and come back with an answer.

- Ensure that you respond verbally and in writing to each of the family's questions.

- Keep records secure.

- Encourage the family to share information with as few people as possible.

- Use clear language, avoiding jargon and euphemisms

- At the request of the family, accompany them to the government office or other agencies to ensure a coordinated response.

- Call on internal advisers, for example salary administration, to answer specific questions.

- Seek advice from the CMT to minimise the possibility of damage to negotiations if the family starts its own investigation or opens a channel of communication with perpetrators.

- Ensure that you keep accurate records of all your conversations with the family. Agree with the CMT / HR when records should be shared.

- Ask occupational health for help when you need it.

Don't

- Get involved in family politics.

- Lie or make promises of any kind.

- Raise the family's expectations or reassure them that 'everything will be alright': you cannot guarantee this will be the case.

Sources of further information

Planning

Centre for Safety and Development (2011). *Crisis Management Procedures.*
http://www.centreforsafety.org

Edward Kemp and Maarten Martelbach (2011). *Can you get sued? Legal liability of international humanitarian aid organisation towards their staff.*
Security Management Initiative. http://www.securitymanagementinitiative.org

Christine Williamson and Roger Darby (2011). *The importance of HR management in supporting staff working in hazardous environments.*
People In Aid. http://www.peopleinaid.org/

ACPOS (2011). *ACPOS Manual of Guidance on Family Liaison.*
Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland.
http://www.acpos.police.uk

Pete Buth (2010). *Crisis Management of Critical Incidents.*
European Interagency Security Forum. http://www.eisf.eu

Humanitarian Practice Network (2010). *Operational security management in violent environments.* Good Practice Review 8 (Revised Edition) ODI.
http://www.odihpn.org

R R Donnelley (2009). *Care for People Affected by Emergencies.*
The Scottish Government. http://www.scotland.gov.uk

UK Home Office and Cabinet Office (2005). *The Needs of Faith Communities in Major Emergencies: Some Guidelines.*
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/132745/faith_communities.pdf

London Metropolitan Police automated helpline
'Delivering the message' 0800 032 9990

Hostage UK (2010). *A family's guide to handling the media during and after a kidnapping.* Hostage UK (2010). A family's guide to coping during a kidnapping. http://www.hostageuk.org

Humanitarian Practice Network (2010). *Operational security management in violent environments.* Good Practice Review 8 (Revised Edition) ODI.
http://www.odihpn.org

Mark Allison, Clayton Consultants, Inc. (June 2010). *Kidnap response: immediate priorities for aid agencies.* Humanitarian Exchange Magazine, Issue 47. Humanitarian Practice Network, ODI http://www.odihpn.org

Pete Buth (2010). *Abduction Management Briefing Paper.*
European Interagency Security Forum. http://www.eisf.eu

Eureste (2008). *Meeting Needs in a Crisis.* Croix Rouge de Belgique.
http://www.eureste.org

Bob Macpherson, Christine Persaud and Norman Sheehan (March 2008). *Experienced Advice Crucial in Response to Kidnappings.*
Monday Developments. InterAction. http://www.redr.org.uk

Safer Access (2008). *Managing a Kidnap Event.* Safer Access.
http://www.eisf.eu

Disaster Action (2006). *Working with Disaster Survivors and the Bereaved: Code of Practice on Privacy, Anonymity & Confidentiality.*
http://www.disasteraction.org.uk

People In Aid (2003). Principle 7: Health, safety and security,
People In Aid Code. http://www.peopleinaid.org

Review

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (2005). *Lessons from the Tsunami.* Office of the Inspector General Evaluation Division (ZIE). http://www.international.gc.ca/about-a_propos/oig-big/2005/evaluation/tsunami.aspx?lang=eng&view=d

ECHO (2004). Chapter 9: Learning and training, *Generic Security Guide for Humanitarian Organisations.*

HMIC Scotland (2003). *Relatively Speaking, A thematic inspection of Family Liaison in Scotland.* H. M. Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland. http://www.scotland.gov.uk

William Macpherson (1999). *Family Liaison until 6 May 1993,* Chapter 26, The Stephen Lawrence Enquiry. http://www.chronicleworld.org/archive/lawrence/sli-26.htm

Glossary

Abduction

The taking of a person against his or her will. Abduction is distinct from 'kidnapping', which implies a demand made (for example, a ransom) for the victim's return. [xxx]

▶ *See also Kidnapping*

Aftercare

This entails psychosocial and practical support (for example, additional paid leave, or special considerations during the next deployment), and administrative follow-up (insurance, contractual issues). Agencies should ensure that not only the field worker involved but also his/her family, the FLO and other staff who may have been affected by the incident are offered appropriate aftercare.

Crisis

A critical incident becomes a crisis when its nature, severity or the wider consequences for an organisation warrant a response beyond the capacity of routine programme management mechanisms and require leadership and coordination from senior management level. [xxxi] Incidents that may trigger a crisis include, for example:

- Abduction, kidnap or hostage-taking
- Arrest or detention of staff
- Bombing
- Events that cause a high degree of threat to staff
- Events that result in multiple casualties and require urgent response
- Landmine explosion
- Large-scale evacuation or medical evacuation of staff
- Loss of contact with all / part of country operations
- Major assault
- Murder, or death in suspicious circumstances
- Rape or sexual assault
- Robbery

When such incidents occur, special policies and procedures must be activated to supplement normal management capacities. These include the activation of a Crisis Management Team and the designation of a Family Liaison Officer.

Crisis Management Team (CMT)

A Crisis Management Team is activated when a critical incident or other situation is determined by senior management to be a crisis. The team may manage the crisis at headquarters or regional level. It is recommended that the Family Liaison Officer is not a member of the CMT in order that s/he can focus on the family.

Critical incident

A critical incident is an event or series of events that seriously threatens the welfare of personnel, potentially resulting in death, life-threatening injury or illness.[xxxii]

Duty of care

The duty of care is 'a legal obligation imposed on an individual or organisation requiring that they adhere to a standard of reasonable care while performing acts (or omissions) that present a reasonably foreseeable risk of harm to others.[xxxiii] Duty of care extends to national as well as international staff (and to a Family Liaison Officer employed by the agency).[xxxiv] It may extend to dependents, volunteers and consultants.[xxxv]

▶ *See also Liability*

Family

The term 'family' includes partners, parents, siblings, children, guardians, carers, friends, and others who might have a direct, close relationship with the missing, injured or deceased person.[xxxvi]

In some cases, a family may be split, for example, because the parents of a field worker have separated. In others, a field worker's partner may be unknown to his / her relatives or not recognised by them as a partner. A crisis can bring a family together or further divide it. If it emerges that a field worker's family is split, the FLO must assess how news can be delivered to the different members and whether additional family liaison and support and/or an additional FLO is needed.

Changing relationships and family dynamics mean it is important that the field worker keeps his / her personal information file up to date and enables family and friends to receive the support they may need in a crisis.

Tool 2

Sample information for a personal file

Family Liaison Officer (FLO)

A member of staff who has been trained and selected to be the channel for agency support to a family. S/he will provide two-way communication between the family and the agency in a crisis.

If more than one field worker is involved in the crisis, each family should have a designated FLO. If a family is split it is normal to appoint more than one FLO. In a protracted crisis, for example kidnapping, the first FLO may hand over to another.

▶ *See also Family*

Kidnapping

'National staff is subject to the greatest number of [criminal] abductions. An estimated 90 percent of NGO kidnappings involve national colleagues.' [xxxvii]

The forcible capture and detention of someone with the explicit purpose of obtaining something (money, materials or certain actions) in return for their life and release.

▶*See also Abduction*

Liability

'As Security Advisor I personally work closely with [our lawyers] on a number of things that come up. We have talked recently about corporate manslaughter, for example.' [xxxviii]

Being responsible for loss or damage by act or omission as required by law, and the obligation to repair and/or compensate for any loss or damage caused by that act or omission and/or other sanction imposed by a court.[xxxix]

A field worker or his/her family may be able to bring a claim for compensation against an agency if it is found to have acted in such a way that specific health and safety laws have been breached or if the agency has, through negligence, caused injury or death to the field worker.[xl] The signing by field staff of waivers or disclaimers does not guarantee legal immunity for the agency

In addition to the human costs, losing a case brought by a field worker or his/her family may prove expensive in terms of finance, staff morale and agency reputation.

Personal Information File

A file containing personal and Proof of Life (PoL) information about an individual field worker, including details of their Emergency Contact, for use only in case of a critical incident. It is essential that field workers and their dependents understand the reason for holding this information. It must be collected *before* deployment, securely stored, accessible and updated when necessary.

A Personal Information File is required for staff recruited internationally or nationally. If a member of staff is recruited locally, what is the likelihood of having a full staff profile available on him / her? Even though the hiring is done at country level, the field office remains part of the organisation, and the duty of care is still owed at the HQ level.[xli]

National staff are more likely to be kidnapped than international staff.

▶ *See also Kidnapping*

Risk management

'Risk management is typically set within the security field and actually we need to start thinking more about how risk management is taken much more seriously across the organisation.' [xlii]

Risk management refers to the coordinated activities that direct and control an organisation with regards to corporate risk (Kemp and Martelbach, 2011). [xliii] Risk management is a central part of any organisation's strategic management. It is the process whereby organisations methodically address the risks attaching to their activities with the goal of achieving sustained benefit within each activity and across the portfolio of all activities.[xliv]

References

i Hostage UK, (2010) *A family's guide to handling the media during and after a kidnapping*, p. 1, http://www.hostageuk.org/documents/MediaGuide_Feb2012.pdf.

ii Statement by EU Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva on World Humanitarian Day 2012, Brussels, 19 August 2012.

iii Pete Buth, (2010), *Crisis Management of Critical Incidents*, Briefing Paper, p. 7, EISF

iv Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, (2005), *Lessons from the Tsunami*: Review of the Response of Foreign Affairs Canada to the December 26, 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami Crisis, Office of the Inspector General, p. 57.

v IHR Solutions, *The Cost: Hostage Taking And Kidnapping*, http://www.humanrisksolutions.com.

vi Informant interview, 3 September 2012.

vii Pete Buth, (2010), *Crisis Management of Critical Incidents*, Briefing Paper, p.4, EISF.

viii Family Liaison in a Crisis Workshop, 3 May 2012, EISF.

ix Disaster Action, (2006), Working with Disaster Survivors and the Bereaved: Code of Practice on Privacy, Anonymity & Confidentiality, http://www.disasteraction.org.uk/guidance/default.htm.

x Informant interview, 21 August 2012.

xi Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, (2005), *Lessons from the Tsunami*: Review of the Response of Foreign Affairs Canada to the December 26, 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami Crisis, Office of the Inspector General, p. 32.

xii Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, (2005), *Lessons from the Tsunami*: Review of the Response of Foreign Affairs Canada to the December 26, 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami Crisis, Office of the Inspector General, p. 34.

xiii Informant interview, 21 August 2012.

xiv EISF, *Family Liaison in a Crisis Workshop*, 3 May 2012, Notes from EISF.

xv Danish Refugee Council Family Liaison and Support Guidelines, Danish Refugee Council (internal).

xvi Informant interview, 21 August 2012.

xvii Harriet Sherwood, 'Rachel Corrie's mother: "I know this won't be the end"' *The Guardian*, 26 August 2012, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/26/rachel-corrie-mother-not-end?newsfeed=true

xviii Press Association, 'Father of murdered Indian student learned of his death on Facebook', *The Guardian*, 31 December 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/dec/30/father-murdered-indian-student-facebook.

xix Oxfam GB, (October 2009), *Family Liaison Support Pack (internal)*. Contact: Heidi Carter

xx BBC Online Network, 'New hope for Chechnya hostages', 14 September, 1998.

xxi Hostage UK, (2010) *A family's guide to handling the media during and after a kidnapping*, p. 1, http://www.hostageuk.org/documents/MediaGuide_Feb2012.pdf.

xxii Humanitarian Protection Network, (2010), *Operational security management in violent environments*, Good Practice Review 8 (Revised Edition), p. 16.

xxiii Pete Buth, (2010), *Crisis Management of Critical Incidents*, Briefing Paper, EISF, p. 7.

xxiv EISF, Family Liaison in a Crisis Workshop, 3rd May 2012, Notes from EISF

xxv Sources: Mêdecins Sans Frontières Hollande - Psycho Social Care Unit, (2001), *Family support in the case of (critical) emergencies in the field: a practical guideline on managing family support* (internal), Surety Consultants International http://www.suretyinternational.com.au/files/Proof%20of%20Life.pdf;

Save the Children UK, (August 2012), CMT HR/Family Liaison checklist (internal);

Mark Allison, Clayton Consultants, Inc., 'Kidnap response: immediate priorities for aid agencies', *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine*, Issue 47, June 2010 http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-47/kidnap-response-immediate-priorities-for-aid-agencies;

Pete Buth, (2010), *Abduction Management* Briefing Paper, EISF;

Pete Buth, (2010), *Crisis Management of Critical Incidents*, Briefing Paper, EISF;

BBC, http://www.bbc.co.uk/safety/docs/safety-hrt_kidnap_plan_pol_form.doc;

EISF, *Family Liaison in a Crisis Workshop*, 3 May 2012, Notes from EISF.

xxvi Disaster Action, (2006), Working with Disaster Survivors and the Bereaved: Code of Practice on Privacy, Anonymity & Confidentiality, http://www.disasteraction.org.uk/guidance/default.htm.

xxvii Sources as for Tool 2.

xxviii Oxfam GB, (May 2012), *Family Liaison Contact (FLC) Guide* (internal), contact: Heidi Carter; EISF, Family Liaison in a Crisis Workshop, 3rd May 2012, Notes from EISF.

xxix Home Office and Cabinet Office, (2005), *The Needs of Faith Communities in Major Emergencies: Some Guidelines*, http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/132745/faith_communities.pdf.

xxx Humanitarian Protection Network, (2010), *Operational security management in violent environments*, Good Practice Review 8 (Revised Edition), p. xv.

xxxi Pete Buth, (2010), *Crisis Management of Critical Incidents*, Briefing Paper, EISF, p. 4.

xxxii Pete Buth, (2010), *Crisis Management of Critical Incidents*, Briefing Paper, EISF, p. 4.

xxxiii Edward Kemp and Maarten Martelbach, (2011), *Can you get sued? Legal liability of international humanitarian aid organisation towards their staff*, Security Management Initiative, p. 20.

xxxiv Christine Williamson and Roger Darby, (2011), *The importance of HR management in supporting staff working in hazardous environments*, People In Aid, p. 18.

xxxv Edward Kemp and Maarten Martelbach, (2011), *Can you get sued? Legal liability of international humanitarian aid organisation towards their staff*, Security Management Initiative, p. 50.

xxxvi UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport and ACPO, (2006) *Humanitarian Assistance in Emergencies: Non-statutory guidance on establishing Humanitarian Assistance Centres*, p. 13.

xxxvii Bob Macpherson, Christine Persaud and Norman Sheehan, Experienced Advice Crucial in Response to Kidnappings *Monday Developments*, InterAction, March 2008, p. 23.

xxxviii Christine Williamson and Roger Darby, 2011, *The importance of HR management in supporting staff working in hazardous environments*, People In Aid, p. 12.

xxxix Edward Kemp and Maarten Martelbach, (2011), *Can you get sued? Legal liability of international humanitarian aid organisation towards their staff*, Security Management Initiative, p. 19.

xl Edward Kemp and Maarten Martelbach, (2011), *Can you get sued? Legal liability of international humanitarian aid organisation towards their staff*, Security Management Initiative, p. 22.

xli Family Liaison in a Crisis Workshop, 3 May 2012, Notes from EISF.

xlii Christine Williamson and Roger Darby, 2011, The importance of HR management in supporting staff working in hazardous environments, People In Aid, p. 12.

xliii Edward Kemp and Maarten Martelbach, (2011), *Can you get sued? Legal liability of international humanitarian aid organisation towards their staff*, Security Management Initiative, p. 19.

xliv *A Risk Management Standard*, IRM, ALARM and AIRMIC, (2002), p. 1.

Other EISF publications

available at
www.eisf.eu

Briefing Papers

Security Management and Capacity Development: International agencies working with local partners
December 2012
EISF Secretariat, Iesha Singh

Gender and Security: Guidelines for Mainstreaming Gender in Security Risk Management
September 2012
Christine Persaud (author), Hye Jin Zumkehr (ed.)

Engaging Private Security Providers: A Guideline for Non-Governmental Organisations
December 2011
Max Glaser (author), supported by the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

Abduction Management
May 2010
Pete Buth (author), supportedby the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

Crisis Management of Critical Incidents
April 2010
Pete Buth (author), supported by the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

The Information Management Challenge
March 2010
Robert Ayre (author), supported by the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

Reports

Risk Thresholds in Humanitarian Assistance
October 2010
Madeleine Kingston and Oliver Behn (EISF)

Joint NGO Safety and Security Training
January 2010
Madeleine Kingston (author), supported by the EISF Training Working Group

Humanitarian Risk Initiatives: 2009 Index Report
December 2009
Christopher Finucane (author), Madeleine Kingston (editor)

Articles

Incident Statistics in Aid Worker Safety and Security Management: Using and Producing them
March 2012
Koenraad van Brabant (author)

Managing Aid Agency Security in an Evolving World: The Larger Challenge
December 2010
Koenraad Van Brabant (author)

Whose risk is it anyway? Linking Operational Risk Thresholds and Organisational Risk Management (in Humanitarian Exchange 47)
June 2010
Oliver Behn and Madeleine Kingston (authors)

Risk Transfer through Hardening Mentalities?
November 2009
Oliver Behn and Madeleine Kingston (authors)
Also available as a blog at
www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=3067

Forthcoming publications

The Cost of Security Risk Management for NGOs Guide on Office Closure

If you are interested in contributing to upcoming research projects or want to suggest topics for future research please contact
eisf-research@eisf.eu