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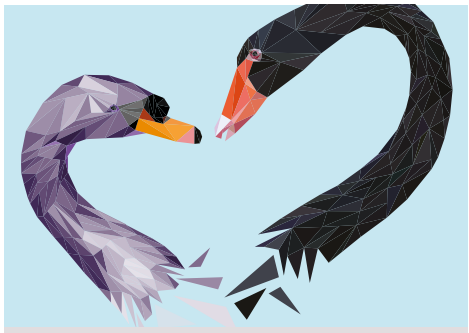

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comment

Our cover of this edition depicts growing malaise around governance, leadership, technology and trust.

Why are these issues so important in a crisis context? Put simply, because of the consequences that poor, malicious, narcissistic or corrupt governance can have on our daily lives, communities, livelihoods, safety and quality of life.

Denise Thompson (p64) explores the importance of governance in regulating the actors and processes around disaster risk reduction. Weak governance is a disaster risk driver, linked to other drivers, such as poverty, inequality, poor planning and development.

And other actors are always ready to fill the vacuum left by poor or weak governance, including those with criminal or malevolent intent, all too willing to capitalise on the opportunities this presents.

Humanity has inexhaustible supplies of ingenuity and creativity; none so evident as in the technology field. If applied correctly, the solutions have immense potential for good. Yet, as climate is a risk amplifier, if applied unwisely, technology can be a risk enabler.

Other articles examine governance and technology. On p14 Maha Hosain Aziz describes a 'global legitimacy crisis' which, she says, is linked with a headlong rush for technological domination. Meanwhile on p18, Andrea Bonime-Blanc presents a view of the megatrends that every leader – of nations, business, institutions, local governments or humanitarian organisations – needs to be aware of. She discusses the collapse of global trust, the ethical leadership paradox and how unscrupulous actors could commandeer technology to further their own agendas.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is set to fundamentally change the way we live. On p58 Laurence Marzell calls for citizens to be placed at the centre of smart cities, emphasising that cities are for people. Vincent Mosco supports this on p66: "Genuinely intelligent cities start with a vibrant democracy, support for public space and a commitment to citizen control over technology," he says.

Constant monitoring, sensors and data gathering all present threats and opportunities. It would be naïve to expect Utopia, but we do have the opportunity to harness burgeoning technological developments for the benefit of our resilience, livelihoods and security. In this new, disruptive landscape, with emerging protagonists and technology, we need to be careful in what – and in who – we place our precious trust.

Securing aid worker safety through effective budgeting

This summer, the European Interagency Security Forum (EISF) has been lobbying aid and donor organisations around the world. Aimed at improving the budgeting processes for aid worker safety and security, the 'At What Cost?' movement has gained traction across the sector, according to **Aisling Sweeney**

The month-long EISF campaign successfully reignited dialogue on the funding processes for security risk management in the aid sector, which no longer reflect the current realities of programme implementation. For aid organisations, this discussion is not new. As one supporter remarked, the topic: "Has been in the fridge for a while." However, for donor organisations that don't have clear dialogue with the agencies they fund, these issues can come as a surprise.

While giving evidence for the UK International Development Committee's enquiry on violence against aid workers, EISF's Steering Group Chair, Fredrik Palsson, spoke about the challenges of not having direct budget lines for safety and security.

In the following session, Matthew Wyatt from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) responded to the question of inadequate funding by saying: "… we certainly do not get NGOs coming to us saying, 'You are screwing us so far down on costs that we cannot do the security we need to do', and certainly, were anyone to suggest that they were worried about that, we would be very sympathetic to ensuring that this was not the case and that they could properly finance the security that they needed from our programmes."

With more aid agencies operating in higher-risk environments than before, financing processes for safety and security must catch up. The commonplace treatment of security risk management as a general administrative cost – as opposed to a direct cost essential for access, with its own justifiable budget lines – means that both aid and donor organisations risk falling short of their duty of care.

The case that led to the *Norwegian Refugee Council vs Dennis*, occurred in 2012 when a convoy was attacked by six gunmen, during which the Kenyan driver of one of the cars – who had been hired that day – was shot four times and died on the spot. The Kenyan driver of another car was shot twice in the back and was seriously wounded, and two other staff members were also shot and injured. Four additional staff members from the VIP convoy were kidnapped.

Dennis, a Canadian citizen who was abducted and subsequently suffered depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, successfully sued his employer – the Norwegian Refugee Council – following the incident.

As the EISF's 2018 review of the ruling notes: "What security risk management and duty of care have in common is the expectation that reasonable and practicable measures are taken to mitigate the likelihood and impact of foreseeable incidents."

Unfortunately, an organisation's ability to meet these standards is affected by wider issues related to funding, which have resulted in a large number of under-resourced aid programmes. Staff in aid agencies faced with cuts to programme funding understandably search for other areas to reduce costs. This means that operational overheads and general administrative expenses often bear the brunt of underfunding. Since this is where safety and security are commonly included in budgets, security measures can be one of the first things to go.

When this happens, the likelihood that 'reasonable and practicable measures are taken to mitigate the likelihood and impact of foreseeable incidents' diminishes, affecting the standard of care that the organisation is providing for its staff. This, in turn, reflects on the donor, who may not be meeting their 'ethical duty of care' for recipient organisations. And this is particularly pertinent for local partner organisations, which are further down the funding chain and have fewer options for financing security risk management.

On a human level, underfunded security risk management can lead to serious injury, psychological damage or even death for staff members operating insecurely.

While the 2012 incident referred to earlier in this article was not a result of cutting costs, it does, however, demonstrate the toll that insufficient security measures can take on human life.

At the organisational level, liability can be extremely damaging to both its finances – owing to legal costs and donors revoking funding – and its reputation. The knock-on effects of a breach of duty of care will reach all aspects of an aid agency, from staff to beneficiaries, ultimately affecting the organisation's ability to operate.

Inconsistencies

In an effort to counter the neglect of security risk management costs, some aid agencies allocate a set percentage of all programme budgets to safety and security. While this may sound like a simple way to avoid the side-lining of security measures, it leaves little room for manoeuvre when inconsistencies inevitably arise.

From the donor perspective, an arbitrary percentage ignores the differences in risk appetite and programme type between aid organisations. Risk appetite can be defined as the amount or type of risk that an organisation is willing to take in order to meet its objectives. An arbitrary percentage would mean that an organisation with a higher risk appetite, operating in more insecure environments, would spend the same proportion of its funding on security risk management as one with a low risk appetite that only operates in medium risk contexts.

From the organisational perspective, internal differences in the funding required by different programmes and contexts are ignored entirely by allocating a standard percentage of every programme budget for

Staff in aid agencies that are facing cuts to programme funding, understandably search for other areas to reduce costs

Gary Waters | Alamy

safety and security. As noted in EISF's open letter to aid and donor organisations, if a programme in Colombia requires €100,000 less for security than a programme of the same size in Somalia – where extremely costly measures such as armoured vehicles are sometimes required – current funding processes would not allow room for manoeuvre in even a conundrum as simple as this.

Finally, without explicit budget lines, organisations cannot demonstrate the true cost of operating in a high-risk context.

Because security risk management is not an easily quantifiable function, justifying costs – both externally to donors and internally to programme and finance teams – can be difficult. Managers must therefore be supported to identify and account for the cost of not only 'hard' security measures, like communications equipment, but also 'soft' measures, such as the working hours spent building acceptance in a local community.

For any funding proposal, donors usually require a log-frame that includes a section on 'risks'.

By including security risks as well as programme risks within this, mitigating measures can be directly related to the achievement of the project goals. Therefore, by understanding the reasoning behind these costs, both aid and donor organisations can know that they have taken reasonable and practicable measures to mitigate the likelihood and impact of foreseeable incidents, thereby meeting their duty of care.

Guidance on identifying security related costs can be found in EISF's 2013 paper, *The Cost of Security Risk Management* (see website details, right).

Since EISF's open letter was released as part of the 'At What Cost?' campaign, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) has announced it will be updating the template and guidance for its Rapid Response Facility (which provides bilateral funding to NGOs for humanitarian emergency responses) to include a specific line for security risk management.

This crucial first step will ensure that organisations funded through this mechanism must actively consider the cost of meeting their duty of care obligations to the staff of each project. DFID's changes therefore set a promising precedent, which EISF hopes will inspire further reforms among donors and across the aid sector at large. CRJ

■ *To keep up with EISF's research and campaigning, follow @EISF1 on Twitter or visit eisf.eu*

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