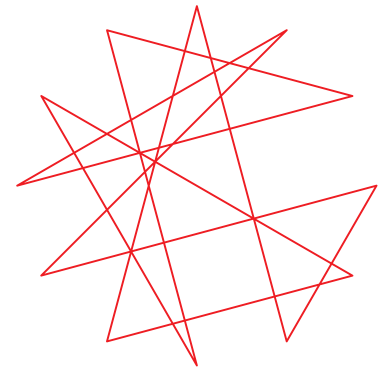
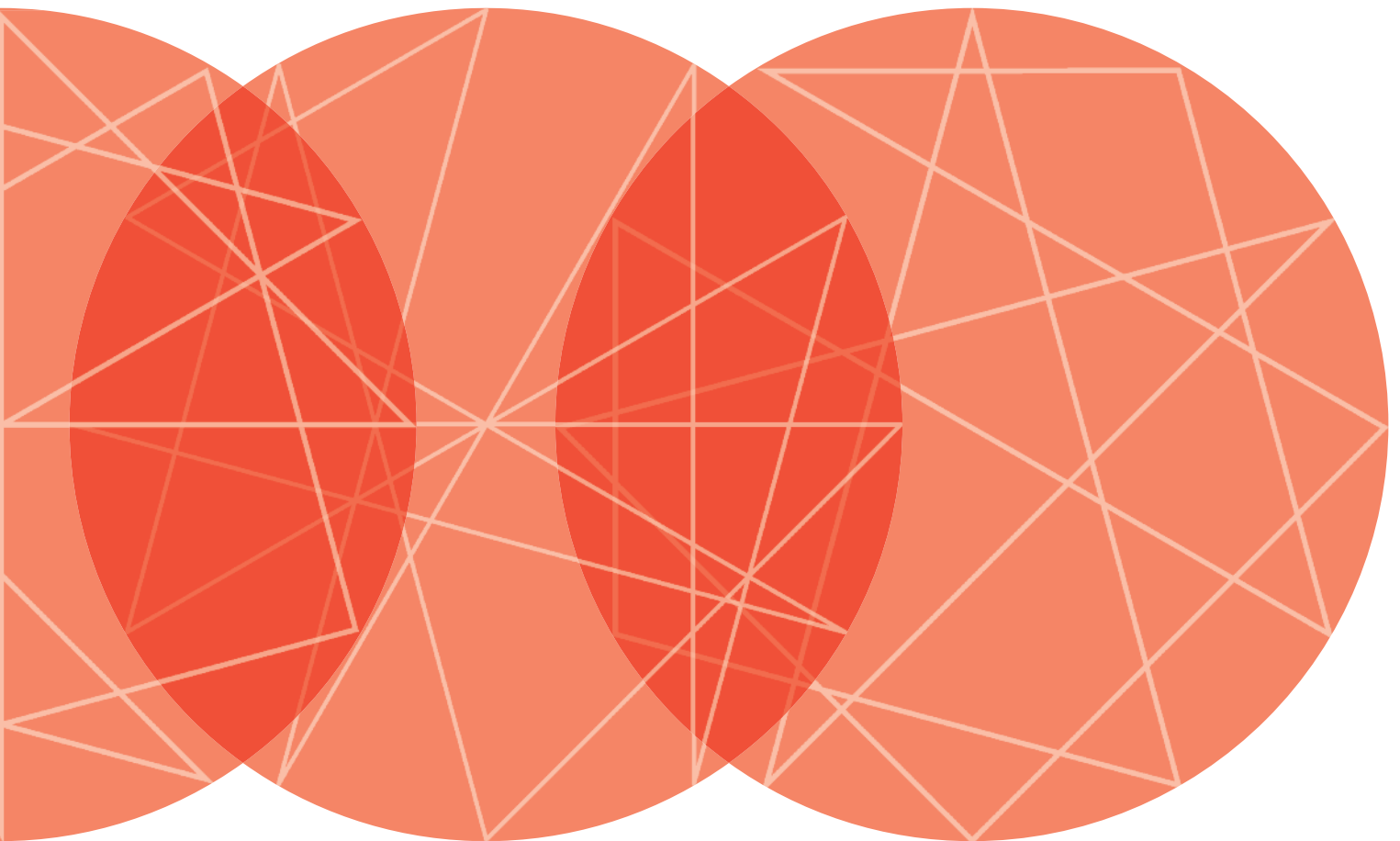


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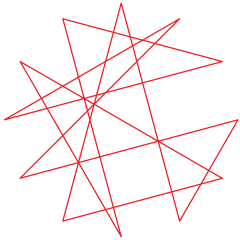


# Abduction Management

EISF Briefing Paper



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## European Interagency Security Forum

The European Interagency Security Forum 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.

The Forum was created to establish a more prominent role for security management in 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, research institutions, training providers and a broad range of international NGOs.

EISF fosters dialogue, coordination, and documentation of current security management practice. EISF is an independent entity currently funded by DFID and hosted by Save the Children UK.

## Acknowledgements

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While all provided significant input and feedback, any errors remaining are EISF's alone.

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# Foreword

The two EISF Briefing Papers entitled *Crisis Management of Critical Incidents* (April 2010) and *Abduction Management* (May 2010) should serve as reference documents for reflection on how to improve the prevention and management of critical incidents within the humanitarian sector. They benefit from the knowledge and experience of a wide range of organisations, experts and victims.

The papers are intended for those responsible for and involved in the management of critical incident and crisis management mechanisms within humanitarian agencies. However, all organisations deploying and contracting employees in environments where the infrastructure to deal with critical incidents is limited or unreliable, should find them valuable.

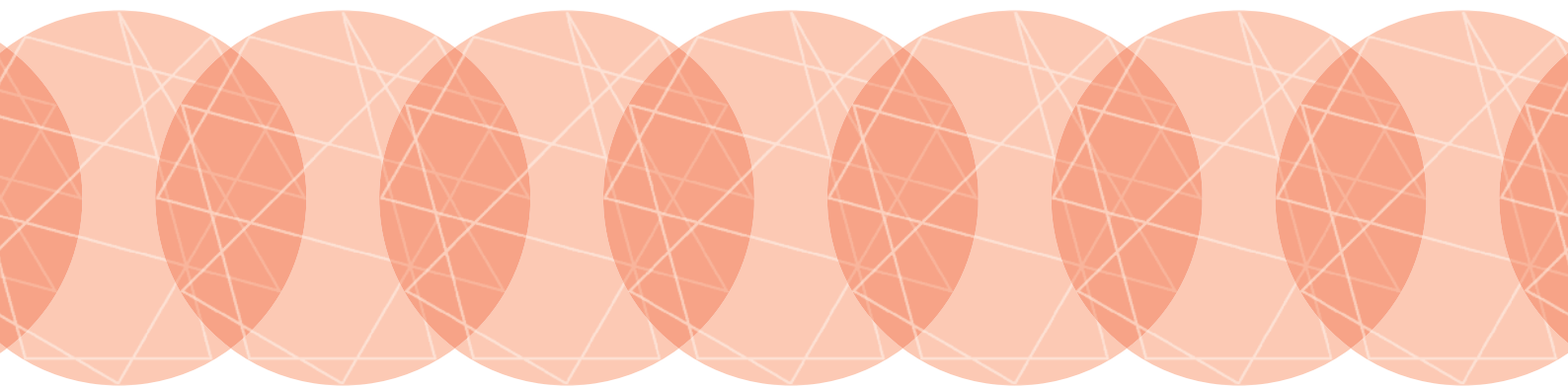
Prevention is key. By establishing robust crisis management mechanisms you can optimise preparation and reduce the risk of an incident occurring, or diminish its impact.

Crisis management is both an art and a science. Best practice is constantly evolving in response to the changing humanitarian environment. We would therefore be grateful to receive your comments and feedback, to ensure the Briefings are kept up-to-date and improved on where we can.

Every success,

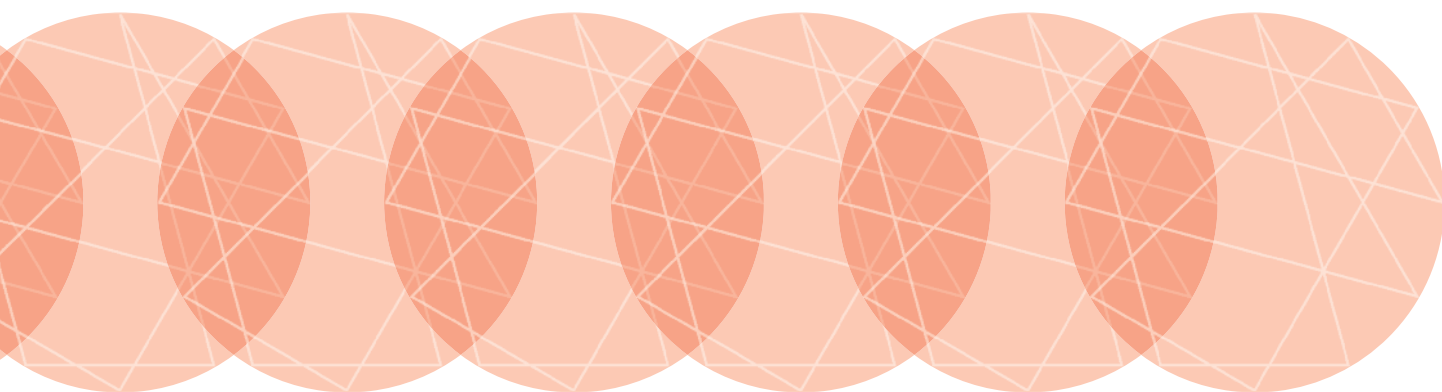
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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Background Information</b>	<b>05</b>
2.1	Motives	05
2.2	Characteristics	05
<b>3</b>	<b>Incident Management: Operations</b>	<b>06</b>
3.1	Abduction Scenarios	06
3.2	First Response	06
3.3	Incident Management	07
3.3.1	External Actors	08
3.3.2	Proof of Life (PoL)	09
3.3.3	Internal Information Sharing	09
<b>4</b>	<b>Incident Management: Human Resources Management</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Incident Management: Media</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Incident Management: Resolution</b>	<b>14</b>
6.1	Release	14
6.2	Unsuccessful Resolution	14





# Introduction

Abduction of aid workers has risen sharply over the past decade.<sup>1</sup> As abduction emerges as a real risk in an increasing number of operating environments, building or strengthening appropriate risk management capacity is regarded as a priority by many aid agencies implementing programmes in these areas.

An EISF Briefing Paper on Crisis Management of Critical Incidents, published in April 2010, dealt with security incidents that constitute crises for humanitarian agencies. These were defined as incidents requiring an immediate, dedicated organisational response beyond the scope of in-country contingency planning and management structures. Abduction is a unique form of critical incident (which may or may not constitute a crisis), to which the essential pillars of effective critical incident and crisis response apply.

Most abductions end in the safe release of captives. However, abduction is an ongoing, active event – often involving a great deal of uncertainty – and by far the most complex and challenging category of critical incident. For this reason, specific capacities and preparedness are required to increase efficacy in incident response, and this should be considered within overall critical incident and crisis response plans.

This Briefing Paper therefore addresses the specific characteristics of abduction incidents and the central tenets of abduction management, including family support and media management. Whilst touching upon various aspects of contingency planning, we do not elaborate on a comprehensive range of abduction preparedness measures – such as training, captive survival techniques, or field contingency planning – which fall outside of the scope of this paper.

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## Notes

1. Abduction is defined as the forcible capture and illegal detention of one or more persons, without demands. Once demands are made, the case becomes a kidnapping, or captive-situation. In this Briefing Paper the term abduction is used more broadly to include both abductions and subsequent kidnappings or captive-situations.
  2. “Captive” and “family” are used in the singular form to avoid the need for captive(s) and family/families.
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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Abby Stoddard, Adele Harmer and Victoria DiDomenico, 2009. Providing aid in insecure environments: 2009 Update. HPG Policy Brief 34 (April).



# Background Information

## 2.1 Motives

Motives for abduction vary widely according to country or region, and the nature of the groups involved. Abduction may be carried out for purely economic purposes (ransom), to exact revenge (personal, family or clan vendettas), for political or ideological reasons, or to draw attention to local disputes. A combination of any or all of these factors can often be discerned. In some countries, kidnap has become professionalised as an industry, and groups specialising in particular aspects (surveillance, grabbing, holding, negotiations, release) have been formed. A common feature in high-risk countries is kidnap with the intent of selling captives on to other groups (as happens, for example, in Somalia or Iraq).

## 2.2 Characteristics

Whilst every case is unique, and patterns are often context-specific, a unique set of characteristics distinguishes abduction as the most complex and challenging type of critical incident:

### Duration

Unlike many other critical incidents – accidents, shootings, robberies – abduction is an ongoing, “live” occurrence. Incident management must therefore adapt to a constantly changing or emerging situation. Uncertainty over the length and outcome of an incident presents an additional challenge for the organisation and for incident managers in terms of resource planning and resilience.<sup>2</sup>

### Response – fast and effective

Related to the above, timeliness and effectiveness of a response is often crucial: the quality of an immediate response can exert significant impact on the outcome of an incident, rendering robust incident preparedness vital.

### Impact of decision-making

Pressure on incident managers not to miss opportunities that may lead to safe release of a captive is immense. Misjudged decisions may lead to protracted negotiations, or in the worst case, to the death of a captive.

### Confidentiality

Abduction management requires a high degree of confidentiality. If details of a case become public, the risk of opportunists attempting to take advantage of the situation, or of damaging leakages to the media, may be increased. The process of establishing and maintaining relationships of trust with perpetrators, family members and a captive’s home government may also be compromised.

### Stakeholders

Actors with a vested interest in the case can be numerous and diverse (for example, kidnapers, family, national governments, mediators, communities, media, etc.). It is important to understand and monitor their varying motives and concerns, especially as these may change during the course of a crisis, or additional actors may emerge. Depending on the length of a crisis, stakeholders can become increasingly challenging to “manage”.

<sup>2</sup> An abduction may last for hours (“express kidnap”), weeks or months, and in exceptional cases for years. Extended periods without any contact are common.



# Incident Management: Operations

## 3.1 Abduction Scenarios

Each case of abduction is unique, and the list of variables is long: the (suspected) identity, motive and demands of kidnapers, multifarious contextual aspects, and an organisation's network and image in the country, are but a few. Numbers and nationalities of captives, and whether multiple organisations are affected, are also significant. Where greater numbers of captives, nationalities and organisations are affected, there will evidently be more stakeholders (families, respective national governments and media, employers), and therefore more complexity in the incident management. A multi-national, multi-organisation abduction is rare but not unthinkable. The more likely scenario is a multi-national abduction from one organisation.

### National staff abductions

Abductions of national staff only (i.e. no international staff abducted) warrant several specific considerations.

Whether an abduction is related to the affiliation of a national staff employee with his/her organisation may not be clear. This raises questions regarding agency responsibility for resolution of the kidnap, as well as the most suitable incident management strategy. Where the motivation for abduction is not related to employment by the organisation (for example, where family, clan or tribal motives are dominant), (visible) engagement on the part of the organisation may do more harm than good. However, as motives may be blurred and often remain uncertain, an effective incident management strategy will take various scenarios into account. It is advisable to discuss these issues beforehand with staff in high-risk countries.

A key aspect to be considered when defining an incident management strategy is how prominent organisational involvement should be. First, particularly in countries

with a high prevalence of abduction, local mechanisms (for example, mediation through clan or tribal structures, local authorities or religious leaders) may already be established and tested, and are therefore more likely to be successful. Second, the visible engagement of an international organisation can result in higher demands from the kidnapers. Thus, instead of leading incident management, agencies may opt to remain in the background, supporting efforts by other actors. A significant implication of this strategy is, however, that whilst an agency may be, or may feel, fully responsible for the resolution of an abduction, it cannot exclusively direct the incident management.

Implications of national staff abductions are usually limited to the country of operation, as all stakeholders (government, national media, family) are in-country. Activating a Crisis Management Team (CMT) at headquarter or regional level may therefore not be appropriate: the incident may be managed most effectively by an Incident Management Team (IMT) on the ground, as long as support from incident managers at headquarter level is available as necessary.

## 3.2 First Response

The essential principles of critical incident response also apply to abductions. Fast and effective response can mitigate the impact of an incident, and increase the odds that resolution opportunities occurring during ongoing incidents are seized. In addition to the steps to be taken for regular critical incident response<sup>3</sup>, the following should be activated or considered during the first phase of a known or suspected abduction:

- **Allocate dedicated phone numbers** for communications between the key actors (kidnapper(s) -Communicator, field-CMT and others as required)<sup>4</sup> **and install recording devices**

<sup>3</sup> See Section 5.1 (Operational Response) in the EISF Briefing Paper on Crisis Management of Critical Incidents (April 2010), available at <http://www.eisf.squareeye.com/resources/category.asp?dc=131>.

<sup>4</sup> Established modes of communication should be as secure as possible.



- **Prepare potential recipients** for receiving the first call(s) from the kidnapper(s) (field staff, country, regional and headquarter offices, family members, etc.) **in case contact is established by phone.** Preparations for this include instructions to guide perpetrators to the dedicated Communicator<sup>5</sup>
- **Identify and prepare the Communicator**<sup>6</sup>
- **Consider abduction scenarios**
  - Possible motivation(s) and perpetrators
  - Risk of captive being sold on or moved out of the area
- **Contain and control the spread of news** about the incident (for example, inform only the stakeholders that need to be informed)
- **Conduct stakeholder analysis**
  - Arrange for external abduction management support capacity as required (see below)

**See Sections 4 and 5 for more detail on family and media management.**

### 3.3 Incident Management

Analyses of the circumstances of the abduction itself, contextual factors, stakeholders and other aspects mentioned above, constitute the basis of an incident management strategy. All incident management components must naturally reflect and support this strategy (family support, media strategy, relations and communications with other stakeholders, negotiations, etc.).

Abduction management must take into account the case-specific complexities discussed above. Strategies that have proved successful in one case or operating context are not necessarily suitable for another. When designing an incident management strategy, organisations may therefore opt for a combination of several approaches (or nuances thereof). These may include a hands-off focus on low-key support to local community leaders, direct negotiation with perpetrators, or exertion of diplomatic and political pressure, amongst other approaches.

Every strategy will be based on certain assumptions and bear certain risks. As abduction is a dynamic situation, situational and stakeholder analysis should

be reviewed frequently, and adaptation of strategy made accordingly, taking into account all potential scenarios and outcomes.

Basic elements and characteristics applicable to most abduction cases include:

#### Staff rotation

As the duration of the incident is unknown, a rotation plan for incident managers should be drawn up within the first few days.

#### Stakeholder management

Inspiring support for the chosen strategy from all relevant stakeholders is instrumental to successful resolution but can be difficult, particularly in multi-captive abductions involving multiple families and governments. It is imperative to avoid the pursuance of multiple parallel strategies, which could result in a series of independently opened channels of communication.

#### Mediators

Stakeholder analysis should reveal a list of potential Mediators: third parties who can potentially act as middlemen or negotiators, or can otherwise assist in the resolution of the case. These may include local authorities, traditional community and religious leaders, businessmen and armed groups operating in the country or area of operation.<sup>7</sup> Decisions about who should be approached for assistance, and who can be trusted, should be based on a thorough analysis of potential motives, values and risks.

#### National staff risks

National staff often play key roles in crisis management. During incidences of abduction, national staff may be instrumental in maintaining links to local communities after evacuation of international staff teams; networking with a range of actors; acting as Communicators with kidnappers; and feeding into analysis and strategy. As well as to threats by kidnappers, national staff are far more vulnerable to the enforcement of national law, for example when incident management entails illegal activities such as negotiating with outlawed “terrorist” groups, or the use of unlicensed communications

<sup>5</sup> “First call guidelines” should be drafted to include “dos and don’ts” for employees and family members.

<sup>6</sup> A Communicator is someone who assumes the role of communicating with kidnappers, ideally acting as the sole point of contact between perpetrators and an organisation. Communicators (with knowledge of a range of languages/dialects/regional accents, broad tribe/clan ties, etc.) should be identified prior to incidents occurring, as part of organisational abduction preparedness strategies.

<sup>7</sup> It is recommended that a list of potential Mediators is drawn up as part of the ongoing contingency planning or abduction preparedness process.

equipment. For this reason, the degree of national staff involvement in incident management should be explicitly discussed and agreed in advance, both organisationally and with individual staff members.

### Information security and confidentiality

Total control of information flows is impossible in most cases, as various stakeholders (perpetrators, families, national governments, Mediators) may choose to disclose information about the case within the public sphere. Yet, guaranteeing the maximum confidentiality that circumstances allow is imperative. This can be achieved by:

- Ensuring that decision-taking on information sharing (what, when and with whom) is the exclusive responsibility of the person in charge of the incident management<sup>8</sup>
- Establishing good relations with all relevant stakeholders in order to maximise the organisation's influence on them
- Sharing information strictly on a "need to know" basis
- Utilising secure modes of communication (for voice interactions as well as transfer and storage of data)
- Electronic data (logbooks, minutes of meetings, situational analyses, etc.) should be password-protected and stored only in a limited number of hard drives or other designated locations
- Hard copies of documents must not be left unattended and should be safely stored or destroyed after use

### 3.3.1 External Actors

#### Host government

To what extent host governments become actively involved in the management of an incident naturally differs by country. Key factors determining the reaction of a host government may include national law and order infrastructure and enforcement capacity, the degree of political pressure exerted at international level (by the UN, national government of a captive, or organisation employing the captive), and domestic political considerations.

Whilst host governments can act as a valuable source of information, support and advice, their objectives may differ from those of the organisation involved (i.e. safe release of the captive). This may lead to lack of support or even hindrance of organisational efforts. Host governments may:

- Show greater interest in capturing kidnappers, thereby deterring future kidnappings
- Wish to be perceived as remaining in control of law and order
- Distrust an organisation's incident management capacity and/or resent that fact that an organisation "allowed" an abduction to occur in the first place
- Wish to prevent organisations from interacting with "terrorists" or "rebels" for political reasons
- Impose legislation prohibiting any or all forms of contact with kidnappers

Particularly in high-risk countries, it is advisable to examine the host government's reaction to and role in previous abduction cases, and establish contact with relevant authorities and law enforcement agencies in advance.

#### Home government of captive

The involvement of the home government of the captive also hinges on numerous factors. Some governments will pursue a highly proactive approach when their nationals are abducted abroad (for example, the German government), whilst others will adopt a more passive stance if they are confident in the abduction management capacity of the organisation. In such instances the home government may still provide support on request. The home government's confidence in the organisation concerned will be shaped in part by the captive's family. Where a family loses faith in an organisation's incident management capacity and strategy, for example, they may press a home government to assume leadership of the situation. Political relations with and strategic interests in the country concerned certainly also influence governmental attitudes and strategies.

<sup>8</sup> The head of the CMT if the abduction is declared a crisis and managed at the central level; the desk manager if the abduction is managed by regular management structures. See the EISF Briefing Paper Crisis Management of Critical Incidents (April 2010), available at <http://www.eisf.squareeye.com/resources/category.asp?dc=131>.

## Professional response teams

Captive negotiations require a high level of professional experience and skill. If such expertise is not available in-house, agencies may consider engaging external support from professional captive negotiators. Such services are provided by, among others, independent consultants, Private Security Companies (PSC) and insurance companies offering K&R insurance.<sup>9</sup> Important criteria for selecting external assistance are a company's:

- Record and expertise in captive negotiations
- Availability for swift deployment
- Knowledge of the local context
- Expertise and capacity in media management

The company should be required to maintain detailed record keeping for post-incident review and potential auditing. It is, however, crucial that agencies retain overall responsibility and decision-making for the incident management, even if external assistance is sought. Regardless of whether another actor (UN, government, other organisation, hired professional captive negotiation team) takes the lead in incident management, affected agencies must always maintain an adequate degree of influence over decision-making.

### 3.3.2 Proof of Life (PoL)

Proof of Life (PoL) is an essential tool in abduction management and fulfils two functions:

- Verifies claims by groups to be holding captives, or to have contact with groups holding captives. PoL is hence vital in distinguishing real kidnappers from opportunists or from groups that may have held the captive(s) but are not holding them currently.
- Confirms that the captive is still alive

PoL can come in different forms:

#### Telephone

The best form of PoL is of course speaking to the captive on the phone. The benefits of a phone conversation are that it is in real-time (no delay of PoL), can boost the captive's morale, and provides the agency with some indication of the well-being and morale of the captive.

## Indicative questions

Another form of PoL is to provide perpetrators with a question that only the captive knows the answer to.<sup>10</sup> For this, agencies must be totally confident that kidnappers can get the correct answer only from the captive concerned. Secondly, care must be taken to ensure that PoL questions are not culturally or religiously offensive to kidnappers.

## Other forms

Hand-writing samples or videos can also serve as PoL.

Due to the centrality of PoL to the management of an abduction, information required for PoL should be obtained from all staff before they are deployed to high-risk contexts. Standard forms can be filled in by staff and kept in a sealed envelope in a safe location. Additional PoL questions can be obtained from the family or close friends during incidents, with the additional benefit of assuring the captive that loved ones are both informed and involved.

### 3.3.3 Internal Information Sharing

The principle of information sharing on a need to know basis applies also for those involved in the incident management itself. In order to protect individuals in their respective functions, they should only be briefed on what they need to know to fulfill the task at hand. For example, information provided to the Family Liaison Officer should be limited to briefs intended for families, so that he/she does not need to conceal information, or conversely does not accidentally reveal more information than is necessary. The same applies for the media spokesperson and the Communicator.

A further point of concern is the inherent tension between the need for strict confidentiality and demand for information within the organisation. Understandably, concern for the captive among colleagues is high, resulting in constant urging for updates. Applying the following principles may help to manage these tensions successfully:

- **Do not compromise confidentiality.** As discussed above, it is vital to maintain relationships of trust with families and kidnappers, avoid leakages to the media, and mitigate openings for opportunists.

<sup>9</sup> Kidnap and ransom insurance: coverage is offered for a range of aspects, including operational, medical, administrative and legal costs, as well as operational (i.e. captive negotiations) capacity and advice. For more detail see RedR, 2006. Special Risks Insurance – a buyer's guide. *Security Quarterly Review*, Issue 5, pp.3-5.

<sup>10</sup> This may also boost a captive's morale, especially if the PoL question comes from the family, indicating to the captive that the family is engaged in the release efforts.

- To avoid triggering rumours and raising unrealistic expectations, **do not speculate about deadlines or release dates.**
- **There is no such thing as “internal” information.** Once information is shared within the organisation, it is impossible to control its flow. (Unintended) info-leakage to the public or the media is always possible.
- **Provide regular updates.** No news is also news: for those not involved in managing the incident, the fact that there is nothing to report may be significant.



# Incident Management: Human Resources Management

Frameworks and principles for Human Resources Management (HRM) during abduction cases are principally the same as for standard critical incident response protocols. Family support is a crucial component, yet it is often far more challenging during abduction cases.

Underlying the centrality of family support is uncertainty on the part of relatives about the well-being of the captive and potential outcomes, which can cause immense distress for the family. It is vital to keep the family “on board” and supportive of organisational strategy, so that they do not pursue separate and potentially counterproductive initiatives in an attempt to free the captive. Families that trust organisational incident management capacity may play an important role in supporting the overall strategy; in contrast, a breakdown in relations is likely to create numerous complications.

Family support consists of two main components: family liaison and psycho-social support. The latter rests on a family’s decision about whether to accept support, but it should be offered by an organisation from the very beginning of an incident. Regardless of whether support is provided through internal or external resources, the family must be assured of confidentiality.

## Family liaison

The function of family liaison is threefold: to keep families updated, provide practical support, and build and maintain relationships of trust. The importance of building trust can hardly be overstated. As outlined above, the risk of divergent incident management strategies applied in parallel should be avoided. Essential steps towards gaining trust include:

- Being present and approachable from the very beginning of an incident
- Showing tolerance, understanding and patience in all communications

- Remaining predictable and clear (who is responsible for what)
- Providing information consistently and coherently
- Always being truthful with the family
- Keeping the family active and engaged

Sufficient time and capacity should be made available for family support from day one to brief them and discuss the various aspects of abduction management, including:

- The organisation’s response mechanisms
- Support offered by the organisation to the family (when, who, how)
- Rationale behind the incident management strategy<sup>11</sup>
- The family’s interaction with other stakeholders (government, media, external service providers)

Sometimes families know little of organisational operating methods, or of situational realities in countries of deployment. It may therefore be beneficial to invite them to visit headquarters, in order to meet staff and learn about the organisation. Introducing them to the incident managers may also help to reassure them of organisational commitment to resolving the incident. Stronger relationships between families and organisations may be established in this way.

Understandably, families often want to assist in incident management. Agencies can encourage families to engage in activities that keep them active whilst supporting incident management, such as:

- Media liaison, following training in dealing with the press (see below)
- Influencing other stakeholders on the organisation’s behalf
- Devising PoL questions (based on the captive’s childhood – see above)

<sup>11</sup> The probability that the family will raise the ransom question early on is high.

- Scanning news and collecting newspaper clips
- Putting together care packages for the captive (where it is considered feasible to send these to captives)

The organisation should also facilitate contact between the family and family support groups or ex-kidnap victims (if so desired by the family). Being in touch with people who have had similar experiences, may help the family to cope with the immense stress they suffer during an abduction.

Keeping families “on board” does not mean that organisations can or should attempt to control them. It is important to acknowledge and accept that most families will seek advice from other sources (governments, consultants, etc.), if only to verify the validity of an agency’s strategy and capacity.

### Family Liaison Officer (FLO)

The Family Liaison Officer acts as an interface between a CMT and a family, providing regular updates from a CMT, and ensuring that family requests and questions to a CMT or an organisation are followed up in a timely manner. An FLO should ideally speak the affected family’s native language and be accustomed to cultural issues. Families should appoint a contact person for the FLO. Depending on family structure and dynamics, more than one contact person may be required.

The frequency of contact between a family and an FLO is dependent on the wishes of the family, as well as the course taken by an incident. However, contact is usually very intense, at least in the first phase. A regular schedule for updates should be agreed upon as soon as possible. If abductions last for longer periods (i.e. months) regular meetings with the CMT may also be considered helpful. In multi-hostage situations, it is important to ensure that all families receive the same information simultaneously, to avoid perceptions of favouritism or withholding information. In addition, organisations should facilitate contact between families of the various captives.



## Incident Management: Media

Whilst abduction of national staff is rarely considered newsworthy in international media (or even in national media if abductions are commonplace in the country or region), abduction of an international staff member will almost certainly attract media attention. The extent of interest from the press is dependent on the area concerned, the nationality of the captive, how newsworthy the story is compared to other events, whether the kidnappers themselves seek media attention and, last but not least, media access to information about the incident.

The mainstream media are fully aware of the need for an information blackout in the immediate stages following an abduction, and the best approach to halt a story breaking is to target the relatively few major news players with a proactive call for a news blackout once the media indicate an awareness of the story.

As the incident progresses, most agencies adopt a passive media strategy due to the risks associated with publicising details of an incident. Publically-accessible information may attract opportunists and other individuals seeking a stake in the case.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, media intrusion of families and captives can be intense in some cases.

Preventing details of the case leaking into the public sphere involves formulating very generic press statements or Q&A sessions, stressing organisational concern and commitment to finding missing staff (without revealing names and nationalities), avoiding and discouraging speculation or the use of terms that may spark further media interest and/or anger perpetrators.<sup>13</sup> A communication management line, as defined by a CMT, should be presented by a spokesperson, who should receive as little information about the case as possible in order to avoid accidentally revealing more details than necessary. In addition, social networking sites belonging to the captive (Facebook, blogs, etc.) should be shut down as soon as possible, and national and international media as well as blogs monitored frequently.

Families may be particularly vulnerable to media pressure. Thus, a comprehensive briefing on the chosen media strategy and communication line, including methods used by some journalists to gain access to information (posing as intermediaries, old friends of the captive, etc.) should be conducted during the early stages of an incident.

It should be noted at this stage that the media may also offer opportunities for resolution of the crisis, and may actually be part of the incident management strategy. In situations where no contact with the kidnappers has been established, journalists on the ground (who may have more established local networks than NGO staff) may help to identify and contact Mediators or to conduct public appeals to perpetrators and other influential actors.

Furthermore, the media can serve as a vital tool in cases when public pressure is considered (part of) the most appropriate strategy. This may be the case, for example, when political actors must be forced into action during politically-motivated kidnappings. A range of methods can be applied to create public awareness and support, thereby exerting pressure on the kidnappers and/or influential actors. These methods include setting up support websites, fostering open letters and petitions, engaging public figures in the campaign, and distributing leaflets and posters showing images of the captive around the local area.

<sup>12</sup> For example, individuals posing as holders of significant information and offering to sell such information.  
<sup>13</sup> Terms such as captive, deadline, ransom, kidnapper, terrorist and criminal.



# Incident Management: Resolution

Scenarios for resolution of an abduction should be considered from the earliest stages of an incident, and reviewed frequently as the crisis evolves. Although most abductions are resolved successfully (i.e. with the safe release of a captive), all potential scenarios, including worst cases, must be contemplated.

## 6.1 Release

Although the exact time and location of release may not be predictable, a number of steps can and should be taken to facilitate management of the immediate post-release period:

- Appointing a “gate-keeper”, tasked to manage access to/shield and protect the freed captive from attention from colleagues, media and authorities<sup>14</sup>
- Facilitating (phone) contact with the family immediately after the release
- Providing clean clothing, ideally the captive’s own clothes
- Arranging an immediate medical check-up<sup>15</sup>
- Preparing for repatriation
- Considering the likelihood of government agencies asserting a right to debrief the freed staff member, and planning accordingly
- Assessing likely sources and intensity of media attention, and agreeing on an appropriate communications strategy<sup>16</sup>

- Planning when, how and whom to inform about the release (i.e. through a call-tree system)
- Planning an operational debrief session with the freed staff member

## 6.2 Unsuccessful Resolution

Although statistically rare, unsuccessful resolution is a scenario that requires due consideration and planning. In the case of death of the captive, recovery, identification, and repatriation of the remains, as well as administrative follow-up (insurance, pension, etc.) are key concerns.

An unresolved case, i.e. no PoL and no contact with kidnappers for a long period of time, constitutes the most difficult outcome as uncertainty lingers for all parties. Once a decision to formally terminate the incident management mechanism has been taken, an organisation should appoint a case manager to act as a long-term contact point for the family and other actors.

For Post-Incident Follow-Up, procedures outlined in an organisation’s standard Critical Incident Response Plan apply. See the related **EISF Briefing Paper on Crisis Management of Critical Incidents** (April 2010), available at [www.eisf.eu](http://www.eisf.eu).

<sup>14</sup> If a former captive is deeply traumatised and/or has experienced physical assault, the appointment of a second person (i.e. a trusted colleague) should be considered to offer emotional support until professional psycho-social support is available.

<sup>15</sup> Psycho-social support is not an imminent priority, but should be made available soon after release.

<sup>16</sup> If the story was carried by the press during an abduction, media demand for the captive’s story may be so high that a press conference is advisable or unavoidable. In such cases, it is often best to arrange this at the first opportunity following release, to prevent continued media harassment of staff and family members.





# Other EISF Publications

## **Briefing Papers**

### **Crisis Management of Critical Incidents**

April 2010

Pete Buth (author), supported  
by the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

### **The Information Challenge: A Briefing on Information Security for Humanitarian NGOs in the Field**

March 2010

Robert Ayre (author), supported  
by the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

## **Reports**

### **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), supported  
by the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

## **Articles**

### **Risk Transfer Through Hardening Mentalities?**

November 2009

Oliver Behn and Madeleine Kingston (authors)

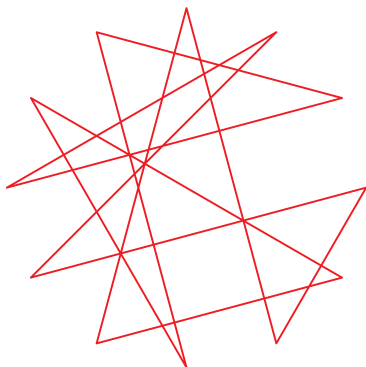
Also available as a blog at

<http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=3067>





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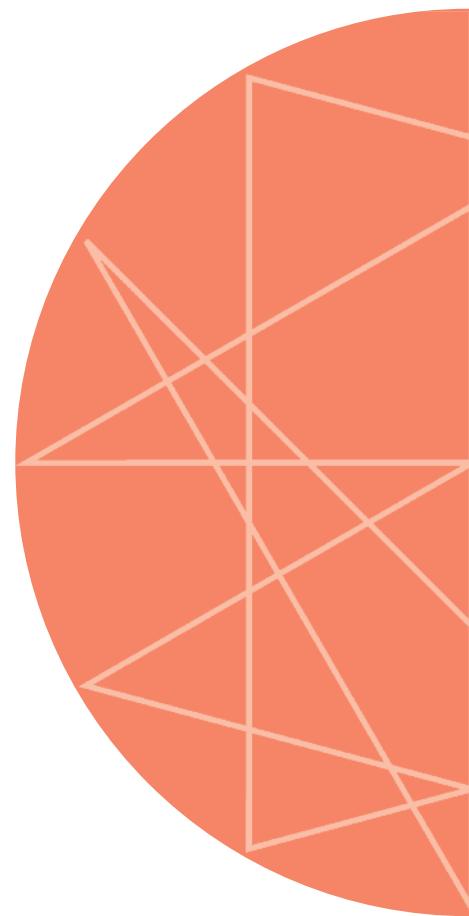
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