Understanding Risk Management of Aid Organizations:
An Analysis of Security System Design & Function.

A research project by Christopher Finucane, www.humanitarianpolicy.org, in cooperation with the Centre for Refugee and Disaster Response, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, and the Security Management Initiative (SMI) of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP).

The literature and evidence-based research on safety and security of aid workers has steadily grown over the past decade. The majority of this research examines acts of violence and/or safety related incidents affecting international and national aid organizations[1] and their staff, with a focus on direct and indirect causes of incidents and events.

The present project builds on the academic and policy literature that examines aid organization *responses* to security risk challenges. In collaboration with participating aid organizations, documentation on risk and security management will be collected and reviewed; this will be complemented by structured interviews. The study will be directly relevant to – and for the benefit of – aid organizations, policy makers, donors and other stakeholders by presenting a comprehensive analysis of the different types of systematic approaches designed and implemented by the organizations both institutionally and in various operational contexts.

Security system *design* is examined through eight inter-dependent parts from (1) governance frameworks, (2) policy, (3) management processes, (4) information and knowledge management, (5) training strategies, (6) financing security, (7) contextual plans and procedures, through to (8) monitoring and evaluation of the system.

The study examines system *function* using the international standard for risk management that proposes eleven principles for effective risk management. These principles are used as the baseline reference, applying for each indicators that are specific to aid organization security risk management. The comprehensive approach of this study will take into account inputs, processes and outputs throughout the system and provide a comparative analysis of different security risk management methods and structures.

The research will present new information on the current architecture of aid organization security management systems, as well as propose a practical self-assessment tool. It aims to provide an evidence base from which the following questions may be addressed: (1) What is the current status quo of humanitarian security management systems?; (2) Do common systems exist across the different agencies?; (3) To what extent do current systems reflect national and international risk management industry standards?; (4) What are the strengths and weaknesses of these security systems?; (5) Do systems demonstrate duty of care?; (6) How do these systems develop and influence staff behavior and attitudes towards safety and security management?; and (7) How can and/or do these systems adapt to experience and new circumstances?

To register your interest in participating in this study, please complete the on-line registration form:
http://www.securitymanagementinitiative.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=34&Itemid=5&lang=en

For more information about this study, please contact:
    Christopher Finucane **|** cfinucane@humanitarianpolicy.org **|** + 44 759 004 7863 (GMT)

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[1] For simplicity, the term 'aid organization' is used in this text to refer to the variety of organizations that provide aid in complex environments. The research recognizes that organizations working in these environments may also be carrying out activities that would more accurately be described as humanitarian, emergency relief, developmental, peace-building, protection, advocacy, etc. or any combination of the above.