

Workshop Report

GISF Event: Training for Security in Today's World

3 March 2021, virtual

1. Summary

On March 3rd 2021 GISF hosted a virtual training event. The event titled 'Training for Security in Today's world' brought together GISF Members and Affiliate experts to discuss training for security today, considering how training has changed over the last year or so and what could happen beyond the impact of Covid-19.

During the event attendees discussed what training might look like in the near and mid-term future. Participants discussed training for partners, senior leadership, blended learning and the future of personal security training.

Participants expressed a desire to resume face-to-face trainings as restrictions ease, however they also acknowledged that trainers need to build on the momentum of the achievements and lessons learnt during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although the transition of pre-existing trainings to virtual ones is not simple and for them to be successful, time and financial investments are required, this year has shown that virtual learning can be effective.

The conclusion is that moving forward most organisations will adopt trainings that follow a more blended learning approach. Maximising the opportunities for face to face trainings, while recognising the value of individual pre-learning, greater accessibility for and more diverse participants at a virtual-training and the opportunity for a more continuous learning approach rather than relying on the 'one-hit' intensive training course, necessary when utilizing expensive face to face options.

2. What are the key questions and concerns facing security trainers today?

Impact

When asked to reflect on the training related issues and big questions they currently have about the future of training, many participants shared concerns that virtual trainings are less impactful and result in weaker outcomes.

While it was generally agreed that not all trainings can be taught online, for example the scenario based and interactive aspects of HEAT trainings. This was countered by the greater accessibility to online personal security trainings for National Staff and Internationals not from Europe / US; and the discussion of whether this is of greater impact than the current HEAT style approach only available to some.

One particularly positive opportunity identified was the rise in the number of trainings organised within departments but across continents and between different departments which can involve a greater diversity of participants and perspectives, helping to foster improved relations between and within departments.

Many participants voiced the concern of how much people remember from online trainings. Though the counter argument was how much information do attendees retain from 'one-hit' trainings in the following three – six months?

Inclusivity

It was identified by participants that, despite greater accessibility, it is challenging making trainings fully inclusive due to pre-existing barriers such as time zones, multiple languages, and poor internet connectivity, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. It was recognised that the increased difficulty of getting feedback during on-line trainings, rather than face to face, made it harder to spot if individuals were being excluded. Again, this was seen as additionally challenging when organisations felt that participant numbers could be increased based on virtual access rather than good training practice.

Resources

Another key challenge mentioned was the lack of available resources – with organisations not recognising the time and money required to convert an existing training to a virtual format, assuming a training could be easily 'just run on-line'.

Many participants agreed there was a sense of uncertainty around what the future for training might look like as many organisations struggle with resourcing issues and see the huge savings made through virtual trainings. Participants felt it could be difficult to justify the benefits of face to face trainings to money conscious senior leadership. Some participants also identified their organisations as taking a stronger environmental stance, seeing the pandemic as creating changes in approach that could see a long-term reduction in their carbon-footprint.

Some participants identified the opportunities created by the giving of increased responsibility to national staff, because of limited travel by international staff.

3. Training for security in today's world

Stephen Blakemore (a training expert with many years of experience working in the humanitarian sector) and Guillaume Noailly (the Supply Chain and Security Learning and Development Coordinator with Bioforce) shared their insights and reflections on how Covid-19 has impacted training, and how, over the last 12 months, security trainers have had to rapidly transition to virtual training. A transition that has presented both challenges and opportunities.

Challenges

- *Connectivity vs equality*: There are challenges reaching people all over the world remotely due to varying access to technology and inequality in the level of internet connection. This leads to unequal accessibility for data and training.
- *Budget*: Online trainings are not as cheap as management expect. Therefore, it is essential to advocate for proper budget allocation for virtual trainings. Moreover, sourcing financial investment is key to creating high quality, accessible and inclusive trainings.
- *Local Trainings*: Organisations need to invest in appropriate technologies that facilitate effective trainings at local levels. Whether equipment for accessing the resources needed for engaging with virtual opportunities or for running face to face trainings.

Opportunities

- *More content on line*: Having gone through a rapid learning curve for virtual training due to the pandemic, there is an opportunity to continue to build on these gains and keep putting more events and content on-line. The key is to do this in a way that is accessible, inclusive, and effective.
- *Return to face to face*: As restrictions ease, a return to face-to-face training is expected, however this should not come at the expense of building on the gains and learnings of 2020. **Blended learning**, a mixture of both virtual and face-to-face training, will be a popular, and effective training approach moving forward.

In discussion, Participants tackled some specific questions.

What is the biggest loss from not having face-to-face training?

- Connectivity issues, it is significantly harder to include national staff in remote areas.
- Getting to know people in person and having informal conversations, making it harder to build relationships and trust.
- Difficulties measuring feedback and the impact of the training.
- Challenging to identify people who are suffering or are triggered by the training.
- More difficult to get people out of their day-to-day activities and immerse themselves in the training content.

The quality of security training has improved a lot over the last decade: How do we ensure we do not lose the gains in good training made over the last few years as we move forward?

- Adopt a blended learning approach so we don't lose the face-to-face aspects and go completely virtual. Therefore, it is important to look at what can be provided online and what really needs to be conducted in person.
- Ensuring privacy and data protection.
- Ensure different people are still involved in developing and delivering training, e.g. contacting several local actors, etc.
- Decentralising security training, which will also help in better conceptualising training
- There is still a need for more standardisation

What change in training have you seen during the last 12 months that you want to continue?

- The innovation that has occurred and the ability to reach more people at a lower cost:
 - Accessibility for staff with visa issues and travel constraints
 - More diverse audiences
- Training can be delivered at any time and shorter trainings are more prevalent.
- Continuous training approach with more follow-up.
- More environmentally friendly due to less travel
 - Increased reflection amongst staff about whether travel for a training is necessary.

4. Training for Partners

Discussion led by Franziska Heizman

Partners' security needs are very different (handling burnout, having drivers training, etc) so it is very important to explore them in-depth and create trainings that are adapted to what they see as valuable and not only to what the INGO believes is valuable.

Need to approach partners on an equal footing and work together on training, rather than a top-down approach. It's important to build on the capacity partners already have and equally consider learning opportunities for the INGOs. It's also important to have conversations about power imbalances within the partnership.

Elements that are needed for fruitful training:

- Need better security awareness within the INGO and the L/NNGO. Need to embed security in programming - help make this link within training and within the organisation. Global SFP roles should also be about changing the culture of their organisations.
- Training and expectations should be adapted to the realities of partners and not overburden them.
- Training on how to build relationships of trust and spread such knowledge across the organisation. Training should be about trust building and not just transferring knowledge.
- Additional funding - funding is a big issue to organise training for partners, INGOs should lobby donors.

5. Training for Senior leadership

Discussion lead by Abraham Doblado

What is the problem? Why do we need to train senior leadership?

The group expressed a need for senior management to have the ability to interpret data for better decision making. Senior leadership should be aware of the security management process. There is a desire to be able to leverage senior leadership through security training.

Funding is a reason for training senior leadership. If people don't understand security, how can you lobby for resources to implement it.

Security management training, in particular crisis management training, helps to equip management to deal with *all* incidents (PR, reputational, funding) – security management is left to deal with the issues regardless. Increasingly crises issues in organisations are more reputational than security related. Security managers are equipping the managers to deal with any crisis. The understanding between security and crisis management needs to be divided properly.

Who owns the risk?

The legal ownership of risk lies within the management line of the organisation. In the country office it will be the country director but who do they report to? A country office has a senior management team, HQ has a senior management team, in some organisations it is still an ongoing conversation of who should lead on a crisis response. Security managers are not responsible, they implement procedures but the country managers own the risk.

How do we train senior leadership?

Because of the limited opportunities and materials available for training senior leadership on security, it may not be easy to decide who to train within the senior leadership team. At present there are some corporate based trainings

on risk management, however they have minimal inclusion of security risks. Some organisations have identified consultants who will be involved in specific sessions. The Charity Commission in the UK now runs a two-day course for new board members on responsibilities and it includes a section on security risks.

6. Blended Learning

Led by Stephen Blakemore

Pre-Covid there were some online trainings such as courses on Kaya or Disaster Ready, however the majority of trainings were face-to-face. The general consensus of the group was that some form of in-person training is required for trainings to be effective.

Blended learning mixes face-to-face learning with virtual learning. Virtual learning approaches include: podcasts, videos, online courses, webinars, pre-course reading, online assessments and virtual reality simulation training. A blended learning approach can be a more financially viable option for NGOs that do not have capital to run or attend entirely face-to-face trainings.

There is a clear environmental reason that post-Covid we shouldn't completely return to mass traveling to attend trainings. Especially since the last 12 months have highlighted the effectiveness of virtual learning.

It is important to make virtual training inclusive. For example, to ensure that all staff members who need to be able to access online trainings have the equipment and ability to do so.

Blended learning is seen as the future. It is richer and more engaging as it takes place over a longer period of time, which is likely to increase information retention. Consequently, enhancing participants safety and security awareness.

7. Future of Personal Security Training

Led by Phil Candy

Why do we do personal security training?

It is useful for informed consent, resilience and experience. It is also used as a self-assessment pre-departure tool. It enables staff to see if they can deal with, and how they react when confronted with risks. However personal security training is a two-tier system. Training international staff pre-deployment is feasible while it is more challenging to provide the same level of training for national staff.

Positives:

- **Face-to-face** - Parts of personal security training require a specific kind of atmosphere and stress to be successful and it is very hard to replicate this virtually.
- **Virtual** - Virtual learning allows both national and expatriate staff to have a common basic training which can be reinforced when face to face is possible. Conducting training online is more cost effective and enables more people to take part as it is completed remotely.

Negatives:

- **Face-to-face** - It is exclusive and costly. HEAT training remains primarily for expatriate staff.
- **Virtual** - There are concerns as to whether staff actually retain the necessary practical skills without practical experience.

Future considerations.

Virtual Reality (VR) has the potential to be used to mimic the scenario aspects of in-person HEAT training, however, its usefulness is debated. At present the cost is too high for most organisations. Over time, hopefully, such technologies will become affordable.

8. Conclusions

GISF's interactive training event enabled Members and Affiliates to reflect on the development of security training and consider the impacts, both the positive and negative, from the pandemic as well as discuss the future of training.

While it is very likely face-to-face trainings will return when restrictions ease, it is important that organisations and trainers continue to build on the momentum of the achievements obtained over the last 12 months. Although the transition of pre-existing face to face trainings to virtual ones is not simplistic and for them to be successful, time and financial investments are required, this year has shown that virtual learning can be effective.

The likelihood is that moving forward many organisations will adopt trainings that follow a more blended learning approach. A balance of face-to-face and virtual trainings to counterbalance the challenges and opportunities presented by both approaches.

9. Useful Resources

[Radically Remote](#)

[Blended learning case study.](#)

[GISF Training Hub](#)