gisf

Strategy
2025-2030

Introduction

Security risk management (SRM) in the aid sector has come a long way.

In the 1990s, the rise in aid worker attacks underscored that good intentions alone were not enough to ensure staff safety. By the early 2000s, NGOs began creating dedicated SRM roles—but often in isolation, with limited opportunities to share practice.

In 2006, a group of security managers formed the European Interagency Security Forum (EISF), establishing a peer-led space for trust-building and practical learning. As the sector professionalised, EISF helped shape the policies and tools that now underpin aid delivery in high-risk contexts. By 2019, EISF became the Global Interagency Security Forum (GISF), and in 2023, GISF became an independent legal entity.

Today, GISF is a global, member-led network of around 140 organisations dedicated to supporting SRM practices that enable NGOs to more safely and securely reach the communities they serve. NGOs join GISF to take part in collective action that improves both their own capacity and sector-wide SRM.

This strategy sets out GISF's 2025–2030 ambitions, based on extensive consultation with members, partners, and leadership. It responds to a rapidly changing world where security is more critical than ever, and reaffirms our belief in the interdependence of security: that strong, coordinated SRM practices across all actors enable safe, sustained access to those in need.

Key definitions

Security risk management (SRM) is the process through which NGOs identify, assess, and manage security risks that affect an organisation's staff, assets, and programmes. Robust SRM enables organisations to operate safely and sustainably in insecure environments by balancing risk, access, and duty of care. Effective SRM is not just a technical function, but a strategic enabler of humanitarian, development, and human rights work in an evolving landscape.

Access is the ability of humanitarian actors to reach affected communities, as well as communities' ability to access assistance and services. GISF uses access in reference to any NGO's ability to 'get where it needs to be' to carry out its work, regardless of mandate. Similarly, 'communities' is a catch-all term which can apply to the targeted support recipients—whether physical communities, digital communities, individuals, wildlife, or the physical environment.

GISF is a global, **member-led network** of around 140 organisations dedicated to supporting **SRM practices that enable NGOs to more safely and securely reach the communities** they serve.

OCHA / Alioune NDIAYE

Global trends shaping the future of NGO security

The need for robust, equitable SRM has never been more urgent.

Aid operations are expanding into increasingly dangerous environments, while resources are shrinking and national NGOs are absorbing disproportionate risk. At the same time, threats are evolving faster than existing SRM frameworks. GISF's 2025–2030 strategy is shaped by the following realities:
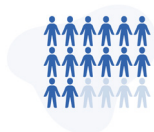
Rising need in harder-to-reach contexts: Humanitarian needs have increased by 82 per cent since 2020, with 305 million people now requiring assistance.[1] Over 100 million people in need are in areas where sanctioned armed groups are active,[2] where NGOs face severe access and security constraints. By 2030, more than half of the world's extreme poor will reside in fragile and conflict-affected settings.[3]

Evolving and emerging risks: Aid operations are increasingly affected by armed drones and autonomous weapons systems, targeted disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, and digital surveillance. Meanwhile, violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) are no longer outliers, but "persistent, widespread, and increasingly met with indifference".[4] NGOs are struggling to adapt their SRMs systems to keep pace with these evolving, complex risks.

Shrinking civic space: Only 3.2 per cent of the world's population lives in countries with "open" civic space.[5] Legal restrictions, surveillance, and targeted violence increasingly impact NGOs regardless of mandate.[6] These dynamics require tailored SRM strategies that address digital security, legal preparedness, and protective measures for at-risk staff.

Rising security risks and uneven risk-sharing: 2024 marked the deadliest year on record for aid workers, with at least 336 killed across 25 countries.[7] Local and national NGOs (NNGOs) face disproportionate risks: 96 per cent of NGO staff casualties were national staff, more than half of whom worked for national NGOs.[8] As pressure mounts to respond in insecure contexts with limited resources, NGOs are often forced to prioritise accessible areas, leaving highly insecure regions underserved, or risks being transferred onto local actors.

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1   OCHA. (2025). Global Humanitarian Overview 2025; OCHA. (2020). Global Humanitarian Overview 2020.

2   International Crisis Group. (2024). Ten Challenges for the UN in 2024-2025.

3   World Bank Group (2020). World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020-2025.

4   Geneva Academy. (2025). IHL In Focus: Annual Report.

5   CIVICUS Monitor. (2023). Civic Space in Numbers; CIVICUS Monitor. (2024). People Power Under Attack.

6   Amnesty International. (2024). State of the World's Human Rights.

7   Aid Worker Security Database. (2024).

8   Aid Worker Security Database. (2024). Major attacks on aid workers: Summary statistics.

Systemic limitations on NNGO safety and security: Only 50 per cent of NNGOs workers have access to basic protections such as evacuation plans, accident insurance, and risk monitoring resources.[9] Project-based funding rarely covers SRM needs of NNGOs. Combined with donor inflexibility, risk-averse partnerships, and limited access to tailored SRM resources, these gaps reinforce uneven risk distribution and limit organisations' ability to manage threats effectively.[10]

A shifting policy space: Against this backdrop, political momentum to strengthen protections for aid workers is building. UN Security Council Resolution 2730, the Ministerial Group for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel, and other parallel initiatives signal renewed political will. Commitments must now translate to practical support for security measures alongside efforts to promote greater IHL compliance and accountability.

Resource constraints: Humanitarian funding has been declining for years, with 2025 marking a sharp escalation as several major government donors announced deep cuts or suspended entire aid portfolios. These reductions disproportionately affect enabling functions like security and access. SRM is often categorised as indirect, overhead, or 'non-programmatic', leaving it vulnerable under rigid funding structures and cost recovery models. Declines in unrestricted funding has also limited NGOs' ability to invest in SRM.

An aging global coordination system: The current humanitarian coordination architecture has long been criticised for its inability to respond to today's complex access environment and meaningful inclusion of local first responders.[11] The 2025 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Humanitarian Reset underscores the need for reform, but highlights continued uncertainty over what effective coordination looks like. Many SRM coordination initiatives are similarly outdated, designed for a time when NGOs lacked internal SRM capabilities.[12] There is growing recognition that NGOs and local actors must be empowered to lead coordination efforts, backed by investment in common services and operational enablers like security.[13]

9   Humanitarian Aid International. (2024). The status of frontline humanitarian workers.
10   GISF. (2020). Partnerships and Security Risk Management: from the local partner's perspective.
11   Sida, L., Mooney, E., Lough, O. and Fouad, L. et al. (2024). Independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement. HPG report. London: ODI.
12   Humanitarian Outcomes & GISF. (2024). State of Practice: The evolution of security risk management in the humanitarian space.
13   ICVA. (2025). The IASC Humanitarian Reset examined: A strategic briefing for NGOs.

The strategy

This strategy was drafted during 2024 amid intensifying threats to aid worker safety, shrinking budgets, and deepening inequities in risk sharing.

The final draft was presented to GISF's membership in February 2025, in the shadow of multiple announced cuts to aid budgets by traditionally strong government donors.

Over the next five years, NGO operations may shift dramatically. As a critical enabler of humanitarian action, security practices must evolve with these changes: adapting to new threats, supporting increasingly localised delivery models, and making the case for sustained investment in the system that keeps aid workers safe.

This strategy sets out GISF's approach to supporting that evolution: grounded in collective endeavours that strengthen individual and sector-side SRM.

Key principles of the strategy

- Maintain GISF's role as a neutral, trusted platform for NGO engagement on security

- Ensure GISF membership delivers tangible value to an organisations' SRM capacity

- Anticipate and stay ahead of future risks through forward-looking insights and innovation

- Promote long-term resilience and self-reliance among NGOs

Key priorities

- Reduce the cost of effective SRM through shared services, tools, and collective approaches

- Ensure all NGOs can access the services and supporting infrastructure that SRM requires

- Broker and facilitate collaboration and coordination to unlock efficiencies and make the best expertise available to all NGOs

- Strengthen sector-wide SRM by growing and diversifying GISF's membership

- Accelerate the levelling-up of NNGOs' role in managing security risks

- Elevate SRM as a core enabler of safe, principled, and sustainable humanitarian operations, with a commensurate role in strategic decision-making

The vision

A world where NGOs have safe and sustainable access to people in need, enabled by robust and relevant SRM practices.

GISF is determined to reduce security and safety risks as a barrier to providing assistance, ensuring that the lives of those helping others are protected.

By fostering a culture that prioritises and invests in strong SRM at all levels of the NGO sector, GISF enables NGOs to work safely and sustainably, even in the most challenging contexts.

GOAL Global

GISF's **unique position**

GISF is the only independent network dedicated to strengthening NGO safety and security worldwide. Governed by its NGO members, GISF ensures that SRM remains at the heart of safe and effective NGO operations.

Security is a sensitive subject. GISF's role as a neutral convener provides a trusted platform where NGOs can collectively address systemic SRM challenges, share knowledge, and develop practical, experience-based solutions.

GISF's unique position makes it a vital resource for NGOs and external stakeholders looking to engage with a critical mass of NGOs to improve SRM across the sector.

For NGOs

NGOs operate in increasingly complex and high-risk environments, where security is essential for sustainable access to communities in need. GISF helps NGOs to enhance their SRM capabilities through peer-to-peer learning, practical guidance, and cutting-edge research.

Unlike standalone security initiatives, GISF fosters a collective approach to SRM, where members benefit from shared insights and resources. Membership provides NGOs with access to:

- A highly engaged community of security professionals across 140+ NGOs, fostering collaboration and shared learning
- Tailored resources and best practices designed to meet the unique security needs of NGOs operating in diverse contexts
- Cross-pollination of ideas and approaches between NGOs of different mandates and expertise
- Collective engagement on donor policies and funding structures that directly impact NGO security and operational sustainability
- Practical solutions to address emerging trends, from digital security to resource limitations, developed through GISF's research and engagement with experts

For partners

External stakeholders—including donors, not-for-profit service providers, private sector companies, and multilateral institutions—play a crucial role in shaping the security landscape for NGOs. Engaging with GISF offers them the opportunity to:

- Work with a critical mass of NGOs and gain insights into real-world SRM needs and challenges
- Develop an in-depth understanding of NGO SRM and duty of care requirements
- Scale, pilot, and deliver new initiatives that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of NGO SRM
- Support innovative, evidence-based solutions that enhance NGO security and operational continuity

GISF acts as a trusted bridge between NGOs and third parties, ensuring that SRM is recognised as a fundamental enabler of effective, sustainable NGO operations worldwide.

Membership: The foundation of GISF's impact

NGOs become members of GISF to strengthen their own SRM capabilities, improve NGO sector-wide SRM practices, and to collectively influence the external systems, organisations, and policies that shape the SRM environment.

In addition to individual NGOs, the wider NGO community also benefits from these advances, and so, in turn, GISF's members benefit from sector-wide improvements in SRM practice.

Retaining and attracting members is key to strengthening the outputs of GISF's convening function. To that end, GISF members receive exclusive benefits, as well as those that are made publicly available. These benefits will be strengthened to better demonstrate the value of a GISF membership.

GISF is formed of around 140 international NGO (INGO) members and associates. GISF's board is legally accountable to the membership, further ensuring that GISF is solely focused on improving their safety and security.
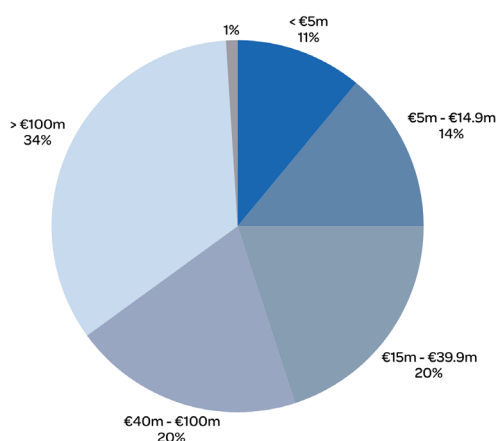
Figure 1. GISF members by revenue
as of December 2024
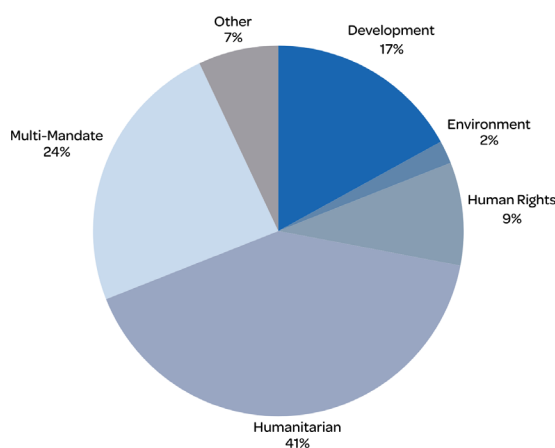

Figure 2. GISF members by mandate
as of December 2024

GISF's members illustrate the breadth and complexity of the NGO sector. This diversity–in contrasting risk profiles and approaches to risk management–presents both challenges to GISF, with regards to producing services relevant to all, as well as unique opportunities such as the cross-pollination of experiences and approaches.

How we seek to **create change**

GISF's Theory of Change (Figure 3) is built on the principle that safe and secure access is a shared responsibility and shared benefit among NGOs.

GISF's long-term goal is for all NGOs, regardless of mandate, size, or geography, to have the ability to sustainably access the communities they serve. To achieve this, we target four interconnected outcomes that reflect both internal capacities and external systems that influence SRM effectiveness.

Our ambitions: Four interconnected outcomes

To achieve this goal, GISF targets **four interconnected outcomes**. These reflect both internal capacities within NGOs and the broader systems that influence SRM.

1. Individual NGOs have **stronger internal capabilities** in SRM

2. NGO **coordination mechanisms are better able to promote operational safety and continuity**, both long-term and in rapid-onset crises

3. NGOs have **access to specialised SRM services** that enhance capacity and reduce financial burdens

4. Donors and policymakers **adopt NGO-defined practices and policies** that support SRM implementation

Our core workstreams

To deliver these outcomes, GISF focuses on four areas of work:

- **Capacity strengthening:** Activities that are aimed at improving the capabilities of individual NGOs, ranging from direct training to technical assistance, and the production of technical guides to enable self-led development.

- **Research and knowledge generation:** Data collection, analysis, and documentation of lessons learned and new data, to generate insights and foresight on issues relevant to SRM.

- **Collaboration:** Events, communications, and facilitation that bridges the gap between NGOs and other key stakeholders/stakeholder groups, with regards to strengthening NGO SRM practice.

- **Policy and influence:** Actions to influence the agenda and decision makers within the systems that shape the implementation of NGO SRM.

Impact

NGOs–individually and collectively–are able to **sustainably reach the communities they serve**

Outcome

NGOs–individually and collectively–**implement security risk management more effectively**

Intermediary outcomes

Influences internal NGO practices

Influences a supportive external environment

Individual NGOs have stronger internal capabilities in SRM

NGO coordination mechanisms are better able to promote operational safety and continuity, both long-term and in rapid onset crises

NGOs have access to specialised SRM services that enhances capacity and reduces financial burdens

Donors and policymakers adapt NGO-defined practices and policies that support SRM implementation

Outputs

Capacity strengthening

Research & knowledge generation

Collaboration

Policy & influence

GISF always begins by

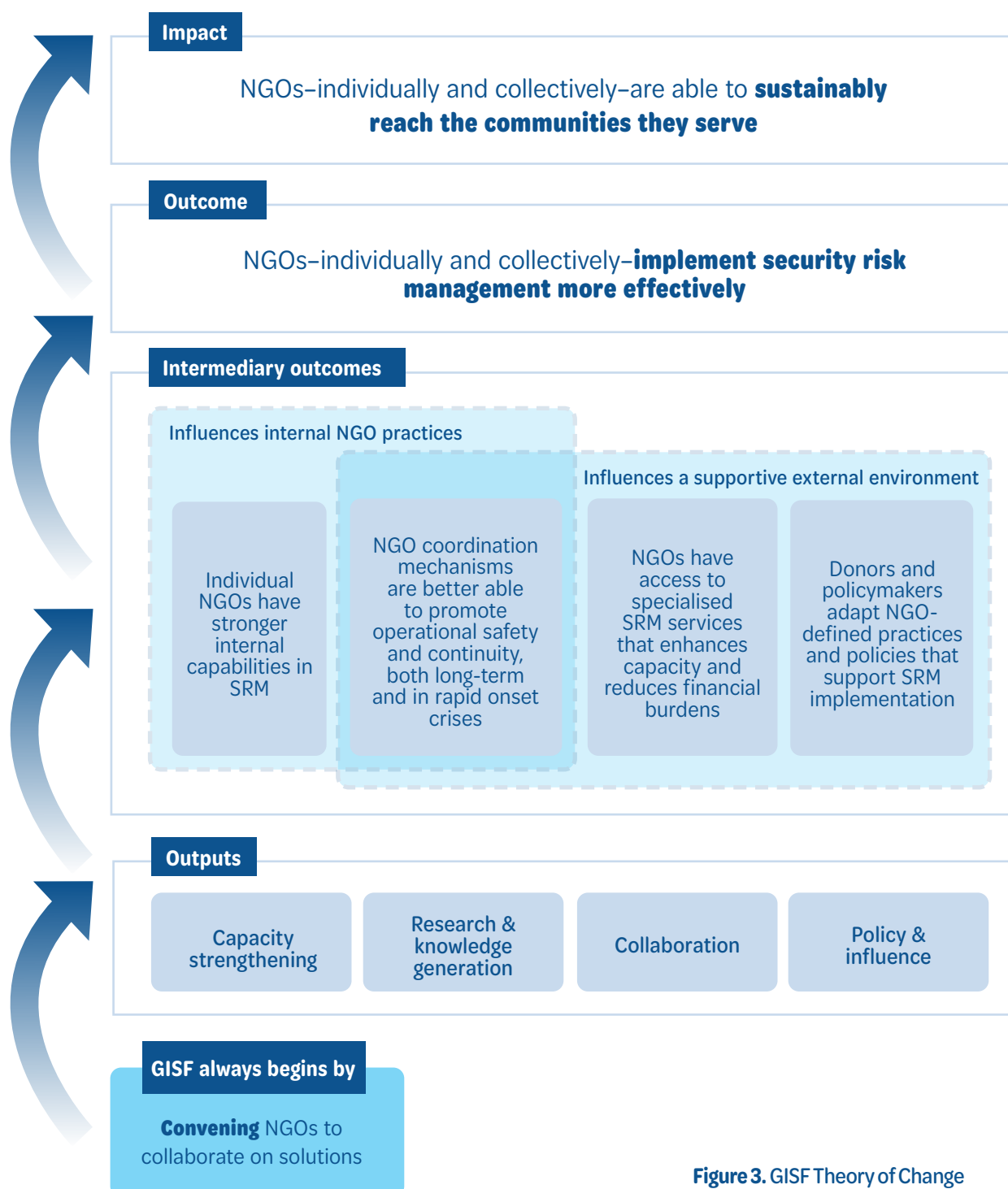**Convening** NGOs to collaborate on solutions

Figure 3. GISF Theory of Change

Effective SRM depends on coordination and collective action.

This is the starting point for everything GISF does.

Joseph Mankamba / OCHA-RDC

Convening: GISF's foundational enabler

Through its convening function, GISF brings together NGOs across humanitarian, development, and rights-based sectors to strengthen their individual and shared approaches to SRM. By creating opportunities for peer learning and shared problem-solving, GISF fosters collaboration, coordination, and trust. GISF's current and future success is entirely grounded in its convening function.

Many members identify the convening function of GISF as a valuable end in itself. It underpins every GISF initiative, enabled by NGO SRM professionals' willingness to share knowledge and lend support to collective endeavours. Continued investment will be made to maintain and strengthen existing convening platforms and member services, recognising that the health of the network is an essential prerequisite for achieving the broader ambitions in this Theory of Change.

Priorities to strengthen convening include:

- More contact points between GISF and member organisations to improve membership value and mainstream SRM

- Encourage and enable focused communities of practice on specific themes, to grow and diversify GISF's mandate

- Increase digital convening and networking opportunities to accelerate member-to-member engagement

- Use data collected from members and the wider NGO sector to increase the relevance and impact of GISF's activities

- Develop a model for NNGOs to convene and lead on their own SRM development

- GISF's member-only services should represent a tangible, net-positive investment for members

- Grow and diversify the GISF membership

See Annex for illustrative outputs related to convening.

GISF / 2025

Cross-cutting priority: Strengthening SRM for local and national NGOs

Local and national NGOs (NNGOs) face distinct barriers to strengthening SRM.

These include the absence of inter-NNGO networks to advance SRM practices, persistent financial and resource constraints, and limited access to tailored guidance or support. A further challenge is perception–often shaped by international frameworks–that a 'culture of security' is lacking within NNGOs, rather than recognising how security is understood and managed in different contexts.

Despite these barriers, NNGOs already possess inherent strengths in managing security risks. Their deep contextual knowledge, proximity to affected communities, and ability to adapt responses to specific needs provide them with distinct advantages. The unique approaches they employ, often distinct from those of INGOs, not only support their own staff but contribute to the shared security of all NGOs operating in the same environment, reflecting the principle of 'interdependence of security'

Expanding GISF's engagement with NNGOs

GISF is uniquely positioned to help overcome these obstacles, contributing to the broader localisation agenda within both security and the humanitarian sector as a whole. While past efforts have focused on NNGOs in their role as implementing partners of INGOs, the strategy now shifts toward supporting NNGOs directly or through local and national NGO coordination mechanisms.

NNGOs operate within diverse professional, legal, and cultural frameworks, which shape their approach to SRM in ways that differ from the dominant INGO-led models. Simply integrating them into the GISF community or engaging in capacity strengthening that is primarily based on INGO approaches, is not sustainable.

Instead, GISF will provide NNGOs with the same pathway INGOs have had since GISF was first established nearly two decades ago: to shape, strengthen, and lead their own SRM agendas through peer learning, practical tools, and strategic support. This will begin with the establishment of trusted communities of practice for those responsible for safety, security, and access, supported and facilitated by GISF. Where possible, GISF will work through existing NNGO platforms, but is prepared to establish platforms where there are no suitable existing mechanisms. GISF will explore opportunities to partner with existing NNGO networks on the overall principles of the initiative.

As GISF deepens its engagement with NNGOs, insights from these interactions will shape GISF's INGO-focused activities. This includes:

- Influencing policy and funding frameworks to better align with NNGOs' SRM realities

- Improving INGO-NNGO partnerships by refining ways of working together on security

- Defining the evolving role of INGOs in a more localised humanitarian sector, ensuring they continue to support, rather than dictate, security coordination

Impact

NGOs–individually and collectively–are able to **sustainably reach the communities they serve**

Outcomes

NGOs–individually and collectively–**implement security risk management more effectively**

National and local actors strengthen their **ownership of SRM decision-making and implementation** within their operational contexts

Intermediary outcomes

Influences internal NGO practices

NNGOs have access to purpose-built SRM resources, tools, and services that address their unique operational challenges & advantages

Equitable participation and leadership in SRM coordination for NNGOs

Influences a supportive external environment

Third-party suppliers of SRM resources and services understand and engage with NNGOs

INGOs and donors adopt and implement risk-sharing frameworks that distribute security risks more equitably with local NGOs. Donors, coordinating bodies, and INGOs adopt SRM policies and frameworks that prioritise local ownership and decision-making to design and implement context-specific SRM strategies

Outputs

Capacity strengthening
- Relevant trainings, tools, & guides
- NNGO SRM coordination

Research & knowledge generation
- Capture and advance good practice
- Quantify Global South perspectives on liability and risk

Collaboration
- Bridge gap between NNGOs and service providers
- Systemise INGOs/NNGO knowledge transfer

Advocacy & influence
- Targeted advocacy to mitigate risk transfer and promote adequate SRM resourcing

Using learning from the last 20 years, GISF creates and supports **collaboration platforms for local and national NGOs**

Figure 4. GISF Theory of Change to strengthen SRM for NNGOs

The strategy

The next five years

Outcome

Individual NGOs have **stronger internal capabilities** in security risk management

1

Sean Sutton / Mines Advisory Group

SRM is a complex, context-specific and ever-evolving challenge.

One element that influences if NGOs implement SRM effectively is their internal capacity to deal with these challenges. GISF provides a wide range of active and passive capacity building activities that support NGOs. The ambition is that by providing these services, NGOs improve their ability to assess, manage, and mitigate security risks in their operational contexts.

Active capacity building ranges from webinars to workshops and in-depth consultancy. Passive efforts refer to GISF's ability to make the necessary resources available for NGOs to undertake self-led capacity development.

Importantly, since GISF's transition to independence and review of membership, GISF increasingly views the entire NGO as the 'member', rather than a specific security focal point. This acknowledgement is in line with GISF's approach of mainstreaming SRM—colleagues in HR, legal and the executive, to name a few, all play key roles in security. GISF will seek to directly engage with them more often, with the guidance of security teams.

Local and national NGOs

Comparatively few training and written resources have been developed with a focus on NNGO SRM practices. As the move towards localisation grows, NNGOs are being asked to take on more risk and more responsibility, often without the additional resources and expertise of INGOs. GISF will develop and deliver targeted capacity building support for NNGOs.

Priorities

- Mainstreaming of SRM practices within organisations, such as legal, HR, and executive teams

- More efficient SRM practices

- Members can make better informed internal investments into their SRM capacity

- Accessible and relevant SRM resources are developed for NNGOs

- Increase the availability of technical support to NNGOs on SRM

See Annex for illustrative outputs related to this outcome.

Outcome

NGO coordination mechanisms are better able to promote operational safety and continuity, both long-term and in rapid onset crises

2

NGO coordination mechanisms are better able to promote operational safety and continuity, both long-term and in rapid onset crises.

Coordination mechanisms at regional and local levels play a vital role in the effective delivery of NGO programmes, especially in insecure and rapidly evolving contexts. Security coordination helps organisations share information and build a common understanding of evolving security risks. During acute crises, it enables coordinated responses and contingency planning. Most SRM staff rely on a combination of formal and informal channels to fulfil these responsibilities.

However, existing humanitarian coordination structures remain outdated. Some formal mechanisms are overly centralised or exclusionary, while informal networks often lack consistency and institutional support. At the global level, frameworks such as Saving Lives Together (SLT) offer a foundation for security coordination–but SLT, created over 20 years ago, was designed for a world where the UN's resources and expertise far outweighed those of NGOs.

Alternative models of security coordination must be explored to strengthen how NGOs collectively respond, and to encourage the broader humanitarian system to adopt more effective approaches. GISF believes future mechanisms must move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, providing support tailored to specific contexts. These models would draw on a multi-disciplinary network of capabilities, flexibly deployed to meet the unique demands of different emergencies.

Crucially, GISF believes that security coordination must be embedded in broader operational and strategic frameworks. Security practices cannot function in isolation; they must be woven into all aspects of operations and decision-making. When integrated properly, organisations can ensure that protective measures are responsive, relevant, and aligned with overall response goals.

Local and national NGOs

Recent assessments have demonstrated that there is insufficient participation by NNGOs in SRM coordination mechanisms. In addition, existing formal mechanisms are based on the INGO approach to SRM, which does not necessarily align with the NNGO approach, and so may not be fully catering to their unique needs. GISF will pursue ensuring the equitable participation of NNGOs in security coordination mechanisms, as well as assessing the requirement for new models of SRM coordination.

Priorities

- All NGO platforms possess a minimum capacity for SRM coordination

- Affordable models for NGO SRM Coordination are available to a range of contexts

- NNGO SRM Practices are supported with relevant and inclusive coordination models

- UN and NGO coordination practices reflect and support modern practices

- NGO SRM Coordination makes better use of the wide range of specialist service providers available

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See Annex for illustrative outputs related to this outcome.

Outcome

3

NGOs have access to specialised SRM services that enhance capacity and reduce financial burden

As part of effective SRM, NGOs often have to procure expensive but essential services such as legal advice, medical evacuation, and insurance.

These services providers may not be accustomed to working with NGOs, particularly those offering new innovations. Additionally, a number of not-for-profit service providers exist that offer direct or ancillary benefit to NGO SRM.

GISF has the ability to negotiate discounts, create mechanisms to share and pool resources, and incentivise the private sector to improve its products and enter new markets. This can enhance NGO access to the products and services that they need to meet their duty of care obligations.

External providers GISF will engage include:

- **Service Providers**: These entities offer specialised expertise in cybersecurity, data protection, risk analysis, and training. They also offer temporary increases in capacity that NGOs may be unable or unwilling to maintain internally. Commercial providers (e.g., Dragonfly Intelligence and Control Risks) and non-profit organisations (e.g., International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO), ACAPS, and iMMAP) provide tools and advisory services for situational awareness and risk assessment. Barriers can prevent smaller NGOs from accessing some of these services. Bridging this gap requires collaborative efforts to adapt private-sector innovations for resource-constrained contexts and ensure providers align their offerings with the NGO sector priorities and resources.

- **Insurance Providers**: Nearly all INGOs rely on their services to protect their organisations and help meet their duty of care requirements toward staff. Several brokers specialise in and have a greater understanding of the NGO sector. Insurance policies can often be the link between NGOs and specialist risk management companies in helping to manage critical incidents. Economical and accessible coverage can vary widely between contexts. National NGO staff are generally offered significantly less coverage than 'international' staff.

Local and national NGOs

A number of barriers exist to NNGO access to specialised services, which limit their ability to manage risk to the same degree. Given their unique approaches, not all services will have equal relevance to NNGOs and INGOs. The focus is on ensuring that suppliers and service providers understand the needs and priorities of NNGOs, and that artificial barriers are broken down.

> **Priorities**
>
> - Ensure the availability of effective SRM services that meet NGO needs
>
> - Increase the relevance and utility of these SRM services to NGOs
>
> - Expand insurance options to improve coverage for national staff
>
> - Incentivise improvements in the training market
>
> - Leverage collective buying power to drive down prices of essential services
>
> - Increase access of NNGOs to the market for SRM support services

See Annex for illustrative outputs related to this outcome.

Outcome

Donors and the international system adopt NGO-defined practices and policies that support progressive SRM implementation

4

United Nations / 2024

Donors and other actors in the international system play a crucial role in creating and maintaining the systems, structures, and frameworks in which NGOs operate, including SRM.

Financial and regulatory frameworks are often shaped by these actors through compliance requirements and funding models. Major institutional donors influence how organisations prioritise and implement SRM. The legislatures of donor countries also play a key role by setting legal parameters around liability, duty of care, and the broader regulatory environment that governs NGO operations and staff safety.

Current practices and policies are not optimised to address systemic security challenges. GISF will represent the priorities of members to these stakeholders, particularly on the systematic integration of security, predictable and flexible funding for SRM, and global cooperation on security. GISF also offers donors a single point of contact to reach a large, engaged body of NGO security professionals. Providing evidence-based information and messaging to inform policy developments will be key.

Local and national NGOs

GISF has identified two specific policy areas that are preventing progress towards localisation of SRM. Firstly, local ownership and decision-making is not prioritised, with flow-on effects in terms of allocation of resources. Secondly, INGOs and donors do not currently adopt equitable risk-sharing practices with their local/national partners. Current frameworks do not incentivise the adoption of these practices. However, some donors are beginning to integrate SRM into broader funding models.

> ### Priorities
>
> - Maximise the voice of GISF's members in policymaking
>
> - Position effective SRM as a key enabler of programmes
>
> - Facilitate risk-sharing in INGO/NNGO partnerships
>
> - Increase decision-makers' understanding of NGO SRM practice
>
> - Evolve donor bureaucracy to reduce inefficiencies and facilitate responsive SRM

See Annex for illustrative outputs related to this outcome.

Resourcing framework

Achieving GISF's ambitions for 2025-2030 will require a more sustainable and diversified funding model.

This resourcing framework outlines the key principles and strategies that will guide GISF's approach to financial sustainability, ensuring the organisation remains mission-driven, responsive to member needs, and resilient amid a changing funding landscape.

Key objectives

Increasing funding horizon: GISF will work to increase its funding horizon based on a three-year funding cycle, setting annual targets based on secured funding over the following three years to enable sustained strategic planning and implementation. By securing multi-year commitments from donors and partners, GISF will be positioned to invest in long-term projects and maintain continuity in its core services to members.

Diversifying funding sources: To reduce dependency on a limited number of institutional donors and increase resilience to financial fluctuations, GISF will actively work to diversify its funding sources. Over the next five years, business development efforts will aim to achieve a balanced portfolio where no single revenue stream accounts for more than approximately a third of overall revenue. GISF will focus on deepening and broadening its relationships with key institutional donors, including current donors, to achieve a more diverse, healthy balance of funding within its institutional funding portfolio. It will expand beyond institutional funding to include corporations and philanthropic foundations and explore innovative revenue-generating mechanisms such as social entrepreneurship (e.g., consulting services, training, and fee for service).

Securing funding for core activities: Core membership services should be funded primarily through unrestricted funds (such as membership fees and commercial income), reducing members' exposure to unpredictable donor activity. This will help protect core services while allowing donor funds to be directed to new or strategic initiatives.

Throughout this process, GISF will carefully balance its growth/stability objectives with a commitment to maintaining fidelity to its core values.

Resourcing strategies

To achieve these resourcing objectives, GISF will implement the following strategies:

- **Institutional donor funding:** Build on existing donor relationships while diversifying the base to include new traditional and non-traditional funders, in line with member expectations. Initiatives that showcase innovative methodologies, new initiatives, and pilot programmes will be prioritised to attract donor support.

- **Member fee optimisation:** Membership fees are a critical and reliable revenue stream. GISF will expand membership across diverse sectors and NNGOs and ensure an equitable and accessible fee structure. This includes refining membership tiers and benefits, with the potential to introduce new tiers offering differentiated benefits (in consultation with the existing membership).

- **Foundations and individual philanthropy:** GISF will identify mission-aligned foundations and develop targeted proposals to secure foundation grants. It will also cultivate relationships with high-net-worth individuals who align with its mission to advance NGO security.

- **Innovative funding mechanisms:** As a Community Interest Company (CIC), GISF is authorised to generate revenue through mission-aligned activities, provided that all profits are reinvested into its social purpose of strengthening NGO SRM. This structure enables GISF to explore innovative funding mechanisms, such as social enterprise models and fee-for-service offerings for non-members, while maintaining fidelity to its mission and compliance with CIC regulations.

- **Corporate and private sector engagement:** GISF will actively develop partnerships with commercial service providers and corporations to pursue income, in-kind donations, or pro bono services that align with its mission and benefit members directly.

- **Organisational architecture**: To expand funding availability and partnerships, GISF will assess the feasibility of establishing affiliates and obtaining charitable status in different jurisdictions, such as the EU and the US. This evaluation will include legal requirements, compliance costs, operational impacts, and potential benefits for strategic partnerships and funding access.

Annex. Illustrative outputs & activities

This annex provides illustrative outputs that reflect how GISF's strategy and Theory of Change are translated into practice. The examples span GISF's foundational convening function and the four core outcome areas. Each output is tagged to indicate whether it is delivered as a member service, available exclusively to GISF members, or intended to support the broader global SRM ecosystem. While not exhaustive, they offer a snapshot of planned and potential activities that strengthen internal capacities and external systems that influence SRM effectiveness.

Convening the NGO SRM community

Output	Description	Member service	Globally available
Communities of Practice	GISF will facilitate an expanded offer of sector-specific communities of practice, to increase opportunities for collaboration and maintain relevance as we grow and diversify in membership. These will range from online groups exchanging knowledge informally, to funded initiatives.	x	
Digital collaboration platform	GISF will improve its digital platform for member collaboration, communication and knowledge sharing. This will help navigate the identified 'bottleneck' of pushing resources through a single contact point; accelerate member-to-member engagement and facilitate thematic communities of practice.	x	
Pilot establishment of an NNGO SRM Platform	GISF will seek partners to develop and implement a pilot 'convening platform' based around facilitated peer-to-peer learning and networking to advance SRM practice, with associated capacity strengthening elements. Led by participants, it will identify areas for targeted investment and support via GISF.	x	x

Outcome 1: Individual NGOs have stronger internal capabilities in security risk management

Output	Description	Member service	Globally available
Purpose-build SRM resources	GISF will support the development of tailored SRM resources of NNGOs and adapt distribution methods including working through a strengthened network of NNGO SRM practitioners. NNGOs can maximise their existing limited resources by building off the work of each other and GISF.	x	x
Trainers of trainers	GISF will develop and implement a "training of trainers" programme to establish regional SRM trainers and coordinators who can provide localised technical support and capacity strengthening across regions. This will increase the availability of technical support to NNGOs on SRM.		x

		Member service	Globally available
Self-assessment tool	GISF will create an SRM self-assessment tool for members which will produce a benchmarked report against which members can assess their SRM approach and performance. This can then be used inform internal investment.	x	
Return-on-Investment tool	GISF will produce a return on investment tool (and wider econometric study about the cost of SRM) to support NGOs to make quantifiable justifications for SRM resources.	x	
INGO-NNGO capacity exchange	GISF will facilitate and support long-term capacity exchange initiatives between international and local NGOs, so both can benefit from peer-to-peer learning.	x	x

Outcome 2: NGO coordination mechanisms are better able to promote operational safety and continuity, both long-term and in rapid onset crises

Output	Description	Member service	Globally available
NGO SRM coordination support	GISF will build off pilots already undertaken and planned for 2025, to drive sustainable, NGO-led SRM coordination. GISF will create and deliver training modules for security coordination focal points within NGO platforms. GISF will create a community of practice for focal points to better capture learnings and approaches. GISF will work with third parties to explore common tools that can be made available to NGO platforms.		x
Data exchange	GISF will look to create secure systems for the sharing of operational data between NGOs, over and above the current focus on 'incident tracking'. This would include existing SRM capacity in specific contexts, risk assessments, and other areas of duplication with the intent of increasing operational efficiencies while supporting organisations' individual approach to risk mitigation.	x	
NNGO SRM coordination	GISF will be led by NNGOs to research and understand their specific needs around coordination that facilitate their specific ways-of-working.		x
UN/NGO coordination	GISF will strengthen the mechanisms by which members are linked to decision-making on the Saving Lives Together platform. GISF's primary objective will be to improve productive coordination between UN agencies and NGOs and evolve mechanisms to suit the needs of its membership. GISF will argue in favour of pragmatic inclusion of NNGOs into these relationships.	x	x

Outcome 3: NGOs have access to specialised SRM resources and services that enhance capacity and reduce financial burden

Output	Description	Member service	Globally available
Facilitate feedback to providers	GISF will create avenues for collective feedback from NGOs to service providers, to ensure the availability of appropriate SRM services that meet NGO needs.	x	
Certificate of services	GISF will explore the feasibility of certifying or creating an endorsement for HEAT courses, to incentivise improvements in the market and streamline members' procurement processes.	x	x

		Member service	Globally available
Cost-sharing	GISF will work with members to identify opportunities to use collective buying power to drive down prices of services, such as specialised legal, external audits and subscription-based services. This will facilitate access to shared quality services that complement or reinforce organisations' SRM capacity.	x	
At-cost consultancies	GISF will look at offering at-cost consultancy support to help NGOs meet their duty of care requirements in a difficult funding environment. These will focus on internal capacity strengthening using the results of the new Self-Assessment tool. A technical expert will work with the organisation to develop a strengthening plan and oversee its implementation. This service is expected to be of most use to smaller NGOs looking to increase their ability to manage duty of care, but are underserved by the private sector.	x	
Expand insurance options	Work with providers to expand insurance options to improve coverage for national staff.	x	x

Outcome 4: Donors and the international system adopt NGO-defined practices and policies that support progressive SRM implementation

Output	Description	Member service	Globally available
NGO network coor-dination	Continue strengthening relationships with major NGO networks, such as ICVA, InterAction and NEAR, to ensure safety and security are present and well-informed considerations in their policy development.	x	x
Donor Working Group	GISF sees it as vital that government donors increase their engagement, to share their own best-practices on supporting implementing partners with safety and security. Cohesive approaches to SRM arrangements will reduce NGOs' administrative burden and increase efficiencies. GISF will work with donors to encourage and facilitate this, whether through new or existing mechanisms.		x
Certification of security standards	GISF will explore whether there are benefits to introducing a common certification of SRM competency for NGOs, to avoid the requirement to undergo due diligence reviews from multiple donors. The goal is to reduce administrative burden, increase efficiencies and increase NGO's flexibility in approaching risk mitigation.	x	x
GISF Policy Working Group	Launched shortly prior to the strategy, this group functions as a central mechanism for shaping and delivering policy priorities, with consistent member engagement and demonstrable outcomes.	x	

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Global Interagency Security Forum

GISF CIC
Romero House,
55 Westminster Bridge Road,
London,
SE1 7JB

www.gisf.ngo