

Welcome to Module 1: High Level Security Assessment

As part of operations management, it is important to conduct high level security assessments. As humanitarians, we can be exposed to potential dangers when visiting the field and insecure locations. No matter how familiar you may be with an area, there can always be unforeseen events that may affect your safety and security and so it is important to be prepared for anything. However, there are steps you can take to minimise potential dangers. By developing safety and security plans in response to high level security assessments, you can help to keep yourself and others safe.

In this module, we are going to look at the key areas that you should take into account when conducting high level security assessments. These include: political security, environmental security, and conflict security.

Political Security

When contemplating operations in another location, particularly one in conflict, it is necessary to consider the political security risks. Risks to political security include government repression, systematic violations of human rights, and threats from militarisation. Regard should be paid to national, regional, and district political systems and structures as well as the local religious and social community setup. Understanding the political context of where you will conduct your operations is key to yours and others' safety.

Before departing, we recommend you obtain the latest security and intelligence reports for the location to be visited. Use a map to establish a safe route and a back-up route to your destination. Ensure all team members receive a security and pre-

departure briefing and are given emergency contact cards in the relevant languages.

Things to consider:

- What identity and security documents will staff members need?
- Do I need to inform other organisations or seek permission for my planned visit?
- Will I require a dedicated translator?

It's also important to understand where you might face political security problems after you arrive in the field. These could be caused by political party clashes, religious group turmoil, or social insurrections. The prevalence of these political security risks will vary between national, regional, and district levels so if you don't have enough intelligence information available at your headquarters or senior management level, it is important to obtain relevant details from other parties that are actually monitoring the security situation on the ground. Remember, this can change at any moment so information needs to be constantly updated.

Finally, when considering political security risks, do not forget the "Do No Harm" principle. This requires humanitarian organisations to strive to minimise the harm they may inadvertently cause and maintain the humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Consider this: are you going to be perceived as supporting one party or group as opposed to another?

Environmental Security

Environmental security involves ensuring public and staff safety from environmental dangers caused by natural or human processes due to ignorance, accident, mismanagement or design. To assess environmental security risks, it is important to consider several factors before you start your mission:

- What are the road conditions like?
- Are there any access issues or obstacles that could prevent you from reaching the areas that you plan to go to?
- In the event of a natural disaster, are there disruptions to the land that could affect your mission or put people at risk?
- In the event of a natural disaster, are storage areas secure or have they been damaged?

Often after cyclones, hurricanes and earthquakes you will find that power cables will be down. These can be a serious risk with live cables across the road.

You should also think about current and future weather and land conditions. These are particularly relevant if you are moving from low-land to high-land. Landslides and flash floods can be difficult to anticipate so try to always be prepared and be aware of your surroundings.

In-conflict security

You must conduct security assessments for conflict and unlawfulness. Consider the volatility of the location you are travelling to and any obstacles you may encounter on your journey there.

Complete a travel authorisation form prior to departure. Have copies for yourself, your team, and for those remaining behind so they are informed of your itinerary and location. This form should include your intended and alternative travel routes, expected arrival and departure times, and check-in procedures.

Things to consider before departure:

- In the field, do you anticipate having to go through checkpoints? What are the implications of this? Is there going to be a risk to your team? Do you understand the specific security procedures when passing through?
- Are you aware of where the current front lines are if you are in a conflict situation? Remember, frontlines can move quickly so you need to plan ahead and react fast.
- Are you aware of any unexploded ordinances (UXOs) on your route and therefore the standard response procedures with regard to avoiding UXOs and driving off-road?
- Are there any risks that you will be driving on a road that is subject to crossfire between different parties in a conflict?
- Are you aware of the standard procedures for ambush, kidnap, or theft and how you can mitigate these risks when planning your mission?

When travelling within insecure locations do so in convoy (2 or more vehicles

travelling together). Your convoy will need to rely on negotiated permissions with local leaders and security forces to gain access and safe passage. You should also follow the convoy safety checklist before departing. This includes briefing all staff on convoy procedures; nominating a convoy leader to travel at the front; deciding the order in which vehicles will travel; and scheduling check-ins at particular times or landmarks.

Remember: stay alert and be wary of anything suspicious. Stay in contact and report any security issues immediately. If you do not feel comfortable or prepared about an assignment, do not do it. Be proactive. Stay safe.