

Safer Access – A Statement of Principles

Aim

The aim of Safer Access is to assist relief and development organisations to safely and effectively access their beneficiaries. Safer Access achieves this through the provision of training, operational support and practical assistance.

Introduction

Safer Access is a network of humanitarian safety expertise that aims to provide security services that were tailored to the particular needs and values of humanitarian agencies. It is a learning organisation that is in-tune with current best practice in the humanitarian security sector. Safer Access advisors, trainers and consultants are all security professionals from a range of backgrounds, however the overriding factor in the selection of Safer Access staff is the ability to understand the specific needs of the humanitarian sector and work in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Humanitarian Agencies and Security/Safety

The word security can be sensitive in many parts of the world, particularly when humanitarian agencies are present with the begrudging consent of a host government. In most cases Safer Access will use the term Safety to describe its activities.

Humanitarian organisations are more frequently operating within Complex Emergency environments, working for extended periods in post conflict environments with sporadic eruptions of conflict or civil disturbance. Falling between relief and development, these environments bring complex challenges and security risks. This is further compounded by current geopolitical developments.

In some emergency interventions the overwhelming humanitarian need may initially provide a safety umbrella for humanitarian organisations in the initial stages. This, however, is often quickly eroded - leaving humanitarian workers vulnerable.

The most important people in any humanitarian intervention are the beneficiaries. It is the view of Safer Access that if the beneficiaries cannot be served effectively, due to poor security provision or excessive risk to humanitarian personnel and the beneficiaries themselves, then the humanitarian organisation must question its presence in that location.

The risk/benefit balance is a delicate concept for those who believe strongly in the programmes they are implementing. Simply put, it is acceptable to take more risks where the activities being conducted contribute **directly** to saving lives.

Integrated Approach

Safer Access believes in an integrated approach to security management. This belief stems from the fact that security provision cannot be separated from the

programmes and the context in which they are being implemented. Risk flows as a natural by-product of our interaction with the operating environment.

Both international and national staff have a responsibility for the security of programmes and as such should be involved with all aspects of security planning.

Humanitarian Principles

Safer Access understands that the majority of humanitarian organisations are guided by their own principles and mission statements that have a firm foundation in International Humanitarian Law.

Safer Access supports the **Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief** (shown below) and the general humanitarian principle of **Do No Harm**. Our consultants and advisors follow these principles during the implementation of their work with Safer Access and will strive to assist client agencies in incorporating these principles into programmes and by extension security planning and provision.

Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief

1. The Humanitarian imperative comes first.
2. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.
4. We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.
5. We shall respect culture and custom.
6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.
7. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.
8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.
9. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.
10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects.

The Right to Life with Dignity

Safer Access supports this principle and strives to assist client agencies in developing security and safety procedures that enable the agency to carry out advocacy and rights based work where this is within their mandate and mission. Safer Access however recognises that a balance needs to be struck between life saving interventions, agency safety and security and a Rights Based Approach.

Safer Access and Armed Protection

- Safer Access places serious doubts on the effectiveness of Armed Protection in the context of humanitarian aid delivery.
- Safer Access employees and consultants will under no circumstances be armed during the course of their duties.
- Safer Access will not manage or provide training to armed guards or close protection teams on behalf of humanitarian agencies. Safer Access will provide humanitarian agencies with the management tools to safely employ armed guards where a humanitarian agency has deemed them necessary. Safer Access will not take actions that could be construed as contributing to the proliferation of armed security amongst humanitarian actors.
- Safer Access does not believe that working with Armed Protection is conducive to humanitarian values, as it creates insecurity and contributes to the proliferation of “gun culture”.
- Safer Access believes that there are limits to the level of risk that Humanitarian Agencies should take. This is based on the ‘Risk-Benefit Balance’. The **perceived** need for armed protection is often an indicator that it may not be appropriate for a Humanitarian Organisation to continue work in that area.
- Safer Access does not wish to be prescriptive nor dictate solutions to humanitarian agencies, though we believe that it is clear that the use of armed security by humanitarians is most often inappropriate and ineffective. In order to aid relief and development organisations to safely and effectively access their beneficiaries, we will render whatever assistance and training possible, ensuring that this assistance remains consistent with our own principles.

Health, Safety and Security

The security, good health and safety of our staff are a key organisational responsibility. Safer Access recognises that working in complex risk environments often places considerable demands on staff. Safer Access strives to assist clients in recognising this and their duty of care to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of staff.



Safer Access is familiar with the principles enshrined in the People in Aid code and assists signatory client agencies in incorporating these principles in their operations. Safer Access consultants can also assist interested client agencies in becoming People in Aid compliant.