

BEYOND

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

HOW THE NEXT GENERATION OF MOBILE SECURITY TOOLS KEEP YOUR GLOBAL WORKFORCE SAFE

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A RISK TOO FAR

The way forward in protecting NGO staff



**THE LAST TEN YEARS HAVE
SEEN A 200% INCREASE IN
AID WORKER FATALITIES.**

AMAURY COOPER, FOUNDING
MEMBER OF INTERNATIONAL
NGO SAFETY AND SECURITY
ASSOCIATION, INSSA,
DESCRIBES HOW BETTER
COLLABORATION AND
CO-OPERATION IS THE WAY
FORWARD IN PROTECTING
NGO STAFF.

There was a time when any attack or threat to an aid worker was a strict taboo; now overseas aid workers are increasingly a target. Every year hundreds are killed, severely wounded, kidnapped or imprisoned. For some organizations, an inability to keep staff safe is directly inhibiting the effective delivery of services. The need to find better, safer ways of operating has never been greater.

Aid workers have come under fire as aid work has become more complex, a trend identified by World Vision Germany's Country Program Co-ordinator for Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs, Michael Reich (in a recent interview for DW).

adequate, not least because it inevitably encourages a fragmented and inconsistent response. Our sector suffers from poor information sharing and co-operation, on many levels: between individual organizations, between the non-profit and 'for profit' aid sectors and even geographically, between the American, European and Southern NGOs.

At INSSA we're looking at taking a new approach – improving safety through collaboration at a grass roots level.

When INSSA started in August 2009, it evolved from a small group of NGO safety and security managers. Their hope was to develop new, more structured ways of working



MICHAEL REICH
COUNTRY PROGRAM
COORDINATOR FOR
HUMANITARIAN AND
EMERGENCY AFFAIRS,
WORLD VISION
GERMANY

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A RISK TOO FAR?

Says Reich, 'It's more difficult today to say for sure who is a humanitarian worker, and who may be affiliated with a military or paramilitary group. Visibility is sometimes tricky. And civil military corporations sometimes blur the differences between purely humanitarian aid and military intervention.

'Humanitarian aid workers are attractive targets. They have good resources – their materials, cars, computers, money – and because usually they are not armed, they are not shooting back. Add to this the belief that they are part of an evil system, and you have a soft target that people just want to get rid of.'

With the taboo broken, the traditional approach of NGOs working individually to provide security and safety is no longer

together, better ways of educating people across the aid sector and also recognized NGO security certification standards that together would buck the trend in NGO safety. What started over a drink after long days at the office became a proposal for how to enhance the professional development and improve the safety and security capacities of all those working in the humanitarian aid and development sectors, a proposal made real by a two-year grant from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of USAID.

Person to person

INSSA's founders decided early on that it would not represent organizations, and this remains a core principle today. Instead INSSA

advocates for aid and development organizations to adopt comprehensive safety and security strategies, by addressing the topics that are most relevant to individual aid workers.

Our key projects involve empowering individual aid and development workers to share information and resources on safety and security directly among themselves, a move which removes the organizational constraints on collaboration, and particularly supports greater communication between the non-profit and 'for profit' sectors. It's an approach which seeks to enhance existing initiatives being undertaken by groups like InterAction, EIFS, INSO and others.

When it comes down to it, there is no single best methodology for security; >

different organizations apply different models as best fit their values and their analysis of the context in which they work. What has become universal however, is the need to raise the level of understanding, both inside and outside the humanitarian aid and development community, about the risks and dangers aid workers face every day, and to deliver tangible, professional, competency-based solutions to help them successfully navigate those risks.

With this as a target INSSA has completed its first major endeavour, creating an online collaboration platform which allows NGO safety and security professionals, and

the United Nations General Assembly to raise public awareness about humanitarian assistance and the people who risk their lives to provide it. And INSSA continue to plan and participate in events that bring together professionals from the NGO safety and security field as well as peripheral sectors to share information, identify best practices and methodologies, discover innovative technologies, and develop appropriate means of implementation.

Most recently, INSSA has begun developing a certification process based on the internationally recognized core competencies and standards required for



aid and development workers to find and communicate with each other directly. It enables the sharing of best-practice among the people most at risk, enhancing safety by enabling individuals themselves to make a difference. Through the website there is a reservoir for information as well as a forum for discussion on the latest security issues affecting the global aid and development community.

Now in its third year, INSSA has recently been able to begin pursuing its other programming goals in advocacy, education, and standardization. This year INSSA teamed up with several other organizations to support World Humanitarian Day (August 19) which, among other things, was designated by

individuals pursuing careers in NGO safety and security at various levels.

Today more than 725 individual members, from over 130 countries, representing over 400 organizations are, through INSSA, reaching out to assist each other, with a shared purpose and strength in numbers. Tomorrow, by working together, let's hope fewer people, working on the front line, providing a life-line, have to put their lives on the line to help those in need. +

For more information about INSSA or to become a member or Organizational/Corporate Supporter, visit our website: www.ingossa.org.

WHAT HAS BECOME UNIVERSAL IS THE NEED TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING, BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE HUMANITARIAN AID AND DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY, ABOUT THE RISKS AND DANGERS AID WORKERS FACE EVERY DAY.