Paying the Ultimate Price: Analysis of the deaths of humanitarian aid workers (1997 - 2001)
(Use of the SHARE approach for documenting and analyzing data on deaths of humanitarian workers)

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One of the most disturbing trends in recent years is the increased number of civilian aid workers who have been killed in the line of duty, working for organizations providing humanitarian assistance or service to populations affected by disasters and emergencies. This trend has become of increasing concern among the international humanitarian community, although the collected data and documentation for this trend has been woefully incomplete. An article in the British Medical Journal, Volume 321 (15 July 2000) entitled "Deaths among humanitarian workers" Shiek, Mani et al. does provide research and statistics on the topic based on information voluntarily submitted by UN aid agencies, NGOs and UN peacekeeping organizations between the years 1985 and 1998. This study reported 375 deaths among civilian (UN and NGO) aid workers and UN peacekeepers during the fourteen year period.

The Office for the UN Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) keeps records and compiles statistics on casualties of UN civilian staff (international and local), and the UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations (UN DPKO) tallies the deaths among UN peacekeepers, military observers and personnel on UN peacekeeping missions. Likewise, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) maintains data on security incidents involving Red Cross delegates, volunteers and local staff. However, in order to provide analysis of the trends and assessment of security threats faced by humanitarian aid community, it is necessary to track incidents involving all organizations providing some type of humanitarian assistance, not just UN agencies, but national and international NGOs as well.

My research analysis presented below is derived primarily from five years of accumulated reports in the ReliefWeb document database for the years 1997 - 2001. ReliefWeb collects and publishes documents from over 600 sources, mostly humanitarian organizations. Culling information from the ReliefWeb database permitted a chronology of events to be derived, listing in chronological order the details of each recorded incident, including the nature of the death of the worker(s), the date of the incident, the location of the incident, as well as reporting the source of the information. Documentation can be found in The Chronology of Humanitarian Aid Workers killed: 1997-2001. (see attachment)

Documents in the ReliefWeb database follow the meta-data standard promoted by the SHARE (Structured Humanitarian Assistance Reporting) approach, which was outlined in an article in the Summer 2001 Issue of Humanitarian Affairs Review. The SHARE approach advocates that information collected, reported and presented should always include 1) the source of the information, 2) the date of the information, 3) the geographic area of the information. Furthermore, it advocates including relevant definitions, methodologies and indicators of this information, especially if this information can be easily misinterpreted.

**Definition of Criteria**
To be able to evaluate the analysis, you must know the definitional criteria that was used for the data. Included incidents adhered to the following criteria:

- Incident took place in a country during an emergency or post-emergency transitional period
Death was the result of intentional violence (vehicle ambush, armed attack, anti-aircraft fire), weapons of war (landmine explosion, aerial bombing) or a work-related transport accident (aircraft or vehicle accident).

Recorded deaths were limited to individuals working for civilian humanitarian-related organizations, both local staff and expatriate staff, and all passengers/crew on a humanitarian assistance mission e.g. drivers, security personnel, pilots, etc.

Does not include the deaths of inter-governmental or UN peacekeeping personnel and military observers.

Does not include deaths by natural causes or suicide.

* DPKO maintains records and statistics on fatalities among UN peacekeepers, observers, monitors and other of its personnel. Incidents involving peacekeeping personnel have only been included if they were killed while providing security assistance for a humanitarian mission or convoy. Otherwise, data is restricted to non-military personnel working for civilian humanitarian organizations.

**Conclusions of Analysis**

The data indicates that more civilian humanitarian aid workers are killed by acts of violence than in accidents. However, Jan Davis of RedR, who is responsible for security training for that organization, notes that "there are many deaths due to vehicle accidents and health problems that are not reported for a variety of reasons ...also, one of the problems concerning the reporting of security incidents is that agencies may not wish to publicize staff deaths as this can adversely impact the image of the organization or cause problems for the agencies in different ways..."

Almost half of the non-accidental deaths of humanitarian aid workers (47%) were the result of ambushes on vehicles or convoys. These incidents occurred on the road in attacks by bandits or rebel groups. This documented finding can be used to justify more investment in vehicle protection and specialized training in precautions to take while driving on isolated roads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Vehicle or Convoy Ambush</th>
<th>Stationary Attack</th>
<th>Anti-aircraft attack</th>
<th>Aerial Bombing</th>
<th>Landmine</th>
<th>Transport Accident</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the location of each incident is identified, a list of the countries where the deaths occurred can be compiled. Below is a listing of the ten countries where the greatest number of non-accidental deaths occurred. Not surprisingly, the countries match the areas of the world that have been experiencing long-term civil conflicts.

**Deaths by Country (top ten)**

- Angola
- Sudan
- Rwanda
- Afghanistan
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
Somalia
Burundi
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Indonesia and East Timor
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia including Kosovo

Among the non-accidental, intentional violence incidents, 74% of the fatalities were local staff and 26% were expatriates. Also, 59% of these victims worked for or on behalf of non-governmental organizations, while 41% were employed or under contract to UN agencies. The number of local and/or NGO fatalities is probably higher, since these incidents are less likely to be reported in public sources than the deaths of UN and/or expatriate personnel.

**Actions taken to enhance security of humanitarian aid workers**
The provision of better protection and security training for humanitarian aid workers is being addressed by the United Nations, many NGOs and NGO consortia. Over the past several years, UN agencies and international organizations have established improved staff security monitoring and response mechanisms and incorporated staff security awareness into their training programs. More specially trained "security officers" are being employed by the United Nations, the specialized UN agencies and many NGOs. Organizations such as InterAction, VOICE, RedR and International Rescue Committee have developed training programmes and security coordination systems to enhance security for NGO staff.

Reports in 1999 and 2001 of the UN Secretary General to the UN General Assembly on the safety and security of UN personnel have recommended new procedures and coordination structures to enhance staff security. The Secretary General has proposed new measures to improve security, including appointing a Secretary Coordinator at the Assistant-Secretary-General level, allocating new resources for hiring of field and headquarters security officers, more training and counseling for general staff, and devising new mechanisms to ensure consistent funding for the UN Security Coordinator. However, these mechanisms - such as the Trust Fund for the Security of UN Personnel and special staff security programmes included in the annual UN Consolidated Emergency Appeals - remain drastically under-funded.

International humanitarian law has also sought to address the issue of humanitarian personnel security. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court makes the murder of humanitarian personnel a war crime, although this statute is not yet in force and very few cases have been prosecuted at the national level. In 1999, the UN enacted the 1994 Convention on the Safety of the United Nations and Associated Personnel. However, the Convention is not applicable to humanitarian non-governmental organizations that do not have implementing/partnership agreements with the United Nations and its specialized agencies or to locally-recruited personnel.

In the March 2001 issue of Humanitarian Exchange, Randolph Martin looked at ways of strengthening the 1996 MOU between the UN Security Coordinator and NGOs to provide a framework for a security relationship between the UN organizations and their NGO implementing partners. One of the ways of improving this relationship is to develop a system for tracking all security incidents and sharing of this information among all concerned humanitarian actors.

**The Value of Reporting Standards**
The article, "Death among humanitarian workers" (BMJ, 15 July 2000) presented a challenge in its concluding paragraph."To fully understand the risks of death and the potential for prevention, a comprehensive prospective approach to data collection and monitoring is needed. Much stands to be learned from such a database." The research for this article was conducted as an exercise to demonstrate how
systematic, consolidated data collection and reporting can be used for analysis, which can then be used as the basis for policy making and improved security awareness and procedures.

Such an exercise would not have been possible without a consolidated database such as ReliefWeb and the use of reporting standards promoted by the SHARE approach. The exercise is also presented as an example of knowledge management. In this case, security incidents collected over the five year period serve as accumulated "data". This data is organized and put into context, turning it into "information". Once this information is analyzed and used for a specific purpose, it becomes applied "knowledge".

Similar analysis could be conducted for all security incidents (robberies, kidnapping, injuries, rapes, etc.) involving humanitarian aid workers, not just those that resulted in deaths. This information could then be used for tracking and mapping of security incidents at a country level and conducting security threat assessments.

The data demonstrates that the dangers faced by civilian humanitarian aid workers are serious. The analysis provides us with representative statistics to determine how many humanitarian aid workers have been killed, where these incidents have taken place, and what were the causes of these fatalities. However, to gain a real appreciation for the personal sacrifices of the humanitarian aid community, one should read The Chronology of humanitarian aid workers killed 1997 - 2001 that documents each of the tragic incidents.

Resources
Dworken, Jonathan T. "Where there is no data: patterns, trends and unanswered questions concerning relief worker security problems" Unpublished draft discussion paper, 23 March 1998.

King, Dennis and Maxx Dilley "How to share information in a complex emergency" Humanitarian Affairs Review. Pg. 10 - 13. Summer 2001


P.S. Please report any other fatal security incidents involving humanitarian personnel to the author at djking27@hotmail.com