Mercy Hands
Humanitarian Aid

MERCY HANDS FOR HUMANITARIAN AID SECURITY AND SAFETY POLICY

Purpose

This document sets out the policy for security and safety of staff by defining basic security principles, applicable to all Mercy Hands (MH) staff and programs, at all times.

The Principles of MH Security and Safety Policy

Priority to Human Life

The security of personnel is of higher priority than the protection of assets, including premises, vehicles, office equipment or program materials.

Regarding to continued programming and presence in an area of insecurity, with a recognition that it may be necessary to accept an increased level of insecurity if, by maintaining a presence, the program staff are able to save the lives of people who would otherwise die.

Staff has Responsibilities and Rights

Security awareness is an ongoing collective responsibility and each member of staff is obliged to:

- Actively participate in and contribute to the maintenance of security measures.
- Be aware of security risks and team security.
- Understand and adhere to security measures.
- Be responsible for their own security and the security of staff they manage.
- Behave as a positive representative for MH and adhere to the Code of Conduct.

Each member of staff is responsible for reporting to his/her line manager any actions or behavior that breaches policy or jeopardizes team security. Breaching security policy is a disciplinary offence and must be dealt with as such by the appropriate line manager.

Operational Managerial Responsibility

The Executive Director is responsible for the security of staff working for MH.
Operational responsibility for the security of staff follows the line management structure.
Among the responsibilities for managing staff security are the following responsibilities:

- Delegating security management tasks.
- Ensuring an appropriate security management system and plan is developed, implemented and updated in a manner that is inclusive and transparent, taking into account the insights that may be provided by national staff.
- Ensuring that all staff are updated on security incidents or issues and management decisions are taken in response to them.
- Ensuring that an adequate communications system is in place.
- Inducting/briefing all new staff and visitors on the security situation and security measures.
- Recognition that security management is demanding and that adequate time must be allocated to it.

Organization Policy Responsibility

The Director of Logistics and Security Department is responsible for developing policy, monitoring policy implementation and advising Senior Management on security matters. Permission to adopt practices that differ from the policy can only be granted by the Board of Directors.

Staff Skills and Capacity

MH will endeavor to ensure that all staff have the skills and capacity to analyze the security threats in their working environment and to minimize their vulnerability to these threats. This will be achieved through training, the active dissemination of security guidelines and ongoing good security management practice.

No Operations without Security Management Plans

A Security Management Plan (SMP) must be developed for each governorate in which MH works. In governorates with satellite offices for which there are different security risks, location-specific security management plans may also be needed. A context and risk analysis, including an assessment of threats and vulnerabilities, must form a part of the SMP.

SMP must be approved by the Country Director, signed off by the Board of Directors and reviewed by the Logistic and Security Department. Each SMP must be regularly reviewed and updated at least once a year. In insecure governorates, a more frequent review schedule should be agreed with the Regional Director. The Emergency Unit will offer technical support in the development of such plans and in any other issues relating to security management.

All staff must be made aware of the contents, practical application and authority of the SMP.

Right to Withdraw

Irrespective of the judgment of the line manager or organization of the risk in a particular situation, any staff member may decline to take up work in an insecure area or may withdraw from such an area, having informed their manager that they intend to do so.

If an individual feels uncomfortable with the frequency or level of personal risk inherent in a position, a review should be undertaken between the individual and his/her line manager to determine an appropriate course of action. The HR Officer in HQ should be advised of the process and the outcome.

All Security Incidents Must Be Reported

All security incidents must be reported immediately to the Country Director or the Executive Director. The Director of Logistics and Security Department should be copied on all security incident reports to enable tracking, monitoring and analysis of security trends.

As soon after the incident as possible, a post-incident report needs to be completed by all those involved in or affected by the incident. This allows for an analysis of the incident to be undertaken, so that the Country Director/ Executive Director may determine why the incident happened, whether it could be prevented and how such incidents may be managed more effectively in the future.

The HR Officer will not contact the family members of staff involved in security incidents unless they are requested to do so by the Country Director or Executive Director.

Kidnap/Abduction

In the event of a member of staff being kidnapped or abducted, MH stated policy pertains: 'In the event that a member of MH staff is abducted, contact should be made as soon as possible with MH HQ so that action can be coordinated at HQ level. The Country Director or Executive Director will assume ultimate decision making authority, treat it as his/her top priority and will decide whether to include the Board of Directors in the decision process or not. Every effort will be made to engage with the kidnappers and particular emphasis will be placed upon the use of an appropriate mediator.

MH's policy is not to pay any ransom requested to affect the release of a member of staff.

MH will provide appropriate support to immediate family during the period of the kidnap.

In keeping with the line management structure, the Country Director or Executive Director should make the reporting of such incidents.

The Use of Armed Protection is Discouraged

MH staff should seek to avoid using armed protection since it may be seen to compromise our impartiality. This is particularly the case if the protection is not provided by a neutral force. This is not an absolute – in circumstances of instability, or where it is a requirement of the government or local authorities for vehicles to be escorted by police or military personnel, then armed protection can be considered.

MH does not rule out the employment of armed guards for the protection of equipment and facilities, particularly in areas where violent crime is rife. However, the nature of this protection needs to be considered in light of the local context and the possible impact that its utilization may have on the local perception of MH's neutrality.

Permission to use or hire armed personnel (either directly or indirectly) may only be granted by the Country Director or Executive Director.

Firearms should not be carried in MH vehicles unless the security situation demands this, and even then may only occur if the Country Director or Executive Director has sanctioned this action following consultation with the Director of Logistics and Security Department. Other than those people specifically employed to provide armed protection in exceptional circumstances, MH staff must not carry or be seen to take up arms while on MH duty.

Limit Involvement with Armed Forces to Essential Humanitarian Actions

In determining the relationship between MH and military forces, we should be guided by the Code of Conduct. Engagement with military forces is a difficult area to be entirely prescriptive on, with local circumstances having a huge impact on the nature of any such relationships, but as a humanitarian agency must maintain its independence of decision and action, and can never operates under the command of the military.

Full Participation of National Staff in Security Planning

The staff, local and expats, should be involved in the formulation, review and implementation of security policies and plans. Each MH Country Director should analyze specific risks faced by the staff as part of the ongoing process of threat and vulnerability assessment.

The staff should be included in security preparedness and training.

Maximize Co-ordination and Information Sharing

MH should coordinate closely with other non-governmental organizations in managing security. Security incidents should always be reported to other agencies and regular mechanisms for sharing information should be established.

Visitors Record

- The purpose of recording visitors' information is for security reasons, to keep track of all previous visits, and to help review MHs' Security Policy.
- The Director of Logistics and Security is responsible for keeping the Visitors Record Book and applying visitors recording procedures. He coordinates with the Executive Administration and/or managers of satellite offices to assign the Visitors Record Book of each satellite office to a designated staff member.
- The following information is recorded in the Visitors Record Book: visitor's name, organization, ID number, phone number, date, time in and out, name of visited Mercy Hands' staff or department, and reason for visit.
- Recording visitors' information continues even after working hours.
- Visitors must report to reception and sign the Visitors Record Book on arrival at the property. Visitors have a general responsibility to look after MH property whilst on site and to give due consideration to security issues. They must follow security procedures designed to protect MH property.

- Visitors must follow instructions from either the Director of Logistics and Security, Security Officer, Guard, or Facilities team.
- For the purposes of the policy, relatives of staff and former employees are classed as visitors.
- Visitors are not allowed to spend the night at MH premises unless a prior approval of the Director of Logistics and Security is obtained.

Guidelines for International Staff's Field Visits

- **Field Visit Procedure**
  - For any field visit, the Expat should submit a request to the Country Director and the Director of Security & Logistics (Security Director) at least one week in advance, stating in the request the planned date of visit, location, duration, and reason for visit. The request is submitted to the Executive Director if the requester is the Country Director.
  - Within three days, Security Director will conduct security assessment and submit results to the Country Director. The Security Director will gather information from MH staff in the respective area and from other reliable sources such as INSO.
  - Based on the results of the assessment, the Country Director will decide if it is possible to conduct the field visit or not.
  - At the day of the field visit, the following steps shall be followed:
    - The Security Director makes sure that both the international staff and the driver have mobile phones that are fully charged with ample credit.
    - The Security Director reviews the trip route with both the driver and the international staff.

- The Security Director calls the international staff and driver to run a checklist of the following: 1) first aid kit; 2) fire extinguisher; 3) fuel (full tank); 4) tire air pressure; 5) oil level; 6) spare tire; 7) access paperwork (e.g. JCC letter); 8) personal IDs (passport and residency card for international staff); and 9) phone numbers of MH field staff and duty phone number of the Civil Military Coordination Group (OCHA).
- The international staff does a phone check or sends a text message to the Security Director upon departure and arrival to every visited location.
- Any change to the route or other details of the trip must be immediately reported to the Security Director.

- **General Guidelines**
  - Other than the international staff, Security Director, Regional Coordinator for Northern Iraq, and Country Director, no one should know about the intended field visit. Only at the day of the visit, others involved, including the driver, can be informed about the trip.
  - The Security Director has the right to cancel or change the details of the trip at any time and the field trip team has to comply.
  - Maintaining low profile is key to any field visit. The international staff should wear modest culturally appropriate clothes and avoid talking to strangers, including security or military personnel. The international staff should reduce the public exposure and visibility.
  - The international staff works with the Country Director and/or Regional Coordinator for Northern Iraq to ensure that all necessary access documents are signed and stamped (such as the JCC letter).
  - The international staff is encouraged to have enough water and snacks in the car in order to avoid public exposure by buying it, reduce the time spent at unsecure places and to keep low profile.

■ The Security Director is responsible for training drivers on safety and security standards and risk assessment, focusing on security measures to reduce risk, how to identify and prioritize threats, identifying and prioritizing factors that affect staff and/or asset vulnerability during movements, and identify and prepare for specific security incidents.

Premises Security and Safety Guidelines

- **Introduction**

For MH to have a safe and secure environment for its staff, partners, contractors and visitors it is necessary to have in place robust premises security procedures which will enhance security and safety.

- **Objective**

The premises security guidelines provides the overarching framework to which more detailed instructions, issued by the Director of Logistics and Security Department, will be linked. It provides a high level guide to all people using MH buildings and is an aid to promoting robust security governance. Through this guidelines MH will take all reasonable measures to safeguard the security and safety of all staff, partners, visitors and contractors, whilst within or situated on MH premises.

For Satellite Offices, a designated satellite office's staff will work closely with and support the Director of Logistics and Security department in implementation and enforcement of premises security guidelines and procedures.

The Premises Security Guidelines and procedures apply to all MH staff. Staff of partnering organizations, contractors, and other visitors must comply with the instructions issued to visitors.

- **Responsibilities**

All individuals using MH premises must take responsibility for promoting premises security, through adhering to the principles within this policy and any supporting

instructions. Failure to abide by the principles within the Premises Security Guidelines or supporting instructions may lead to disciplinary/ criminal proceedings being taken against the individual.

The Director of Logistics and Security will review the Premises Security Guidelines and supporting instructions on a regular basis and work with the Country Director/ Executive Director to develop the revisions of this guidelines.

- ### General Principles

All MH staff must follow the instructions of the Director of Logistics and Security regarding the use of MH premises and equipment and car parking at MH premises.

The Director of Logistics and Security must: 1) Ensure staff have access to and are familiar with the Premises Security Guidelines and procedures, with close attention paid to those issues, which are relevant to the activity of their service; 2) Ensure that all members of staff and visitors to the property understand and exercise their security responsibilities and have due regard to safeguarding council property; 3) Liaise with the Satellite Offices' teams on any security matter and attend relevant meetings to discuss security issues; 4) Undertake a security risk analysis of programs' service area and operations in conjunction with the premise's team (where appropriate) and act to remove and reduce as far as possible any security risks; 5) Monitor existing controls and report any concerns; 6) Provide security training for staff; 7) Undertake periodic inspections of the premises to promote premises security, monitoring adherence to security best practice; 8) Maintain an inventory of non-fixed equipment in accordance with Financial Instructions; and 9) Put measures in place to ensure staff who leave MH return MH IDs and any keys to the premises on or before their last working day of employment.

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Policy Monitoring and Review Process

In recognition of the fact that both internal and external environments change, the scope and content of this policy will be reviewed periodically to reflect these changes. This review process will, in line with MH's values, be consultative and participatory in nature. The responsibility for initiating the review process rests with MH Executive Director.

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