

INGO security forum meeting: 4 January 2011

Below are the key highlights of the discussion held among Security forum representatives of over 30 INGOs.

- UNDSS representative shared that in Southern Sindh, particularly Hyderabad, Jamshoro, Mirpurkhas etc, incidents of robberies, highway crime and criminal acts on public transport have increased significantly. These incidents are particularly common between 6 pm and 11 pm. Moreover people using ATM machines to withdraw cash have also encountered criminals demanding the money on gun point or using other violent means.
- UN has imposed restriction on travel between Islamabad and Peshawar due to dense fog. However this is a flexible restriction which is relaxed upon confirmation of clear weather/visibility by local contacts and police.
- In Karachi, year 2010 has seen 100 percent increases in the target killing incidents. Exact figures have not yet been shared but proportion of increase in this trend is in itself very alarming. It was agreed that it was a politically motivated crime not directly aimed at the INGOs. However due to the risk of being at the wrong place at the wrong time, this phenomenon was worrisome for the humanitarian and NGO community.
- IN Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) situation is again very tense especially after Pak government's reassurance to US of its sustained and improved intelligence cooperation. Drone strikes are continuing which have caused the friction to intensity between locals and government/military authorities.

NOC requirements:

It was shared that for expats to travel to Swat (KPK), entire Balochistan, and DG Khan Tehsil of South Punjab, expats need to apply for a "No Objection Certificate" from the competent authorities. However for travel to Sindh, most INGOs are not acquiring NOC and have not faced any problems so far.

Updates from Emergency Response Areas

In view of looting incidents of some INGOs's NFI supplies in South Sindh (Oxfam) , the forum agreed that it may be useful to inform the local police in case of convoy movement so that petty crimes, looting and other non-militant attacks can be checked. It was suggested that the Deputy Inspector General of Police (D.I.G) or the District Police Officer (DPO) may be informed of such movement. The security focal person should be in touch with the respective DIG or DPO and must establish rapport as most often police is willing to offer extra help and support based on individual PR. It was also shared that in past 6 months, almost 7 incidents of looting have taken place in South Sindh targeted against INGOs.

In another incident in Jhal Magsi (Balochistan), one INGO (Save the Children) was distributing food items when few members of the community objected over the selection of beneficiaries etc. As situation

worsened and quarrel started, the organisation stopped the distribution process for a while in order to let the issue settle down. In the meanwhile, some community members attacked the goods truck and got injured. One girl even died of head injury and this created resentment among the community. The INGO was criticised but later the issue was resolved with the involvement of community elders and security personnel.

Other Points:

In Mansehra (KPK), some INGOs have received visitors who introduced themselves as intelligence agency representatives and asked for staff's list and other details. Since they failed to prove their identity, this information was not provided to them. During discussion it was decided that if ever INGOs are approached for information, they must make sure that the person seeking information is authentic and will not use this info for other purposes. Information seekers must be dealt with politely but tactfully and asked to prove identity.

It was shared that in lower Swat, checking has been relaxed and strength of security staffs at different check posts has been reduced.

In Islamabad, police personnel have been visiting private residences and offices locate in residential areas (including INGOs) to ask about number of people residing there and their National Identity Card (NIC) numbers. It was advised that if police personnel approach a resident, s/he should ask which police station they have come from, and then call up that police station to verify their authenticity before sharing any info. It has been reported that certain criminal elements have in the past used these tactics to carry out burglaries and kidnappings. This means that residents should have information about their local police station in charge /Station House Officer-SHO (name and number).

The facility of Visa on arrival for expats coming for flood relief projects has been extended to 31st January 2011. More information can be acquired from NDMA.

Regards,
Farrukh