

Challenges and Questions Organizations Are Dealing With

Salaries and Payments

- How do we deal with a bank shut down?
- How do we facilitate payments?
- Are orgs paying salaries in advance?
- Subaward / contractor / consultant payments when there is a lack of available currency or banks close
- Security of assets in the country
- Some staff unable to receive cash (staff location, bank location, bank closures, etc)
- Staffy payment in conflict-affected areas
- How do you manage reporting? All expenses relate to salaries and operational costs with limited or operational costs.
- Lack of cash with limits on spending in certain areas; current limit is \$40k per week for all awards in the Tigray region.
- Financial, EPS
- Delay in access to funds, distribution of funds, salary payments
- Funding delays
 - o USAID has been flexible
- Adjusting compensation for inflation?
- Which currency are you basing salary on?
- How do you expense advanced salaries to staff if/since the program requires time sheets and other documentation?
- Problem of sending salary payments to staff in Tigray

Communication

- How do we stay in touch with staff if communication channels are shut down?
 - o Sat phones or equipment like Garmin
 - o Signal and Whatsapp
- How do we stay in touch with staff in conflict-affected regions
- Social media and misinformation
- Social media and shut downs
- How frequently is your organization communication with staff? Have you increased/required check-ins?
- Trying to triangulate the information (US-based info, local government information, social media information, misinformation) to ensure they are receiving good verifiable information and addressing false info
- Difficulty of determining what's actually happening on the ground: news is different from western vs govt sources
- What do other orgs have for back up communication options?
- How are you communicating with Tigray based staff, in particular?
- SOPs in the event of a comms blackout. If movement is restricted, managers will do in person checks for safety (Vital Strategies)
- How do you maintain safety of communications?

- **Staff and Security**
- What are your evacuation plans?
 - o Many have already evacuated expats to Kenya
 - o Some local staff have also been evacuated if at risk
 - o When do you decide that staff are at risk enough for move?
- What is our duty of care for partners who are doing implementation on the ground?
- How do we balance the need to support and our level of risk/threat understanding in HQ vs the understanding of local staff in the locations?
- Lack of access to the Tigray region means lack of fuel, cash, and communication to support staff
- Staff safety is number one priority
- How do we support staff that have had movement restricted?
- Do you have recommendations for increase in check-points?
- Adjusting program areas from the north to other regions
- Finding legal representation - lawyers saying no due process
- Legal SOPs – have you provided any for staff if they are detained?
 - o Do you provide bail, legal assistance, salaries?
 - o What kind of support do you offer?
 - o Do you have suggested legal representation there?

What Are Orgs Doing Now?

Salaries and Funds

- Many have pre-paid staff a few months of salary in case banks close (1 – 3 months in advance)
- Written letters of support for payments in advance in the event of internet/communication breakdowns
- Constant communications with donors on the situation
- Ask for no cost/cost extensions
- Request for funds to be reprogrammed into other accessible areas
- Transferred funds in case salary advances are needed
- Continued salaries for staff as much as possible
- The UN was helping to funnel funds into difficult regions, but this seems to have been exhausted recently

Communication

- Using different lines of communication
 - o Signal and Whatsapp
- Arrangements made with other orgs - if internet is available, they can use it to send key messages
- Embassies also offering this, as possible
- Using the few local staff on the ground to communicate
- Streamline communication through one staff member in affected regions, when possible, to connect everyone together
- Installed fax line to communicate out of country, telephone tree for in country

Staff and Security

- Have already evacuated staff to other parts of the country or the region
 - o Ex. Nairobi; from Tigray to Addis
- Support staff of specific ethnicities/identities if they are at heightened risk\
- Teams working on contingency plans
- Many are still working remotely, using work from home approach, but being conscious that this could also open staff up to complications with government
- Have developed personal security plans for staff
- Incident management teams meeting daily
- Banned travel outside Addis
- Shared practical advice with staff re; preparing (food, fuel in car, mobile top up etc)
- Messaging to partners / suppliers that open to convos if scopes of work need to change
- Stopped operations in particular areas:
 - o Tigray, Aroma

Legal Assistance

- Starting point is determining the duty of care - if colleagues are detained because of their work for the organization?
- Some colleagues have chosen to leave the country
- Making sure that people have contacts to legal counsel
- Organizations don't seem to have standard protocols on this - case by case
- Recommendation from Brian von Kraus at FireWatch Solutions: Telay Tegegne;
telaye2011@gmail.com

Resources

- Get info from local staff, USAID, Security focal points
- [Humentum Connect](#)
- [OSAC](#) WhatsApp group
- [Factal](#) - free NGO service – best POC: Tyler Adams: tyler@factal.com
- [Africa Center for Strategic Studies](#)

[Other resources and notes from the discussion are available here.](#)