

Topics identified as challenges ahead of the call

- Salary / cash payments
- Communication methods if internet/phone are shut down
- Safety protocols / Staff check-ins
- Business contingency plans that other organizations are considering
- Expats / repatriation
- State of due process under state of emergency
- In case of detention - SOPs for how much to support organizationally
- Staff evacuations and whether or not evacuation was mandatory

Speakers that joined for the call:

- Cynthia Smith, Director, Government Affairs and Advocacy; Cynthia.Smith@humentum.org
- Brian von Kraus, Founder, FireWatch Solutions; brian.vonkraus@firewatchsolutions.com
- Scott Ruddick, Senior Deputy of Global Security, MEDA; sruddick@meda.org

[Additional documents, resources, notes from the call are here](#)

Communication

- WhatsApp groups and Signal are currently in use
 - o Both WhatsApp and Signal are internet based; known to be very secure but may not work
- Sat phones – heavily regulated by the government – can be turned on/off; monitored
- Voice comms over normal cell phones; landlines should continue to work
- Garmin those kinds of devices should work in a limited way

Salaries/payment

- Some have pre-paid several months of salaries to ensure they have funds available if banking shuts down (not just Tigray)
- In Tigray, had been using UN agencies to distribute funds, but no longer have funds available
- Tigray region – cap on spending; can't spend more than \$40k per week across the whole area on all projects; difficult to do the work
- Using informal networks? (similar to Hawala)
- How are you dealing with exchange rate fluctuations?
 - o Monitoring through trade & economics
 - o Provide a monthly allowance to the inflation rate
 - o Considering doing increases earlier than fiscal year to help address inflation
 - o A few organizations are or are considering a shift from local currency to USD
 - o Watching closely
- Usually peg to market mid-point
- While waiting for time sheets – pay out of unrestricted funds and then when required documentation is submitted they expense to the project

Safety of Staff

- Expats have moved from Tigray to new locations
- In Addis – continue to work in the office (with COVID protocols)
 - o More checkpoints; looking for letters of employment, staff IDs, etc
 - o USAID has been hearing reports of detaining of implementing partner staff
 - o Community policing units to look for “insurgents” but also targeting Tigrayans generally
- For offices in areas of conflict – working with staff to secure assets and remain safe
- Concerns around staff NOT going to office – is that suspicious / unsupportive to the government
- Amhara office – half in/half out because of COVID
- Dessie – have relocated staff to Addis until safety shifts
- How are you protecting Tigrayan staff?
 - o Suggesting they don't come to the office? (some orgs, yes)
 - o Providing individual staff security plans
 - o Reviewing duty of care / legal support if detained
- Alternate safe area away from the office; Plan for lots of contingencies

Outstanding Questions

- How do you ensure safety and that org is carrying out duty of care?
- Identifying legal counsel if needed, state of emergency
- How are you securing assets? Security firms? Etc?

Scott's Update

- evacuated country director and spouse; US citizens, now in Kenya; In Amhara staff are half in office and half work from home; in Addis – regular operations
- Major challenges – lack of good information; amount of MISinformation
 - o Misinformation – lots of rumor and innuendo on SM; staff are concerned, and the org has been working to address/refute incorrect information
- Concern around what to do if Tigray forces continue to push south to Addis

Brian's Resources

- Sharing information and community is invaluable
- [OSAC](#) WhatsApp group
- [Factual](#) – free NGO service – best POC: Tyler Adams: tyler@factual.com
- [Africa Center for Strategic Studies](#)
 - o DOD thinktank that provides a daily newsletter
 - o Analysts are open to discussion
- Legal Counsel - Telay Tegegne; telaye2011@gmail.com
- [Insecurity Insight](#) – periodic reports and 'predictions'

Humentum's Reminder

- We are always available for questions or to be an intermediary if you need to get support with a funder
- We will continue to provide space for discussion and support as you work in Ethiopia and other conflict-affected areas