Norwegian University
of Life Sciences

Master's Thesis 2020 30 ECTS
Faculty of Landscape and Society
Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric

Armed Escorts in Humanitarian Work: A Discussion of Use and Implications

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Declaration

I, Eva Vilde Bjerknes, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature……Eva Vilde Bjerknes……

Date 15.12.2020……

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I must give my thanks to my supervisors Benjamin de Carvalho and Kristin Stuvøy. Benjamin, I am grateful for your vast knowledge and insight. Your support, critical thinking and guidance has lifted my work to a higher level. Thank you.

I must also express my gratitude to my supervisors at the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). To Thomas, Marcel and Tim, thank you for your guidance and support.

Thank you to all my interviewees. This project would not have been possible without you. Thank you for receiving me with open arms and open minds and for all the work that you do. Your heart and passion in your work is truly inspiring. Thank you again for sharing your experiences and thoughts with me.

And finally, I would not have been able to complete any of my studies without my loving family. Your love and support have lifted me through trying times and celebrated me through it all. I cannot express enough how much this means to me. To Karoline and Tuva, my fellow sisters in arms, you have contributed more than you know, thank you!

Abstract

The discussion surrounding security measures in the NGO community is somewhat lacking in the IR field of theory, as well as within the NGO community itself. The impact and effects of having an armed escort for NGOs delivering aid seems to be overall lacking in both practical and theoretical debate. This thesis seeks out to not only present the current discussions surrounding the impact and effects of NGOs having armed escorts, but it also wishes to ignite a discussion surrounding this topic. The thesis aims to answer how the security measures of NGOs impact their own security, their role as well as their perceived impartiality. To achieve this goal, I have interviewed ten NGO workers who are currently working in the field, or who was sent home during the ongoing pandemic.

Keywords: *International relations, Humanitarian Security, Humanitarian Principles, Non-governmental Organizations*

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACF	African Conservation Foundation
AK-47	Avtomat Kalahnikova-47 (assault rifle)
CAR	Central African Republic
HI	Handicap International
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IR	International Relations (The academic discipline)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSAG	Non-state armed group (security threat)
PHAP	Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection
UN	United Nations
USD	United States Dollar
WFP	World Food Programme

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Dating back to the 18th century, NGOs across the world has increased in not only numbers but also in an international political importance. In providing assistance to people in need humanitarian NGOs has bridged worlds of politics, military and informal social and cultural In a nutshell, humanitarian work evolves around helping people in need in countries and areas plagued by war, political crisis and natural disasters. Unsurprisingly, there exist a common understanding that humanitarian work and being good falls under the same category (Slim, 2004;10). As humanitarian do good, they thereby are good too. This notion therefore separates humanitarianism and violence and are to be understood as opposites. The mere though that humanitarian work can be securitized or forceful challenges not only the common perception of humanitarian work as a peaceful and impartial, but also challenges the humanitarian principles.

During the last decade, the new generation of humanitarian aid organizations has emerged in a new crisis of security. From 2001 to 2019, there was an increase of aid workers who were victims of major attacks while working and residing in the field from 90 victims in 2001 to 483 victims in 2019 (Total incidents (2001 - 2019) | The Aid Worker Security Database, 2020a). What these different numbers tells us is that the humanitarian community is under increased risk, despite efforts in updating protocols and security efforts. The humanitarian community is under tremendous external pressure from donors, host governments as well as internal pressure as a result from inter-agency competitions (Slim, 1997a;253; Slim, 2004;8). NGOs thus started developing their own security plans and to devote more resources and attention to the security issues at hand. In order to achieve their goals, many NGO has therefore reached towards an "apolitical" view of security and separating their conception of security from the traditional view (Avant, 2007;146). The unease with this traditional view of security has then urged more and more NGOs to rely on the humanitarian principles, as well as the iron triangle for their safety and security in achieving their missions. However, the humanitarian agencies' identity and position become somewhat problematic as the humanitarian values, such as peace and humanity attempt to co-exist in societies dominated by violence and inhumanity (Slim, 1997b; 343).

Today, several NGO are at a crossroad where they may often function as a governing authority in places where the local authority either need assistance or is unable to provide any governing hold over isolated territories. As the NGOs then must navigate through dangerous and unstable environments, they must now also carry a political burden they never asked for.

As humanitarian NGOs have named themselves *non-governmental* organization, they have found a niche where they at times must operate with political agendas and state-like authority in order to fulfil their mission in a safe as possible manner for their employees.

In the western world, NGOs market themselves as soldiers for the collective humanitarian well-being and use the humanitarian principles to prove it. As this utimatly works as a stronghold to receive support from donors and donor-states, it is difficult for people in "safe" and "stable" countries to imagine just how this blanket approach actually works when NGOs exist in environments that may differ dramatically from each other. The record-breaking support for humanitarian agencies and their similar marketing leaves the impression that the security agenda is well established and well working. On the contrary, NGOs are finding it more and more difficult to keep their workers as safe as possible while still adhering to the humanitarian principles and the apolitical security conceptions. As some opt to withdraw from dangerous areas or to step away from discussing security altogether, there are some who decided to set their own terms when it comes to their own security needs. It is this latter form of security approach that often is found to use armed escorts in from of private security companies in order to maintain their "humanitarian space" (Avant, 2007;148).

As this thesis unfolds, it is important to mention that it is not written with the intent to promote the researcher's subjective meanings or to conclude with a definitive or universal solution and answer to the issues presented in this thesis. The goal of the thesis is simply to function as an addition to theory and practice. Hopefully, this will ignite a much-needed debate within the theoretical field of IR as well as within the humanitarian filed of security and safety.

1.1. Objective

Literature suggests that humanitarian work is becoming increasingly difficult and dangerous. Embroiled in political emergencies, natural disasters and civil wars, NGOs stands as a third party in high risk areas with humanitarian principles to guide them to safety. The use of armed escorts is considered to only be used as a last resort in life-saving emergencies. However, NGOs are forced to make challenging decisions in the filed concerning their perception, their accessibility and their safety while being confronted by challenging host governments, NSAGs and pressure from donors. As this research will show, armed escort are not always used as nothing but life saving measures. On the contrary, armed escort and other

humanitarian health and safety measures are much more complex and contextual impacted than one might think.

A statement I regularly heard during my internship in NRC was that “armed escorts are bad; we don’t use them”. However, I also regularly heard conversations that would sound something like “of course I used armed escort” from NGOs coming back from visits in the field. As this thesis aims to understand why these contestations exist, it is precisely this that will function as the starting point for this thesis. As this thesis aims to understand this contention in the field of NGOs, it will also bring light to a much-needed debate within the humanitarian community concerning at what cost one should stay and deliver aid. In order to answer such questions and debate such issues, this thesis will focus on various NGOs working in different contexts where this is a common controversy. This thesis will not attempt to conclude with a universal solution. When it comes to humanitarian security, it is not black and white. However, the thesis will shed light on issues existing within the field of health, safety and security of NGOs, and how this affects the NGO community itself. By interviewing experts within the field, the thesis identifies that there are competing discourses of what armed escorts is really about.

1.2. Research questions

This thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. In what way, if any, does the humanitarian security measures affect the security and safety of NGOs?
2. How do these security measures affect the role of NGOs?
3. Has the use of armed escort impacted the impartiality of NGOs?

1.3. Thesis outline

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter one functioned as the introduction for the thesis. The topics researched and addressed in this thesis were introduced along with the research statement and research questions. The second chapter provides a general background of important themes and information of the humanitarian world. This includes an explanation of the humanitarian principles which includes statements on the topic from humanitarian aid workers in the field, derived from an explanation video provided from NRC (NRCb, 2016).

Chapter three presents the literature around NGOs and humanitarian security issues. Pre-existing research and literature to these topics addressed in this research is presented and discussed. This chapter is used to contextualize the findings in order to answer the research questions. As a result, the literature in this chapter provides a platform where findings from this research may be contributing to new insight within the field of NGOs and security.

The fourth chapter aims to present the methodological approach implemented in this thesis. The chapter discussed the justification for the methodological choices made throughout the research process. Firstly, the data collection methods such as sampling strategy, interview techniques and secondary sources are presented and discussed. Thereafter, the approach to the data analysis is explained. Lastly is a discussion of the quality assurance of the research. This also included an assessment of the trustworthiness of the thesis as well as the ethical considerations incorporated.

The fifth chapter presents the main findings. The chapter gives an introduction to the humanitarian community and life as experienced. Thereafter, an introduction to the *Iron Triangle* explaining the fundamental pillars for humanitarian security from the perspective of the respondents. Additionally, there will be a brief presentation of findings related to the NGO community itself in regard to their security structure and their civil-military relationship.

The sixth chapter will discuss the relevant research findings in relation to theory. Issues like NGO security conceptions, humanitarian principles, as well as the impact surrounding NGOs understanding of themselves and their use of armed escorts will be explored in connection to findings and relevant theories.

The seventh and final chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing each of the research questions. In concluding remarks, this chapter will answer the research question on the basis of this research.

Finally, the thesis concludes in proposing further research on the topics brought up as a result of this thesis. A way forward from this research and the findings derived from this will work as a guide for this chapter.

Chapter 2: Background

This chapter gives a practical introduction to NGOs, how where and how they function as well as a brief historical introduction. Included is an explanation of the humanitarian principles and their significance in humanitarian work. Finally, is a brief explanation of the risk habitat in which the humanitarian aid community currently resides.

2.1. Non-governmental organizations

Although there is no clear definition of NGOs, a NGO, is a collective name for non-profit, non-governmental organizations. As politically independent, NGOs are commonly based on its members' ideologically based engagement. Working on a voluntary or non-profit basis, NGOs try to solve international humanitarian crisis' such as hunger, extreme poverty and breach of human rights. This definition does not exclude other businesses and professional organizations. However, in this thesis it is the NGO with a humanitarian foundation that will be the point of focus. NGOs are best known for, but not limited to, two different, albeit interrelated types of activity; *advocacy activity,* with the aim to promote policy and influence government, and *operational activity*, which aims at delivering services to people in need (Lewis, 2010;1).

NGOs have existed for centuries dating back to at least the late 18th century, but it was not until the 1990s that the number of NGOs increased dramatically (Charnovitz,1997; Lewis, 2010;1). Since then, the number of NGOs across the world has accelerated. As they grow in not just numbers, reaching 10 million organizations in 2015, NGOs proliferate in new issue areas as well as international presence. Using famous profiles for dramatic narratives to capture the attention of the world, the number of people donating money to NGOs reached 1.4 billion in 2014 and is expected to grow to 2.5 billion by 2030 (NonProfit Action, 2015). According to Newsweek (September 2005, cited Lewis, 2010;1), official development assistance provided through NGOs had increased from 59 billion USD in 1995 to 78,6 billion USD in 2004 (Newsweek, September 2005, cited Lewis, 2010;1). Now, in the 21st century NGOs are where the emergencies are. However, it is tricky keeping track of exactly where there are and how many there are, as some countries require NGOs to register and some don't.

As a term, NGO first came into use in 1945, as the United Nations had developed a need for differentiating its character between participation rights for private international organizations and those for intergovernmental specialized agencies (Willetts, 2016). Characteristically, NGOs work in a context of networks with a transnational collection of

other partners ranging from informal local groups, warlords to governing elites and UN agencies. Amongst these are also religious and ethnic communities as well as local and international businesses. Through this type of forming networks, NGOs bridge divisions critical in world politics. By bridging divides, NGOs generate transnational encounters where power is at play (DeMars and Dijkzeul, 2015, p.5).

As the global surge of NGOs started in the 1990s, the number of NGOs across the world has accelerated. As they grow in not just numbers, reaching 10 million organizations in 2015, NGOs proliferate in new issue areas as well as international presence. Using famous profiles for dramatic narratives to capture the attention of the world, the number of people donating money to NGOs reached 1.4 billion in 2014 and is expected to grow to 2.5 billion by 2030 (NonProfit Action, 2015). This has resulted in that the "humanitarian footprint" also has increased significantly (Stoddard et al.,2009;2). Some say that NGOs may have expanded beyond the limits of their operational capacity. As some NGOs now function as local or state governments, NGOs have faced a crisis of trust as some governments try to limit their authority. However, NGOs are revered as trusted institutions on a global scale (DeMars and Dijkzeul, 2015, p.3). By bringing authority and order to "hard to reach countries", NGOs may in some cases function as an extension of the United Nations (UN) itself. This became evident when thousands of NGOs teamed up with the UN in the 1990s, enforcing a "third wave" of democratization. This evoked new forms of global governance across many fields (DeMars and Dijkzeul, 2015, p.11).

Throughout the years, the term *humanitarian space* is developed to describe the space and territory in which humanitarian agencies have free access and movement (Slim, 2004b;10). The aim in not to control or govern such space, but to protect and assist the civilians residing in this territory. Such territorial ambition has become an arena for humanitarian aid and is becoming increasingly complex. As the political and governmental structures have become increasingly fragile and the numbers of hostile NSAGs are increasing, the humanitarian space is shrinking. Access to territories has become a competitive struggle for the humanitarian community in which negotiation and cooperation across both humanitarian agencies, NSAGs and governmental actors is vital. As such, the humanitarian community has spent much time attempting to develop a universal solution for delivering programs without compromising humanitarian ethics (Slim, 2004b;12).

2.2. Humanitarian Principles

In the centre of humanitarian IR, are the humanitarian principles. These are developed to hold the various humanitarian agencies up to a certain standard when it comes to *humanity, neutrality, impartiality* and *independence* in humanitarian action (What are Humanitarian Principles?, 2012). Humanitarian aid agencies are guided by the principles of humanitarian action in their work. First promoted by the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement in the 19th century, the humanitarian principles have been important in shaping the modern humanitarian aid we see today. Evolved from practice of delivering humanitarian assistance in areas of warfare, the significance of the humanitarian principles emerged. Humanitarian aid agencies are guided by the principles of humanitarian action in their work. These principles provide the very foundation for humanitarian action (What are Humanitarian Principles?,2012). As such the principles are *humanity, impartiality, independence* and *neutrality.*

Humanity concerns the prevention and addressing and human suffering wherever it is found. Its purpose is to protect life and health, as well as ensuring respect for human beings. The principle of *impartiality* states that humanitarian action must be carried out without making any distinctions on the basis of sex, gender, nationality, race, class, religious belief or political opinions. Humanitarian action must also remain *independent* from political, economic, military or other non-humanitarian objectives. Lastly, *neutrality* concerns that humanitarian action must abstain from taking sides in hostilities as well as restrain from engaging in political, racial, religious or ideological controversies and debates. However, it seems that humanitarians mix neutrality and impartiality as terms. This will become more evident in chapter five, but a quote from a humanitarian I the field will serve as a temporary example;

"In Colombia, impartiality is fundamental. A fundamental principle because we work in areas under control of armed groups, criminals and drug traffickers. To be able to support the populations, we shall not take sides, neither economic nor political, in order to guarantee a support in total security and security for our teams."- Irene Manterola, HI Colombia (NRCb, 2016)

Here, Irene borrows the definition of *neutrality* in explaining how *impartiality* affects the humanitarian work in areas controlled by armed groups. This implies that not only are the principles interrelated, but they may mean something else for the humanitarians working with the principles than what they mean on paper.

Through negotiations with communities and parties to a conflict, humanitarian agencies gain access to people in need of assistance and protection. However, different

humanitarian principles are often challenged as a result of complex situations (NRC, 2016a). The principles can challenge the ability to stay and deliver, as upholding the principles can force NGOs to delay their work, rather than taking the "simpler way". This is explained in the context of using armed escort by a humanitarian aid worker; *"It is obvious that coming with any armed escort to do the distribution, would not show us an impartial player in the country. The main issue is that if we go back a week later in the very same village, other parties of this complex conflict here in CAR would not see us as impartial players. That is why it is something that drives us every day and explains why sometimes we'd rather delay a distribution than doing it with an armed escort." – Eric Besse, ACF – CAR (NRCb, 2016).*

2.3. Humanitarian security; a brief overview

Following 9/11 attack in the US, humanitarian work has not only increased in sheer volume when it comes to human participation and funding, it has also increased its presence in high risk areas with ongoing conflict (Duffield, 2012, p. 475). It is precisely because of this association with increased danger that 9/11 is used as a timely point of departure for this research (Duffield, 2012;477).

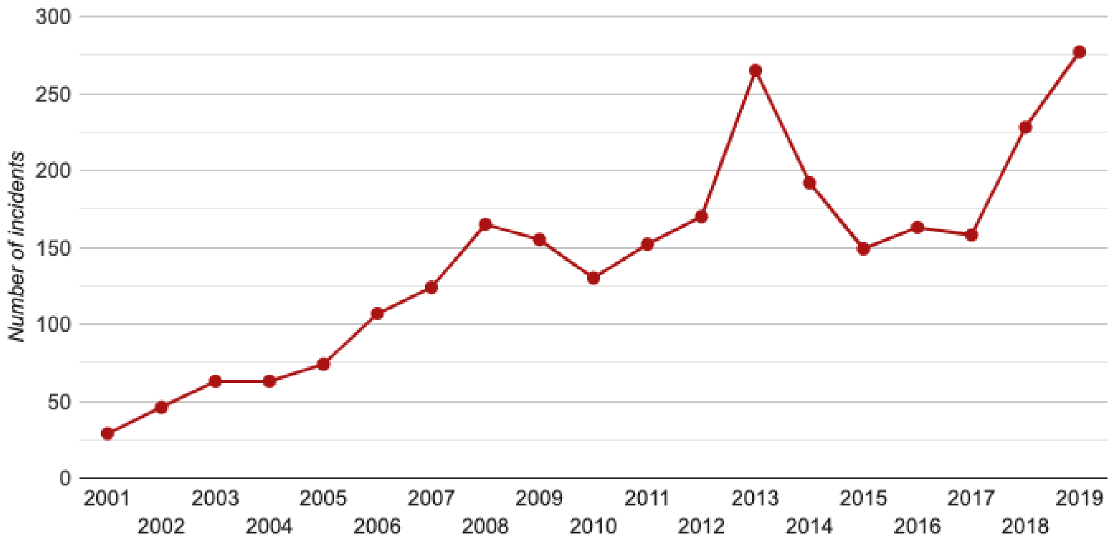

Figure 1. Total incidents (2001-2019) (Total incidents (2001 - 2019) | The Aid Worker Security Database, 2020a)

As seen in figure 1, there has been as a steady increase of humanitarian security incidents since 2001. The lowest point of incidents was in 2001 with 29 incidents in total, and highest point in 2019 with 277 incidents. As figure 2 will show, 483 aid workers were a

victim of a violent incident in 2019, 0f which 125 died while working and living in the field. This is a dramatic increase from 2009, where there was a total of 295 aid workers who were victim of incidents, 108 of which were killed in the humanitarian aid community (Security incident data | The Aid Worker Security Database, 2020). These numbers may of course not reflect the presence of NGOs in countries with a significant political disturbance, nor the effect of the security measures taken by those organizations. They do, however, reflect a growing number of crucial security incidents experienced by the humanitarian workers over the years.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of incidents	155	130	152	170	265	192	149	163	158	228	277
Total aid worker victims	295	250	311	277	475	332	289	295	313	408	483
Total killed	108	73	86	71	160	123	111	108	139	131	125
Total injured	94	84	127	115	179	88	109	99	102	146	234
Total kidnapped*	93	93	98	91	136	121	69	88	72	131	124
International victims	74	41	29	49	60	32	29	43	28	29	27
National victims	221	209	282	228	415	300	260	252	285	379	456
UN staff	102	44	91	57	106	66	43	71	48	69	39
International NGO staff	128	149	135	97	142	152	173	159	98	183	260
LNGO and RCS staff	47	47	77	93	167	74	49	48	115	138	170
ICRC staff	17	10	5	3	20	23	6	11	42	13	2

* Victim survived, or unknown outcome (kidnappings where victims were killed are counted in the 'killed' totals)

Figure 2. Major attack on aid workers: Summary statistics (2009-2019) (The Aid Worker Security Database, 2020b)

As a way of reducing risk, steps are taken to ensure the safety of the humanitarian aid community. With increasing loss of political guardianship, aid agencies have to find different ways to deal with the pending risk of being a humanitarian (Duffield, 2012;475). Bunkerization (which will be discussed in more detail later), training and deterrent measures such as armed escort are only a few examples to prepare and protect aid workers residing in high risk environments. Nevertheless, these security measures come at a cost. By striking deals with local government or local non-state actors to ensure protection or access to hard to reach areas, the use of force in the humanitarian world may not be as welcomed as one may think. As the political scene has changed after the 9/11 attacks and the international consequences that followed, the protection which most aid agencies relied on has changed dramatically. Not only has host governments become reluctant to provide protection, but local armed groups and rebels has also joined in on the humanitarian denial (United Nations, 2001;

Humanitarian Emergency Response Review, 2011). Nonetheless, humanitarians often accept more risk the more critical their work is for the survival and welfare of the people (Egeland et al., 2011;2). It is this willingness to stay, that will be the point of departure for this thesis.

> *"Humanitarian action is under attack, but neither governments, parties to armed conflicts, nor other influential actors are doing enough to come to its relief. On the contrary, those who control territory, funding, or simply the closest guns are too often allowed to harass, politicise, militarise and undermine humanitarian action with impunity."*
>
> *(Egeland et.al, 2011;viii)*

Chapter 3: Humanitarianism and Use of Force

Humanitarian aid as an industry plays a key part in the world of international relations. As NGOs largely work on solving larger humanitarian issues, they work on an international platform where both national and international cooperation is key. Bridging gaps between countries, governments and a diverse set of actors, NGOs find themselves in a unique and important position on the global arena. Nongovernmental institutions can play a key part in a government concerning matters such as economy, national and international norms as well as politics, national and international law and safety. In this way, INGOS create an arena for complex relationships of power by institutionalizing conflict and cooperation in world politics (DeMars and Dijkzeul, 2015, p.5). This spectre of the social, political and economic also grasps the principles and practices of international relations (IR) theory. Humanitarianism has entered a new area "*distinguished by an unprecedented proliferation of agencies, an increased exposure to conflict, and the emergence of humanitarianism as an ever more strategic instrument in the foreign policy of the great powers and the politico-military strategies of violent factions»* (Slim,1997a ;246). Although the principles are of a general capacity, they function as proof of the humanitarian community's ethical reform during the 90's (ibid). The principles play a key part holding the humanitarian industry as an important actor in world international relations.

As this thesis will explore the various ways in which humanitarian organizations will take to protects its employees, it will also attempt to answer how this not only affects the safety of workers themselves, but also the work which they try to achieve as well as how this influences the impartiality of NGOs. The intent of this literature review is to present the broad strokes of theory concerning humanitarianism and the use of force in the field. In addition to this, it will also try to explain the most common ways humanitarian organizations protect their employees. Finally, the chapter will conclude in discussing the balance of security within the humanitarian community. This will lay the foundation of the discussion later to come.

3.1. The Politics of Aid

Following the deterioration of governmental protection, humanitarian negotiation of access has become increasingly difficult in the world of NGOs. Up until the 1990s, the negotiation of access was often led by a UN agency negotiation with both governmental and non-state groups, often backed up with written agreements (Duffield, 2007;75-81). These agreements would ensure the protection of the humanitarian organizations in exchange for the

humanitarian aid needed (Levine, 1997). As more and more NGOs are linked with these UN logistical solutions, they in turn were linked with the warring parties allowing access to the affected populations (Duffield, 2012;483, Avant, 2007;152). Although this negotiated access came with its difficulties, such as undermining the host governments sovereignty by negotiation with local non-state actors, the fragile nature of consent was important for both needed access and security.

This solution to access came to its end in the cold aftermath of 9/11. As the US led the War on Terror, many of the non-state actors who earlier played a crucial role in securing humanitarian access were now considered "terrorist" groups and effectively became an enemy as a result of pressure from the US (Duffield, 2012;484). This then led the humanitarian aid community to negotiate and (to some degree) cooperate with several NSAGs actors without facing sanctions (Egeland et al, 2012;4; Duffield, 2012;484). "*In comparison with the 1990s, the meaning of negotiated access has been fragmented and localized; it is now whatever deal an individual agency can strike with the actors and local strongmen it encounters.*" (Duffield 2012;484). The power of access now holds with the governors of territory, weaponry of funds, who often use this to harass and take advantage of NGOs in terms of political or military advantage (Egeland et al., 2011; viii).

According to research done on the recent trend in violence towards aid workers done by Abby Stoddard, Adele Harmer and Victoria DiDomenico (2009), attacks on aid workers are increasingly political motivated (Stoddard et al.,2009;1). Through their research, they uncovered that 65% of the incidents in Afghanistan 2008 were believed to be by armed resistance groups. In some cases, the targeting on aid organizations could be motivated by the association with enemy governments, either local or international, or it could be by perceived cooperation with enemy rebel groups. The motivation could also be more directly towards the organization itself. In these cases, the actions of the aid organization or the delivering of aid to a certain population is the cause of attack (Stoddard et al., 2009;5). NGOs attempt to strengthen their security by making clear statements and actions that prove their independence from both foreign and national political and military actors and operations.

3.2. Perception of aid

An example where the perception of aid had worsened is found in the research of Antonio Donini (2009). During the 90's, the UN advocated for a particularly forceful reaction to increased human rights violations. This western-led policy placed humanitarian aid in the

same category as military force (Slim, 2001;326). Aid agencies were eventually seen as “the enemy” by the locals, as seen in Afghanistan. After 9/11, NGOs and the aid community accepted that Afghanistan was in the state of post-conflict. The role of the NGOs then was to support the government (Donini, 2009;3). As the aid community has successfully survived the reign of the Taliban, their role was now to support a government. Coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan welcomed the humanitarian industry as allies in sharing the same goals (Slim, 2004;34). However, outside Kabul the Afghan population were unsympathetic to the government as corruption was widespread in governmental institutions such as the police and military forces. Thus, as the aid community were associated with the government the locals themselves considered untruthful, the hostility towards the aid community grew in Afghanistan (ibid). In addition to this, the belief that peace and development goes hand-in-hand had resulted in the surge of foreign military pursuits in the name of humanitarianism (Donini, 2009;3; Duffield, 2001). Foreign forces were thought as “clearing” the way for NGOs to save the people after the destruction those forces left behind. The previous definition of NGOs as an impartial, unarmed entity in the midst of war and political violence, attempting to aid in civilian and natural relief, were now associated with the use of force (Slim, 2001;326).

In a study of violence against aid workers Stoddard, Harmer and Czwarno (2017) revealed that humanitarian agencies are perceived by NSAGs as aliens in many of the cultural contexts in which they operate (12). As some aid agencies were accepted as neutral organizations, others were seen as corrupt entities and agents of the enemy (Stoddard et. al, 2017;13). Amongst NSAGs there exists a near-universal understanding that most aid agencies pocket their money and very little money actually goes to the people it is intended for (Stoddard et. al, 2017;12). Additionally, is the mere suspicion that aid agencies collude with political actors is concludingly enough justification for NSAGs to attack aid agencies (Stoddard, et. al, 2017;13). The seemingly liberal legitimization of aid agencies as targets is justified be NSAGs beliefs that the agency is fundamentally against their cause and therefore requires violence (Stoddard, et. al, 2017;16).

Even if some aid agencies were not a part of the governmental coalition, they were still associated with the political-military agenda (Donini, 2009;7). As a result, humanitarian organizations are justifiably concerned to fall under the same category of foreign military (ibid). This may turn the hearts and minds of the locals as they are perceived as to taking sides in a sensitive political arena, but worse yet is the increasing harassment and attacks on humanitarians. Groups forming in resistance to the government in Afghanistan and Iraq

attacked humanitarians as they were now understood as agents of the enemy (Slim, 2004;34). Not only has the number of kidnappings increased, but the attacks on humanitarian aid workers have grown to be more lethal and well organized (Egeland et al., 2011;1). The resulting security measures the aid community is forced to take may very well increase the gap between the aid community as a whole and the local community in which they operate.

3.3. Security measures

This chapter will explain three of the important ways in which humanitarian organizations protect and shield their employees in dangerous and complicated environments; bunkerization, training and deterrence. In exploring these important security steps, the apparent need of humanitarian security will become more evident as to understand their challenges both within the aid community, the beneficiary population and the host country in which they reside.

3.3.1. Bunkerization

As a solution to the increased risk for the international aid worker, “bunkerization” has become a way of life. This approach allows organizations to manage risk where they are, rather than to try to avoid risk all together. This “how to stay” way of thinking allows aid organizations to continue their work where they are (Egeland et al., 2011;2). The fortified aid compound has for a long time been a classic tactic to manage risk. However, it has grown to be even more visible and tantalizingly fortified. With blocked roads and strict security protocols to gain entry, the compound is often surrounded by fortified walls topped with razor wire, protected by security guards with security cameras overlooking the area (Duffield, 2012;477). In addition to this, it is not uncommon to have panic rooms (or “safe rooms”) and tunnels for a swift entry or safe departure. Now, the fortified aid compound will look more similar to a militarised base. This way, bunkerization creates a divide between the aid workers and the community in which they reside. This separation can again result in an increasing “otherness” which again can create a continuous cycle of vulnerability (Egeland et al., 2011;2).

By shielding aid workers, the bunker shows that forms of resilience have been exchanged for protection in dealing with increased external insecurity (Duffield, 2012;475). In their research, Jan Egeland, Adele Harmer and Abby Stoddard (2011) propose alternative protective measures to bunkerization such as more discreet security measures, a wider radius

of blocked streets to avoid the militarised look (Egeland et al., 2011;28) or even remote programming (Egeland et al., 2011;2).

3.3.2. Training and Coping

With the demise of political and sociological patronage, combined with strict humanitarian principles concerning negotiation of access and protection, aid agencies have grown to become resilient within the field. As we have seen, protective measures have somewhat been renewed by forms of accepting the existing risk and developing resilience amongst aid workers.

Field security training as a way of taking care of oneself is most often provided by host agencies and may include a range of different learning techniques. Ranging from first aid training, training in humanitarian principles to capacity building, the trainings are often meant to give aid workers techniques on how to cope in a complex political landscape and dangerous environment. Governing aid workers through anxiety by the way of bunkerization and security training is even argued to have a therapeutic function by giving the subjects techniques to govern their own insecurities to a greater extent (Duffield, 2012;475). The fear of security emergencies will then inevitably be exchanged with ready preparedness that follows chaos. Developing resilience to be able to absorb shock will be key in maintaining functionality in a state of continued disturbance of risk. Contrary to dread security incidents, the aid community is developing techniques of resilience and coping. Internalizing emergency embraces the opportunity to stay and deliver in the aid community.

The techniques designed to cope have however created a vicious circle. The coping strategies have increased the separation between the local host community. As previously argued, the increased otherness added to the already perplexing socio-political arena in question, may just as well increase the hostility and remoteness towards the aid community.

3.3.3. Deterrent measures and armed escorts

Negotiating access has become increasingly problematic in areas where aid agencies are no longer the trusted pillar for human aid it once was. Either it is an inhospitable government, reluctant locals or aggravated and NSAGs, safe passage has become an infrequent occurrence in the world of humanitarianism.

Armed escorts as deterrence measures can be provided by both state- and non-state actors as to balance the threat. The general rule for humanitarian organizations is to avoid the

use of armed escorts (Egeland et al.,2011;29; IASC Non-Binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys, 2013;3). It is however not uncommon for aid agencies to use some form of armed protection to enable humanitarian development. Effectively there has been created policies concerning the condition of such deterrence measures. These policies are made to clarify the conditions under which armed escorts are needed for protection. Egeland, Harmer and Stoddard (2011) presents an example for circumstances in which one agency considers it acceptable to use armed escorts; the threat is related to widespread banditry, a number of lives are at risk, the provider of the escort in question is satisfactory, and that the deterrent measure is thought to be effective (29).

Many practical consequences of using armed escort exist, however. The implications may be both short and long term and may affect both the humanitarian actors and the relevant organizations connected to the aid community. Organizing armed escort for humanitarian convoys may for instance make humanitarian movement less flexible as it is not always readily available (ibid).

Armed escorts may not be a long-term solution. First, the armed actor arranged to provide the armed escort can be a target in itself, as it may exist other armed forces within the area with targeted aggression towards the armed actor providing the escort. In addition to this, the cooperating armed actor can make it unsafe to enter a territory controlled by other armed forces that the humanitarian convoy need to enter or pass through. There may be additional risk for the humanitarian workers if the armed escort do not have the appropriate capacity to respond in a fitting manner during an attack (IASC Non-Binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys, 2013;4)

Secondly, there may be financial pressure to use armed escort. By paying an external force to provide armed escort to a humanitarian convoy, the jobholder can develop an economic interest in maintaining the service of armed protection. The pressure to continue the use of armed escorts grows as the use of such deterrent measures create an ongoing circle where humanitarian agency may become somewhat dependent on armed escort. As discussed further later in this chapter, the use of armed actors can create a negative perception of humanitarian aid agency. The effects of this negative perception will influence the humanitarian convoys that have no protective deterrent measures, making it increasingly more difficult to operate without. It is also argued that a ending the use of armed escorts can endanger humanitarians further by uncover them as a soft target (ibid).

Lastly is the point of the perceived impartiality of humanitarian organization that will suffer with the continued use of cooperating with armed actors. As already discussed, the

perception of aid itself has grown to become an ambiguous term. Hostility towards the aid community has already forced organisations to shield aid workers from the local community. Cooperating then with an armed actor, whether it is a local, national or international actor, can damage the perception of the aid community. The political or military objectives of the armed actor used by a humanitarian organization can result in the aid community, along with the beneficiary population to be associated with those objectives. The consequence of having international, local and national actors associated with those objectives will undermine the actual and/or perceived impartiality of not only the humanitarian organization using that specific armed actor, but the aid community as a whole. The independence of the humanitarian aid community is thereby also undermined when using armed escorts (ibid).

In situations where government protection is absent, the aid community must attempt to advance security protocols with strategies such as accepting the local community and using local armed groups. Nevertheless, armed escorts seem to have little positive effect to the aid community as a whole. However, it seems to be a convenient security measure to protect the lives of humanitarian personnel, supplies and mobilize humanitarian activity. Several alternatives exist to armed escort, such as remote programming and other forms of protection that does not include a presence of armed actors in a close proximity of a humanitarian convoy (Egeland et al.,2011;30; IASC Non-Binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys, 2013;5).

3.4. A balancing act of security

As humanitarian work has over time transformed into a "dangerous profession" (Beeril, 2018; Duffield, 2012), the security within international humanitarian organization has become somewhat of a balancing act when it comes to lives. Humanitarian workers have reached a point where there exists a balance between one's own life and the lives of others (Neuman and Weissman, 2016; Slim, 1997a;248). This in turn, have forced humanitarian organizations to professionalize security and the implementation of security standards and protocols. In the rapid expansion of the aid industry, the industry has observed a growing remoteness. Not just in the gap between aid workers and the societies they operate in, but the gap between the national and international staff.

Inconsistencies exist within the security of categories, such as international/national staff and head office/field staff, but also humanitarian workers and the people in need of aid in the most dangerous and "hard-to-reach" corners of the world (Fassin 2010; Beeril 2018).

By designing separate security systems for the different categories, it leaves the security in a kind of hierarchy of humanity. This can also be seen in Beeril (2018) arguments where he argues that there exists a struggle between the bureaucratic rules of security within a humanitarian organization and the humanitarian aid workers in the field who contest the top-down directives of standardized security (71).

Humanitarian security was developed as an expertise in a more systematic planning process in order to predict and manage "insecurities" (Van Brabant 2000; Beeril and Weissman 2016; Beeril 2018). A process such as this includes incident reporting systems, safe mission planning, analysis of risk, procedures for how to response to incidents and so forth. This process looks different pending on whom the security initiatives will involve. Some NGO´s develop security trainings for all staff that will work and/or live in areas regarded dangerous. However, there are some issues where the mere identity as an NGO can present itself as a security risk. There are several arguments in the world of IR theory explaining the risk of being identified as a humanitarian aid worker. The politicization of aid and crisis of consent are some of the arguments discussing the complexity of the role of an NGO.

The Politicization of aid argument holds that allocation of international aid is a tool of western policy. It argues that, especially after 9/11, aid workers have been associated with Western foreign policy (Duffield, 2012). This relationship between aid and politics freezes aid workers in space and time, leaving insurgency as their main threats (Duffield 2012; Fox 1999; Oxfam 2011). Another argument calls that the aid industry has revealed a *crisis of consent* that argues the humanitarian world has revealed "self-generated risks" (Egeland et al., 2011).

These weaknesses are less concerned with the politicization of aid and turn more to the Western culture that exist within humanitarian organizations. This leads to a negative cultural acceptance amongst the locals which contribute to a *"greater suspicion, less general acceptance and, unfortunately, outright hostility"* (Van Brabant, 2010:10).

Regarding politicization, NGOs focus on clearly separating themselves from the military. As already discussed however, this has become difficult on several levels: when armed military forces misuse the term humanitarianism to operate under development purposes, and when humanitarian agencies use armed escorts to protect their convoys. For the crisis of consent, acceptance strategies are put in place in local communities to build the relationship between the NGO and the locals (Egeland et al., 2011, Duffield, 2012). For instance, several aid agencies are recruiting more local and national staff to work in their field offices to minimize the perception that the aid community is largely a western occupancy.

In other words, risk is now accepted as something inevitable but does not scare the humanitarian world from the most dangerous of locations. In fact, the aid workers are there to stay. However, as already stated, NGOs do see a necessity for armed escort in countries where the level of risk is high. The fact is, that in several cases, NGO´s break with the standardized protocols and accept armed protection in the name of personal security. The balancing act between security of the personal and security of the greater humanitarian is therefore just that, a balancing act. A humanitarian choosing to protect him- or her-self with armed escort may give the perception that all humanitarians uses weaponry or armed protection. This in turn may increase the security risk of being a humanitarian, developing a never-ending circle of security and insecurity.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter will establish the methodological choices made for this research and discuss the different approaches. For this thesis, I have employed a qualitative research method when conducting my research. This approach provides the means to emphasise words, meaning and subjective meaning rather than the quantification of the collection and analysis of data (Brockington and Sullivan, 2003). What is a fundamental concern within the qualitative method is the perceptions of the social world. As such, I have chosen to highlight the individual experience and their own experiences related to the use of armed escorts, and what effects this can entail. Following Bryman (2012), the social world must be studied and defined from the perspectives of those individuals or groups that are being studied. Qualitative research thus provides texture and contributes towards demonstrating the understandings and meanings to phenomena that would be difficult to identify through other methods (Berg and Lunde, 2012:154; King, Keohane, Verba, 1994;7). An *inductive approach* was incorporated in this qualitative research, meaning that findings and research in this thesis hopes to generate or build to theories within the field (Miessler, 2018). This chapter will present and discuss the chosen methodology approach; qualitative research. Firstly, an outline and justification of the data collection methods chosen for this thesis is presented. Thereafter, a brief review of the data analysis is included, followed by quality assurances such as trustworthiness, limitations and ethical considerations.

4.2. Data Collection

The data collection method employed in this research was chosen on the basis of providing sufficient data to answer this thesis' research questions. Secondary sources were used to support the findings from interviews. Thus, what is considered the primary data are the 10 semi-structured interviews conducted with personnel involved in humanitarian work. These interviews have been conducted between June and August 2020. Similar to other qualitative research projects that have been conducted within the field of social research, this research has not followed a linear model. During the research, I have moved back and forth between different stages, rather than completing the different stages in a chronological order.

4.2.1. Sampling Strategy

It is not goal of the qualitative research is to be able to generalize to the rest of the population the samples represent. However, it is important to collect a sample size to create a

nuanced picture of the experience NGOs has with armed escorts. The choice of sampling approach has the potential to affect the entire research (Emmel, 2013;121). A sufficient sample depends on the size of the sampling, the sample frame, as well as the specific design of the selection procedures (Fowler, 2009:19). In other words, the sampling in a research should the goal of the research question. In reference to the research question asked in this specific research, the aim was to interview a wide range of respondents in the humanitarian field that would allow me to gain knowledge and understandings from different context.

For a qualitative research to support a convincing conclusion, it is argued that the sampling size should be around 30 respondents for an interview (Adler and Adler:2012;9; Mason, 2010). On the other hand, it is also argued that samples with less than 20 in a qualitative research, could increase the researcher's chance of developing fine-grained data (Crouch and McKenzie:2006). Onwuegbuize and Collins (2007) argues that the size of a sample could vary depending on the situation but should at the very least be big enough to achieve data saturation (289). The maximum of the targeted participants was not reached according to Adler and Adler (2012), however I had to stop the research to have sufficient time to transcribe interviews as well as to have enough time to decode and analyse the collected data. This highlights my choice for employing qualitative research as a method, as it prefers fewer units (Bryman, 2916; 693).

In order to gain knowledge regarding personnel working in NGOs and their experience with armed escorts, it was important to not only focus on one specific area where humanitarian personnel assist, but rather gain a wider understanding of how armed escorts are used across the globe as well as across different NGOs. Before setting out to find relevant informants, I had to set some requirements for who would be included in the research. These requirements were necessary in terms of finding relevant respondents for my research. For example, an interview with a regular person in the streets of Oslo would not have value to research and would not provide credible data. An interview with an NGO worker with experience or knowledge about humanitarian security, humanitarian principles and the use of armed escort would however be able to share relevant information necessary to answer the research question. For this research, there were few requirements set. The requirements made are as follows; the respondents needed to be NGOs with an understanding of the humanitarian work of NGOs, humanitarian principles and the what role armed escort plays in this. The reason for this choice is connected to the research questions leading this thesis, which specifically mentions NGO workers and their experience concerning armed escorts. Thus, the requirements narrowed the scope of informants to a relevant group in regard to the research

question. My goal was to interview several people who holds the same position in order to compare findings and variations (Gallagher, 2013;192). Several of my initial informants I reached out to did not have any experience with the use of armed escorts while working in an NGO. At one point, one contact informed me that he did have experience with using armed escorts, but not while working in an NGO. Thus, the contacts that did not fill the requirements were not included in this research. Despite not being included in this research, they assisted me by directing me to further individuals working in NGOs who did fill the criteria of the sampling.

During this research, I wanted to create a sample that would provide a wide range of contextual experiences from different environments. Thus, I interviewed respondents that had experiences from Asia, Middle East, Africa and South America. I did not find it challenging to find individuals with different backgrounds, as there is a relatively high turnover of employees in field offices. Moreover, many NGO workers turned out to have experiences not only from working under different NGOs, but from working in different countries and regions.

In order to find informants who could meet these requirements, I employed a different set of sampling strategies. Firstly, I used a non-probability purposive sampling strategy as I this allows me to strategically select individuals who would answer my research questions (Bryman, 2012:410; Punch 2005;187). Secondly, I employed a convenience sampling strategy which is another form non-probability sampling. Specifically, I interviewed those who were available in the time frame of this research being conducted (Bryman, 2012:689). However, I still had to employ a strict level of criteria that would make sure that the respondents would answer my research question. During my internship under the head of security in an NGO, I was able to connect with several NGO workers across the world. This was not limited to the NGO under which I worked; I was able to meet several security experts in several organizations. Therefore, my network allowed me to contact several possible respondents that could assist me in my research. My most important contacts were however my hard-working supervisors during my internship at NRC. The convenience sampling strategy is however not the most prominent of strategies used in this research but allowed me to link my research with relevant individuals. These individuals were also those who introduced me to this field of research and gave me a unique starting point.

Lastly, I employed the snowball sampling, which turned out to be critical for connecting with more informants. Following Bryman (2012;415), snowball sampling is a sampling technique used when a researcher gets directed to relevant informants from his or

her initial sample group. In other words, I was directed to further informants during the research process. Every person from my NGO network I initially wanted to interview connected me to more individuals who could be relevant to my research. When I reached out to individuals in the humanitarian field, they usually connected me to other relevant individuals. Usually, I was connected to security experts and mid-level security managers within a field office. This allowed me to understand the thoughts behind the use of armed escorts in a specific context. Those respondents then directed me to other NGO workers who might also have some relation or experience with armed escorts. As a result, the snowball sampling strategy allowed me to grow a large group of informants as it gradually increased with each conducted interview.

4.2.2. Interview techniques

I conducted a total of 10 qualitative interviews during my research. Out of all the respondents, 1 were conducted through email and 9 were done over skype or a similar platform. The interview process thus proved to be quite flexible.

Interview over skype made it possible to interview a larger number of individuals. Most people today have access to a smartphone, tablet or computer with internet access. With the use of web cam, a skype interview is the closest thing to an in-person interview since it includes a visual element. Interview over skype made the interview very flexible as it made room for last minute adjustments and reduced any financial burden that could arise from meeting in person. Without such software, interviewing humanitarians currently working in field would be close to impossible as I wanted to interview individuals in as many different countries as possible. Several of these countries would also be difficult to travel to, as I interviewed respondents currently posted in areas where there is a security risk. The outbreak of Covid-19 also made it difficult to meet individuals in Norway. Interviewing through Skype therefore made the interview safe as well as time and cost efficient. However, some of the interviews were prone to a lesser quality of connection which made the interview hard to record and disrupted the flow of the interview. Due to conflicting schedules or poor internet connection, one interview had to be completed by email. However, it was still possible to send follow-up as well as explanatory questions if needed. This allowed me to uphold the type of questions that characterizes the semi-structured interview.

As stated by Bryman (2012), semi-structured interviews allowed for a flexible interview. This type of interview proved to be valuable. In designing the interview, I focused on including Kvale’s (1996) nine suggested questions; (1) Introducing question, (2) follow-up

questions, (3) probing questions, (4) specifying questions, (5) direct questions, (6) indirect questions, (7) structuring questions, (8) silence and (9) interpreting questions. By including these, I was able to include questions that were not listed in the interview guide and expand on the respondent's answers. It left space to conduct probing questions, follow-up questions and clarifying questions that could urge the respondent to elaborate their answers. This also left space for flexibility as the respondent could bring up subjects of interest that were not originally included. In other words, the interview guide made sure the specific topic related to the research question was covered, as well as being flexible enough to allow some leeway for both the interviewee and I as the interviewer (468). Choosing a semi-structured interview allowed me to tailor each interview to the respondent as their roles and perspective could differ. In addition to this, this approach let me develop and refine theories and concepts out of the findings. Additionally, the semi-structured interview allows the interview to develop as a conversation with follow-up questions, in turn creating a relaxed environment.

The interview guide was developed based on guidance from my supervisors, the literature review and the research questions. I adapted the busy schedule of the humanitarian lifestyle by making the interview short and concise. This made it easier to acquire more interviews, as it would not be time consuming. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 1 and is divided into three sections. The first section concerns the general background of the respondent that would be relevant for the research. The second section functions as the core of the interview, with five questions designed to answer the research questions. The last section ends the interview with closing questions for both me and the respondent.

For the interviews done over skype I used a recording device with the respondent's permission and notes were taken to get a fuller collection of data. With the use of a recording devise during the interviews I could transcribe the interviews. This helped me reference the interviews more correctly in this thesis, as well as it assisted in emphasising key findings.

4.2.3. Secondary sources

Secondary sources have been very important for the development of this thesis. I needed to familiarize myself with previous research concerning humanitarian work and armed escorts prior to developing the research question for this thesis, the interview guide as well as research methods. The secondary sources also assisted me in understanding the major themes and theories that would be approached in this thesis. Even though my research heavily relied upon peoples' experiences and thoughts concerning armed protection, I relied upon the theoretical argumentation and humanitarian principles concerning the issues in question. The

secondary sources assisted in understanding key concepts such as *impartiality, neutrality, access negotiation, beneficiaries, deterrent measures* such as *use of force,* and trends within *security measures* such as *bunkerization* and *coping*. The secondary sources played an important part in comparing data collected from the respondents against defined concepts and grounded theoretical discussions.

However, I identified a gap in existing literature concerning the topic I wanted to explore. I found only brief mentions of the use of armed escorts and its implications in professional "guidebooks" from humanitarians and not the academic and theoretical discussion I sought out. This will be further discussed in chapter 4.4.2. I did however create an extensive literature list with similar topics that had the necessary function to root myself in relevant theories, context and conceptual frameworks that was highly necessary to conceptualize and connect the findings of this research to already existing and established theories, discussions and concepts.

In addition to the conducted interviews and literary sources, I also attended a webinar for and by humanitarians (Appendix 2). The webinar may not only have concerned itself with NGO security and use of force but had a greater focus on coordinating access. The topics are however quite overlapped. This gave me an opportunity to get a wider understanding of issues at hand in the humanitarian community. It also gave me the opportunity to hear opinions and arguments by NGO experts I was otherwise not able to interview.

4.3. Data Analysis

All interviews were as mentioned conducted through Skype and were recorded with the informed consent of the informants. All recordings were done on my personal phone and saved in a password protected folder. I also transcribed each interview into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which was also saved in a password protected folder on my computer. Some interviews were transcribed directly after the interview was completed; however, some were transcribed days or weeks after the completed interview due to a hectic schedule. I therefore took notes during the interviews so that any important information would not be forgotten. As I became familiar with my research question, I was able to write down thoughts and comments relevant for my research in my interview notes. After a while I was also able to see reoccurring themes or contradictions that would be interesting to analyse, which I then noted as well. When I transcribed the interviews, I was able to develop a colour coding scheme by identifying themes and key findings which pertained to my research question, thus conducting

a thematic analysis. By conducting a thematic analysis of data, means that I examined all the transcripts to identify important themes (Burnard et al., 2008;429). Through coding each transcript, I broke down data into components with an array of colours to that would later outline my key findings. This way of managing data is a hectic process with many steps. By transcribing the interviews and conducting a thematic analysis by breaking down the data into occurring themes and labels, the data became much more accessible and easier to interpret than merely listening to the interview over and over again.

Additionally, I attended a seminar on the topic of coordinating access for humanitarian protection. This seminar was suggested for me by one of the respondents as it was mainly for humanitarian aid workers on how they can face challenges during field work. The seminar was done online for accepted members of the website PHAP.org. but was made public as a podcast as well as a visual recording available on their website. In addition to this, notes and bullet points were published on the same site. This made it possible to quote experts within the field of humanitarian access and security without having to conduct interviews on the subject. The seminar also conducted event polls which I could acquire as background information and additional research findings.

4.4. Quality Assurance and Assessment

Assessing the quality of a qualitative research is, according to Bryman (2016), problematic. He highlights the ongoing debates of quantitative research in a qualitative social research, and how to employ criteria to assess this. Bryman explains that there are no universal truths in the social world. Rather, there are several accounts and components that needs to be considered. Therefore, Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposes two new criteria for assessing qualitative research; *trustworthiness* and *authenticity*. For qualitative research to be trustworthy, Bryman (2016) argues it must include the criteria known as *credibility, transferability, dependability* and *confirmability.* The focus here is assist the researcher in avoiding making assumptions of subjective meaning. Assessment of this study will thus focus on the trustworthiness rather than the validity and reliability.

The development of the research question was, as already stated, done quite late in the research process, as is a familiar trait within inductive reasoning (Miessler, 2018). Even though I had a clear idea of what I wanted to focus my research on, I stalled in formulating a specific research question. This proved to be both a strength and a limitation during the research. The open research question I operated with while collecting data made it difficult to

narrow down the exact information I was looking for. Without specifying a clear research question the researcher may be prone to collect too much data and lose focus (Bryman,2016;8). This amounted to an extensive amount of collected data, both from secondary sources and interviewing. Such data collection from qualitative research is described by Miles (1979) as “attractive nuisance” and can easily result in a poor analysis if the researcher is lost in the attempt to find paths through the collected data. The strength of having an open research question was however the fact that it kept the door open for respondents to include elements not previously considered during the data collection. This resulted in a widening of the research findings.

As seen in chapter 1.2.1, the sampling approach has already been discussed. To represent the sample population (humanitarian workers within NGOs with armed escorts experience), I set out to cover a group of NGOs that would fulfil this criterion. In failing to collect enough respondents, the research could be constrained in its credibility as well as its feasibility (Bryman, 2016;384). Even so, the data collection method became to be both credible as well as dependable as the individual respondents provided highly valuable data that corelated well with each other as well as the research question. This may also affect the transferability of this research. The findings in a qualitative research must be recognized by other respondents from the same population and generalizable to theory. Therefore, the findings of this research must be recognizable to other NGOs (Bryman, 2016; 399). The choice of using a semi-structured interview guide has already been discussed in chapter 1.2.2 and will not be repeated in this part. However, some limitations are worthy of mentioning. Follow-up and probing questions could vary depending on the person respondent as well as the subject of discussion. The flexibility and “leeway” provided by using a semi-structured interview could result in that the interviews could differ quite drastically from person to person. In other words, there could exist an imbalance in what each respondent had the chance to mention. If every respondent were given the same follow up questions, they could potentially have contributed with additional insight and discussion. This could very well have added to the limitation of trustworthiness.

As already sated, the findings of each individual interview did correlate and therefore ensured a transferable research. What is important to note here, is that this research does not attempt to generalize the findings to fit the entire population, as qualitative research does not allow the generalization of subjective meaning. Moreover, this research simply attempts to find contextual uniqueness in the world of study.

The replicability of this research is however challenging, as defined by Bryman (2016), to the degree that the results of the research can be reproduced. As qualitative research focuses on the subjective meaning of the subject, it may be hard to do so. The analysis of the data and theories might also be of a subjective nature, to some extent, and therefore damage the replicability of this research or any qualitative research in general. However, this research might be easily replicable in presuming that a researcher would be using the same collection methods as I have been clear on how I collected data and proceeded to analyse it after.

Question 9 in the interview guide (Appendix 1) included the concept "others" and let that be open for interpretation for the respondent. This was done to make the question open for subjective interpretation and could include beneficiaries, locals, colleagues, donors, etc. However, this could potentially affect the credibility of findings as the respondents may mean or define the phrase different than what the researcher thinks. Their subjective interpretation of the meaning may also differ from each other (Bryman, 2016;6). How the concepts can create different meaning among different people can affect the confirmability of the research. However, upon asking the respondent this question, they all seemed to define it in similarly as their answers were more often than not identical in their reasoning.

Due to the subjectivisms of the collected and analysed data, as well as the limitations previously mentioned, I would argue that the research may be missing some aspects to be able to establish findings that can correlate to other NGOs across the world. Even though I am pleased with finding correlating and interesting data as well as the quality of the thematic analysis, the size of the sampling may not be completely representative to the rest of the population. If given more time, this research would have included a higher number of respondents to provide a better foundation for analysing data.

4.4.1. Limitations

The outbreak of COVID-19 created several limitations throughout the research process. Norway, as well as the rest of the world, was placed in lockdown with strict protocols. As the schools and libraries were closed, finding a suitable place to write the thesis became an issue. Isolation and leave from work would seem to be the perfect way of encouraging the writing of the thesis. However, several of my fellow students (including myself) at NMBU experienced the opposite effect. The time it took to adjust did create some limitation to the completion of this research.

As my focus was on contacting NGO workers in the field, I could finally understand the true privilege I had to be able to practice social distancing in a safe environment. In the humanitarian world however, I became more aware of the security threats linked to the spread of the virus once it reached refugee camps, countries with poor infrastructure and economy, and the NGO workers dealing with both internal and external crises in the field. In the disarray of confusion and hardship that followed the outbreak of COVID-19, it became difficult to find respondents who had the time to sit down for interviews. The communication was slow, as many had a lot to do at work and I would have to wait for weeks, and sometimes months for a reply. I am however grateful for the people who took the time to contribute in my research, either through interviews or by assisting me in any other way.

As mentioned, the timeframe for my research turned out to also create limitations for my research. Finding possible respondents for my research took longer than I expected. Furthermore, the time it took to adapt to the new everyday life and way of working made me second guess the research all together. However, I could not change the circumstances, only the way I undertook the research process during this time. Nevertheless, the timeframe was compromised and did not allow for all the interviews I wished to conduct. Luckily, financial constraints were never an issue as I conducted all of the interviews over Skype from my own home which saved me from travelling. COVID-19 also forced many seminars and informative presentations to be held on-line, which made it possible for me to attend several useful and intriguing seminars that would otherwise be difficult.

The lack of secondary sources also became a constraint. As discussed in chapter three, the academic discussion on the use of armed escorts in NGOs is severely lacking. Great time was spent searching for relevant academic discussions on the topic. Most of the documents I did uncover were guidelines written for and by NGOs. These guidelines did however briefly mention the use of armed escorts and went on to discuss alternative ways of conducting and delivering programs and aid without the use of force. These guidelines went on to state that the use of armed escorts goes against the humanitarian principles and that it should not be used expect for in extreme circumstances such as the evacuation of a country. This did not correlate with the findings of the research, as the research shows that the use of armed escorts is often used outside of extreme circumstances. As such, some contradictions were identified during my research.

What is additionally worth mentioning is the gender aspect of my research. I interviewed both men and women from various nationalities and cultures where genders may not always be treated equal. However, as I interviewed the respondents, I did not observe any

difficulty concerning this matter. When looking at NGOs globally, it could be regarded a "mixing pot" of cultures, religions, ethnicities and nationalities where all genders work together and are treated equally. This is however an observation that only reflects the informants I have been in touch with, and I will not argue that there are anomalies to this discussion.

Lastly, it becomes important to highlight the language constraints of my research. As all my respondents could speak English quite well, as could I, I did not feel the need to use a translator. However, as most of the respondents had one or more first languages, the accent or pronunciation of the English language was difficult for me to understand at times. I would ask follow-up if this occurred, but it became frustrating at times. During the transcription, this issue became prominent. I would have to go back and forth to try to understand pronunciations of certain words or term. At times I wanted to seek help from my peers or friends, but as the interview was anonymous, this was not possible. Nevertheless, the level of English the informants attained was understandable, and the issue of accents were only a minor limitation during the research.

4.4.2. Ethical Considerations

The ethical process is of outmost importance in any social research. The ethical considerations should be grounded in the "good" or the "correct" way of doing things (Banks and Scheyvens, 2014;162). The main concern with ethical issues within this thesis arose in the relations between myself as the researcher and my relationship with my research participants during the research. *"Every human has the right to not be used by other people"* (Locke, Spirduso and Silverman, 2014; 29). With this, Locke, Spirduso and Silverman argues that the power of the researched lies within the right to share or not to share information (ibid). To avoid any unethical issues during the qualitative research process, I set out to employ the four main areas of ethical principles as defined by Diener and Crandall (1978); informed consent, privacy, harm and deception.

A very important aspect to cover when conducting research is the concept of *informed consent*. This entails providing full and accurate information concerning the research to the contributing informants so that they can make an informed decision concerning their participation in the research (Bryman, 2016;129). In the emails sent to the possible participants I briefly informed them about the research, the aim of the research, and a short description of the interview itself. I also included a short description of myself as a student.

Upon "meeting" the respondents online, I gave a more detailed description of the research and by background. They were also made fully aware of their anonymity and that any recording and transcription of the interview would only be seen my me. This very much overlaps with the ethical concern of *invasion of privacy* (Bryman, 2012:131). The guarantee of their anonymity encouraged the participants to open up and share personal beliefs and opinions. Some of the participants even informed me that as long as their identity would be held secret, they were more inclined to share their experiences.

Another essential principle of ethical consideration was the concept of *harming of participants.* Harm and lack of informed consent can be argued to overlap with each other in various ways (Erikson, 1967;369). Harm can take many forms, such as physical harm as well stress, loss of self-esteem and confidence, and harm to the participants' development (Diener and Crandall; 1978:19). In other words, the concept of "do no harm" means avoiding physically and mentally endangering or deceiving the participants involved in the research. For example, in several of the interviews, some participant failed to answer the questions asked in a satisfactory way. Here, I could simply interrupt the participant and ask him or her to answer the question being asked. However, I regarded this as something that could potentially affect the trust in me as an interviewer, their argumentative reasoning and their self-esteem. Thus, I let them finish their thoughts and arguments in line with Kvale's (1996) reasoning. Letting the respondents speak freely also let them bring up interesting and new arguments and experiences that would not have come up if I would have interrupted. What is also essential to consider is the bias of the researcher. Researcher bias includes the collection of findings that fits into the already existing theory, goals and perceptions of the researcher and any data that may stand out for the researcher (Maxwell, 2013;124). Throughout my research, I deliberately listen to the respondents with an open mind and to be aware of my own biases as to not dismiss any information that I would otherwise deem unnecessary for the research. Therefore, I continued to let the respondents speak without any interruption. The natural development in the interview was a welcomed turn which resulted in great amounts of useful data. However, I had to consider the sensitive information shared by the participants as they often spoke of personal experience. Some had rather difficult and emotionally damaging experiences that were difficult to discuss. When this happened, I had to consider the possible harm this could have for the respondent and informed them that this was a safe place to discuss what ever came to mind and that I would treat this information with respect and anonymity.

The last ethical principle consists of *Deception*. Deception in this sense takes place when the researcher deceives the participants during a research in any way. For example, the research may represent their work as something different than what it actually is, thereby deceiving the participants in the research (Bryman, 2016;133). Every respondent asked to participate in the research has the right to "*know what they are getting into and the right to give or withhold their cooperation in the basis of that information*" (Locke, Spirduso and Silverman, 2014;30).

As the research question was not yet finalized at the time of the interviews, this became a paramount concern. The concern was that when the research question was finally decided, the goal of the research would no longer be recognizable to the respondents. However, as I had only given a general description of what I wanted to research, I felt that neither final research question nor the goal of the research did not change the research to the extent that it would deceive the participants.

5. NGO Security in Practise

The aim of the coming chapters will be to outline and discuss the findings from the qualitative interviews. Based on the interviews conducted with NGOs working on issues such as security, access coordination and program implementation. The respondents raged from top-level managers sit working from regional offices to mid-level managers working on local offices in high-risk environments. Due to the recent outbreak of Covid-19, some were however working from their home countries. As the literature review portrayed, there is a general consensus that using armed escort should only occur in life saving situations or as a last resort. As such there are alternative ways for the NGO worker to cope in a high-risk environment. Further indicated in the literature review is the growing remoteness between the aid community and the community in which they operate, as well as a growing gap between national staff and international staff.

The first chapter will give a short introduction to the basic, yet fundamental security solutions in the NGO community, which was coined as the *Iron Triangle* by respondents. The three pillars of the iron triangle will be explained, with additional focus on the last pillar; *Deterrence,* which has been given its own sub-chapter. Within the category of deterrence, the different categories of data have been divided into separate topics. Finally, the chapter concludes in shedding a light on the relationship between military forces and NGOs.

5.1. Fundamental Security Pillars

5.1.1. Iron Triangle

The fundamental safety and security solution is what one respondent called *The Iron Triangle.* This was mentioned in every interview as the fundamental pillars in humanitarian security strategy and consists of *acceptance, protection* and *deterrence.* The first pillar of security is *acceptance.* One respondent described acceptance as the most important, but difficult pillar for humanitarian security. It builds on trust and understanding to lay the foundation for a mutual beneficial relationship and cooperation between the local community and the NGO community. The process to build acceptance may take a long time but may be destroyed within days and is thus a fragile part of the security aspect.

Protection as a strategy describes the various protective measures taken in the humanitarian community. In short, protective measures basically consist of high walls

surrounding the NGO offices, guards to protect compound and fortified guest houses of the international NGO worker. The last pillar is *deterrence*. As a preventative measure from attacks from armed actors, armed escorts are sued to safely transport NGOs from A to B. Throughout the interviews, the respondents had several experiences and opinions to share on the topic of armed escort.

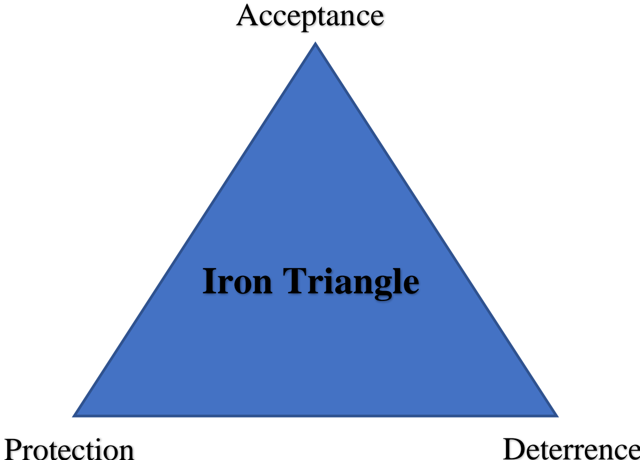

Figure 3. The Iron Triangle

5.1.2. Acceptance

As one of the key parts in the security triangle, acceptance is the only one concerning the mental state of the local population, the beneficiaries and the host government. It references to the hearts and minds of the local population and their acceptance of the NGO presence and work in their community. Protection and deterrence both rise and fall pending on acceptance. As one respondent stated; "*it all comes back to acceptance*."

Acceptance is developed by maintaining good relationships with all parties a humanitarian agency will come in contact within line of work, including non-state actors, civil/military relations, relationships both the host government and local authority as well as the local community. During the interviews, the importance of acceptance within security was made evident by all the respondents. Acceptance is not only important for the security of the humanitarian aid community but for their work as well. Without acceptance the free movement, access and cooperation becomes difficult, as acceptance may enforce or discourage locals to assist or approve NGOs in their work. Acceptance are not only vital for the implementation of new programs or enforcing programs already implemented, but it has other positive conditions as well. By gaining appreciation from the community and local

authority, locals will be more inclined to share crucial information regarding possible safety issues for the humanitarian community. As a source of information, acceptance serves as an important part in humanitarian organization, not only for the security and safety of aid workers, but also for the humanitarian work itself.

However, individuals also discussed the increasing complexity of acceptance in an increasingly complicated political arena. As one respondent stated:

"It's also because the environments and the context have become more dangerous and more difficult. I really agree to that. Meaning that before working on acceptance was not that difficult. It would be enough to just be careful and maintain good relationships with your neighbours, with the local authority, just do polite visits you know. Even to the armed groups. And basically, that would be enough. Now it's not enough. It's a full-time job now actually."

According to the respondents, this change mainly came from two reasons; (1) change in risk habitat and (2) increased pressure on the humanitarian community. Respondents alluded to the fact that the former stems from the growing professionalism of hostile NSAGs. Not only are they better funded and organized, the attacks have grown to be more complex and lethal. This increased risk environment has made acceptance more difficult as NSAGs acceptance of NGOs may be highly important to the safety and security for the humanitarian community (Stoddard, et. al, 2017;12-3). In a research concerning NSAGs violence against aid workers and their acceptance of humanitarian aid agencies, Stoddard, et. al (2017) indicated that the conditions NSAGs sets for their acceptance of humanitarian aid workers goes against the basic humanitarian principles (16). The second reason acceptance is challenged comes from the pressure put on NGOs by their donors. As there are more crisis than ever, NGOs are in fierce competition for funds from donors coming with their own agenda. Respondents claimed that donors would at times put pressure on NGOs and their techniques in delivering aid to deliver results as swiftly as possible. By experiencing pressure to provide results to donors together with the competition for funds, less and less NGOs stand their ground on the humanitarian principles. In other words, the humanitarian principles have taken a backseat to make donors happy enough to continue their funding.

The use of armed escort may greatly affect acceptance, which was regularly confirmed by the respondents. Nevertheless, acceptance of armed escort do occur. Respondents shared that acceptance is easier when you don't stand out, another shared that in some areas weapons and armed escorts are so normal that you do not stand out in case you use armed escorts. In these areas the local population are so used to seeing armed convoys, that the use of armed escort does not affect the acceptance from the local population. In other areas, the cultural

customs may even force NGOs to use armed escorts in turn of getting acceptance from the local government. Where the cultural customs take pride in taking care of their guests and insist in going the extra mile to make sure their guests are safe, the host government may take offence in the rejection of their help. The understanding of the cultural context is therefore highly important in gaining necessary acceptance. A clear command and control structure enforce access and acceptance, with the simple fact that you are clearer in where and how to gain acceptance. In solid hierarchies, humanitarians find it easier to gain assistance in solving potential issues in knowing exactly who to contact.

In closing words, there are some issues concerning acceptance. First of all, acceptance is fragile in its own right. However long it may have taken to build a strong acceptance, it may be destroyed within seconds. Several of the respondents mentioned that once you have used armed escort, the acceptance may be destroyed instantly. As one respondent stated when discussing the use of armed escort to perform and assessment in a high-risk territory; *"You have to consider going back to that place".* Using armed escort once might compromise the acceptance at a later stage. Secondly, respondents claimed it was difficult to measure acceptance. There has recently emerged a discussion within humanitarian acceptance examining how to measure if acceptance truly is effective. Not only do members of the community rarely reach out a humanitarian aid agency with complaints or concerns, they may not share their honest opinion if asked. According to respondents, locals would probably remember an incident and action they do not agree with and build up negative emotions towards the humanitarian agency or the humanitarian community as a whole. This would certainly harm the humanitarian work and security in the long term.

5.1.3. Protection

Protective measures include bunkerization, high walls, guards and so on. It is already discussed in detail in chapter 3.3, and since none of the respondents gave much information concerning protection as one of the pillars of the iron triangle, it will not be repeated. However, there are a few things worth mentioning surrounding the conditions for protection. There is an argument that some agencies find it easier to spend money on armed protection or to employ a person with a weapon than to upgrade protective measures such as metal work, saferooms, procedures and training. This was confirmed throughout the interview as respondents stated in situations where NGOs recently have been attacked, other NGOs have a tendency to hire more armed protection. Although this is more usual in smaller NGOs, the

creeping effect it has on the humanitarian community is still palpable. This shows tendencies to lose focus on protective measures in favour of the deterrent measures.

5.2. Deterrence

As the point of focus for this thesis, deterrence measures such as armed escort was recurrently discussed as a domineering theme. As such, the respondents brought up an abundance of thoughts, experiences and ideas concerning the use of armed escort within NGOs. This chapter will therefore address the multitude of themes related to armed escort brought up by the respondents. Aid Security Database (2020) collected data on where aid workers are usually attacked. As figure 2 shows, just over 43% of attacks on NGOs happen while they are traveling on the road. This said, it is no wonder that NGOs are more inclined to use deterrence measures such as armed escorts to keep their workers safe while traveling.

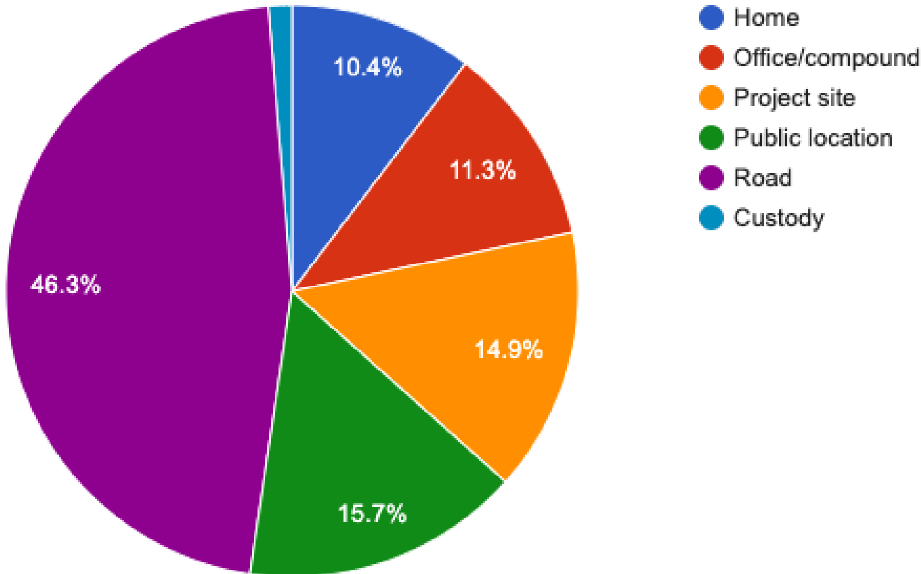

Figure 4. Location of Attacks (2001-2019) (The Aid Worker Security Database, 2020)

First, the chapter will discuss respondents experience where armed escorts are forced upon them by host governments.

5.2.1. Forced Protection

One of the most reoccurring themes from the interviews was the forced protection implemented on NGOs by the host country or local government. Respondents shared experiences where host governments and local military leaders gave the ultimatum to NGOs working, or wanting to gain access to the areas under their control. The ultimatum more often than not forced the NGO in question to pay for and use armed escorts provided by the national military or leave the territory all together. This condition could result from several factors and often depended on how strong the acceptance of the NGO is in the territory and governmental forces. If the agency had a strong relationship with local leaders or had been delivering aid in the same territory for a long time, the NGO in question could sometimes use advocacy as a tool to negotiate their humanitarian access with little or no armed escorts. The NGO could also choose to accept the armed escort if they were the only existing large-scale provider of aid in the community. In such areas, the NGO are likely to have worked on their acceptance for years and thus risk their reputation and security in accepting the terms of the host government. However, in places where there is no former presence of the NGO, NGOs have to choose between to stay and deliver with armed escorts or to stand their ground in the humanitarian principles and leave. In other cases, hotels or other forms of rental homes and offices provides armed escort as a part of the package. Where forced protection is rejected, the humanitarian space shrinks as NGOs no longer have access to people in need. On the other hand, ambitious NGOs have a tendency to accept the use of armed escort in order to gain much needed access. Respondents assured that the ambition of NGOs in being the first to plant their flag in new territory apparently goes hand in hand with the increased use of armed escorts. Here, ambition does not let the humanitarian principles stand in the way of high-profile aid assistance.

5.2.2. Indirect use and transferring risk

As a way of transferring risk, more and more NGOs are finding alternatives to using armed escorts and decreasing exposure to dangerous environments and contexts. Popular approaches such as remote management and remote programming are made possible by technological advances. Respondents gladly shared stories about their successful endeavours where remote programmes implemented did not just lessen the work-load on the NGOs, it decreased the necessity for NGO workers to travel to and from field locations.

There are other methods of transferring risk used by NGOs. By contracting suppliers to transport supplies, agencies are transferring the risk of safely getting the goods to where

they need to be. Meanwhile, NGOs are fully aware of that they may use armed escort to protect the goods they are transporting. This way NGOs do not have to waver their humanitarian principles in exchange for protection. However, armed convoys transferring supplies may still be attacked and looted for its content. According to respondents, some countries demand humanitarian agencies to provide documents stating that the shipment is for humanitarian aid and where its final destination is. Respondents went on to share concerns surrounding this indirect method of using armed escorts. Some were concerned about the blurred lines between the humanitarian principles and this indirect use of armed escort. As most NGOs refrain from using armed escort for anything else than life-saving emergences, they all use it indirectly. As one of the respondents stated "*And this supplier, we know fully well that they are using the armed convoy. Because it is no other way, if not they would die, or the truck would be looted. So, we are not using it, but we are sub-contracting other persons to do it for us. And this is not just us, this is everyone. Everyone!*" An example presented by respondents painted a clarifying picture for discussing the benefits versus the cost. The example explained that a highly trained armed escort delivered important commodities in a high-risk environment. In this case each of the armed personnel were paid 300 USD, which at the time of the example was a substantial amount of money. This begs to ask the question whether the benefit of having the commodities delivered outweigh the financial cost, as well as the cost it may have had on the humanitarian community?

What then is the responsibility for an INGO in terms of stay and deliver? The transferring of risk to suppliers or local NGOs who might use military convoys may often end in attacks due to the chosen armed escort, according to respondents. How do NGOs cope with transferring risk in terms of their ethical values? Do they stay and deliver and thus risk compromising their humanitarian principles, or do they stop providing aid to people in need to keep their principles intact? Or in other words, at what cost should one stay and deliver?

5.2.3. Motives, choice and justification in armed escort

This part will discuss and present the data concerning the thoughts behind choosing to use armed escort, the armed escort in itself and their own motives. The choice of using armed escort is often a decision made from a manager in the head office after a long-time consulting agency workers in the specific context in question. There are of course several things to consider before using the armed escort, but those brought up by the respondents were *necessity and context.* Agencies need to consider the situations where they require that level of protection. The NGO needs to consider the *necessity* of their work if they find it life-

critical and in need of life-saving protection. Furthermore, the NGO in question needs to concern itself about their armed escort provider depending on the *context* in which they operate. Issues like the affect on acceptance are quite obvious, but based on the context, the acceptance on the type of armed escort my vary as the armed escort may be a part of the conflict. There may also exist underlying motives driving the provider of armed escort. The financial motives were discussed in chapter 3.3.3., but respondents informed about the financial motives of the military leaders often pocket the larger share of the payment, leaving the bearer of arms risking their lives for less. This in turn, affects the level of trust NGOs have for their armed escort provider. Likewise, respondents mentioned that the armed escort may be intelligence gathering in the community they are operating in. By escorting NGOs to beneficiaries through territories, the escort provider may be able to gather information about the beneficiaries, the NGO workers as well as the communities in which NGOs work and other actors they may cooperate with. In situations where NGOs needs to cooperate with NSAGs, which according to respondents do occur, this issue is especially outstanding. This is also an example where the armed actor providing the escort is a part of the conflict.

Respondents further identified issues concerning the level of professionalism and training of the armed escort. In most cases the provider of the armed escort was provided from a private security company, but they could also be military actors, NSAGs, or provided by the UN. The issue lies in how safe an armed escort really is. Conflicting armed groups aside, the level of training and understanding of critical situations are what is needed in order for an armed escort to protect you in case of attack. Several of the respondents painted pictures of teenagers in jeans and flip-flops with AK-47's on the back of pick-up trucks providing armed escorts for humanitarian agencies. On the other side, there are also professional and highly trained actors with good weapons control and good weapon handling ability. In other words, there exist a significant gradation of armed actors.

As one respondent stated *"of course, you are only as safe as how quickly you can get out of it, the level of training and professionalism of the people who provide the armed escort. Often these people are not paid significant salaries, so are you going to put your life on the line for a few dollars a day?"* and *"But if these people haven't had that necessary level of training and it required a lot of practice, then can it be a worse situation."*

The attention a humanitarian convoy can get using armed escort may be riskier still. What was preferred by the respondents when they first had to use armed escort, was to negotiate their visibility. Having the armed escort driving a few meters in front of you could create a plausible deniability if the NGO convoy would be stopped.

The cultural context is also highly important to consider when choosing armed escort. As government break down it may create fractions in the social world polarising the local community into different social, political, religious and cultural groups. Having an NGO convoy moving across these different parts of an area requires different approaches to each social area.

An increase of crisis and attempted forced escort has effectively shrunk the humanitarian space over time. The process of deciding whether or not to use armed escort differ from agency to agency, but what is most valued in the decision is the extensive context analysis recommending the right way forward. With robust procedures and policies for people who are traveling set a standard for their security as well as their job. A few respondents were convinced that if an agency were to use an armed escort, they had failed in conducting a proper context analysis or failed in following its recommendations. Some even had experienced that no matter how through the analysis were and how meticulous they followed its recommendations, their leaders only focus was to carry through their work with no regard to the impact the use of armed escort might have.

5.2.4. Effects and perception

Social effects from the use of armed escort ranges from mistrust, increased risk and decreased acceptance, amongst others. Most often when a humanitarian aid agency work in environments where there exists a security threat, armed actors is somebody who the beneficiaries may not feel safe around. Respondents expounded that there often exits a level of mistrust between the beneficiaries and whoever is armed. Whether its national security forces or the police, if its armed position groups or paramilitary, government military and so on. All those who carry weapons are groups that beneficiaries do not feel safe around.

The effects of armed escort also reach to affect the humanitarian community as a whole. One agencies choice to use armed escort or similar deterrence measures may affect the perceived impartiality of the entire humanitarian community. If one uses armed escort, the entire NGO community uses armed escort. Several respondents informed that most beneficiaries do usually not know the difference between the different NGOs as they don't always understand the concept in itself. *"They get income distribution, they are happy. They don't care if it's NGO X or NGO Y. But then you start rolling around with an armed convoy, they are going to start thinking you are a government entity"*. So not only will the perception

change, it may very well be entirely confusing to the people NGOs attempt to assist. Not only will this very well enforce NGOs as aligned with the government

What is also under risk here, is NGOs perception of each other. We have already established that one humanitarian agencies' choice may affect the perception of the humanitarian community as a whole, but the internal perception may be equally as sensitive. Some respondents often stated that they do not, and would not, use armed escort outside the scope of critical and life-saving situations, but others had experienced a more relaxed approach to ambitious tendencies to use armed escort in order to achieve their goals and maintain the humanitarian space. In an arena already competing for funds and access, the additional perception of each others approach to armed escort may just fuel an internal mistrust within the humanitarian community. As one respondent stated in discussing the importance of understanding the context NGOs operate in before using armed escorts *"I just think that in 9 times out of 10, there is just a lack of understanding the context and I think that whenever I see somebody use armed escort, they really fall in my rank."*

5.3. Civil/military relationships

On the platform for discussions surrounding humanitarian security, the civil-military relationship is gaining more attention for debate throughout the humanitarian community. Throughout the interviews with the respondents, this was often mentioned although never really explained in depth. In analysing the data, it became evident that the civil-military relationship had been explained and discussed indirectly through examples and experiences. Most of these examples had been deemed classified or the respondents shared to give context but in reciting it in this thesis, it would cast light on who my respondents are, for which NGO they work for and where they reside. However, as the respondents deemed the topic important for future discussions, it will be included here.

As previously concluded, NGOs and military have a somewhat complicated relationship. Military forces may however assist in both a logistical capacity as well as a valuable source of information. Sometimes used to assist in crowd control, collaboration between military forces and aid agencies can be mutual beneficial. However, NGO protocols for logistics and safety differ substantially from that of the military. Respondents often described national forces as a brute force not seeing the necessity to share information with locals about their agenda and methods in assisting aid agencies. The NGO approach was on the other hand welcoming to the idea of sharing information with the crowd on the necessity

of following rules to avoid any physical altercation. Other respondents shared that it could at times be difficult to control the government soldiers. Soldiers could at times simply show up without being asked or to engage in crowd control or similar tasks without being instructed to do so. Respondents also shared that it has happened that national army had unintendedly shot and killed a beneficiary while doing crowd control. Incidents like these does not only create difficult for the NGO intentionally or unintentionally using armed military in their job but will consequentially alter the perception of themselves in the eyes of the beneficiaries.

Together with the perception of cooperation between NGOs and governments, the civil/military relationship has become increasingly indirect and secretive. NGOs are encouraged to not be seen with any form of military asset, either its international, national or UN military forces. The blurring lines in the relationship between NGOs and military has enhanced the target on the backs of NGOs.

"And I think it's' also touching our role as an organization as the blurring of the lines between the military and the humanitarians is very important. It happened that we be killed. We have been targeted by kidnappings or explosions or things like this, because of this blurring of the lines."

6. Protection in need of security

A this point in the thesis there is a general understanding that armed protection would not reduce risk in the field. Both theory and respondents has insinuated that “carrying arms will bring arms”, meaning that if one seems to use armed escorts or similar armed protective measures, other parties will do the same, thereby creating a circle of armed protection. This might however just be based on the several specific contexts where the NGO is present. One respondent made a little joke stating that “*I would rather run naked in the streets in Afghanistan than to not have a gun in some of the places we operate in Latin America*”. This exemplifies just how different the operational context might be in the humanitarian world. The cultural context and risk-habitat may not always fit the strict frame of the humanitarian principles. It may therefore be argued that in order to carry out humanitarian aid, the implementation and security measures should be based on the local culture and risk-habitat, not a westernized frame that attempts to find a universal solution for all humanitarian aid. As this calls for a discussion of the contextual suitability of the humanitarian principles, we must start by reviewing the findings in order to explore this issue further.

By reviewing the findings, the humanitarian principles are clearly acted on as suggestions for the humanitarian aid worker and not as the fundamental principles for all humanitarian action as it was intended. Independence, for example, states that all humanitarian action must be independent from politics, economic, military, and all other non-humanitarian action (What are Humanitarian Principles?, 2012). As we can interpret from the findings, this is not the case as several NGOs work closely with governments in host countries, which was proven time and time again during the interviews, exemplified in this statement from a respondent; “*The government influences a lot on our programs”.*

While NGOs may be neutral, they often have partners that are not. In revising data concerning transferring risk and who NGOs choose as their armed escorts, NGOs are including partners that are not only the opposite of being neutral but openly representing social and political groups in their territory. This is a clear contradiction for the neutrality principle for NGOs, but does that exclude the partners in which NGOs may cooperate with? Later in this chapter you will read that the chief of policy advice and planning section for OCHA states that they are willing to negotiate access with NSAGS and extremists to achieve their goal. This begs for a discussion to be held if the parties NGOs cooperate with should also be upheld to the same humanitarian and principal standards as the NGOs. Seeing this in relation to the earlier discussed outsourcing of transporting goods with heavy armed

protection, it would seem that NGOs has found a loophole in which all humanitarian principles can be thrown out the window.

As NGOs still uphold humanity (prevention of human suffering) and impartiality (humanitarian action must not make any distinction on the basis of sex, gender, religion, and so on) as a stronghold for all their work, their meaning is not always clear. Throughout the chapter representing the findings, the term *impartial* was often understood as being an impartial actor in the sense of being neutral and independent from taking political sides or conducting humanitarian action without any non-humanitarian objectives. However, potential parties where NGOs may negotiate with or be forced to cooperate with are still not upheld to the same principal standards. One respondent discussed the negative perceptions and possible dangers NGOs might experience when having to negotiate access with NSAGS such as ISIS;

"*But again, to work in an ISIS controlled area, you will probably need the authority and approval of ISIS to bring in armed escort. And of course, if they are not a part of ISIS, they are not gonna be allowed access to that community. So, I don't think, it goes back to that this will be the last choice we will ever have in a decision-making process. Unless it's a really bad emergency situation where we need to use somebody to get out the situation.* ***I: If an NGO would need access to an ISIS controlled area, and couldn't get access without armed escorts, would an NGO work with ISIS to get access into an ISIS controlled territory?*** *R: Potentially yes, but again then you have to factor in some of the points I mentioned earlier. What is it you are actually trying to do? Why would you need to have an armed escort in... You can say they are policing their own environment, so they wanted as means to keep you safe. But obviously at the same time they want to do it as means to keep an eye on you. To Make sure you are staying... People in ISIS for example, when you are wandering off talking to the local people without them overseeing it. They would be like shadowing you. But then it goes into informed consent as well. How comfortable would our staff feel, having an armed escort imposed upon them."*

There are several things important to note in this extract. First of all, having to use armed escort or to coordinate with NSAGS are defined strictly as a last resort or as a life-saving action. After concluding that it is indeed necessary, the respondent states that he/she then factors in the necessity of the mission by asking the question of why the NGO would be in such a dangerous territory in the first place. Secondly, is the point raised of "policing their environment" gives the NSAG in question a certain authority over the visiting NGO. As stated in the extract the respondent informed that the extremist groups likely would keep a watchful eye on NGO workers and who they came in contact with. As discussed in chapter

3.2. some NSAGS has their own justifications for viewing NGOs as an enemy in the basis of their different beliefs and ideas (Stoddard, et. al, 2017;16). If an 'enemy' NGO then would assist or aid a population that is already seen as an enemy of an NSAG, would that put beneficiaries and/or NGOs in additional risk simply because the NGO saw no other alternative than to use or work with an armed escort?

The attempt to adhere to the humanitarian principles may therefore be a smokescreen to gain acceptance from the local community and governmental office as well as promoting a well-intentioned rouse for donors. This was also confirmed by respondents as they stated that; *"this is one of the examples that humanitarian principles are something really nice to explain to people or to put on websites and talk to donors about and write proposals etc. But when it comes down to implementation of projects vs adherence to those principles, the principles will quickly take a back seat."* Here, the ambition of NGOs is again proven to be a force of reckoning where not only the humanitarian principles are compromised, but the security and image of NGOs are damaged as well. By ignoring all consideration of perceived impartiality of the NGO community as a whole, overly ambitious NGOs may cause more harm to their fellow humanitarians than good. The apparent separation between security practice and contextual dynamics found in the NGO security practitioners' mindset is outside the scope of academic scrutiny today but will need rethinking if the humanitarian world is to remain somewhat safe for those involved.

However, what was also mentioned is that the current discussion of humanitarian security does not really concern the effects of armed escorts, but rather the civil/military relations that exists within the global humanitarian community today. The fact that the current discussion does not pay much attention to the issue of armed escort is also supported by the lack of theoretical writing and discussion. The concerning inadequacy regarding such an important issue leads one to ask the question of why the discussion concerning armed escort is no longer worth a thorough debate in the humanitarian community? And what has changed for this to no longer be relevant? The relationship between humanitarian NGOs and military does in many ways overlap with humanitarian NGOs and their armed escort provider as they both are the relationships between an (apparently) politically and military independent and neutral NGO and an armed actor with their own motives and goals. Upon questioning the respondents regarding this issue, a respondent simply stated that *"…almost everybody is carrying a weapon. It's very much the standard thing to do."* Moving away from the clearly defined terms of operations, NGOs today are operating in a middle ground between NSAGs and official military and political operations, creating a unique niche of activity. The current

chief of policy advice and planning section for OCHA Aurlien Bufller declared that humanitarian NGOs "*negotiate with whoever gives us access*" when asked if OCHA ever coordinates with extremists (Webinar 'Coordinating access for humanitarian protection', 25 June 2020). As the humanitarian world today sees more and more fragmentations of social groups, it too raises the security threat and therefore arguably justifies the need for armed escorts. The increased risk environment also justifies collaborations with all parties available in case their services are needed, including the government or national authority. For instance, if an NGO would need to medically evacuate one of its international workers, it would require support from other actors, such as a national or international army. Traveling by air requires lending helicopters that may land in military facilities. Therefore, the discussion surrounding armed escort arguably should be holistic in terms of considering the relationship between NGOs and armed actors.

Throughout the findings, one can identity different approaches to security within the NGO sector; (1) withdrawal in the presence of possible danger, (2) hiring of private security companies and (3) achieving security and presence by following the humanitarian principles and practising acceptance. The two former approaches depend on the recognition of the state as the actor of security. In several of the countries in which NGOs operate in states are often weak or "diseased" as one respondent formulated it. A well-functioning government or national authority was also argued to be important in offering a stable environment for the NGO mission to work, as it creates a more secure environment. At times when the government is not working sufficiently enough, the NGO itself may substitute as a governing authority in territories where local or national government cannot reach or does not have a governing hold. Thus, following the logic of the Copenhagen school, NGOs are deemed fit to identify certain issues as a threat of security and thereby justifies the use of armed escort and potential violence. However, for an issue to be securitised through the speech act, it must be accepted by a relevant audience (Wæver, 1995). This raises a lot of questions regarding the self-conceptions of the NGO community. Who is then the relevant audience that must accept something as a threat of security? The possible choices range from local communities, beneficiaries, local governments, donors and the NGO community itself. As the security issue is then securitized by the NGO, the issue then concerns the NGO as they use armed escort to protect themselves upon traveling to though high-risk territories. Therefore, one might argue that the audience for NGOs are the NGOs themselves. In accepting the traditional form of security options which informs the logics of securitization, the NGOs must consider themselves as a form of a governing entity. As argued, there exists a larger vacuum of power

in areas ruled by conflict and governing fragility. It is in this vacuum where recognition no longer is relevant that NGO may strengthen is niche of activity between official political and military operations and NSAGS.

Following the claim of Ole Wæver (1995), when a state representative uses the speech act of security it allows for the state to use whatever moves necessary to overcome an issue. However, for an issue to be securitized, it must be accepted by a relevant audience as an issue of security. Once an issue is securitized, the politics concerning the issue will be transformed with images of enemies and threats (Avant, 2007;145). What differs a state and an NGO however, is the separation of the political “us” and “them”. As we have now seen several times, NGOs have created the humanitarian principles that required that they do not create political sides and deem them as “right” or “wrong” or as “us” and “them”. This apoliticism may then lead NGOs to conceive of security differently than states (Avant, 2007;146).
Even though NGOs rely on acceptance as one of their main security strategies, the respondents have proven that acceptance has become a second-hand strategy in times where armed escort is not needed or used. There is then a need to transform the language NGOs use to talk about security and the surrounding processes.

Upon involving former military as security managers, two security languages collide. On one side there is the humanitarian principles and acceptance, on the other there is a military security approach that risk disrupting the NGOs acceptance methods. The civil/military relations and culture clash are exemplified in several circumstances where military troops are set to secure environments in which NGO would operate. In Somalia during the early 1990’s, for example, a military approach to security rattled the acceptance approach by the NGOs operating in the area (Byman, 2010; Sieple, 1996). Instances where military forces involve themselves in the name of humanitarianism, humanitarianism itself seems to lack a voice over the deafening sound of military relief.

The fact that NGOs across the world are then hiring former military as security experts in their ranks, may not as bad as one would think. They may stem from a different security culture with different language and vie of the field, but they too can bring something new to the old ways of NGOs security. As the world is not as black and white as the humanitarian security triangle want it to seem, knowledge and experience of violence, force and staying calm in a storm might just be what NGO security needs.

7. A necessary evil?

The objective of this thesis has been to explore the humanitarian security measures and their effect on the role of the NGO, their impartiality and their safety and security. The chapter will commence with a brief summary of thesis, reviewing the choices made and findings conjured from the research. The chapter will then answer the research questions on the basis of the discussion previously had before closing with some last thoughts worth mentioning.

In order to study the diverse effects humanitarian security has, this thesis has explored the experiences and thoughts of humanitarian workers in the field. By opting for a qualitative research with semi-structured interviews, the research has allowed for the individual experiences of the respondents to demonstrate understanding and texture to a phenomenon that would otherwise be difficult to identify. The interview guide was developed from the theoretical discussion presented in chapter three, which portrayed an existing gap in literature surrounding use of armed escort within NGOs. Findings from the semi-structured interviews described in chapter four proved much of the theoretical discussion. Derived from the interviews were an interesting discussion surrounding the impact of the security measures used by NGOs.

The thesis has argued that the humanitarian security measures in fact affects the security and safety of the NGO. By using armed escorts, either by force or by their own choice, NGOs are in danger of being assimilated with a political power or even as a hostile entity fared by locals and beneficiaries in the territory in which they operate. This negative perception may only increase hostility and anger towards NGOs as a whole, as they are rarely seen as separate organizations with separate motives and practises. As discussed throughout the thesis, the fields where NGOs operate are diverse but the risk habitat is increasing nevertheless. As a result, more and more NGOs therefore opt to protect their own staff in order to carry out their missions with an increased armed protection strategy. Even if this there are practices in place to win the hearts and minds of the local population, such as acceptance, they often grow small in the shadow of armed convoys.

The role of NGOs can therefore be argued to be greatly affected by these security measures. First of all, the “non-governmental” part of the term is growing bleaker in it’s own meaning. The role of NGOs are, as seen, more and more in line with governmental entities. Not only as they often are forced to use governmental military forces as their protection, but as they often closely work with political actors. Secondly, at times where NGOs operate in places where the local authorities have no real power, the NGO may take that obligation upon themselves to ensure their own safety. This can be seen in Afghanistan, as discussed in chapter 3.2., where the NGOs role was to support the government. In turn, this has also impacted the conceived impartiality of the NGO community. In this thesis, the humanitarian principle “impartiality” and “independent” has been somewhat interchangeably used. Not only has the respondent understood the term impartial as independent, but they have also had the same meaning throughout this thesis. As such, the term impartial will continually be understood as impartial from all political, economic, military or any other form of non-humanitarian action. Findings from this research points to that NGOs are not completely separated from taking political sides. In fact, this research has found that NGOs more often than not needs to comply with a wide range of political, religious or ideological agendas in the name of humanitarianism. This is grounded in findings that has shown that NGOs will and have complied or negotiated with several actors such as NSAGS, national and territorial governments and local leaders.

At this point it is important to note that this research has found no evidence that any NGO has carried out humanitarian action with any distinction on the basis of sex, gender, nationality, race, class, religious beliefs or political opinions, as is the true meaning of the humanitarian principle impartiality.

In sum, NGOs can no longer be seen as an isolated actor in the international field but should be seen in coherence with military forces. The question that then resides is how to manage this unavoidable relationship. It is already established that western military forces often cry “humanitarianism” or “development” in the name of their military actions, as such there exist a linguistical improvement between military forces and the NGO community. This research shows great growing potential for the NGO community, but as both the international and national risk climate is ever evolving, so too should the NGO community. Acceptance is a great start, but one westernized blanket approach to every culture and every territory where NGOs operate is not feasible. It is important to adapt, in any situation, and it is important to develop in order to continue the important mission of delivering aid to those in need.

Lastly, in the INGO community there exist an imbalance of the security of international aid workers and national aid workers. Although this is indeed an important topic, it has fallen outside the scope of this thesis. However, as it has been briefly mentioned in chapter three and was a reoccurring theme throughout the interviews, I feel it is only right with some concluding remarks on this issue. Respondents shed light on the difference in the quality of the security given. One respondent shared an example *"If you go on a lot of organizations where we often have, especially for long runs or rural kind of runs, you will often find that internationals get two vehicles in case one breaks down. But nationals only get one, which you know, if you apply the principle you apply that to everybody."* Others informed of times national staff do not get an armed escort where international staff do. The imbalance of security seems to reach beyond the external field of political and cultural insecurities into the internal body of the humanitarian community.

In concluding remarks, I find it necessary to discuss the further research. Although this is a relatively small research of only 10 respondents, it is still an important research. There exists a gap in literature surrounding the implication of NGOs using armed escorts in the name of humanitarianism, just as there is a need of this discussion in the NGO community. Rather than considering NGOs as a less acknowledged actor in the field of IR, functioning independently, actors across the theoretical world of IR and across the global NGO community should see this as an opportunity to discuss the topic of the effects armed escorts may have one the NGO community openly. In doing this, the discussion may shed some light on the social, political and cultural layers humanitarian security must take into consideration. It will seek to function as a contribution to a much-needed debate, providing nuanced understandings, that will increase the awareness of the issues facing the world of NGOs. As it is a difficult road to navigate in terms of acceptance, protection and deterrence. Respondents made it clear that balancing the protection of the NGO staff, the perception and role of the NGO may seem like an impossible obstacle, but if the NGO staff cannot deliver aid to those in need, who is left to do so? The question that remains then, is if armed escort is in fact a necessary evil.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Background Information:

1. Date:
2. Occupation:
3. How many years have you worked as an NGO:
4. Location of current employment/location of employment prior to relocation due to the outbreak of Covid-19:

Armed Escorts

5. Do you use armed escort, or have you adopted any similar security measures?
    a. If yes,
        i. What security measures do you use?
6. Describe your relationship with the use of armed escorts.
7. Have you experienced any changes in the use of armed escorts over time?
    a. If yes,
        i. Please explain these changes.
8. In what way, if any, would you say the use of armed defines your role as an NGO worker?
9. In what way, if any, would you say the use of armed escorts has changed others* view of you as impartial?

Concluding questions

10. Do you have anything else you would like to add to this topic?
11. Do you have any questions for me?

(*) The use of the term "others" is open for interpretation for the interviewee.

Appendix 2: Attended webinar

Title:	**Organizer:**	**Date:**	**Location:**	**Speakers and Organizations:**	**Public:**
Coordinating Access for Humanitarian Protection	PHAP Cooperating in the event: NRC; and Global Protection Cluster	25 June 2020	Webinar online	**Anghard Laing,** Executive Director, PHAP. **Aurlien Buffler**, Chief of Policy Advice and Planning Section, OCHA **Marie-Emilie Dozin**, Protection Cluster Coordinator, Mali **Melody Knight**, Global Humanitarian Access Advisor, NRC **Ann Marie McKenzie**, Cluster Protection Coordinator, Libya **Sarah Vuilleumier**, Protection Advisor, WFP	Yes, but needed to create profile and ask for approval for attending

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