

The Complex Dynamics of Aid Beneficiaries Security in Insecure Humanitarian Environments: A 21st Century Imperative and Challenge for Humanitarian Organizations

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Abstract: The safety and security of aid beneficiaries is a contemporary humanitarian imperative and challenge. Humanitarian security risk management strategies have significantly evolved since the turn of the millennium, progressively focussing on aid beneficiaries' safety and security, particularly in insecure humanitarian contexts. The imperative to ensure aid beneficiaries access humanitarian assistance safely and in dignity, has witnessed substantial focus by humanitarian organizations on their safety and security in insecure environments. Insecure humanitarian contexts such as armed conflict and fragile post conflict, have particular security concerns for aid beneficiaries. Aid beneficiaries, particularly forcibly displaced persons such as refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), asylum seekers and others face multiple security challenges peculiar to their situations. To support and complement governments and *de facto* authorities in some contexts, fulfilling their security obligations and responsibilities, humanitarian organizations have progressively incorporated and implemented security risk management strategies that specifically address aid beneficiaries' security concerns to the extent possible. This is aimed at ensuring that humanitarian aid delivery supports humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence particularly in vulnerable security environments. This paper critically explores security risk management strategies implemented by humanitarian organizations for aid beneficiaries, with particular focus on forcibly displaced persons such as refugees and internally displaced persons, in insecure humanitarian environments. Further explored are key considerations for effective aid beneficiaries' security.

Keywords: Aid beneficiaries security, security management in humanitarian operations and Security risk management strategies for aid beneficiaries

1. Introduction

The turn of the millennium has witnessed significant deterioration of security in humanitarian operations particularly in insecure contexts. Humanitarian personnel, operations and aid beneficiaries have been victims of serious security incidents as direct and or collateral targets, in insecure humanitarian contexts [1, 2]. Insecure humanitarian contexts which in most cases are high-risk environments, are associated with any or a mix of, general insecurity, armed conflict, fragile post-conflict situations, weak or non-existent governance and security systems [3,4]. Insecure humanitarian contexts are also associated with widespread violence, international law and national law violations, human rights abuses, political instability or repression and civil infrastructure collapse [3, 4]. In these diverse scenarios of insecurity, aid beneficiaries, especially forcibly displaced persons

such as refugees, IDPs and others are particularly vulnerable and need the greatest protection, be it physical, legal, social, or economic. The safety of these vulnerable communities has become a significant security concern for many humanitarian organizations since the turn of the millennium. Ensuring safety and security of aid beneficiaries, who most of the time are in difficult situations, is crucial for effective humanitarian assistance. It is a 21st century humanitarian imperative and challenge.

States have the primary responsibility to provide security to everyone in their territories and jurisdictions regardless of status. In practice, some states fail to fulfil their security obligations to some communities, groups, or individuals for various reasons. States involved in active armed conflict and fragile post conflict states, particularly face some challenges providing security to humanitarian personnel, operations, and aid beneficiaries in some humanitarian contexts[5]. When states struggle to meet their security obligations, humanitarian organizations often step in to support the protection of both aid workers and beneficiaries from physical threats and harm and it's a collaborative approach. This collaboration is essential to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those in need, even in insecure environments.

Humanitarian organizations support and complement governments efforts by developing and implementing security risk management strategies that address the security concerns not only of their personnel and operations, but aid beneficiaries as well, in insecure contexts, to the extent possible. In this regard, aid beneficiaries' security has multiple and interdependent dimensions recognizing the role of humanitarian organizations over a range of interventions relevant to security in insecure humanitarian environments. By incorporating and implementing security risk management strategies that specifically address aid beneficiaries' security concerns, humanitarian organizations significantly contribute to ensuring that humanitarian action supports humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence[5,6]. The complexities of contemporary conflict caused humanitarian environments, with multiple, diverse and sometimes antagonistic stakeholders, complex humanitarian needs and plethora of security threats, make the whole approach of ensuring security of aid beneficiaries a significant challenge but a humanitarian imperative. Therefore, ensuring the security of aid beneficiaries in humanitarian operations is a complex yet essential requirement.

Security risk management strategies for humanitarian personnel and operations in insecure environments have significantly evolved and gained tract with humanitarian organizations since the turn of the millennium. However, there remains significant study gaps and analysis regarding the complex, multiple and interdependent dimensions of security risk management for aid beneficiaries in 21st century. The objective of this paper is to close this gap by examining contemporary security risk management strategies for aid beneficiaries such as refugees and IDPs in insecure environments. Security risk management strategies implemented by humanitarian organizations for aid beneficiaries in insecure humanitarian environments are critically explored and key considerations to improve their efficacy are expounded.

2. The Contemporary Security Context of Humanitarian Operations

The current millennium has witnessed a surge in humanitarian crises in many regions of the world, primarily due to political events such as armed conflict with record numbers of forced displacements requiring enormous humanitarian interventions and assistance[6]. Displacements inevitably lead to aid dependency by affected individuals and communities. To put it into perspective, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the estimated number of displaced people as of June 2024 was 122.6 million [7]. Forced displacements in the world, most of them by products of armed conflict, are mainly due to "persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order" (7 p.5). The displaced persons are often caught up in these conflicts, pay the highest price for any insecurity and bear most of the brunt. The security and protection of aid beneficiaries is primarily a state function. Where the state lacks capacity for various reasons humanitarian organizations come in to assist state authorities to the extent possible.

Humanitarian organizations have since the turn of the millennium progressively played their part in the safety and security of aid beneficiaries particularly in refugee and internally displaced persons humanitarian situations. In most cases, if not all, this is done with the concurrence of the authorities (*de jure or de facto*) as it compliments their security mandates to aid beneficiaries. In some humanitarian contexts, there is no functional state or the state lacks capacity, *de facto* authorities such as non-state armed actors usually fill the gap, and humanitarian organizations may be obliged to collaborate with the non-state entities.

Contemporary humanitarian operations in insecure environments are conducted in complex field environments characterized by one or more and a mix of the following [8].

- i. International armed conflict. That is, conflict between two or more sovereign states. Contemporary examples include Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Somalia, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Afghanistan. Most forced displacements are product of war. This context inevitably causes internal and or external displacements of people.
- ii. Internal armed conflict. That is, an environment where there is active internal fighting (including cross border) between the state and one or more internal armed groups (rebels/ insurgents). Civil war and rebellions are in this category. (e.g., Syria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, DRC, Yemen, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Iraq, Myanmar). This context causes displacements (internal or external)
- iii. Post- conflict. Countries that experienced international armed conflict and or internal armed conflict (civil war) and remain fragile. Typically, this was fighting between the state and another state (international) and or the state fighting one or more organized armed groups within the same country or with group/s based outside the country. In some countries it was organized non-state armed groups fighting each other within same country. Examples of post conflict include Iraq, Colombia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Libya, Central Africa Republic (CRA). This context creates both internal and external displacements. It also interferes with or disrupt humanitarian operations
- iv. Terrorism and fundamentalism (particularly religious) from internal and external groups targeting state actors/ governments, country security forces (including law and order entities) and civilians, causing substantial displacements and or disruption of delivery of humanitarian and development assistance (e.g., Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Mozambique, Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, Yemen, Somalia).
- v. Localized armed groups pursuing localized interests (tribal/ community/ militias/ vigilantes/ youths). The groups intermittently disrupt or interfere with humanitarian and development activities if their interests, or demands are not fulfilled by governments, humanitarian organizations or others. Typically, such groups are found in conflict and fragile post conflict countries with weak law and order systems and or experiencing general insecurity. (e.g., Yemen, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Somalia, CRA, Colombia, Libya, Mozambique).
- vi. Armed combatants or ex-combatants' presence in displaced persons camps (e.g., refugee or internally displaced persons camps) and in local communities. The armed combatants or ex-combatants' could be the *de facto* authorities in their localities. In some contexts, the armed combatants create parallel administrative structures, disrupt effective civilian administration of camps and settlements, and interfere with humanitarian operations. This is typically found in refugee and IDP situations. Examples include Uganda, South Sudan, Sudan, Central Africa Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo where refugee and IDP camps had at some stage significant presence of armed combatants or ex-combatants.
- vii. High crime levels with significant impact. For example, armed robberies, theft, kidnapping and abduction, vehicle hijacking, human trafficking, gender-based violence e.g., rape, cybercrime and extortion affecting local communities, displaced persons (refugees and IDPs) and other aid beneficiaries, humanitarian personnel and organizations. Organized and transnational criminal groups also pose significant threats to humanitarian operations in some contexts.
- viii. Civil unrest (demonstrations/protests/strikes) by citizens, displaced persons (refugees and IDPs), and host communities causing intermittent disruption of humanitarian services for a variety of reasons including non-fulfillment of certain expectations.

The contemporary humanitarian security environment has diverse and multitude of threats with serious implications on the safety and security of aid beneficiaries particularly forcibly displaced such as refugees, IDPs and others in difficult situations. While States have the primary responsibility to provide security to everyone in their territories, the reality on the ground in some insecure humanitarian contexts is that for various reasons, some states often fail to fulfill their state security obligations to citizens and vulnerable groups such as refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs who in most cases depend on aid [5]. This is most visible in conflict and fragile post conflict humanitarian environments with significant refugee and IDPs population such as Syria, South Sudan, Sudan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Chad, Iraq, Yemen and Eastern DRC among many other insecure environments [9].

In this complex humanitarian operational environment, some security responsibilities rest on humanitarian organizations compelling them to go the extra mile to ensure the safety and security of aid beneficiaries. Humanitarian organizations complement governments security efforts to the extent possible by developing and implementing security risk management strategies that contribute to the safety and security of aid beneficiaries in insecure environments. Some vulnerable communities such as refugee and IDPs whether in camps or resettlements have particularly benefited from humanitarian organizations support, complementing governments to ensure their safety and security[5,6]. Complementing state and or even non-state actors in their security responsibilities in insecure humanitarian environments involve navigating complex processes with multiple stake holders.

3. The Complexities of Aid Beneficiaries Safety and Security in Insecure Humanitarian Environments

Ensuring the safety and security of aid beneficiaries such as refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in insecure humanitarian environments is a complex exercise involving multiple stake holders. The key challenges to be navigated include [10, 11,12, 13,14]

1. **Diverse Stakeholders:** The protection of aid beneficiaries such as refugees and IDPs though primarily a state responsibility involves a wide range of stakeholders, including international organizations (e.g., UNICEF, WFP UNHCR, IOM), local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups and aid beneficiaries themselves. Coordinating efforts among these diverse actors can be difficult due to differing mandates, priorities, and resources compromising the security of aid beneficiaries. Governments and non-state armed groups may have prescriptive processes on how aid beneficiaries' security should be approached which might potentially compromise humanitarian principles.
2. **Legal and Policy Frameworks:** Legal frameworks for aid beneficiaries such as refugees and IDPs are governed by different legal frameworks. Refugees are protected under international law, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, while IDPs rely on national laws and policies, which can vary significantly. This creates challenges in ensuring consistent security support to the authorities between refugees and IDPs. This is significant in that sometimes there appears to be systematic support to state actors in the maintenance of law and order in refugee camps than in IDPs camps because of mandate issues. For example, UNHCR is seen playing more active and assertive role in refugee situations than IDP situations because of its mandate on refugees.
3. **Security Threats:** There are diverse threats against aid beneficiaries to be addressed and they vary from context to context. Most forced displacements in the world are a product of armed conflict. Refugee and IDP camps and settlements are often located in conflict zones or areas with high levels of violence. Armed groups may infiltrate refugee and IDP camps and settlements posing additional threats to both aid beneficiaries and aid workers. In many conflict-affected areas, humanitarian access is often restricted due to security concerns, political barriers, or logistical challenges. This hampers the delivery of aid and protection services to those in need. Security threats aid beneficiaries such as refugees and IDPs face in conflict zones require multifaceted

approach to deal with them. Ensuring the security of refugees and IDPs in volatile humanitarian environments requires robust collaborative approach to security risk management. This may be a significant challenge in some humanitarian contexts.

4. **Resource Constraints:** Humanitarian organizations often face funding shortages, limiting their ability to provide adequate protection and assistance. This is compounded by the increasing number of displaced persons globally, which strains available resources. Lack of or limited resources limit humanitarian organizations capacity to support governments to enhance the security of aid beneficiaries.

5. **Complex Needs:** Aid beneficiaries have complex vulnerabilities and needs. For example, refugees and IDPs have diverse and complex needs, including physical safety, mental health support, education, and livelihood opportunities. Their vulnerabilities to insecurity are also complex peculiar to their situations. Addressing these needs requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach.

6. **Community Tensions:** Tensions can arise between displaced populations and host communities over resources, employment, and cultural differences. Managing these tensions and promoting social cohesion is essential for maintaining security in humanitarian operations in insecure environments. Building sustainable relationships between different communities in refugee and IDP situations may represent a significant challenge particularly in humanitarian contexts with diverse and contesting actors.

7. **Long-term Solutions:** Finding durable solutions for aid beneficiaries generally and refugees and IDPs in particular, such as voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement, is a long-term process that requires sustained effort and cooperation among multiple actors. Finding durable solutions for refugees and IDPs remains problematic in diverse humanitarian operations over a variety of reasons exacerbating insecurity for some groups such as minorities and people with special needs.

These challenges illustrate the multifaceted nature of ensuring the safety and security of refugees and IDPs, highlighting the need for coordinated and collaborative efforts.

4. Aid Beneficiaries Security Threats

The safety and security of aid beneficiaries in insecure humanitarian settings is a critical concern due to the inherently dangerous nature of delivering aid in conflict and crisis zones. Aid beneficiaries particularly vulnerable groups such as refugees, IDPs, asylum seekers and others, often face diverse and complex security threats which can significantly impact their safety and well-being. The range of security threats come from diversity of state and non-state actors, criminals, humanitarian personnel, peacekeeping entities, and others. State actors include government authorities at various levels, undisciplined military forces, Police, and other state security forces [15]. Non state actors include anti-government armed and non-armed groups (militias, insurgents, militants, rebels, vigilantes, interest groups). Threats also come from organized crime including cyber, local population (e.g., host community) and aid beneficiaries themselves [15]. Security threats have sometimes come from UN and regional peacekeeping operations. UN peacekeeping operations in DRC, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Central Africa Republic, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, East Timor, Haiti, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan were at some time accused of sexual exploitation and abuse of local communities [16, 17]. Some of the threats aid beneficiaries face are from natural disasters e.g., flooding, cyclone, fire.

Some of the documented security threats against aid beneficiaries in insecure environments particularly high-risk humanitarian contexts are in following categories[9, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21]

1. **Armed conflict threats:** Aid beneficiaries, especially in conflict zones, are at risk of physical violence and attacks. These include armed attacks, bombing, ambush, forced displacements, unlawful killing and other unlawful acts, physical violence against individuals, groups, or communities. Attack and destruction of civilian infrastructure such as houses, schools, churches, hospitals, stores. Improvised explosive devices (IED) attacks, direct and indirect fire, crossfire, landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO) and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) are common threats in conflict zones. Forced recruitment and association of children with armed forces

and groups, including women and children are also common in conflict zones. In armed conflict situations, access denial threats such as restrictions on humanitarian activities and movements, preventing aid from reaching those in need including interference with aid operations, partiality and discrimination against some aid beneficiaries are common and have been well documented.

2. **Crime threats:** Criminal acts against aid beneficiaries are common in all contexts of humanitarian operations and elevated in high-risk environments such as conflict and fragile post conflict settings. Forcibly displaced persons such as refugees and IDPs are particularly vulnerable to crime in their situations especially where there is weak law and order maintenance. Crime related threats include kidnapping, abduction, hostage taking, extortion, human trafficking, theft, robbery, gang violence, banditry, smuggling and disappearance. Looting and theft of aid supplies depriving aid beneficiaries of essential aid create additional security challenges. Presence of combatants, ex-combatants and other armed elements among aid beneficiaries in refugee and IDPs camps and settlements to obtain assets and gain access to infrastructure routinely destabilizes refugees and IDPs.

3. **Terrorism threats:** Terrorism threats common in some humanitarian environments include religious and other ideological persecution, humanitarian access denial and or restrictions, disruption of supply chains, direct and indirect attacks, targeted improvised explosive devices attack, kidnapping, Looting and theft of aid. Forced recruitment and association of children with armed forces and groups, including women and children. Psychological and emotional abuse and inflicted distress.

4. **Civil unrest threats:** Demonstrations, protests, and group disturbances against a range of grievances. Tension and conflict between aid beneficiaries such as refugees and IDPs and local communities or between aid beneficiaries themselves. Group conflicts, which include rival aid beneficiaries groups violence and or criminal gang violence.

5. **Gender Based violence threats:** Especially violence against women and girls, which includes, sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, harmful traditional practices, child marriage, rape, domestic violence, verbal, and physical harassment. psychological and emotional abuse and inflicted distress.

6. **Cybersecurity, disinformation and misinformation threats:** Aid delivery has become more digital, and aid beneficiaries' data is increasingly vulnerable to cyberattacks. Personal data can be compromised and used for criminal purposes, aid distribution can be disrupted, interfered with or manipulated. For example, diversion of aid to undeserving beneficiaries undermining humanitarian principles and trust in humanitarian organizations. Disinformation and misinformation threats include false information which can spread rapidly, leading to confusion, mistrust, and even violence. This can hinder aid efforts and put aid beneficiaries at risk.

7. **Health and hazardous threats:** Inadequate security can lead to health risks, including the spread of diseases in overcrowded or unsanitary conditions. Continuous exposure to violence and insecurity can also cause significant psychological stress and trauma. Hazardous threats include natural disasters (flooding, cyclone, tsunami), road traffic accidents, air accidents, and fire accidents

8. **Bureaucratic, Political and Legal threats.** Negotiating administrative hurdles is complex and time consuming in some humanitarian operations. Bureaucratic threats include abuse of power, corruption, exploitation, and harassment by diverse state and non-state actors against vulnerable groups such as refugees and IDPs. Political and legal threats include operational restrictions, detention, arbitrary arrests, expulsion and refoulement. Impediments and restrictions to access legal documentation, including civil documentation (legal identity) are common in some humanitarian contexts.

The threats above demonstrate the diversity of the threats some aid beneficiaries are confronted with helping to understand the complex nature of the humanitarian operational environments. The threats are not homogenous and differ from one humanitarian context to another. Despite the security threats and other security challenges humanitarian organizations continue to find ways to assist aid beneficiaries in highly insecure environments through a mix of security risk management strategies.

5. Principle of No Harm

Humanitarian organizations have cardinal responsibilities to ensure that the imperative of 'do no harm' is rooted in their mandates. The 'do no harm' principle requires that humanitarian organizations take all necessary action and measures to protect populations they assist from any adverse effects of their actions[22]. From a humanitarian security management perspective, humanitarian service delivery and all activities associated with humanitarian action must not be a source of harm and or insecurity to aid beneficiaries. In this regard, humanitarian security management strategies must ensure that aid beneficiaries access aid safely and in dignity, to uphold the principle of 'do no harm'. The principle is applied through implementing security risk management strategies that specifically address security concerns of aid beneficiaries to the extent possible in insecure humanitarian environments.

6. Humanitarian Security Management Framework

Humanitarian security management framework significantly evolved on turn of 21st century. The surge in violence against aid workers and humanitarian work in general, on the background of increased humanitarian crises, primarily due to armed conflict, progressively advanced humanitarian security management to address security risks in the environment [5, 6, 8, 23]. The advancement of humanitarian security management framework led to the development and implementation of systematic humanitarian security risk management strategies to lower security risks in order to meaningfully operate in insecure humanitarian environments[23,24]. Humanitarian security risk management has significantly contributed to a safe humanitarian operational environment for both aid workers and aid beneficiaries [[5, 6, 8].

Humanitarian security risk management determines how inherent risks in the humanitarian operating environment should be addressed. It allows humanitarian organizations to fulfill their mandates and achieving their stated objectives while at the same time ensuring the protection of their staff from harm [5 6, 8]. Safe access to communities in need of humanitarian assistance is a critical part of humanitarian security risk management. According to GISF[25], "humanitarian security risk management allows greater access to and impact for crisis affected populations through the protection of aid workers, programs, and organizations". For Umbrelia [26], "humanitarian security risk management is intended to ensure physical and mental condition, as well as reputation, personnel, material and status of organizations during humanitarian operations". This is achieved through adopting and implementing security risk management strategies that address security threats and risks in particular contexts and environments.

Humanitarian security management focuses on protecting aid workers and humanitarian operations, ensuring access to and safety for affected populations in need of assistance. It involves implementing essential security risk management policies, procedures, processes, practices, and measures to address security threats in the operational environment [5, 6, 8]. Humanitarian security management arguably is concerned with the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, enabling them to conduct operations in safe and secure environments and ensuring that aid beneficiaries can access and receive aid without harm[5, 6, 8]. The security of personnel, operations, and aid beneficiaries is crucial, as any risks to these groups can disrupt the delivery of humanitarian assistance and compromise humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. In this regard, humanitarian security management centres on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel during their work and daily lives. It enhances the ability to access the community in need and deliver humanitarian assistance with no hindrance. It is also concerned with the security of aid beneficiaries to receive aid without being harmed.

7. Humanitarian Security Management for Aid Beneficiaries

The safety and security of humanitarian personnel and operations has been the classical main focus of humanitarian security management since the turn of the millennium. This was on the background of increased

incidents of insecurity against aid workers particularly in some high- risk humanitarian environments, requiring systematic security risk management strategies [1, 2]. Since the turn of the millennium, humanitarian security management has evolved to proactively address security threats and risks affecting aid beneficiaries, both directly and indirectly, in insecure humanitarian contexts. This process involved applying similar security management strategies used for aid workers to the aid beneficiaries themselves. This is particularly so in insecure humanitarian contexts such as high-risk environments with refugee and IDP population. High risk humanitarian contexts include Syria, Gaza, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, Northern Nigeria, Yemen, parts of northern Kenya bordering Somalia, Myanmar, and Haiti among many others[5, 6, 8, 27]. To address the diverse threats and risks affecting aid beneficiaries' humanitarian organizations have progressively incorporated security risk management strategies that address aid beneficiaries' security to the extent possible.

Security risk management strategies of humanitarian organizations must be able to complement states' efforts, where there is a deficit, to the extent possible, to ensure the safety and security of aid beneficiaries. Complimenting government efforts in the security of humanitarian operations and personnel is fairly straight forward and has been the focus of humanitarian security risk management since the turn of the millennium[18, 19]. But complimenting states efforts in respect of aid beneficiaries' security is a complex, costly endeavour, and sometimes contentious and must be delicately navigated. To what extent this can be done varies from context to context depending on many factors which include actors involved, the resources available to assist government efforts and humanitarian organizations mandate. In some humanitarian contexts, assisting *de facto* authorities is not possible as the authorities may be non-state armed groups not recognized by any international laws. Some such groups may be subject to anti-terrorism laws of some donor nations making it difficult to support or assist them which could lead to no funding[28, 29]. Therefore, aid beneficiaries' security, a primary role of governments, is an area humanitarian organizations have to delicately navigate to safeguard the rights and dignity of aid beneficiaries.

8. Security Strategies in Humanitarian Operations

Addressing security risks in the humanitarian operational environment entails protecting both aid workers and aid beneficiaries from harm. Classically, security strategies to manage risks by humanitarian NGOs and other independent organizations (e.g., ICRC) in insecure humanitarian environments can generally be classified under Acceptance, Protection, and Deterrence strategies (30, 31). They combine to form an overall organization security strategy [18]. The strategies have significantly evolved and remain highly relevant for ensuring the safety of aid beneficiaries and humanitarian workers in insecure humanitarian contexts. Other strategies such as risk avoidance, risk transfer and others have also evolved in some humanitarian contexts [5,6,8] The UN system now typically follows the UN Security Risk Management (SRM) approach to manage security risks for staff and operations since 2004 [32]. Humanitarian security management strategies are intricately linked with the security of aid beneficiaries. The critical connection is that the security strategies aim to create a safe operational humanitarian environment which does no harm to anyone. Vulnerable communities such as refugees, IDPs and others in difficult situations must be particularly protected.

Humanitarian security management and the consequent security risk management strategies classically and primarily focussed on security of humanitarian personnel and operations. Since the turn of the millennium, aid beneficiaries' security concerns in insecure contexts have also significantly evolved. This is on the background of many crises with record number of forcibly displaced persons, with significant numbers ending up being refugees and internally displaced persons, entirely dependent on aid [7]. Progressively, humanitarian organizations developed and implemented specific security risk management strategies for aid beneficiaries to the extent possible. This process involved applying similar security management strategies or some aspects, used for aid workers to the aid beneficiaries themselves. The security risk management strategies have been regularly

reviewed to consider evolving situations and context specific considerations and the extent to which they can be provided to aid beneficiaries[33].

9. Security Risk Management Strategies for Aid Beneficiaries

Security risk management strategies which have classically been for aid workers have progressively evolved to specifically apply to aid beneficiaries particularly in refugees and IDPs humanitarian environments. The classical security strategies of Acceptance, Protection, and Deterrence in insecure humanitarian environments and the UN Security Risk Management (SRM) approach have evolved to significantly contribute to aid beneficiaries' security. This has been achieved by applying similar security strategies or some aspects, used for aid workers to the beneficiaries themselves, in insecure humanitarian contexts. In this respect, the security risk management strategies are tailored to suit the specific security concerns of aid beneficiaries such as refugees and IDPs.

Security risk management strategies for aid beneficiaries are diverse and context specific. They are done consciously and unconsciously by humanitarian organizations. Many factors determine the level of support to governments including funding capacities and nature of programs to support aid beneficiaries' security. The following security risk management strategies are applied in some insecure humanitarian contexts to ensure the safety and security of aid beneficiaries.

10. Acceptance Security Risk Management Strategies

Humanitarian acceptance security risk management strategies have been classically for aid workers and humanitarian operations, though some aspects benefited aid beneficiaries as well. Acceptance security risk management strategies have evolved to be a significant contributor to the safety of aid beneficiaries in insecure environments through applying similar acceptance strategies used for aid workers to the aid beneficiaries themselves. This is particularly so in humanitarian contexts with refugees and IDPs.

Acceptance strategies are about developing, engaging in and building sustainable relationships with the diverse actors in a particular geographical location, environment or context [30,31]. This leads to acceptance by the local actors enabling humanitarian activities to proceed safely. The actors could be state, non-state including non-state armed actors, conflict parties, local communities, influential groups, or individuals (e.g., religious leaders and traditional leaders) and aid beneficiaries. Also included are other humanitarian actors in same environment. Other acceptance security risk management strategies include implementing participatory programming approaches, acceptable accessibility and visibility, and presence in area of operation, community engagements and accountability to beneficiary communities[18, 31, 34, 35,]. Regular community feedback forums, attending to beneficiary community complaints, progressive employment opportunities for locals including promotion of diversity, inclusion, and equity, addressing the quantity and quality of aid and effective communication are also acceptance security risk management strategies[34, 35, 36.] Acceptance strategies also enhance humanitarian organizations accessibility to aid beneficiaries and their ability to provide aid safely.

The humanitarian acceptance security strategies are inextricably linked with the security of aid beneficiaries. The critical connection is that acceptance security strategies aim to create a positive and sustainable humanitarian operating environment which does no harm to anyone. Particularly so to vulnerable groups such as refugees, IDPs and other aid beneficiaries. The strategies focus on building trust and good relationships with everyone including local communities, diverse stakeholders, and authorities. By fostering mutual understanding and respect, these strategies help ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers and the people they serve, aid beneficiaries.

Acceptance strategies help create a safer and more effective operating environment. Acceptance strategies must address some of the diverse threats and risks aid beneficiaries face in their daily lives. For example,

acceptance strategies such as building sustainable relationships between communities' address threats associated with community conflicts, crime and civil unrest, which could lead to demonstrations, protests, tension, confrontations and clashes between refugees/IDPs and hosting local communities or between refugees or IDPs themselves. In refugee and IDP operations, humanitarian organizations spend significant resources, time and effort building sustainable relationships between local communities and refugee or IDPs to avoid conflict[15, 35, 36].The community engagement and relationship building strategies lead to a harmonious environment contributing to a safer environment and security of all.

Acceptance security strategies aim to build positive and sustainable humanitarian environment for both aid workers and aid beneficiaries and this goes hand in hand with advocacy at all levels. For example, humanitarian organizations play significant roles at various fora advocating for governments and other actors (e.g., donor community) to address security concerns of vulnerable populations such as refugees and IDPs from crime related threats. Crime related threats include, kidnapping, abduction, hostage taking, gender-based violence, extortion, human trafficking, theft, robbery, gang violence, banditry, smuggling and disappearance[15]. Looting and theft of aid supplies deprive beneficiaries of essential resources creating additional security challenges[15]. Acceptance strategies help to address some of these threats by progressively involving community participation in their safety and security through participatory approaches and relationships building.

The acceptance risk management strategies are crucial for ensuring the safety and effectiveness of humanitarian activities. By implementing acceptance strategies, humanitarian organizations build strong, positive relationships with diverse actors including aid beneficiaries, ensuring that their activities are accepted and can proceed safely. By fostering positive relationships and trust, humanitarian organizations reduce hostility towards aid beneficiaries, some of them living in local communities, refugee or IDP camps or settlements. Acceptance security risk management strategies aim to build trust and conducive security environment enabling aid beneficiaries to be assisted safely and in dignity. By fostering sustainable relationships with a wide range of local actors, including state and non-state entities, conflict parties, and community leaders, humanitarian organizations gain the acceptance needed to operate safely. A safe operational environment is beneficial to all, be it local communities, aid beneficiaries, humanitarian personnel, and operations.

In some humanitarian contexts, governments sometimes prioritize national security interests and see aid beneficiaries such as refugees and internally displaced persons as security threats leading to arbitrary decisions against them leading to further marginalization of these communities[15]. Acceptance security strategies partly address some of such perceptions and misconceptions at the various levels of government authorities by demonstrating that refugees and internally displaced persons can leave peacefully with other community members and are not a security threat. Establishing and maintaining trust with all stakeholders through consistent and respectful interaction can mitigate local conflicts. Arguably, acceptance risk management strategies assist to build trust, ensuring that aid beneficiaries are not particularly targeted for attacks and that aid provided meets their needs respectfully.

UN agencies, humanitarian NGOs, and other independent humanitarian organizations (e.g., ICRC, Red Cross,) actively implement acceptance risk management strategies in their operations. However, the scope differs from organization to organization according to the mandate, funding, size, complexity of operational area and risk toleration, among other considerations. UN humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR, WFP, IOM UNICEF, WHO and their partners and humanitarian NGOs engage with governments at various levels building acceptance for both their operations and aid beneficiaries[5,6,8] These deliberate engagements with governments at various levels and importantly at the local level, build acceptance which ensures safe and secure humanitarian operations and access to affected communities. By advocating for better safety and security for aid beneficiaries, such as forcibly displaced persons (e.g., refugee, IDPs) and local communities, humanitarian agencies are promoting effective security measures for the aid beneficiaries[5,6,8]. The acceptance of

humanitarian operations at various levels with state authorities is critical to the security of aid beneficiaries. This leads to less operational restrictions and other bureaucratic impediments. Significantly, this can reduce arbitrary decisions such as unfair detention, arbitrary arrests, expulsion and refoulement by authorities against vulnerable aid beneficiaries such as refugees and IDPs.

Acceptance strategies promote and allows for peaceful coexistence between aid beneficiaries and other community members. This is particularly so in refugee and IDP situations where refugees, IDPs and local community live side by side and often sharing same resources for example, water, agricultural, grazing land, and wildlife. These resources have been significant sources of conflict in some humanitarian contexts. Conflicts over natural resources between refugees, IDPs and local communities are common in various parts of the world. For example, Lake Chad basin, a region around Lake Chad, which includes parts of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, has seen significant conflict over dwindling water resources[37]. Intensifying competition for water, fish, and agricultural land, leading to clashes between local communities and refugees[37]. In South Sudan, competition over scarce resources like water and grazing land has led to conflicts between local communities and internally displaced persons (IDPs)[38]. The situation is exacerbated by climate change, which has made resources even scarcer [38]. In Mozambique, the impact of Cyclone Idai in 2019 displaced many people, leading to increased competition for resources such as land and water in the areas where IDPs sought refuge. This sometimes resulted in tensions and conflicts with local communities [39]. Acceptance strategies promote harmonious relationships between diverse communities contributing to the security of everyone in a given context. Aid beneficiaries such as refugees and IDPs inclusion and acceptance in the communities where they live is a contributor to their security.

Acceptance security strategies are about building relationship with everyone including non-state armed groups and all parties to the conflict. Engaging with non-state armed groups is critical for the safety of aid beneficiaries in some humanitarian contexts. Engagement with non- state armed actors by humanitarian organizations including UN agencies, though, can cause serious problems with some states who fear that such engagements can enhance legitimacy of the armed non-state actors[6,8]. The reality in some humanitarian environments is that non-state armed actors are significant players in some conflicts. They are not only in control of territories, but they even carry out quasi-state functions in those territories and have the power to block or facilitate humanitarian operations. For example, non- state armed groups in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine (Donbas region), Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Niger, Mali, Myanmar, and Afghanistan before Taliban takeover in August 2021[5, 9,40]. The non-state armed groups in these countries, had or have significant control of some territories thereby allowing them to conduct quasi government functions. To ensure the safety and security of aid beneficiaries in territories under non state actors' control, it becomes prudent to engage them and gain acceptance, otherwise no aid will be delivered.

The U.N. openly supports engaging with both state and non-state actor groups to ensure the protection of civilians, promotion of human rights, facilitating humanitarian assistance and conflict management [41]. Peacekeeping operations are particularly on the forefront of this. For example, UN peacekeeping missions in Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mali (MINUSMA), the DRC (MONUSCO), and Afghanistan (UNAMA) engaged with non-state armed groups to protect civilians and facilitating humanitarian assistance [41]. The UN Security Council Resolution 1621 adopted in 2005, acknowledged the need for dialogue with nonstate armed actors to protect children in conflict. Security council Resolution 1888 adopted in 2009, underscored the need for dialogue with nonstate armed groups to combat sexual violence in conflict. In 2006, the U.N.'s Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) issued guidelines and a manual on humanitarian negotiations with nonstate armed groups. Independent humanitarian organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), have a longstanding tradition of engaging with all parties involved in armed conflicts, including non-state armed groups. This engagement is essential for ensuring that aid can be delivered safely to those in need and that beneficiaries can access services without risk [42, 43].

Fostering acceptance can help build community support and reduce some of the risks aid beneficiaries face. However, acceptance strategies obviously do not mitigate all the diverse threats and risks faced by aid beneficiaries in insecure humanitarian environments. Acceptance strategies in some insecure humanitarian contexts have limitations particularly when dealing with targeted criminal violence, fundamentalism, and terrorism which are common in some humanitarian contexts. Terrorism threats such as religious persecution, humanitarian access denial and or restrictions, disruption of supply chains, direct and indirect attacks, targeted explosive devices attacks, kidnapping, looting and theft of aid and forced recruitments including women and children, are common in some insecure humanitarian environments. Populations such as refugees and IDPs, majority who are products of armed conflict, are particularly impacted by such threats. For example, in some high-risk contexts, such as Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Mozambique, Nigeria and Burkina Faso, some armed religious fundamentalist groups have been disruptive to humanitarian operations unfairly prejudicing aid beneficiaries from accessing aid [6, 8]. Gaining acceptance in these contexts to ensure the safety of aid beneficiaries may compromise the practical application of the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence as the non-state armed groups may not subscribe to these principles. Significantly, in conflict zones some non-state armed groups may not view humanitarian work as neutral and impartial. The armed groups such as the Islamic State and associates in Iraq and Syria, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, Islamic State and Al Qaeda and their affiliates in Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Mali, Mozambique, Burkina Faso and Boko Haram in Nigeria, did not (still some do not) view humanitarian work as being neutral and impartial [20, 36, 44, 45, 46]. Building acceptance to ensure aid beneficiaries security in such environment is complex and requires substantial effort, commitment, and staff time to build. For example, in Somalia, Al-Shabaab's control over large parts of Somalia has necessitated careful negotiation and coordination by humanitarian organizations [47]. The ICRC, for example, has engaged in dialogue with Al-Shabaab to secure access to vulnerable populations and deliver essential service [47]. During the Syrian civil war, humanitarian organizations had to negotiate with multiple armed groups to deliver aid [48]. In Yemen, humanitarian agencies have navigated complex negotiations with both Houthi rebels and government forces to provide aid [49].

It is critical for humanitarian acceptance strategies for aid beneficiaries to consider all the contextual factors. Ensuring acceptance strategies for aid beneficiaries are relevant to their security requirements is a complex exercise as aid beneficiaries' security has multiple and interdependent dimensions. Particular focus should be on principled humanitarian action which includes practical application of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, transparency and accountability, [18, 33, 36,]. The reality on the ground requires that acceptance be complemented by other strategies, for example, protection, deterrence, and other security approaches.

11. Protection Security Risk Management Strategies

Humanitarian protection security risk management strategies like acceptance strategies, have been classically for aid workers and humanitarian operations. They have evolved to be a significant contributor to the safety of aid beneficiaries in insecure environments through applying similar security strategies used for aid workers to aid beneficiaries. Protection security risk management strategies are aimed reducing exposure or vulnerability to current and conceivable threats through physical measures such as secure facilities, guards, and barriers [31, 33]. Protection strategy is defined as "the use of protective procedures, physical structures, materials and devices as part of a security management strategy in order to reduce vulnerability to existing threats" (13. p. xv). A protection strategy is aimed at hardening the target and has no concern to the threat itself, and therefore it is effective to mitigate impacts of targeted attacks and to prevent opportunistic crimes [18, 31]. Protection approaches are often exemplified in environments with armed conflict, high rates of crime and terrorism.

Typically, security risk management strategies under the protection strategy include building facilities for physical security protection, use of armed or unarmed guards, use of armoured vehicles, building bunkers/safe

rooms, blast resistance structures and devices, emergency systems, lighting and visibility and security training, among others [18, 31, 33]. Humanitarian organizations including UN agencies widely use protection strategies in their operations in different environments, making substantial investments in physical security of compounds. Examples include use of security guards (armed or unarmed), reinforced walls and fencing, closed circuit television(CCTV), blast resistant devices, lighting, emergency alert and response systems. [18, 31, 33]. These measures aim to reduce the impact of incidents in high-risk environments with armed conflict, crime, and terrorism, thereby minimizing risks to aid workers and aid beneficiaries. The strategy is to mitigate against attacks and intrusions minimizing risks to aid workers. Similar protection strategies have been applied and immensely contributed to the security of aid beneficiaries in some high-risk humanitarian environments. Effective protection security risk management strategies are crucial for ensuring the safety of both aid beneficiaries and humanitarian workers in insecure environments[8,18, 31, 23].

Protection strategies are based on sound security risk assessments helping humanitarian organizations to identify the threats in their environment and their vulnerability to these threats leading to the implementation of context specific protection security measures. Ensuring the physical security of aid beneficiaries such as refugees, internally displaced persons and others in similar difficult situations, in insecure environments is a humanitarian imperative. In this regard, protection security strategies must ensure aid beneficiaries physical security and protection in all contexts of humanitarian operations[18, 31, 23]. The following are some key protection security risk management strategies implemented by humanitarian organizations particularly in humanitarian environments with refugees and internally displaced persons.

Collaboration: Effective protection security risk management strategies for aid beneficiaries such as refugees and IDPs require state and non-state actors' collaboration for humanitarian success. Security risk management strategies, regardless of their design and intent, are effective only in environments where governments, actively support humanitarian operations by meeting all basic security requirements of a functioning state. Active engagement and collaboration between governments and humanitarian organizations on safety and security at all levels are crucial for the safety of aid beneficiaries. Such collaboration includes sharing security information, mapping security threats for aid beneficiaries, deployment of sufficient law and order security forces, provision of resources supporting law enforcement among others. Collaboration with governments to ensure the safety and security of aid beneficiaries is exemplified in diverse refugee and IDP situations in the world. For example, refugee camps and settlements in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Syria, Yemen, Bangladesh, Eastern DRC, Chad, Lebanon, Jordan among many other countries [6, 15, 18, 41]. UN humanitarian agencies in general and UNHCR in particular and their implementing partners (NGOs), play significant roles ensuring their collaboration with governments meet some of the security needs of refugees, IDPs and other persons in difficult situations dependent on aid [5, 6, 15, 18].

Equally important is the engagement and collaboration with non-state armed actors, who may control certain territories and perform quasi-government functions. Their cooperation is essential to allow humanitarian operations and ensure the security of humanitarian personnel and aid beneficiaries in their territories. The focus on principled humanitarian action, which includes the practical application of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence, is vital. This should also encompass transparency, accountability, and adherence to standards. UN has engaged with non- state actors in diverse humanitarian contexts to ensure the protection of civilians. Peacekeeping operations are particularly on the forefront of engagement with non-state armed actors. For example, UN peacekeeping missions in Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mali (MINUSMA), the DRC (MONUSCO), and Afghanistan (UNAMA) engaged with non-state armed groups to protect civilians and facilitating humanitarian assistance[5, 6, 41].

Coordination: Ensuring security for aid beneficiaries requires a collective effort involving state authorities at different levels, their security systems and agencies, donors, humanitarian organizations, aid beneficiaries,

hosting communities, and influential individuals like community and religious leaders. This necessitates improved engagement and coordination on security matters among various stakeholders at different levels (local, regional, national), including conflict parties. The involvement of these diverse stakeholders in security decisions and solutions at various levels is crucial for the effectiveness of protection security strategies. Collaboration with local law enforcement is critical for the protection of aid beneficiaries. Regular communication and coordination with local police and military to address external threats and established protocols for responding to security incidents are imperatives which help to the protection of aid beneficiaries. Strengthening coordination between humanitarian agencies, local authorities, and security forces helps to ensure a comprehensive and cohesive approach to the safety and security of aid beneficiaries. Examples of effective and sustainable coordination with state authorities and others on security are found in refugee camps and settlements in Turkey, Syria, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Jordan, Uganda, South Sudan, Kenya etc. [8 15, 18, 50].

Collective security: The UN and the greater humanitarian community implement collective protection security risk management strategies to ensure the safety and security of aid beneficiaries. Collective security is premised on the general interests of humanitarian organizations in a specific geographical area to share the security resources available for the common good[5,6]. The objective is to reduce risk to the greatest extent possible for both aid beneficiaries and humanitarian personnel. For example, there may be need for the deployment of armed security forces from government and sometimes non-state armed actors, to support humanitarian operations in areas with high incidences of violence, terrorism or high crime against aid beneficiaries. This is aimed at ensuring that law and order is maintained and aid beneficiaries' access and receive humanitarian assistance safely. These are both protection and deterrence strategies and are provided to humanitarian organizations collectively in a given geographical area. Such practices are found in refugee and IDP situations in Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Somalia, Yemen and Bangladesh among other countries[5,6,41,50]. UN peacekeepers also provide humanitarian organizations with collective security (e.g., armed escorts or area security) so that they carry out their mandates. Examples are found in peace keeping missions in countries such as South Sudan, DRC, Mali, Central Africa Republic, among other peace keeping missions [8, 41, 50].

Sufficient security in refugee and IDP camps and settlements and local communities. This is achieved by ensuring deployment of adequately trained security forces to maintain law and order. Humanitarian organizations continuously advocate for the maintenance of law and order in refugee and IDP camps to ensure the safety of inhabitants. For UNHCR, the safety and security of refugees and other persons under its mandate is a strategic responsibility[15]. UN agencies and UNHCR in particular, and some donors, have positively contributed to the maintenance of law and order by supporting governments with both hardware and software infrastructure to improve security in refugee and IPD camps. For example, the Security Partnership Project Memorandum of Understanding (SPP MoU) between the Government of Kenya and UNHCR in 2011 was funded by various donors to improve security in Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya[5,6,8]. The SPP MoU supported both hardware infrastructure in form of police stations, police accommodation, new vehicles and their maintenance. Software infrastructure in form of training, risk analysis and incentives. The MoU led to significant improvement in security in Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, significantly safeguarding the security of refugees, local communities allowing humanitarian operations to proceed with minimum insecurity interruptions [5, 6,8].

Another example of UNHCR's support to maintain law and order in refugee camps can be seen in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). In this region, UNHCR partnered with the Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCCC) to manage refugee camps [50]. This partnership included supporting camp management authorities to maintain law and order and ensure the civilian character of the camp. UNHCR support to governments to improve security in refugee camps and settlements is also seen in refugee operations in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, South Sudan, Uganda, Jordan, [6, 8, 50, 56].

Secure Shelter, Infrastructure and Safe Access to Services: This has been realized by advocating and helping governments to ensure aid beneficiaries camps and shelters such as refugee and IDP camps locations are safe from conflict zones and natural hazards. Assisting governments to establish well-protected refugee and IDP camps away from active conflict zones with secure perimeters, adequate lighting, and controlled access to prevent unauthorized and malicious entry are protection strategies meant to ensure the safety of inhabitants. Ensuring essential services like water, sanitation, and healthcare are easily accessible and safe to reach, especially for vulnerable aid beneficiary groups like women and children significantly contributes to their physical protection. Humanitarian organizations have advocated and continue to advocate for safe space for aid beneficiaries such as refugees and IDPs. For some UN humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR, ensuring the safety and security of persons under its mandate is a strategic responsibility and challenge, and it is at the core of the UNHCR protection mandate. UNHCR has been particularly proactive with governments ensuring that refugee shelters and infrastructure are located out of conflict zones. Examples are seen in refugee camps in South Sudan, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Bangladesh, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Sudan, Chad, Central Africa Republic among many other countries [15, 50, 56].

Community Policing: Community policing is about a community taking ownership of some aspects of their security by actively being involved in localized policing, thereby contributing to a safer community. Community policing as a security risk management strategy emphasizes building strong relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. The goal is to work collaboratively with community members to identify and solve problems related to law-and-order maintenance. The active involvement of communities in their own policing is a protection security risk management strategy and is exemplified in diverse refugee and IDP operations in Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Chad, and Uganda. This is done through various processes including building cooperation and collaboration between communities and law enforcement agents and deployment of volunteer community security personnel to guard humanitarian facilities (e.g., warehouses, distribution sites, health facilities, water facilities etc). The other processes include deploying community volunteers to maintain law and order and provide protection within refugee and IDP camps. These protection strategies are essential and must involve refugees and IDPs in planning, implementation and decision-making processes to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed[50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56].

Community policing is seen in many refugee and IDPs camps. For example, in Kalemie, Bunia, and Uvira IDP Camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Police, in collaboration with the Congolese National Police (PNC), undertakes community-oriented policing in these camps. This approach helps facilitate dialogue, engagement, and a sustainable protective environment. Other community policing initiatives are in Kenya Dadaab and Kakuma camps where the Security Partnership Project(SPP) MOU supported community policing. In Uganda, the police actively engage in community policing within refugee camps and settlements, particularly in the West Nile region. For example, in the Adjumani, Rhino, Bidi Bidi, and Omugo settlement areas, involving refugee welfare committees, host communities, and local council leaders to improve the working environment through community engagement. The police sensitized refugees on crime prevention, emphasizing the importance of cooperation with security agencies and adherence to local laws. In Jordan, Zaatari refugee camp has a robust security framework involving Jordanian police and community watch groups to ensure safety and conflict resolution. The camp established conflict resolution committees to mediate disputes and prevent violence[50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56].

Other Protection Strategies. Other protection strategies implemented by humanitarian organizations in refugee and IDP settings include providing training on security awareness and self-protection measures to refugees and IDPs, empowering them to contribute to their own safety [57, 58]. Community engagement involves engaging refugees and IDPs in security planning and decision-making processes to ensure their security needs and

concerns are addressed[57, 58]. Setting up mechanisms for conflict resolution and mediation to address disputes within the camps and settlements between refugees/IDPs and local communities and implementing early warning systems to detect and respond to potential threats quickly are protection strategies[57, 58]. These strategies are exemplified in diverse refugee operations in South Sudan, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Bangladesh, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Sudan, Chad, Central Africa Republic among many other countries [15, 50, 56].

Protection risk management strategies are often influenced by the specific context in which they are applied. Humanitarian organizations need to critically analyse the contextual dynamics to ensure the effectiveness of these strategies. There have been instances where protection risk management strategies, or certain aspects of them, have failed in humanitarian contexts due to a lack of understanding of the local environment. For example, in some regions, the failure to engage with local communities and understand their needs and perceptions has led to ineffective security measures and increased risks for both aid workers and beneficiaries[57, 58]. Additionally, the complexity of conflict zones and the presence of multiple armed groups can further complicate the implementation of protection strategies, such as collaboration, coordination, collective security and community policing.

Adopted protection measures must not raise the profile of aid beneficiaries to make it attractive to potential attackers[57, 58]. For example, community policing can pose risks to volunteers, especially if they are perceived by criminals, terrorists, or religious fundamentalists as being closely aligned with government authorities. This perception can make volunteers targets for intimidation, violence, or other forms of retaliation. For example, in the Dadaab refugee camps, community policing volunteers faced threats and violence from armed groups. These groups often perceive the volunteers as collaborators with government authorities, making them targets[57, 58]. In regions affected by Boko Haram in Nigeria, community policing volunteers have been attacked by militants who view them as extensions of the government [59]. In Afghanistan community policing volunteers were targeted by the Taliban and other insurgent groups, who saw them as aligned with government forces[60]. In this regard, it's crucial for protection risk management strategies to also implement robust safety measures to mitigate risks.

12. Deterrence Security Risk Management Strategies

Deterrence security risk management strategies in insecure humanitarian environments have primarily been to protect civilians, be it local community, refugees, IDPs or others. Aid workers and humanitarian operations in general, have also utilized the deterrence capacities available particularly in some high-risk environments directly or indirectly to the extent allowed by their mandates [18, 31, 61, 62]. The context determines what is feasible or not. Deterrence security risk management strategies are carried out mostly by state actors and associated entities, UN/Regional peacekeeping forces and member states e.g., donor country. In some contexts, non- state armed groups provide the deterrence capacity to humanitarian operations in territories under their control. This happens mostly in armed conflict situations or fragile post conflict situations where non state armed groups control territories.

Security risk management strategies under deterrence strategy include the use of armed protection, use of force and application of sanctions[31, 61, 62]. Classically in humanitarian operations, deterrence security risk management strategies were seen as a last resort as they were primarily associated with the use of armed protection which compromised principles and mandates of some humanitarian organizations[18, 31, 61, 62]. The millennium has witnessed significant changes in some humanitarian contexts as aid workers and aid beneficiaries such as refugees, IDPs and local communities have been specifically targeted for attacks leading to a shift in the security risk management approaches to ensure the safety of aid workers and aid beneficiaries [18, 31, 61, 62]. The security dynamics in the humanitarian environment have significantly evolved since the turn of the millennium with the threat environment being complex, unpredictable and fluid, with diverse actors. Armed

protection has become first line of protection to humanitarian operations in some humanitarian contexts, particularly high-risk environments [5,6,8]. For example, contexts with active armed conflict, experiencing terrorism, religious fundamentalism or high crime levels. These contexts include Eastern DRC, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Northeast Kenya, South Sudan, Chad among many others[5,6,8].

Deterrence is widely applied in insecure humanitarian contexts particularly those experiencing armed conflict, where the obligation to protect civilians is greatest. Armed conflict inevitably triggers forced displacements leading to refugee, IDPs and other undesirable situations. Deterrence in armed conflict or fragile post conflict is a crucial and fundamental component of protecting civilians. The primary aim of humanitarian action is to save lives and alleviate suffering, with the protection of civilians being a core humanitarian imperative that guides these efforts. As such, deterrence security strategies must be able to address the primary goal of saving lives and alleviating suffering, carefully assessing and managing risks to ensure the safety of both aid workers and aid beneficiaries. The use of deterrence strategies such as armed state protection, armed peacekeepers, and non-state actors armed protection (e.g., armed militia or armed private guards), must be based on security risk assessments of a country or area. Understanding the context is critical[5,6,8].

The use of UN armed peacekeepers in the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel is a typical deterrent security risk management strategy which is widely applied in some humanitarian and UN peacekeeping operations[18,31]. UN and regional peacekeeping operations provide armed escorts, area security, critical facilities guarding, patrols, promote and implement community policing, conflict resolution among many other interconnected acceptance, protection and deterrent security risk management activities to protect civilians. By extension these deterrence capacities are also utilized by willing UN Implementing partners and other NGOs[18, 31]. UN peacekeeping operations with mandates to protect civilians past and present are exemplified in Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Sudan, Sudan, Central Africa Republic, Niger among other countries[18,31,41,]

Another deterrent security risk management strategy is the use of armed protection from state security forces for vital humanitarian activities such as humanitarian movements, food distributions and guarding vital facilities [warehouses]. Government security forces are regularly used in some insecure humanitarian operations, including refugee and IDP operations, to protect both aid workers and aid beneficiaries[6,8]. Such practices include use of armed escorts, area security, armed patrols and search operations. Examples include Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, Kenya, Maban refugee camps in South Sudan and Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh among many other refugee operations[5,6,8]. Deterrence is also the most ideal approach in contexts with high crime levels using firearms and other weapons particularly targeting vulnerable communities such as refugees, IDPs and other persons in similar situations. There is always the need to safeguard humanitarian assistance and assets from thefts, looting and expropriation by criminal groups, individuals, particularly armed and other persons or entities. Armed guards, whether government provided or private are utilized in these contexts. Aid beneficiaries immensely benefit from these deterrence strategies as aid is not unnecessarily lost and they are able to receive it safely and in dignity. The reality and context on the ground determine the best security strategies to deal with the threats and risks in the environment.

Deterrence capacity is also provided by non-state armed groups (NSAG) in some humanitarian contexts. For example, M23 rebels in Eastern DRC, AL- Shabaab in Somalia and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, are the *de facto* authorities in territories they control. Any humanitarian operations in territories they occupy are authorized and guaranteed by them. For example, the Sudanese Agency for Relief and Humanitarian Operations (SARHO), an affiliate of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) is the authority responsible for humanitarian affairs in territories under RSF[63]. SARHO has been accused of preventing life-saving assistance from reaching those in desperate need for political reasons[63]. Humanitarian operations ongoing in territories held by non-state armed groups include Yemen, Syria, Eastern DRC, Somalia and Myanmar[41,42, 48].

Sanctions or threats of sanctions against individuals or groups destabilizing humanitarian operations, by the international community individually or collectively, is also a deterrent security risk management measure. Sanctions may include arms embargoes, travel bans, financial or diplomatic restrictions and referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC) [6, 18, 31]. The indictment of then Sudanese President Bashir by the ICC over alleged crimes against humanity in Darfur is a case in point where sanctions were applied[64]. Sanctions or threats of sanctions are ordinarily applied and implemented by international bodies such as UN, regional bodies such as European Union (EU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and UN member states collectively or individually.

Deterrence security risk management strategies must consider all contextual factors in high-risk environments and humanitarian organizations need to critically analyse this to ensure the safety of aid beneficiaries. It is particularly important to analyse the local actors, security threats and risks of operational contexts to determine whether deterrence should be applied. In environments where local actors, particularly armed non-state actors, have no respect or little regard to humanitarian work even if it is benefiting their community, there may be a need to consider deterrence security risk management strategy, such as armed protection, for the good of the greater community[5,6,8]. The reality and context on the ground determine the best approach to deal with the threats and risks. In diverse humanitarian field environments, deterrence strategies are complemented by other strategies, for example, acceptance, protection, and other security approaches.

13. The UN SRM Approach

The UN Security Risk Management (SRM) approach, established in 2004, is the primary strategy for managing security risks within the UN. This approach involves assessing the operational context of UN activities to clearly identify potential threats and determine risk levels[65]. These assessments form the basis for security management decisions aimed at reducing risks to acceptable levels[65]. The SRM approach requires the UN system to develop and implement security policies, procedures, processes, practices, and measures that are relevant and specific to the area and context, based on a Security Risk Assessment (SRA)[65]. The SRA identifies threats that could impact UN personnel, assets, or operations, evaluates the UN's vulnerability to these threats, and assesses the risks in terms of likelihood and impact[65]. It prioritizes risk assessment while identifying prevention and mitigation strategies and security measures to address these threats, with the goal of lowering the overall risk[65].

The primary strength of the Security Risk Management (SRM) approach is its goal to reduce risks to acceptable levels, enabling safe humanitarian and development activities. However, in reality, residual security risks often remain in high-risk environments. Another notable strength of the SRM approach is its specificity to the area and context. This ensures that the security policies, procedures, processes, practices, and measures adopted are particularly relevant to the given context. These strengths have also been replicated with aid beneficiaries' security particularly in refugee and IDP humanitarian situations. Security policies, procedures, processes, practices, and measures have been implemented in various refugee and IDP camps by UNHCR and its partners to improve the security of refugees based on sound security risk assessments. Security risk assessments to enhance security of refugees is exemplified in refugee camps and settlements in Kenya, Bangladesh, South Sudan and Uganda among many other refugee operations [5,6,8].

The UN and the broader humanitarian community also implement security risk management strategies to ensure the safety of aid beneficiaries, often through collective efforts. Collective security leverages the shared interests of humanitarian organizations in a specific area to pool security resources for the common good, aiming to minimize risks for both aid beneficiaries and aid workers. In high-violence or high-crime areas, armed security forces from governments or non-state actors sometimes, may be deployed to support humanitarian operations, maintaining law and order and ensuring safe access to aid. These strategies, which serve both protective and

deterrent purposes, are provided collectively to humanitarian organizations. Examples of such practices can be found in refugee and IDP camps in Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh[8, 33,41,54]. Additionally, UN peacekeepers sometimes provide collective security, such as armed escorts or area security, to enable humanitarian organizations to carry out their mandates. This has been seen in UN peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, the DRC, Mali, the Central African Republic, and Niger among many other peacekeeping missions[8, 33, 41,54].

14. Contributions of the Security Risk Management Strategies

Security risk management strategies must ensure aid beneficiaries physical security and protection in all contexts of humanitarian operations. Humanitarian security risk management strategies must allow humanitarian organizations to reach vulnerable communities in need safely. It is a cardinal responsibility for humanitarian organizations to ensure that all their actions prioritize the safety and dignity of aid beneficiaries and do not cause harm.

Determining to what extent security risk management strategies implemented by humanitarian organizations have worked for aid beneficiaries individually and collectively is a complex task as many factors determine this. Particularly so when there are no readily available consolidated statistics of incidents impacting on aid beneficiaries in the diverse insecure humanitarian contexts. There are fragmented reports of incidents targeting aid beneficiaries in some insecure environments. For example, Insecurity Insight publishes monthly reports detailing security incidents affecting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees as part of their "Protection in Danger" project from different regions of the world from 2017 [66]. Though Insecurity Insight's reports on security incidents affecting IDPs and refugees are valuable resources for understanding the threats and violence faced by these populations, they are not exhaustive enough. The incidents are based on information provided by participating humanitarian organizations [67]. The collection and publication of security incidents targeting aid beneficiaries can be highly sensitive. This is primarily a state function, and humanitarian organizations often face challenges in sharing such information due to concerns about security, confidentiality, and the potential impact on their operations and the safety of their staff and aid beneficiaries. Humanitarian organizations may choose to share this information through internal reports or with trusted partners rather than making it publicly available. This approach helps to ensure that sensitive information is handled appropriately while still allowing for effective coordination and response to security threats.

In this respect, there remains absence of a systematic, coordinated and consolidated humanitarian database to track the diverse incidents involving aid beneficiaries in insecure environments by humanitarian organization. This is a major weakness in the current humanitarian information management system. On the other hand, there are credible reports that provide invaluable information and statistics on major incidents impacting on aid workers (NGO and UN) in insecure humanitarian environments. For example, Aid Worker Security reports by Humanitarian Outcomes (1997 to present), United Nations Secretary General reports on safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (from 2001), reports by International NGO Safety Organization (INSO) among many other humanitarian reports on security in insecure environments.

Though there is lack of consolidated information and systematic data base on incidents impacting on aid beneficiaries in humanitarian operations, there is recognition of the positive contributions made to the security of aid beneficiaries through support provided to governments at various levels by some humanitarian organizations such as UN agencies. Arguably some humanitarian security risk management strategies have significantly contributed to the safety and security of aid beneficiaries in some contexts. For example, UN humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR, WFP, IOM among many others, have policies, processes, procedures and practices that specifically address the security of their aid beneficiaries. For UNHCR, ensuring the safety and security of persons under its mandate is a strategic responsibility and challenge, and it is at the core of the

UNHCR protection mandate. The persons under UNHCR mandate are generally forcibly displaced persons such as refugees, stateless persons, asylum seekers, returnees and IDPs to some extent. In some refugee humanitarian environments, we see active support to governments by UNHCR in the maintenance of law and order[5,6,8]. Examples of the support include building police stations, providing vehicles and motor-cycles, training and capacity building, community policing initiatives among other support. Security support to governments to enhance security of refugees is found in refugee camps and settlements in Kenya, Bangladesh, South Sudan and Uganda among many other refugee operations [5,6,8].

The World Food Programme (WFP)'s protection policy aims to prevent and respond to violence, coercion, and abuse. This involves working closely with local authorities, including police, to ensure the safety and security of vulnerable populations[68]. Significantly, the policy prioritizes the safety and dignity of aid beneficiaries by preventing and minimizing any unintended negative effects of interventions. This approach aims to avoid increasing people's vulnerability to both physical and psychosocial risks. Examples of WFP engagements in insecure environments to ensure the safety and security of vulnerable are numerous. For example, South Sudan, Sudan, Chad, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Uganda, Haiti, Iraq[69]. IOM, Community Engagement and Policing (CEP) programs promote collaboration between communities and law enforcement agencies. This includes building trust, improving communication, and developing joint safety and security initiatives. IOM assists member States in building better ties between law enforcement, migrants and host communities[70]. Examples of such IOM engagements are found in Mozambique, Kenya, Libya and Somalia among many other countries[70]

The community policing approach as a security risk management strategy has been a success story in some humanitarian operations contributing to the safety and security of refugees, IDPs and local/hosting communities. For example, a study by Yunus[58] on community Policing in Dadaab refugee camp found a strong positive relationship between the adoption of community policing, the strategies employed, and effective crime management in Dadaab refugee camps. The study showed that community policing significantly enhanced security and crime management in refugee environments[58]. A study by Carrilho[54] on the role of United Nations Police in IDP Camps, discussed the role of United Nations Police (UNPOL) in protecting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. The study highlighted the importance of community-oriented policing in creating a sustainable protective environment in IDP and refugee camps[54]. In Uganda, community policing initiatives in refugee settlements improved the overall security in the settlements by fostering cooperation between refugees, host communities, and security agencies in Adjumani, Madi Okolo, Yumbe and Terego District (Nvepi and Omugo settlement areas) [55]. There was also notable reduction in criminal activities such as theft, domestic violence, and other violent crimes. The initiative strengthened community engagement and trust in the police, encouraging residents to share information and work together to address security issues [55]. These outcomes highlight the effectiveness of community policing in creating a safer and more cohesive security environment in refugee camps and settlements.

Acceptance strategies focus on building positive relationships between local communities and various and diverse stakeholders. Gaining the trust and cooperation of diverse groups, including aid beneficiaries' humanitarian organizations can operate more safely and effectively. This approach reduces the likelihood of attacks or interference with aid operations, ensuring that beneficiaries receive the help they need [71]. Humanitarian organizations have worked to ensure sustainable acceptance strategies particularly in refugee and IDP settings. For example, community integration programs in refugee and IDP camps promote social cohesion and integration programs helping refugees and IDPs become part of the local community, reducing tensions and fostering mutual understanding[72]. Examples of such community integration programs are found in diverse refugee and IDP camps in Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Bangladesh and Jordan among other countries [55,56,58,59].

Protection and deterrence strategies that ensure the safety of aid beneficiaries and civilians in general, are widely applied in some insecure humanitarian contexts. Protection strategies for aid beneficiaries in refugee and IDP contexts, such as advocacy for refugee rights, sufficient security in refugee and IDP camps and local

communities and secure shelter, infrastructure and safe access to services are exemplified in diverse high risk humanitarian environments[73, 74]. The strategies include collective security approaches, community policing, **safe** spaces, building secure facilities, using armed security personnel and employing technology like surveillance system [74]. These measures help safeguard aid workers and beneficiaries from potential threats, such as armed attacks or theft. By ensuring a secure environment, humanitarian organizations safeguard the continuous delivery of aid and services and the protection of vulnerable communities such as refugees from violence, exploitation, and abuse[62]. State and non-state actor security forces and UN/Regional peacekeeping forces provide protection capacities in many humanitarian operations, and this has been exemplified in South Sudan, Sudan, DRC Central Africa Republic, Niger among other countries[36, 41].

Deterrence strategies aim to prevent threats by demonstrating the capability to respond to potential dangers. This can involve diplomatic efforts, legal actions, or even the presence of armed guards. Humanitarian organizations by showing that they can mobilise action against threats discourage hostile actions. This approach helps maintain a safer environment for aid operations and protects aid beneficiaries from harm[62]. State and non-state actor security forces and UN/Regional peacekeeping forces provide deterrence capacities in many humanitarian operations, and this has been exemplified in South Sudan, Sudan, DRC Central Africa Republic, Niger among other countries. [18,21].

Acceptance, protection and deterrence and other security risk management strategies have significantly contributed to the safety and security of aid workers and aid beneficiaries in insecure environments [18, 20, 36]. The combination of these strategies creates a comprehensive security framework that enhances the safety and effectiveness of humanitarian aid efforts. Each strategy addresses different aspects of security, ensuring that aid beneficiaries receive physical protection and support they need in high-risk environments [18, 20, 36].

The UN SRM approach though specifically addressing security threats and risks to UN personnel and operations, some aspects remain very relevant to the safety and security of aid beneficiaries. For example, security risk assessments assist in identifying threats which affect UN personnel and operations. The same approach is also applied to identify threats which affect aid beneficiaries leading to the implementation and or recommendations of security measures to prevent or minimize their exposure to the threats. Security risk assessments are therefore essential for identifying and addressing common threats that affect aid beneficiaries[5, 18, 36]. In refugee and IDP camps these threats include kidnapping, robberies, gender-based violence, demonstrations, riots, community tensions and conflicts, the presence of armed combatants, abuse of power, human trafficking, and other risks associated with humanitarian aid delivery[15].

Basing on security risk assessments, UN agencies and their partners may choose to actively support governments and their security forces in maintaining law and order. This support can include building police stations, providing equipment such as vehicles and motorcycles to enhance mobility, and conducting training for law enforcement agencies in humanitarian law, human rights law, refugee conventions, community policing, and other capacity-building initiatives. The goal of this support is to lower risks and ensure that communities and aid beneficiaries live in safe environments. Examples of such support can be seen in various refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) operations in Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Bangladesh, and Uganda, where humanitarian organizations such as UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, OCHA play significant roles in complementing government security efforts [6,8].

The effectiveness of security risk management strategies for aid beneficiaries in humanitarian operations is contingent on the proactive support of governments, which must ensure the basic security requirements of a functioning state. Ensuring aid beneficiaries security in humanitarian operations is a collaborative and collective effort. This involves state authorities and their security systems and agencies, donors, humanitarian organizations, aid beneficiaries, hosting communities, and influential individuals such as community and

religious leaders. To address security risks effectively, it's essential to enhance engagement and coordination on security matters among various stakeholders at local, regional, and national levels, including conflict parties. The participation of different stakeholders in security decisions and solutions at various levels is crucial for the success of the security strategies. Active collaboration between governments and humanitarian organizations at all levels is also essential for safety and security of aid beneficiaries particularly in refugee and IDP contexts. Equally important is engaging with non-state armed actors, who may control certain territories and perform quasi-governmental functions, is crucial. Their cooperation is necessary to allow humanitarian operations and ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel and operations, and aid beneficiaries.

15. Key Considerations for Effective Aid Beneficiaries Security Management

Effective security risk management for aid beneficiaries involves deliberate and several key practices by humanitarian organizations to ensure their safety and the continuity of humanitarian operations. Essential components include:

1. **Context Analysis:** Understanding the local context, including political, social, and security dynamics, is crucial. This helps in identifying potential risks and threats to aid beneficiaries and the security risk management strategies to address them. Specifically, context analysis helps in understanding the local context specific threats, such as political instability, social tensions, security vulnerabilities and the main actors. By analysing the operating context, humanitarian organizations can identify potential threats and anticipate problems. This is essential for reducing risks to aid beneficiaries and ensuring the safety of humanitarian staff and operations. Context analysis is not a one-time exercise but a continuous process of review as security in insecure environments is most of the times fluid and unpredictable. This requires ongoing monitoring to detect and anticipate events and their potential humanitarian consequences[75, 76,77, 78, 79].
2. **Systematic Security Risk Assessments and Security Measures:** Conducting thorough security risk assessments which are area and context specific to identify vulnerabilities and implementing preventive and mitigation measures is critical in insecure humanitarian operations. Systematic security risk assessments narrow down on threats that must be addressed in a particular environment. This leads to the implementation of comprehensive security measures tailored to the specific context and the needs of aid beneficiaries. Security risk assessments also help in developing, security plans, contingency plans, standard operating procedures and security protocols to regularly monitor and evaluate security measures to identify gaps and areas for improvement[76,77, 78,79].
3. **Communication, Coordination and Collaboration:** Establishing clear communication channels coordination and collaboration mechanisms with local authorities, local communities, aid beneficiaries, and humanitarian organizations, significantly contributes of the security of aid beneficiaries. Collaboration between local security actors/authorities and aid beneficiaries to enhance security measures is critical in insecure humanitarian operations. Local security actors and authorities often have valuable insights and can help in implementing effective security strategies. The coordination and collaborative processes include timely information sharing, coordinated responses to security incidents, feedback mechanism helping to identify potential security threats early, multi-agency coordination and collaboration mechanism, community involvement and capacity building. By fostering communication, coordination, and collaboration mechanisms, humanitarian organizations can create a safer and more supportive environment for aid beneficiaries [80, 81,82,83].
4. **Training, Capacity Building and advocacy:** Providing training to aid workers and aid beneficiaries on security protocols, risk management, security awareness, personal safety and emergency response is valuable in insecure humanitarian environments. This empowers aid workers and aid beneficiaries to handle security threats more effectively. In high-risk contexts, security awareness and skills training must be the staple focus of humanitarian risk management. Security awareness helps aid beneficiaries to recognize and respond to security threats, such as violence, robbery or theft, thereby enhancing overall security. Training also helps aid workers and beneficiaries understand potential risks and how to mitigate them, reducing the likelihood of harm. This

entails humanitarian organizations working with diverse stakeholders who include governments, local and international bodies (e.g., UN), local communities, aid beneficiaries and others to develop and enforce security measures that enhance security of aid beneficiaries. Advocacy for policies that protect aid beneficiaries and promote their rights becomes critical [19, 84, 85].

5. **Incident Monitoring and Reporting:** Setting up systems for monitoring security incidents affecting aid beneficiaries and reporting them promptly and establishing data base. This helps in tracking trends and adjusting security measures as needed [9, 84, 85]

6. **Staff Care and Mental Health Support:** Ensuring that staff and aid beneficiaries have access to mental health support and care, especially in high-stress environments. This includes providing resources for coping with trauma and stress[86].

7. **Technology and Innovation:** The utilization of technology, such as mobile apps for real-time alerts and GPS tracking, to enhance security management can improve the speed and effectiveness of responses to security threats. It is also crucial that humanitarian organizations protect the personal data of aid beneficiaries to prevent misuse and ensure their privacy. This process involves implementation of robust data security measures to safeguard sensitive aid beneficiary information [87].

Implementing these strategies can significantly improve the protection and safety of aid beneficiaries, ensuring they receive assistance safely and in dignity. By implementing these strategies, aid organizations can create a safer environment for beneficiaries and improve the overall impact of their humanitarian efforts.

16. Conclusion

The current millennium has seen a significant rise in humanitarian crises, primarily due to political events with record numbers of forced displacements. The displacements are mainly caused by armed conflict, violence, persecution, human rights violations, and other events disturbing public order such as natural disasters, health crises. These events have profound impacts on communities, requiring coordinated responses from governments, humanitarian organizations, donors and local authorities to restore order and provide assistance to affected populations. Displaced persons such as refugees and IDPs often face severe insecurity and hardship, with their protection primarily being a state responsibility. Humanitarian organizations have increasingly taken on the responsibility of ensuring the safety and security of aid beneficiaries, particularly in refugee and IDP humanitarian situations. They complement government efforts by developing and implementing security risk management strategies, that benefit refugees, IDPs, local communities and others to the extent possible in insecure environments. This collaborative effort involves complex processes, requiring coordination, resource mobilization, and effective security measures to protect the vulnerable communities.

Aid beneficiaries' security has multiple and interdependent dimensions recognizing the role of humanitarian organizations over a range of interventions relevant to their security in insecure humanitarian environments. Security risk management strategies such as acceptance, protection, deterrence, UN SRM and others, though classically have been for aid workers and humanitarian operations have similarly been applied to aid beneficiaries in some humanitarian contexts. The strategies or some of them, have significantly contributed to the safety and security of aid beneficiaries. Success stories are particularly found in refugee and IDP humanitarian situations where UN agencies such as UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, WFP, OCHA and their partners(NGOs) play significant roles in ensuring the safety and security of aid beneficiaries. This includes mobilizing required financial and material resources to complement government efforts.

The effectiveness of aid beneficiaries' security risk management strategies in humanitarian operations is contingent to several factors. These factors include the critical necessity for proactive cooperation, coordination, collaboration and support of the different levels of government and its security forces, non- state actors, humanitarian organizations, donors, local communities and aid beneficiaries themselves.

The security and protection of aid beneficiaries is a 21st century humanitarian imperative and challenge. Significant challenges lie ahead given the record numbers of forced displacements, with the UNHCR estimating 122.6 million displaced people as of June 2024]. Addressing the root causes of humanitarian crises has significant influence on security of aid beneficiaries and humanitarian operations in general. The problems which cause forced displacements mostly require political solutions. As aptly described by the UN Secretary General the world is facing “multilateral challenges but deficit of multilateral solutions” [88]. The increasingly polarized environment in international relations is making it extremely difficult for UN member states to reach consensus on major issues affecting the world making conflict resolution difficult [89,90]. Sadly, the forcibly displaced persons such as refugees, IDPs and others remain caught up in conflicts, pay the highest price for any insecurity and bear most of the brunt.

17. References

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