HUMANITARIAN ACADEMY · HUMANITAIRES JOBS

Preparing a field mission: analyse, plan, travel and return safely

Course handout · Day 2 : In the field: travel, respond, work and return

2-day certified course: clarify the terms of reference, analyse the context and the actors, assess risks with a scored matrix, prepare your health, documents, logistics, communications and budget, plan every movement, respond to an incident, work with communities and authorities, then complete the debriefing and the mission report. Advanced quantitative case studies, simulations, a final assessment and a verifiable certificate.

https://humanitairejobs.org/en/academy/preparer-mission-terrain/jour-2/

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Day 2 : In the field: travel, respond, work and return

Objectives

- Plan a safe movement with check-in calls and a return deadline.
- Respond to an incident and report it correctly.
- Work with communities and authorities, then close the mission with a debriefing and a report.

Arrival: briefing and first days

As soon as you arrive, ask for the **local office security briefing**, even for a two-day visit. It covers the recent situation, no-go areas, curfew, movement rules, alert phases, assembly points, emergency contacts and expected behaviour (dress, photos, alcohol, relations with the population).

The first days are the riskiest: you know neither the places, nor the codes, nor the weak signals. A few reflexes:

- Save the emergency numbers and keep a paper copy on you.
- Locate the exits of your accommodation and the office, and the route to the assembly point.
- Introduce yourself to the authorities and counterparts designated by the office, with your mission order.
- Listen to national staff: they know the context better than anyone.

> A visitor who ignores local rules endangers the whole team, not just themselves. The rules apply to the visiting director as much as to the driver.

Planning and conducting a movement

Every movement outside town is authorised and tracked according to the office procedure. The **movement plan** states: passengers, vehicle and driver, route and alternatives, departure time, expected arrival and return times, check-in call times, means of communication, and the person tracking the movement at the office.

Calculating the timings. On a track, use a realistic average speed, often 25 to 40 km/h, not the maximum speed. For 120 km at 30 km/h: 4 hours of driving. Departure at 7 am, arrival at 11 am; 3 hours of work; return at 2 pm, arrival at 6 pm. If the office requires a return before 5 pm, the plan is not feasible: you must reduce the work on site, plan an overnight stay on site or split the mission.

Check-in calls and the no-contact procedure. The vehicle calls at agreed times or points. If a call is missed, the office follows a written procedure: call back on all means, then, after a

set delay (often 30 minutes), alert the security manager, who decides on the next steps. Nobody goes off to "see what is happening" without a decision.

At checkpoints: slow down early, stay calm and polite, hands visible, show your documents, offer nothing, take no photos, do not argue or force your way through. If armed people demand something, life comes before equipment.

Responding to and reporting an incident

An incident (accident, theft, assault, arrest, threat) is managed in three stages: **survive and get to safety**, **raise the alarm**, then **report**.

- **Road accident**: secure the scene, give assistance, alert the office; depending on the context, it may be dangerous to remain at the scene after an accident involving a third party: apply the instruction in the security plan.
- **Theft or hijacking**: do not resist, comply calmly, avoid sudden movements, do not stare; property can be replaced.
- **Arrest or detention**: stay calm, ask to contact your organisation, sign nothing you do not understand.
- **Gunfire or explosion**: take cover, move away as soon as possible, do not go closer to look.

The **immediate alert message** is short: who, what, where, when, condition of the people, immediate need. The written **incident report** follows within 24 hours: facts, timeline, consequences, measures taken, recommendations. Even a "near miss" (near accident, verbal threat) must be reported: this is how the organisation detects a trend before a tragedy.

> Never hide an incident for fear of being sanctioned. An organisation that punishes those who report stops learning and puts everyone at risk.

Working with communities and authorities

The security of a humanitarian mission rests first of all on **acceptance**: being known, understood and seen as useful. It is built through the behaviour of every person on mission:

- **Explain** who you are, why you are coming and what you cannot promise; never raise expectations of aid without a decision.
- **Respect the principles** of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in words as well as in choices (whom to meet, where to stay, whom to travel with).
- **Protect people and data**: informed consent before any interview, no names or identifiable photos without agreement, sensitive data encrypted or left at the office.
- **Apply the code of conduct** and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA): no sexual relations in exchange for aid, report any suspicion through the designated channels.
- **Inform the authorities** according to the rules of the country and the office, without passing on information that would expose people.

The choice of counterparts, interpreters and drivers also sends a message: an interpreter perceived as linked to one party can close doors and endanger the people interviewed.

Returning: debriefing, report and recovery

A mission is only finished when its results can be used. On return:

- **Debriefing** within 48 hours with your manager: results, decisions to be taken, incidents and near misses, security information to share.
- **A short, useful mission report**: objective, what was done, main findings supported by data, dated recommendations with a person responsible, annexes (list of people met in line with data protection rules, authorised photos).
- **Feedback** to the teams and, where possible, to the communities met: what was taken on board and what will happen next.
- **Administrative closure**: accounting for the advance, returning equipment, updating contacts.

Recovery is part of the mission. Cumulative stress (fatigue, insecurity, exposure to suffering) is normal; it becomes dangerous when it sets in. The Antares Foundation guidelines recommend preparation before departure, monitoring during the mission, a debriefing and access to psychological support on return. Sleeping, taking a real break and talking to someone you trust are not weaknesses.

Exercise: a realistic movement plan

Situation. You must supervise a distribution 135 km from the office. Average speed on the track: 30 km/h. The distribution lasts 3 hours. Office rule: no vehicle on the road after 5:30 pm. Check-in calls every hour. The vehicle uses 16 litres per 100 km; a 25% reserve is mandatory.

Task. 1) What is the latest departure time for a same-day round trip? 2) Is it realistic if departure cannot take place before 7 am? 3) How much fuel should be planned?

Answer. Journey: 135 / 30 = 4 h 30 each way. Total time: 4 h 30 + 3 h + 4 h 30 = 12 h. To be back by 5:30 pm, you would have to leave at 5:30 am, before daybreak, which generally contradicts the ban on night driving. With a 7 am departure, the return would be at 7 pm: the plan is not feasible in one day. Solutions: overnight stay on site in an approved location, distribution supervised by the local team with a video call, or a two-day mission. Fuel: 270 km × 16 / 100 = 43.2 litres, plus 25%: 54 litres.

Key takeaways

- Local security briefing on arrival, even for a short visit; the rules apply to everyone.
- Timings calculated with a realistic average speed; a plan that exceeds the deadline is changed before leaving.
- Missed check-in call: written procedure, call-backs, then alert to the security manager after the set delay.
- Incident: get to safety, raise the alarm (who, what, where, when, condition, need), written report within 24 h; report near misses too.
- A mission is finished only after the debriefing, a useful report, feedback, administrative closure and recovery.

Quiz

1. A 90 km journey on a track at 30 km/h takes:
   A. 2 hours
   B. 3 hours
   C. 1 hour 30
   D. 4 hours

2. Armed men demand your vehicle at a roadblock. You:
   A. Refuse and speed off
   B. Comply calmly, without resisting: life comes before equipment
   C. Negotiate the price at length
   D. Take a photo for the report

3. Why report a near miss?
   A. To get a bonus
   B. So that the organisation detects a trend before a serious incident happens
   C. It is not useful
   D. To sanction the driver

Quiz answers : 1. B · 2. B · 3. B