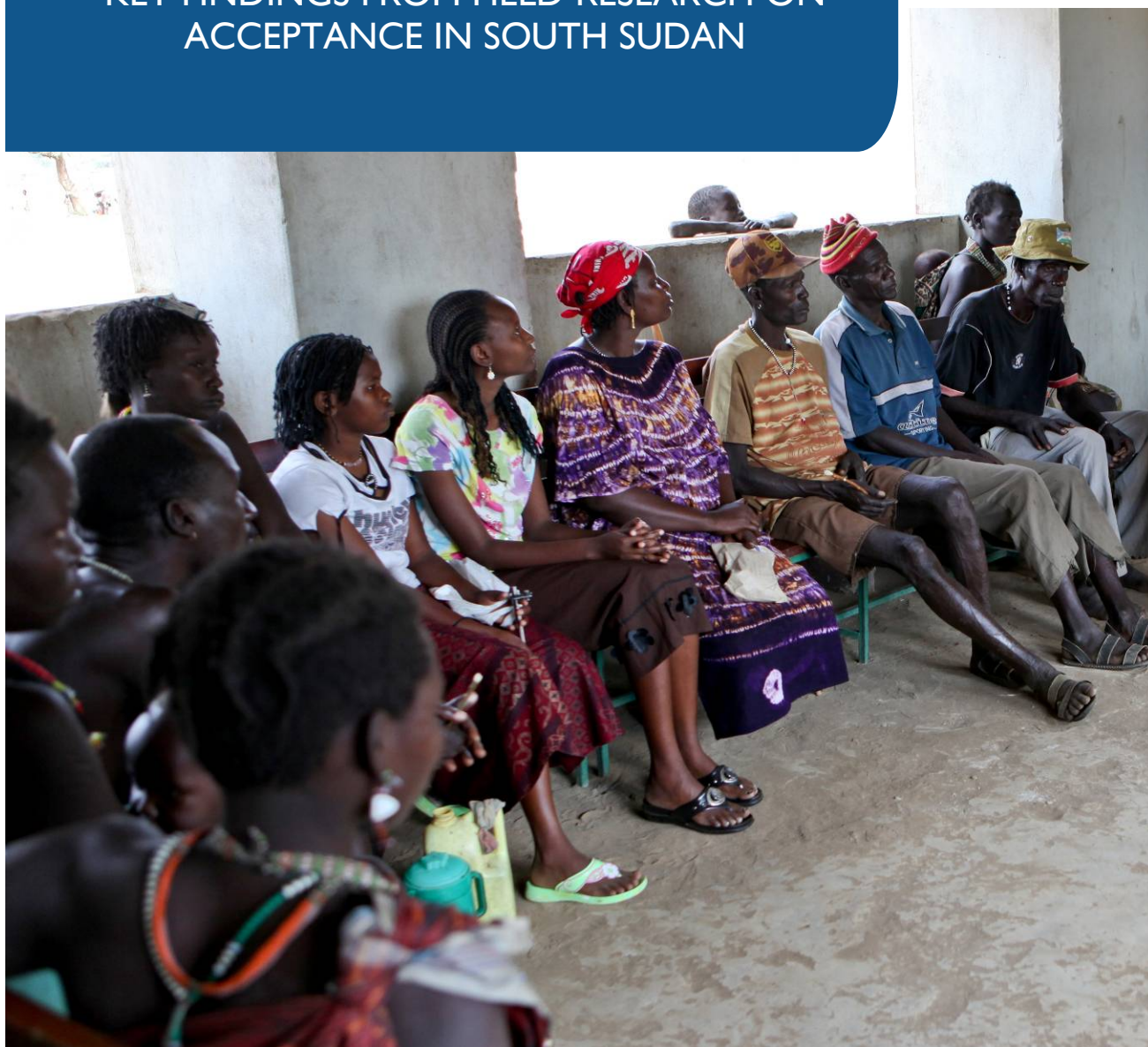


South Sudan Country Report

KEY FINDINGS FROM FIELD RESEARCH ON
ACCEPTANCE IN SOUTH SUDAN



The Collaborative Learning Approach to NGO Security Management Project



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For more information on the Collaborative Learning Approach to NGO Security Management Project, visit <http://acceptanceresearch.org>.

The country research team would like to thank Catholic Relief Services, American Refugee Committee, and Save the Children in South Sudan for providing logistical and administrative support for the field research. In addition, the country research team thanks all of the individuals and organizations that took part in the field research, either as researchers or as respondents. A full list of the names and affiliations of the individuals and groups who participated in interviews and focus group discussions carried out by the country research team is included in Appendix A.

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Executive Summary

This report is based on field research on acceptance as an approach to NGO security management in South Sudan. The research team explored three areas of an acceptance approach to security management: (1) how organizations gain and maintain acceptance, (2) how organizations assess and monitor the presence and degree of acceptance, and (3) how organizations determine whether acceptance is effective.

In general, acceptance as a security management approach is not well-developed among NGOs currently operating in South Sudan. Though many NGOs implicitly or explicitly use it as part of their overall security management approach, few have developed a comprehensive set of activities or indicators to implement or assess the approach and its effectiveness. Instead, informants indicated that acceptance is closely tied to meeting the needs of communities through programs and services. In this way, many NGOs and stakeholders see acceptance as needs-based. Approaching acceptance only from a programming viewpoint, however, limits its efficacy by focusing on community members and local authorities as the main stakeholders while not engaging other actors with the power to harm NGOs, and by confining implementation primarily to programming and not other units within an organization.

Gaining and maintaining acceptance

The primary way that organizations in South Sudan work to build acceptance is through their programming, particularly through meeting the needs of the populations they serve. Thus, organizations see acceptance as intimately connected to how they operate, even though few organizations deliberately and consistently integrate activities designed to build acceptance into their programming strategies. Some organizations also pay attention to staffing and stakeholder and context analysis as part of an acceptance approach.

Assessing and monitoring the presence and degree of acceptance

Stakeholder perceptions of NGOs

Many community members and government officials with whom we spoke reported that they determine the quality of their relationship with NGOs based on the benefits and services they receive from the NGO. These services are often the basis for how they distinguish between NGOs. While meeting needs is critical, providing timely, transparent, and relevant services and programs is equally important. In digging deeper, stakeholder informants also raised issues related to distinction and visibility, respect, how NGOs “look,” and the changing context in South Sudan.

Indicators of acceptance

Agencies do not have formal indicators to determine whether they are accepted. Nevertheless, some informants suggested potential indicators for assessing the presence of acceptance, such as the involvement of the community and local leaders in projects, stakeholders alerting an NGO about potential or actual dangers, or stakeholders intervening in some way to protect an NGO or its staff members.

Determining whether acceptance is effective

Our study revealed a basic level of acceptance for NGOs in South Sudan, founded primarily on meeting the needs of the population. There were also examples of acceptance “working” as a security management approach. For example, in many cases, communities and staff members inform NGOs about security risks, and in some cases communities actively protect NGOs. Other examples of effective acceptance include communities advocating on behalf of the organization or intervening directly to prevent or resolve security incidents.

Recommendations:

- When hiring, organizations should consider their overall profile of employees (e.g., identity, region, gender, age) and not only their identity-based profile (e.g., citizenship or ethnic group).
- NGOs should explore options for offering local, national, and regional staff opportunities for professional development or provide other benefits that do not inflate the local hiring market.
- In their induction and orientation activities, organizations should devote additional attention to codes of conduct, attitudes and relationships, educating and explaining the organizational principles and mission to new staff members, and acceptance as a security management approach.
- To gain acceptance, NGOs should incorporate building healthy and mutually respectful relationships and stakeholder and context analysis into job descriptions and adapt and modify such tools to incorporate acceptance-related analysis.
- NGOs and staff members living in communities should make a concerted effort to participate in the life of the community.
- As a way to build trust, NGOs should increase accountability to beneficiaries, and demonstrate efforts to increase transparency and share budget information and constraints with communities and other stakeholders.
- NGOs could implement small-scale programs in Juba to increase awareness and understanding of the NGOs work and services.
- In hiring for suboffices, NGOs should explore options for including local community members on the committees hiring.
- NGOs should look to create low-cost and feasible mechanisms to engage with communities outside the project cycle (e.g., periodic visits to speak with community leaders or former beneficiaries unrelated to project matters).
- NGOs should look for opportunities to involve communications, human resources, and other staff in increasing acceptance.
- NGOs should periodically reexamine their internal policies and guidelines to assess their costs and benefits for acceptance and other priorities.
- NGOs should designate responsibility for assessing and monitoring levels of acceptance to a particular position or department within the organization, and incorporate this responsibility into job descriptions.
- NGOs should begin to collect and document agency-specific examples of acceptance and a lack of acceptance. Based on these examples, NGOs can begin to differentiate between levels of acceptance and analyze how the level of acceptance affects its effectiveness in South Sudan.
- NGOs should provide formal and informal feedback mechanisms, ensure that communities are aware of these mechanisms, monitor their frequency of use, and change or adapt the mechanisms if they are not using them. And finally, NGOs should follow up with communities to share how their feedback is being used.
- NGOs should begin to collect and document agency-specific examples of acceptance and a lack of acceptance, and use these to analyze the effectiveness of acceptance as a security management approach in South Sudan.
- NGOs should collaboratively develop methods to document under what circumstances acceptance is and is not effective in a given location. This may include analytical tools, guidelines to help staff determine whether to adopt an acceptance approach, or both.

Introduction

The Collaborative Learning Approach to NGO Security Management Project

This report is a project document of the Collaborative Learning Approach to NGO Security Management research project, a yearlong project funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) that explores acceptance as an approach to NGO security management. The project aims to promote a better understanding of acceptance as a security management approach, including what acceptance is and under what circumstances it can be effective. The project held a series of events, which are detailed below. In April 2011, the project team carried out field research in Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda. This report is based on an analysis of data collected through field research in South Sudan only. The other two country reports are available for viewing and download at Acceptance Research, our online information-sharing and discussion forum (<http://www.acceptanceresearch.org>). All three country reports will inform a final policy and recommendations document, which will be available on Acceptance Research.

As its name suggests, the Collaborative Learning Approach to NGO Security Management project aimed to promote collaborative engagement and learning. Each project activity and event was designed to promote thinking and learning and collaboration, which guided the field research on acceptance conducted in East Africa. In the first phase, project staff organized two international consultations, in Washington, D.C., and Geneva, Switzerland, with headquarters-based security professionals and senior staff to discuss the key concepts of acceptance and how organizations implement an acceptance approach to security management. Project staff drafted a white paper on acceptance that explored these issues and consolidated and expanded current thinking on acceptance. The white paper was circulated to participants for review and feedback.¹ The consultations and collaborative process of drafting the white paper informed the project team's analytical thinking about what acceptance is and generated the research questions for phase two of the project.

The second phase of the project was designed to field test the ideas in the white paper. First, project staff drafted a research framework that delineated specific questions about (1) how organizations gain and maintain acceptance; (2) how they assess the presence and degree of acceptance; and (3) how they determine whether acceptance is effective in a particular context. The framework identified potential sources of information and methods for the research, using a qualitative, grounded-theory approach.

Second, project staff organized and carried out the field research in East Africa, referred to as collaborative learning activities (CLA). Project staff reached out across the NGO community in the United States, Europe, and East Africa to solicit field-based participants from different NGOs in Kenya, Uganda, and South Sudan. To prepare participants for the collaborative learning activities in Kenya, Uganda, and South Sudan, project staff held a Regional Consultation and Training Workshop in Nairobi. After the workshop, participants returned to their country of work or origin and took part in field research activities as part of a country research team. Staff members from 16 international NGOs and local organizations participated in the workshop and the subsequent field research.

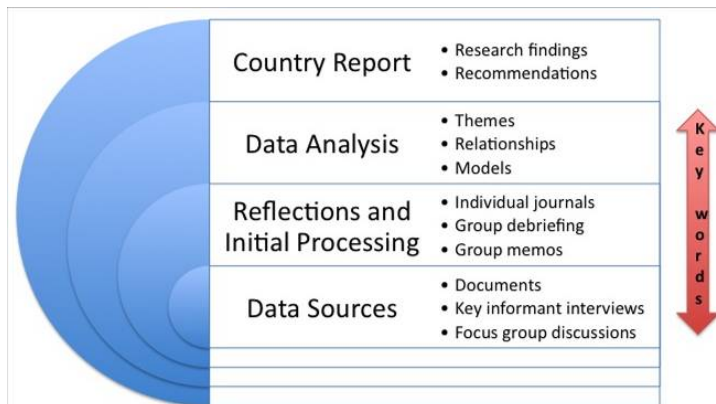


Figure 1: Field research process

¹ This paper has since been revised and accepted for publication in a forthcoming issue of *Disasters* journal (Larissa Fast, Faith Freeman, Michael O'Neill, and Elizabeth Rowley. Forthcoming. "In acceptance we trust? Conceptualizing acceptance as a viable approach to security management." *Disasters*.)

Methodology for the South Sudan Field Research

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The field research sought to answer three questions about acceptance as a security management approach:

1. What actions do organizations take to gain acceptance?
2. How do organizations assess and monitor the presence and degree of acceptance?
3. How do organizations determine whether acceptance is effective in a specific context?

The project used a working definition of acceptance in which “acceptance is founded on effective relationships and cultivating and maintaining consent from beneficiaries, local authorities, belligerents and other stakeholders. This in turn is a means of reducing or removing potential threats in order to access vulnerable populations and undertake programme activities.”²

The three research questions explore basic conceptual aspects of acceptance and seek examples of actual practices. The project staff adopted a qualitative research approach to answering these questions. In particular, the project staff applied a grounded theory approach, which seeks to develop a theory about a process generated through analysis of information provided by individuals, or groups of individuals, who have in some way experienced this process. The understanding of the process that results is thus “grounded” in the reality of the people who live it. In applying a grounded theory approach to the research questions, the project staff aimed to maintain focus on the process of adopting and applying an acceptance approach to security management and to ensure that the research findings reflect and are informed by the realities that organizations and their staff members face.

Each country research team was composed of participants from each country and led by one project staff person and a cofacilitator. Team members for South Sudan were

Larissa Fast, *Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame* (team leader)
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The South Sudan team conducted key informant interviews and led focus group discussions in Juba, Bor, and Kapoeta North and South in April 2011. Country team members conducted interviews with NGO staff (e.g., country directors, program managers, security focal points, logisticians, human resources staff) as well as local government officials and community leaders. The team held focus group discussions with groups of community members, including NGO project beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries, and staff from local organizations. In total, the South Sudan country team conducted 34 key informant interviews and held eight focus group discussions, one in Juba, four in Bor, and three in Kapoeta. At each interview or focus group discussion, at least two team members were present, one of whom served as designated notetaker.

The findings from this research reflect the social, cultural, and security context of South Sudan as of April 2011. Time constraints and difficulties related to access resulting from the start of the rainy season in South Sudan limited the number of interviews and focus groups the team conducted and the locations the team was able to visit. The country research team did not visit the most insecure areas of the country nor speak directly with any of the armed actors in South Sudan. Given these limitations, the findings from this report are not generalizable to the whole NGO community, to the whole of South Sudan, or to all stakeholder groups. Instead, the findings reflect the analysis of the team based on its collective experience and the interviews and focus groups conducted as part of the research. If done in a different setting and with different stakeholders, the process used for this research on acceptance could generate different results. Nevertheless, the findings do suggest important themes related to the successes and challenges of acceptance as a security management approach in South Sudan.

A key element of the collaborative learning approach involved reflecting on what country team members, serving in the capacity of researchers, and team leaders learned throughout the data collection process. Project staff provided all country team members with a journaling notebook and encouraged them to reflect on changes in their knowledge and attitudes regarding acceptance as a

²Larissa Fast and Michael O'Neill. 2010. A closer look at acceptance. *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine* 47:5–6.

Acceptance as a Security Management Approach in South Sudan

security management approach. In addition to individual journaling, each collaborative learning team held multiple debriefings while in the field. These debriefings aimed to capture key observations and new information, challenges, difficulties, and adaptations (including changes to questions and interview guides), and preliminary keywords and themes.

Larissa Fast drafted this report based upon the interview and focus group discussion notes, team debriefings, and field journals. Team members provided feedback on the initial draft, which has been incorporated into the final version of this country report. In addition, we thank John Ashworth, a longtime Sudanese church worker, for his insights and suggestions on the draft report. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are attributed to interview or focus group discussion informants. Appendix A lists the names and affiliations of interviewees, and locations and general characteristics of focus group discussion participants. In some cases, interviewees chose to remain anonymous or to withhold their organizational affiliation. The research complied with informed consent procedures as reviewed and approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, USA.

In general, acceptance as a security management approach is not well-developed among NGOs currently operating in South Sudan.³ Though many NGOs implicitly or explicitly employ acceptance as part of their overall security management approach, few have developed a comprehensive set of activities or indicators to implement or assess the approach and its effectiveness. Instead, informants indicated that acceptance is closely tied to meeting the needs of communities through programs and services. In this way, many NGOs and stakeholders see acceptance as needs-based: “If you give people what they need, then officials [and] communities accept you.” By and large, this appears to be true. There are, however, important caveats to this observation.

This section reports what country team members heard about acceptance, addressing each of the three research questions in turn. The first part documents what actions agencies are taking to gain acceptance, followed by a presentation of how community members and other stakeholders perceive NGOs and how NGOs monitor and assess the presence and degree of acceptance. The final part explores the effectiveness of acceptance in South Sudan. Where relevant, we distinguish between types of informants (i.e., NGO staff, community members, government officials; stakeholders refers to both community members and government officials).

Gaining and maintaining acceptance

The primary way that organizations in South Sudan work to build acceptance is through their programming, particularly through meeting the needs of the populations they serve. Thus, organizations see acceptance as intimately connected to how they operate, even though few organizations deliberately and consistently integrate activities designed to build acceptance into their programming strategies. Other mechanisms related to implementing an acceptance approach relate to staffing and stakeholder and context analysis.

³ NGOs operating in South Sudan during the civil war that operated outside of the parameters of Operation Lifeline Sudan essentially operated using the idea of acceptance, even though acceptance as a security management approach did not formally exist at that time.



Above: Members of the South Sudan Country Team (Photo by Larissa Fast)

NGO programming

For many informants, an organization's programming is the most common and crucial component in implementing an acceptance approach to security management. Many of the elements they identified as important are also considered important for effective development or NGO programs, such as involving the community in program design, planning, and implementation. Informants flagged decision making about targeting particular beneficiary populations as important in gaining or losing acceptance. Many NGO informants indicated that they meet with formal and informal community officials and leaders (e.g., government officials and community elders) to obtain buy-in for programs. They also reported repeatedly meeting with officials and community members, approaching and informing them of progress. To connect with community members, one organization cited the example of translating English training materials into Arabic and local languages, and using pictures and posters to create other ways to communicate with people in their own language.

Organizations see acceptance as intimately connected to how they operate, even though few organizations deliberately and consistently integrate activities designed to build acceptance into their programming strategies.

Several NGO informants pressed for more innovation in programming to ensure greater community acceptance. They observed that relationships with beneficiaries are often built immediately prior to projects, maintained during projects, and end when the project ends. These informants suggested NGOs should emphasize living with and in communities, avoid clustering residences and compounds in

particular areas, and meet with beneficiaries and community members "outside the project cycle." These actions facilitate better engagement with communities and help to build relationships that are not tied only to programming and services.

A few informants directly or indirectly raised the humanitarian principles of neutrality (not taking sides, talking to all sides), impartiality (providing assistance without discrimination and based on need), and independence (independence in decision making and funding) as contributing to acceptance. While the research team did not ask specifically about principles, NGO staff informants mentioned humanitarian principles more often than stakeholder informants did. A few argued that the

principles in and of themselves do not guarantee acceptance. According to one NGO informant, "you can be as principled as you like, but the community still may or may not accept you."

Informants recognized that the lack of visible or tangible results or unmet promises could result in dissatisfaction, and linked this to potential insecurity for program staff. Informants across all categories cited the pitfalls of needs assessments, especially repeated assessments from one or more NGOs, which can raise community expectations or may be interpreted as a promise of future service delivery. Clear communication between NGOs and communities and opportunities for community members to give feedback on programs, informants suggested, can help to mitigate these negative effects. NGO informants indicated they communicate with communities in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Participating in coordination and community consultation meetings,
- Providing written reports on project outcomes,
- Inviting various stakeholders to events and activities (e.g., workshops, trainings, celebrations),
- "Meeting and greeting" individuals in the communities where they work,
- Conducting interviews and focus groups with beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries to assess program results and identify areas for improvement, and
- Hire field staff whose explicit responsibilities include community engagement or community liaison.

One informant, however, observed that many of these mechanisms have become formalized and project-focused, and may not seek opinions beyond the local authorities, village chiefs, and community representatives. The informant suggested this has negatively affected the quality and quantity of feedback that NGOs receive ("the more formalized, the more we don't achieve results"), in that the formal feedback takes the place of informal engagement with communities. The informal engagement, in turn, elicits more information from a wider variety of people and about a diversity of topics.

Staffing

For many organizations, another important component of implementing an acceptance approach relates to staffing, particularly who and how they recruit and hire staff members and the codes of conduct that govern the behavior and actions of staff.

A number of organizations indicated that they post job openings through relevant government channels, both to fulfill government requirements and to advertise widely for positions. For at least one organization, being transparent with community members about how the organization recruits and hires its staff members is a strategic concern. The organization asks community elders or leaders to sit in on the job interviews, and after the person is hired, these elders explain to the community who the organization hired and why. The strategy serves a dual purpose, since the community has input regarding whom the organization hires via their representatives, and the community members themselves take on the responsibility of educating each other about the qualifications for the position and the eventual decision about the successful candidate.

The composition of an organization's staff members is vital to how it is perceived. Many organizations in South Sudan employ a combination of international (expatriates from outside Africa), regional (expatriates from East or other parts of Africa), and national (Sudanese) staff members. Local staff members usually work in suboffices and are from the villages or areas in which they work. According to informants, this practice has strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, broad-based hiring allows organizations to deploy staff members in ways that match skills to programmatic needs while taking account of an individual's profile and his or her security risks. Some organizations choose, for security concerns, not to send an international staff member to highly insecure states. Other organizations may send regional or international staff members based on qualifications and take necessary precautions related to security. "Relocatable staff" are not from the area in which they work, and may be Sudanese, Ugandan, or European. The makeup of these staff, especially those interacting with the community, affects how communities and other stakeholders perceive the organization.

On the other hand, designations of "international" or "national" or "local" create a hierarchy within organizations, with local and national staff, all Sudanese, at the "lowest grade," according to one informant. These distinctions also highlight different risks for staff members. One informant suggested that Sudanese or regional staff are more likely than Western expatriates to be harassed or beaten at checkpoints, while other informants indicated that regional East African staff are more likely to be resented for "stealing Sudanese jobs." Some stakeholder informants suggested these internal hierarchies and, in

some cases, the lack of local hiring—meaning hiring residents of the town or village in which a project takes place—may generate resentment and lessen acceptance. For instance, some community informants said that they feel that some NGO staff treat them as inferior because they are illiterate. One group of community informants expressed this as follows: "NGOs come here with good purpose, but sometimes they don't come with good people. Some of the foreigners, especially Ugandans and Kenyans, think they are wiser than us because we can't read and write but they can. Even people who are from South Sudan who have gone to school show the same attitude. There are too many foreigners working here these days."

While most organizations have given thought to the security management policies of different categories of staff members, not all have given similar attention to the security implications of benefits packages. One informant pointed out that national staff members and their families are sometimes overlooked as important interlocutors for an acceptance approach. For example, how happy staff members are in their jobs affects how they talk about the organization, which can have positive or negative repercussions on an agency's reputation. One organization provides professional development funds for all its staff members, from the country director through to cleaners and drivers.

"NGOs come here with good purpose, but sometimes they don't come with good people. Some of the foreigners...think they are wiser than us because we can't read and write."

Many informants across all categories (NGO, community, and government) raised the higher pay and more generous benefits (e.g., leave policies, health insurance) for international staff as compared to other categories of staff as a source of friction both within organizations and between organizations and various stakeholders. One stakeholder informant said: "It would be cost effective to build the capacity of local staff in order to avoid importation of workers who are very expensive for program funding. If you hire an international, they will leave every eight weeks for R&R [rest and relaxation]. They are always traveling and you will exhaust the budget. Then you appeal to the donor and expand the budget."

While most informants did not think staff turnover created problems for acceptance, some NGO informants indicated that they attempt to ensure departing staff members

overlap with their replacements, though this is not always possible. One NGO informant suggested that staff turnover related to discipline (e.g., a staff member is fired for violating organizational policies) was more likely to cause security problems than turnover related to a staff person taking a different job for higher pay.

Many organizations conduct orientation or inductions for new international staff members that includes cultural introductions and security briefings, which aims to increase acceptance by increasing understanding of local conditions and appropriate behavior. This is reflected in the codes of conduct that many organizations have instituted as part of employment contracts. Most NGO staff informants indicated their organizations had codes of conduct and were able to outline its general content. Some indicated their organizations reward or recognize individuals who uphold the code in performance evaluations, but do not consistently reprimand or punish individuals for violations of the code. Thus, how to hold individuals accountable to the code and spelling out the consequences if the code is violated are often not institutionalized or clear.

Ensuring that all staff members are able to accurately speak about the organization and its mission is another element of orienting new staff members and providing continuity in times of change. One organization is developing simple messages and a handbook about the organization and its goals and values, so that all staff members feel comfortable in talking about and describing the work of the organization.

Most NGO informants also recognized the importance of the less tangible elements of relationships with communities and other stakeholders as they relate to acceptance and security. One informant told a story of how an expatriate staff member who arrived on a temporary assignment ruined a carefully cultivated relationship with a government official in one day. The government official perceived the expatriate's behavior as rude and aggressive, and refused to work with the organization as a result. The organization's level of acceptance with this government official, built over months and even years, dissipated quickly as a result of individual behavior. According to another NGO informant, "Sudan is a tough place to work in. Experienced people are not coming here. We depend on young people with little experience who act like cowboys. If a young guy was to negotiate with the commissioner, it might put the organization and that person at risk." Some NGO informants pointed out that levels of stress affect NGO staff behavior, which in turn affects how they

interact with beneficiaries and their levels of acceptance. One stakeholder informant explained that even the local national staff in health clinics yelled at them, which they did not appreciate.

In summary, staffing and staff behavior are complex though crucial components of acceptance in South Sudan.

Stakeholder and context analysis

The three most commonly mentioned stakeholders with whom NGOs need to engage to gain acceptance were community members, local leaders, and local and national authorities. Thus, while many conceive of stakeholders as limited to beneficiary communities and authorities, many interviewees in South Sudan also affirmed the importance of thinking beyond this key group of stakeholders. Some organizations also recognize the importance of considering the perspectives of and gaining acceptance from other stakeholders, such as nonbeneficiary populations ("communities we pass through"), suppliers, business people, security officials (e.g., police, SPLA) and armed actors (e.g., ex-combatants) who have the capacity to do harm to NGOs.

Reaching out to and developing relationships with all stakeholders is a key activity for some organizations, informing every aspect of their programming. In the words of one NGO interviewee, "if we've surprised anyone by being there, we're not doing our job right." These organizations pointed out that this strategy of "building relationships without preference" is a slow and intensive process of going from village to village to explain about the organization and its work. This work also entails learning more about who the actors are in an area, what roles these actors play in a community, who they relate to in the community, who they influence, and who influences them. For these organizations, the intangibles of developing relationships—often achieved through "drinking tea" and listening—are important components of a staff member's job description.

For other organizations, using local suppliers and local hiring is a way of engaging with various stakeholders. While this is not always possible due to donor regulations, time constraints, or the availability of goods and services, using local suppliers builds relationships with business people in a community, which can also increase acceptance since it supports the local economy and job creation. One informant cautioned that always using suppliers from Juba or outside of South Sudan when the materials are locally available can be detrimental to acceptance.

Generally, NGO informants did not mention specific stakeholder or context analysis tools beyond “actor mapping” or commonly used program analysis tools (e.g., needs assessment, “do no harm” analysis). NGO informants indicated that these generally do not include acceptance-related elements, nor did they emphasize such tools as an important part of their acceptance approach. This suggests that analytical tools for stakeholder and context analysis, particularly as they relate to acceptance, are not well developed nor widely shared across organizations.

Assessing and monitoring the presence and degree of acceptance

From our interviews, it is apparent that many organizations hold two basic assumptions about acceptance: first, that providing for communities’ needs confers acceptance, and, second, that as long as the organization does not experience any security incidents, it is accepted. Both assumptions are potentially problematic, as the former does not consider the potential of other stakeholders (e.g., armed actors, criminals) to do harm to NGOs and the latter does not account for other possible reasons why an organization may or may not have experienced a security incident. In other words, not experiencing a security incident does not indicate the organization is accepted.

This section is divided into two parts. The first assesses the presence and degree of acceptance in South Sudan via the community members’ and government actors’ (including some local security officials) perceptions of NGOs, two key stakeholder groups for gaining acceptance. The second part compiles examples of how agencies assess and monitor the presence and degree of acceptance.

Stakeholder perceptions of NGOs

Many community members and government officials with whom we spoke reported that they determine the quality of their relationship with NGOs based on the benefits and services they receive from the NGO. These services are often the basis for how they distinguish between NGOs, a form of “branding by service provided.” For example, community members are able to name which NGOs provide food, education, or water and sanitation in their communities. Informants reported that if NGOs deliver what communities need, on time, and go through local leaders, the NGOs are generally accepted. According to one community, going through the “right” or proper

channels is crucial: “If you bring something that we need but you don’t go through community leaders, we won’t accept it.” This affirms the importance not only of meeting needs but also of the ways in which NGOs meet these needs. Thus, timely, transparent, and relevant services and programming to meet community needs serve as a foundation for acceptance. In digging deeper, stakeholder informants provided important caveats to this, specifically related to distinction and visibility, respect, how NGOs “look,” and a changing context in South Sudan.

Distinction and visibility

Among our community and government informants, a general consensus existed that communities do distinguish between NGOs (and sometimes label them “good” or “bad”), regardless of whether or not they are beneficiaries of the organization’s programs or services. This casts doubt on any assumption that NGOs are lumped together or seen as the same, even though distinctions between NGOs may be more difficult for nonbeneficiary populations or for regional or national government officials who do not directly benefit from programs. These distinctions extend to programs and individual staff members. For instance, one NGO reported that children in one area run toward nutrition staff members, because they bring food, and away from vaccination staff, because they give injections. In the words of one group of community informants, “We know them by their logos on cars, by the activities they do, and their behavior. Some NGOs have very polite staff, and some NGOs have very short-tempered staff.”

Communities do distinguish between NGOs (and sometimes label them as “good” or “bad”), regardless of whether or not they are beneficiaries of the organization’s programs or services.

Informants suggested that distinguishing between NGOs is more of an issue at the national level (among ministry officials), where government officials are less likely to directly interact with NGO staff or benefit from NGO programs and services. Communication horizontally (across ministries) and vertically (between different levels of government, local to national) is not always consistent or effective. The level of familiarity with and knowledge about NGOs within some ministries (e.g., Ministries of Health, Education, and Disaster Management) is better than in others.

Visibility is a particular issue for nonoperational NGOs who work through local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) or other NGOs. Informants were divided about whether the work of non-operational NGOs, usually international NGOs (INGOs), is well known or not, since their contributions are not necessarily publicized or clear to beneficiaries. In general, though, a few informants suggested INGOs are better known, in part because they have access to more resources. According to one group of community informants, “INGOs are known, have better visibility. They have a better chance with megaresources.” Some community informants indicated that INGOs provide more perks (e.g., per diems for training courses, food, or other benefits to participants), which negatively colors how communities perceive local NGOs, since they cannot provide similar benefits. Other informants characterized the difference between local NGOs (LNGOs) and INGOs in terms of size of project and others by whom they were perceived as serving—communities and governments respectively. For example, one group of community informants characterized the difference as follows: “International NGOs seem to be working for big projects and national NGOs seem to be working with small projects.” Another group stated that “international NGOs are under government control,” and that “international NGOs have a lot of funds and have more quality staff.” One government informant characterized the difference as related to the “institutional backgrounds of local and international NGOs. INGOs have influences from donors and follow rules and regulations from the donors on implementation of funded programs. For example, the Swedish government influences organizations funded by Sweden. Local NGOs are locally guided and managed by local people, and local laws apply.”

Our informants were similarly divided over community member expectations of NGOs working in adjacent communities. Some indicated that they would not object to an NGO passing through their community without providing any services or resources. In contrast, others indicated they resent being “passed over” for services and would expect something from NGOs passing through their communities.

Respect

A number of stakeholder informants indicated that cultural conventions dictate that communities feel an obligation to protect foreigners or NGOs in their midst: “In South Sudan, there is respect for aliens [or] strangers among the people. The culture says that the people must safeguard

them. The community therefore takes responsibility for the safety of INGO staff.” However, when an action violates established conventions, this obligation to protect disappears. Though only a few informants asserted a strong and direct link between respect and security for NGOs, many community members and officials emphasized the importance of NGOs respecting customs and traditions and showing respect to those with whom they interact.

Stakeholder informants raised two elements of respect in particular. First, how foreigners treat women affects the quality of relationships between NGOs and communities. In the words of one informant, “if you tamper with our women, you lose community protection.” A number of informants suggested that the treatment of women had particular relevance, mentioning polygamy and bride price for many Sudanese ethnic groups. Others indicated there are circumstances in which it is not appropriate for women to speak (e.g., at meetings or in the presence of certain elders) and in some communities it is not appropriate for men and women to participate in the same meeting. Informants also mentioned livestock and the value of cattle as an important cultural element of respect. Contravening these traditions would negatively affect perceptions of the NGOs and potentially decrease levels of acceptance.

The second caveat is related to the quality of individual interactions. Informants generally noted the importance of smiling, greeting, and shaking hands when meeting people, and indicated that short tempers and aggressive behavior were not welcome. One informant suggested temperament is more important than how people dress. Another said, “greetings and listening are important; showing concern is important.” Position in the community, gender, and age are important determinants of how individuals should interact in a respectful manner. Some community members resented being treated as inferior by foreigners, whether Western or from other regions of Africa or Sudan. Other informants suggested that some NGO staff, particularly expatriates, do not interact respectfully with or do not defer to government officials, elders, traditional chiefs, or community leaders in ways that would be common practice in their own countries. These behaviors negatively affect relationships, creating mutual distrust and hampering communication. This, in turn, decreases acceptance. In general, stakeholder informants indicated that courteous and respectful interactions are important for acceptance.

How NGOs look: Equity, transparency, and accountability

In response to our initial questions about the relationships between NGOs and the communities in which they work in South Sudan, community members and government officials often responded “they are good.” Scratching below the surface, however, reveals tension between the work of NGOs and how NGOs look. At one extreme, an informant likened NGOs to “retailers,” doing jobs that local community members could do. One group of community informants pointed out that “INGOs pay better, so there is brain drain, as some INGOs are attracting the best qualified staff from national NGOs.” Community members and others voiced complaints related to employment issues and the “NGO footprint,” which refers to perceptions of disparities between an NGO’s resources (e.g., vehicles, compounds, staff members) and the services it provides.

Regarding employment, community members expressed discontent that NGOs tend to hire individuals from outside their communities. The divisions between categories of staff (local, national, regional, international) can lead to resentment and possibly insecurity, especially given the benefits and higher pay that international and some regional staff enjoy over national or local staff. This was of particular concern with young or inexperienced international staff who were seen as having equal or less experience and qualifications when compared with

national staff, yet receive higher pay and better benefits. While some informants recognized a capacity gap related to low literacy rates and the lack of the requisite job skills in some communities, both beneficiary and nonbeneficiary informants questioned where the money went and asked why more community members weren’t getting NGO jobs. Adding to the discontent is the sense that outsiders, whether Sudanese from other parts of the country or regional or expatriate staff, often treat community members as inferior, or as lacking in knowledge or sophistication. Some community members suggested that while they may not be able to read or write, they have knowledge that is of value to NGOs.

Other informants expressed concern about perceived differences between NGO resources and infrastructure and the services they deliver. A few NGO informants expressed concern with what they saw as the separation between NGOs and the communities in which they work, and the negative effects this had on community perceptions and relationships. Stakeholder informants questioned the time and energy spent in conducting assessments and writing reports as compared to the tangible benefits and services they received. As a result, they saw NGOs as taking funds from donors that they believed should be available to communities. Delays, especially unexplained ones, negatively affect community perceptions, as does a lack of transparency or clarity

Voices from the Field

On respect...

“But when NGOs do not fulfill their promises they earn disrespect—if they don’t do the project in time or if the quality is less. Some NGOs deliver expired medicine or rotten food, and this becomes a problem. But when it rains, there is no problem for NGOs. The people know it is the fault of nature.”

On entry strategy...

“If you bring something that we need but you don’t go through community leaders, we won’t accept it.”

On equity, transparency, and accountability...

“INGO compounds are like islands of comfort in the middle of want. They are eating nicely, driving nice cars. Beyond the gates people are dying. They have the best in the ocean...nice food and the best cars!”

“The foreign staff are being paid more heavily than Sudanese staff, in spite of the fact that the staff may be having the same qualifications.”



Photo by Jenn Warren

related to how NGOs make decisions about who to hire, where to work, or how to spend resources.

These informants called for greater accountability and transparency in budgeting (what NGOs spend money on) and staffing decisions, in particular. Several interviewees used the words “genuine” and “sincere” in referring to how programming should be done to increase acceptance.

A changing context

The changing context in South Sudan, with the recent declaration of independence in July 2011, adds new complexities for gaining and maintaining acceptance. For many years, NGOs in South Sudan have worked fairly autonomously, choosing their program priorities and locations and implementing them with minimal or no government input or oversight. The NGOs that stayed and operated in Sudan throughout the war gained credibility and even admiration from the communities they served (see below for an example related to “John Parker”). As a result, these NGOs have earned a great deal of respect from many Sudanese. Like community members, government actors—many of whom previously worked for NGOs—generally indicated that relationships with NGOs were satisfactory, and that officials have good relationships with NGOs and that NGOs are liked and not harassed. “They have no security problems” was a typical statement. Many official stakeholder informants indicated that they coordinate and work with NGOs about decisions regarding program and community priorities.

With the declaration of independence, the period of NGO autonomy is waning and giving rise, in some cases, to tension between old and newer ways of operating and between some NGOs and some government officials. Multiple NGO and government informants indicated that officials do not have a clear sense of what NGOs are doing or that NGOs could do a better job of communicating and coordinating with local and national officials. In some locations, these tensions have surfaced and play out in the form of harassment or administrative obstacles that hinder the work of NGOs on the one hand, and instances of NGOs ignoring government requests or not respecting government officials on the other. This, in turn, can generate mutual distrust and decrease acceptance. Given these tensions and the fact that many government officials previously worked for NGOs, it is important for NGOs not to make assumptions that any degree of acceptance may automatically accrue from previous employment with an NGO or from a long history of work in a particular area. Acceptance, therefore, must be

continually earned and maintained, and not assumed based on history.

Indicators of acceptance

Agencies do not have formal indicators for acceptance, nor do they systematically assess whether they have gained acceptance. Multiple NGO informants suggested that a lack of incidents or the ability to access populations were indicators of acceptance. Several of these informants differentiated between gaining access to populations, which was not an issue for NGOs, and the ability to implement programs, which sometimes proved difficult. In some cases, they indicated that a lack of acceptance hindered their ability to finish or fully carry out a project.

Nevertheless, some informants suggested potential indicators for assessing the presence of acceptance:

- The community shows initiative in taking ownership of the final product of services (e.g., volunteering to guard a building or project site);
- The community offers gifts or gifts-in-kind to the NGO or to staff members; and
- Increased use of services, especially in cases with a prior history of nonuse.

Participants in one focus group related a notable example of an individual and NGO that had gained acceptance.

- “In the mid-1980s, an NGO had a partnership with a local NGO working north of here. It was a bad time. When they intervened, the people didn’t forget. They distributed food and mosquito nets to the people. The aid worker who was implementing this was called John Parker and he was well known within the community. Many people named their children ‘John Parker’ after this extraordinary gentleman. Even the mosquito nets were also called ‘John Parker’ mosquito nets!”

A final group of indicators serve a dual function, as indicators of the presence and degree of acceptance but also as indicators that acceptance is effective (discussed in the next section).

- Stakeholders alert the NGO about potential or actual dangers (e.g., the community alerts an NGO about rumors of armed actors nearby and that the NGO should avoid certain areas; an official or community member warns the NGO of cattle raiding in a project area);

- Stakeholders intervene in some way to protect the NGO or its staff members (e.g., community members surround an NGO vehicle and staff members to protect them from an angry mob after a vehicle accident); and
- Stakeholders intervene after a security incident, to help the NGO or to “right a wrong” (e.g., community members search for and recover stolen property and return it to the NGO).

Several interviewees noted the intuitive nature of acceptance, suggesting that organizations should “feel welcomed” and know when this feeling of welcome either wanes or disappears.

Indicators of acceptance		
Community shows initiative in taking ownership from the final product of services	Indicators of gaining acceptance	
The community or other stakeholders offer gifts-in-kind to the NGO or to staff members		
Use of services increases, especially in cases with a history of nonuse		
Community members or other stakeholders warn of potential threats (information sharing)		Dual indicators
Community members or other stakeholders intervene in some way to protect the NGO or its staff members		
Stakeholders intervene after a security incident to help the NGO or to “right a wrong”		

Figure 2: Indicators of acceptance

Determining whether acceptance is effective

The previous sections documented actions that NGOs take to gain acceptance, which affect whether or not they are accepted. This is different, however, from determining whether or not acceptance is effective as a security management approach. In short, is acceptance working?

Our study revealed a basic level of acceptance for NGOs in South Sudan, founded primarily on meeting the needs of the population. In many cases, communities and staff

members inform NGOs about security risks, and, in some cases, communities actively protect NGOs. Often, the only proof or confirmation NGOs have that acceptance is working is when an incident is prevented or avoided. For example, one group of informants pointed out that guns are widely available in South Sudan, and that individuals could use guns to forcibly enter NGO compounds and take whatever they like. For the most part, this has not happened, suggesting a basic level of acceptance.

In many cases, it is easier to identify when acceptance is not present. NGO informants also shared examples of security incidents that they believed indicated a lack of acceptance. The nature of some of these examples suggests that an NGO lacks acceptance, or at least that the NGO could have done more or taken different actions to gain acceptance. (Note: All of the examples below have been modified to maintain confidentiality for the informants and affected organizations.)

- One NGO participated in an assessment mission arranged by another organization in an area in which it had no existing programs or relationships. When staff members arrived, they discovered that the other organization had not appropriately communicated with the authorities about the purpose of the assessment. The authorities become suspicious and accused the NGO of spying.
- The driver of an NGO vehicle refused to give a lift to a group of people, including a pregnant woman. Later on, the driver of that vehicle was stopped at a roadblock and beaten.
- An NGO got involved in disarmament work. The initial rollout plan did not work and the disarmament efforts encountered significant resistance. The community took up arms in protest and fought back, threatening the NGO.
- An NGO working in a hospital was asked to stop its work and leave because of an issue concerning showers and toilets in the hospital. There was miscommunication about who would clean the showers, which resulted in discontent among the officials. The discontent resulted in the request to leave and eventual departure of the NGO.

In contrast, many informants also shared examples of communities and stakeholders acting in some way to protect NGO staff members or acceptance “working” in other ways.

Examples of the effectiveness of acceptance

The examples below convey a range of ways that community members might signal acceptance, through advocacy on behalf of the organization, sharing of vital security information with the organization, or direct acts of intervention to prevent or resolve security incidents.

Examples of community or other stakeholder actions to protect NGOs:

- An expatriate driving a marked vehicle was in an accident in which a child received minor injuries. The matter was taken to the police. The child's father, who was an SPLA official, came to the police station with a gun and threatened the driver of the vehicle. Despite the threats from the SPLA official, the police protected the staff members.

Examples of community members advocating on behalf of NGOs:

- One NGO recruited the wrong people for a project, and at the end of the project the work was not complete. Some community members were extremely angry. The NGO previously had good relationships with the community. Staff members decided to meet with the community, acknowledging the mistakes and asking how to fix the problems. Those who supported the NGO convinced those who were angry, and the NGO was ultimately allowed to remain in the community.
- In a tense state, the local government expelled an NGO. The community intervened, arguing that the government could not expel the NGO because of the assistance it provides. "They are a part of us and we are a part of them."
- Staff members of an NGO with a small boat were traveling down the river just as an overloaded barge sunk. The port authorities and barge owner accused the NGO of sinking the barge as a result of the waves its boat generated as it passed. They brought charges against the NGO. Staff members were able to negotiate with the police to release the boat and driver because of their good relationships and long-term presence in the community. The charges were eventually dropped.

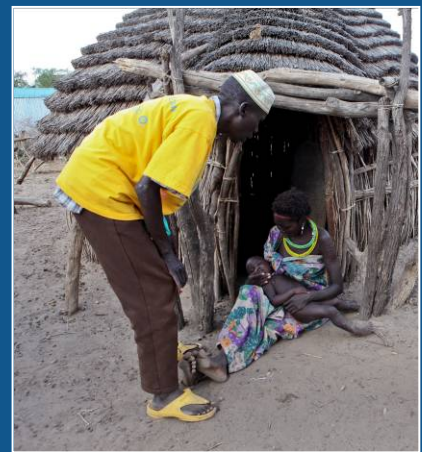


Photo by Jenn Warren

Examples of communities intervening to prevent or resolve an incident:



Photo by Jenn Warren

- After a theft from NGO staff members, the village chief helped to recover some stolen items.
- One NGO using a vehicle that was not well marked was attacked, despite using armed escort. The attackers took all the money and cell phones. The NGO recovered all items except the money, primarily through the intervention of one of the villages in which the NGO worked. The villagers sought out and found the perpetrators and encouraged the NGO to press charges, even serving as witnesses at the trial.

Achieving the Promise of Acceptance in South Sudan

The promise of acceptance as a security management approach in South Sudan remains unfulfilled. Key challenges relate to staffing, building relationships, making use of local resources, and building a narrow vision of acceptance as primarily linked to meeting needs. For those NGOs wanting to further develop their acceptance approach, this section summarizes some key challenges and obstacles and suggests recommendations for change or improvement.

Gaining and maintaining acceptance

Achieving a robust base for acceptance cannot be an afterthought and cannot be confined to program activities. Relying solely on needs-based acceptance means it can disappear quickly and easily. Instead, acceptance must be deliberately sought and gained. To accomplish this, NGOs need to develop more systemized mechanisms for implementing acceptance throughout the organization. While many organizations already implement some of these mechanisms, a more deliberate and systematic application of them would help to broaden the base for acceptance.

Staffing

The discrepancies between what NGOs say they are doing about staffing for acceptance and the perceptions of stakeholders indicates this is an area for improvement. Many organizations give more thought to managing the security of national and international staff, but do not give similar attention to other inequities related to benefits packages or overall employee composition. To some extent, NGOs are caught between the exigencies of the international employment market (e.g., the need to pay international staff higher wages in order to compete with other organizations and countries) and the local markets, with capacity constraints and lower wages overall. Nevertheless, an acceptance approach mandates attention to staffing issues, particularly given the unique challenges of the new state of South Sudan. The following recommendations can help organizations address these staffing issues:

- When hiring, organizations should consider their overall profile of employees (e.g., identity, region, gender, age) and not only their identity-based profile

(e.g., citizenship or ethnic group).

- NGOs should explore options for offering local, national, and even regional staff opportunities for professional development or other benefits that do not inflate the local hiring market. Similarly, NGOs could look to develop secondary arrangements with local institutions that keep Sudanese staff in Sudanese agencies and institutions while still supporting program goals and priorities.
- In their induction and orientation activities, organizations should devote additional attention to codes of conduct (including rewards for upholding and repercussions for violating the code), attitudes and relationships, educating and explaining the organizational principles and mission to new staff members, and acceptance as a security management approach. Codes of conduct should emphasize the importance of respectful and courteous interactions with communities, government officials, and other stakeholders. For example, a code might highlight cultural expectations regarding treatment of women or signal the cultural inappropriateness of young and junior foreigners negotiating with higher level or older Sudanese officials.

Building relationships

Informants clearly indicated the importance of courteous and respectful interactions as a foundation for building acceptance. This involves listening to communities and other stakeholders, cultivating and strengthening relationships, and devoting resources and efforts to the “softer side” of the work. The findings above demonstrate a degree of mutual misunderstanding or miscommunication between some NGOs and stakeholders. For example, NGOs may perceive government authorities as demanding more input into decisions about program priorities and asserting their authority to regulate NGO activities, and see this as infringing on their mission or principles. Government officials may, on the other hand, perceive NGOs as not respecting their authority or mandate. This is exacerbated if such interactions take place between younger, less experienced NGO staff members and older, more experienced Sudanese leaders or officials. An acceptance approach suggests that efforts to build stronger and more resilient relationships that increase understanding and awareness can help to mitigate these impressions. We recommend that organizations consider the following actions:

- Much of the interaction between local officials and NGO staff persons appears to take place in formal settings, such as coordination meetings. This type of “approach and inform” strategy relies on meetings to establish relationships with officials and community members but does not emphasize the importance of ongoing communication and demonstration of respect. This has resulted in meeting-based relationships that are confined to project cycles and coordination or consultation goals. Tenuous relationships, where they exist, appear to be related to the perception of a lack of consultation and could benefit from a renewed effort to establish respectful relationships.

The presence of acceptance requires a balance between delivering services and developing and maintaining relationships, or between “doing” and “listening.”

- To build acceptance, NGOs should incorporate building healthy and mutually respectful relationships and stakeholder and context analysis into job descriptions, either as part of existing positions or in new positions, and to adapt and modify such tools to incorporate acceptance-related analysis.
- NGOs should make an effort to meet with leaders in communities that they pass through on a regular basis, which could help smooth tenuous relationships or improve bad ones.
- NGOs and staff members living in communities should make a concerted effort to participate in the life of the community. This occurs on a day-to-day basis but might imply more involvement at significant community events, such as contributing to funerals or weddings.
- As a way to build trust, NGOs should increase accountability to beneficiaries (e.g., employing the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership standards), and demonstrate efforts to increase transparency and share budget information and constraints with communities and other stakeholders.

Making use of local resources

Several informants highlighted the importance of using local suppliers whenever possible and local hiring in

gaining acceptance. Such efforts support the local economy and invest in the newly established country of South Sudan. This could involve multiple efforts, including the following:

- Many NGOs have headquarter offices in Juba but do not implement any programs in Juba town or engage in efforts to interact with or educate office or guesthouse neighbors about who they are and what they do. Implementing small-scale programs in the neighborhood could help to increase awareness and understanding of an NGO’s work and services, thereby helping to build acceptance.
- In hiring for suboffices, NGOs may want to explore options for including local community members on the committees hiring for positions.
- In partnering with local CBOs and local NGOs, INGOs should consider ways in which they can break down the hierarchies that exist between local NGOs and INGOs. This could involve advocating to donors for increased funding to support better benefits and training or professional development opportunities for local NGOs and their staff, or for establishing long-term partnerships. These could be justified, in part, based on acceptance as a security management approach.
- Donors should support NGO efforts to procure locally based services and supplies, as part of security management. Likewise, NGOs could justify using local suppliers as part of an acceptance-based security management approach.

Looking beyond programming

The presence of acceptance requires a balance between delivering services and developing and maintaining relationships, or, between “doing” and “listening.” For organizations that work through local partners in particular, relying on program-based acceptance is problematic since visibility for the organization and its contributions is more difficult to assert. If organizations conceive of acceptance as extending beyond programming, the visibility question may decrease in importance.

- NGOs should look to create low-cost and low-effort mechanisms to engage with communities outside the project cycle (e.g., periodic visits to speak with community leaders or former beneficiaries unrelated to project matters).

- NGOs should look for opportunities to involve communications, human resources, and other staff in increasing acceptance. Guards and drivers should be able to clearly communicate the principles and mission of the organization to those they encounter. Communications or public relations staff could develop and periodically adapt educational materials about the organization aimed at nonbeneficiary stakeholders.
- In some cases, internal policies or program activities may hinder acceptance (e.g., no-passenger policies in vehicles, repeated needs assessments without follow-up). NGOs should periodically reexamine their policies and guidelines to assess their costs and benefits for acceptance and other priorities.
- Local governments and officials have their own political interests that dictate where they want services directed. NGOs often have a different perspective, based on needs assessments, principles, or values. NGOs should identify and clearly communicate the values and principles that determine where services go.

Assessing and monitoring the presence and degree of acceptance

Determining the presence of acceptance and, more precisely, the degree of acceptance an organization enjoys in a country requires continual monitoring and analysis. Continual monitoring and analysis, in turn, requires a concerted effort on the part of individual organizations.

- NGOs should designate responsibility for assessing and monitoring levels of acceptance to a particular position or department within the organization and incorporate this responsibility into job descriptions.
- NGOs should begin to collect and document agency-specific examples of acceptance and a lack of acceptance.
- Based on these examples, NGOs can begin to differentiate between levels of acceptance and analyze how the level of acceptance affects its effectiveness in South Sudan. Needs-based acceptance, for example, is closer to “tolerance,” while communities actively intervening to warn or help agencies more likely reflects a higher level of acceptance, especially if such intervention could also result in some risk or cost for

those intervening.

- NGOs should provide formal and informal mechanisms for communities and others to give feedback about NGO programs and services. These mechanisms should be accompanied with efforts to ensure that communities are aware of them. NGOs should monitor these mechanisms to ensure that stakeholders use them, and change or adapt them if they are not being used. Finally, NGOs should follow up with communities to share how their feedback is being used. (See, for example, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership standards on feedback, available from <http://www.hapinternational.org>).

Internal policies or program activities may hinder acceptance (e.g., no-passenger policies in vehicles, repeated needs assessments without follow-up). NGOs should periodically re-examine these policies.

- NGOs should avoid assuming that former employees automatically have higher levels of acceptance for their former employers. Such an assumption does not allow for lower levels of acceptance if the employee had a negative (or mediocre or mixed) relationship with the organization, nor does it take account of how being in a new position may create a different impression of an organization and its activities. It is possible to build on a former employee’s understanding of an organization to create new opportunities for gaining and increasing acceptance.

Determining whether acceptance is effective

Numerous NGO informants acknowledged that acceptance itself is not necessarily enough to provide protection for NGOs and their staff, and it must be coupled with other security management strategies. While it is possible to build relationships with communities, local and national government officials, and other stakeholders such as police and security forces, doing so with criminals and some armed actors, for instance, may not yield similar results. It may not be possible to negotiate with some actors. Several informants pointed out that even if most stakeholders welcome and accept NGOs, this acceptance may not protect NGOs from theft. In short, it is difficult

to link the lack of incidents with acceptance. For example, an increase of poverty in an area may increase the level of crime directly targeting an NGO, even if it enjoys a considerable level of acceptance in a particular area of operation; thus, experiencing an incident does not necessarily indicate a reduction in the level of acceptance. Similarly, just because an NGO is subjected to road banditry or an ambush on a particular road may not necessarily mean that the NGO is not accepted. Those who engage in banditry or crime often have different motivations or may not be closely allied with a particular community, thereby minimizing the possibility that community elders might be able to influence their behavior.

Acceptance and security management are context-dependent. For example, in some communities using fencing is part of the culture, and NGOs can benefit from using these mechanisms to protect themselves. Nevertheless, bigger walls and protective mechanisms also create a physical separation and relational gap between NGOs and their neighbors, which may have other negative repercussions. Thus, NGOs must continue to assess the security context and develop appropriate security management strategies, considering the costs and benefits of these strategies in relation to each other.

- NGOs should begin to collect and document agency-specific examples of acceptance and a lack of acceptance, and use these to analyze the effectiveness of acceptance as a security management approach in South Sudan.
- NGOs should collaboratively develop methods to document under what circumstances acceptance is and is not effective in a given location. This may include analytical tools, guidelines, or both to help staff determine whether to adopt an acceptance approach.
- NGOs should collaboratively research the relationship between different levels of acceptance and the effectiveness of an acceptance approach to security management.

Appendix A: Interviewees and Focus Group Discussions

We thank each of the individuals and groups listed below for contributing to the field research in South Sudan. In addition, we thank those individuals and groups who choose to remain anonymous but who also participated in the field research. In particular, we thank these individuals and groups for their time and for sharing their experiences with the South Sudan country research team. We have tried to verify and correctly spell names and affiliations, and apologize for any incorrect information in the list below.

Interviewee, Affiliation

James Aburish, PACT
Chris Agutu, Mine Action Group (MAG)
Gabriel Deng Ajak, South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC), Jonglei State
James Akai, Mercy Corps
Chris Alakonya, American Refugee Committee
Capt. Joseph Manyak Ajok, Office of the Police Inspector, Kapoeta South County
Mary Arnold
Victoria Brereton, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Deng Leek Deng, Office of the Executive Director, Bor County
Tiffany Easthom, Nonviolent Peaceforce
Jessica Ferndrigger, American Refugee Committee
Chase Hannon, Southern Sudan NGO Forum Secretariat
Nick Helton, Solidarités
Lokai Iko, Office of the County Commissioner, Kapoeta North County
James Lokuuda Kadanya, Holistic Community Transformation Organization (HOCTO)
Max Yusif Kallafalla and Jacob Rex Naworis, Office of the Executive Director, Kapoeta South County
Lith Aluong Kang, Office of the Governor, Jonglei State
Josh Kreger, Mercy Corps
Fr. Archangelo Lokoro, Catholic Diocese of Torit
Martin Lorika, Office of the Commissioner, Kapoeta South County
Maker Lual, Office of the Commissioner, Bor County
Lia Mayanti, Save the Children
Johan Odendaal, Norwegian Refugee Committee
Joseph Ohide, Catholic Relief Services
Antje Ruckstuhl, International Committee of the Red Cross
Julie Steiger, PSI
Shoichi Toyoi, Association of Aid and Relief, Japan
Jenn Warren, Save the Children
Ariel Zielinski, Polish Humanitarian Action

Focus group discussion members, Location

INGO Program staff, Juba
Community members, Bor
Local NGO staff, Bor
Community members, Bor/Dukarog (2)
Community members, nonbeneficiaries, Kapoeta South
Community members, beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries, Kapoeta North
NGO Program staff, Kapoeta



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