



## : CHAPTER 4 :

### Staff Preparation

## : NOTES :



## Staff Preparation

**P**re- and post-deployment briefings, providing a thorough orientation, ongoing and relevant training, and other learning/professional development in safety and security—in sum, preparing staff and families for the operating context they will be visiting, living and working in—significantly contributes to the prevention of incidents and promotes resiliency. CRS has both a legal and moral “duty of care” to all staff, families, and visitors. Ensuring that all staff are mentally prepared and oriented regarding the situation, position or mission they are undertaking, is an important step in providing that care. This chapter outlines various opportunities to prepare staff for the safety and security challenges they will face overseas, and provides some guidance to support that preparation work.

### Recruitment

Staff preparation actually begins at the recruitment stage. The nature of the security environment should inform the kinds of skills, experience and behaviors sought after in a successful candidate, as well as the candidate’s decision to accept the position. Whether the post is accompanied (i.e. allows accompanying spouse and children) or not, the R&R policy and Danger Pay policy in effect in a given post is one indication of the nature of the environment, and should help to filter applicants. Speaking with former and current staff in a potential post, ideally someone in the position one would be assuming or a comparable position, can also help staff to determine whether the post is a match.

### Briefings

Briefings can be carried out prior to deployment, upon arrival as well as after deployment. Currently, it is a requirement that all staff and visitors receive a verbal security briefing as close to arrival as possible. Each country should also prepare a written Visitor Briefing document that is provided to staff and visitors prior to departure. It is important to also be proactive about requesting a briefing if no apparent arrangements have already been made to provide one for you.

*Prior to deployment* to an overseas program as a permanent employee (or tdy), CRS Human Resources or the appropriate Regional Team member (i.e. RD, CR or PMII for staff hired in-country, OSD-Regional Representative) should ensure that staff, and ideally also accompanying spouses, receive a safety and security briefing for their country posting.



Staff should proactively seek out security information on their country of destination from the following sources:

- CRS country program security information (Visitor Briefing document).
- i-Jet Country Briefings:  
[available via the CRS Security Community page](#)
- U.S. Department of State OSAC - Regional Security Reports:  
[www.osac.gov](http://www.osac.gov)
- Center for Disease Control:  
<http://cdc.gov/>
- Open source media.
- International Crisis Group briefing documents:  
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm>

*A pre-deployment* briefing should contain:

- Overview of CRS security management decision-making structure (if new staff).

- Introduction to Security Portal resources (if new staff).
- Overview of main security and safety risks present in the environment.
- Provision of a few key “golden rules” that staff may need to know before they are able to receive a briefing at the CRS office (hotel, walking around town, taxis, “no-go” zones, local customs, how CRS manages airport pickup, availability of ATMs, etc.).
- Information on visa and vaccination requirements.

*Upon arrival of staff in-country, an additional security briefing should be held either by the Country Representative or his/her designate at the site. During the briefing, employees should be encouraged to comment on the plan, suggesting improvements in security measures and guidelines and/or voicing anxieties about the work environment and measures taken by CRS to minimize risks to staff and property. A thorough briefing in the field is essential, as a lack of information can lead to the spread of rumors and an undermining of staff confidence and morale. A full briefing cannot be completed in one day, but should be considered a priority and completed within one week after arrival in-country, in the absence of extenuating circumstances.*

*De-briefings are strongly recommended following any critical incident, to make sure that the affected staff person remains in stable mental health and to offer them confidential counseling services should the staff so choose. Debriefings may also take place *post-deployment*, as a means to determine whether any additional support is required from a staff care perspective. They also serve as a means to understand how security management and staff care might be better managed in a particular context.*

### **On-Boarding**

On-boarding is a relatively new initiative from HQ-Human Resources, focused on providing employees with the necessary introduction and access to the information tools they need to get started at CRS. For HQ staff, this generally occurs on the first day of employment.

For overseas staff in particular, some security-related “on-boarding” topics could include:

- CRS benefits (medical insurance, belongings insurance, SOS medical evacuation insurance, Employee Assistance Provider hotline).
- Reference to these *Safe and Sound* guidelines.
- Employee Relations (i.e. grievance/harassment policy).
- Office access procedures (identification badge and keys, if appropriate).
- Intranet access (username and password).
- Security Portal overview.
- E-learning overview.
- Employee Self-Service Center.
- Employee Locator.
- CRS Directory.

### **Orientation**

A complete orientation to the operating environment should be organized for permanent staff and long-term tdys within one week of arrival in country. Families can also benefit from some orientation topics, particularly those related to the specific security policies, procedures and protocols. The broader orientation to CRS values, culture, and program can take longer than a week, and may involve scheduling periodic sessions or pairing new staff with a more experienced staff person who can impart knowledge over a limited period of time.

A thorough Safety and Security Orientation should include:

- The CRS mission statement, both CRS and Red Cross/NGO Codes of Conduct, other humanitarian principles.
- General introduction of the country: historical, political, security situation.
- CRS program activities.
- Local perception of CRS activities.
- Context-specific risks (from CRS Risk assessment).
- Security rules and procedures (including maps of cities, all SOPs, contingency protocols, fire safety, residence security requirements, etc.).
- Medical information.
- Introduction to local authorities, partners, NGOs.
- Use of radio communications.
- Use of vehicles. Driving test.
- Contacts with media.
- Other Security-related policies (i.e. Evacuation, use of the Employee Locator).



In a recent Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) study on staff care in Darfur and Chad, conducted by the Headington Institute (<http://www.headington-institute.org>), among other key findings the research focused on the aspect of preparation and training.

#### Recommendations

1. Recognizing the strategic and foundational importance of the orientation process in employees' professional efficacy and personal well-being, agencies should make every effort to ensure that the orientation process is as comprehensive as possible, with policies and procedures in place outlining who is responsible for covering what orientation topics, and when, during the first three to six months of employment.
2. Orientations should not rely solely on printed material, especially when there is no accountability mechanism in place to ensure that staff has read that material or that questions can be addressed.
3. The orientation process for staff working in complex emergency environments should include review or training on:
  - a. Agency mission and values.
  - b. Job descriptions and responsibilities.
  - c. Policy, procedure, and personal skill-building related to security issues (including any female-specific cultural orientation issues).
  - d. Cross cultural communication and management training.
  - e. Agency approach to staff wellness and stress management, including self-care skills, procedures for accessing counseling and staff support services, critical incident policies and procedures, and information about where staff can access written self-care and stress management resources.
  - f. Whenever possible, agencies should provide a confidential psychological orientation with a mental health professional, external to the agency, very early during the orientation process (for international staff, it would be preferable before they arrive in the complex emergency situation to begin their posting). A confidential psychological orientation can involve the use of assessment tools to examine issues related to burnout, compassion fatigue, strengths and weaknesses related to resilience, hardiness, and vitality, and the development of a self-care and support plan for the upcoming assignment. This orientation should be used to help the individual self-determine if the timing and position are right for them.
4. In the case of continuing projects, ensure that incoming staff have the opportunity for a

face-to-face handover with outgoing staff, or that incoming staff is provided with a written handover document drafted by outgoing staff.”

### **Ongoing Training**

All staff should include development and refresher training needs on safety and security topics within their annual development planning process. There is a basic “package” of security management topics which all field-based staff, or staff who travel regularly overseas, should be familiar with, including: CRS Security Management 101 (how CRS manages security, basic policies, etc.), Road Safety, Stress Management, First Aid, etc. Other security topics become more important as staff are promoted to positions of increased responsibility within the agency, and/or are transferred to locations that present specific risks, such as land mines. Security management experience is a competency that will begin to receive additional focus as CRS rolls out its Talent Management Strategy. CRS will continue to develop a full curriculum supporting defined areas of knowledge, skills, and behaviors which staff in various job categories should ideally possess.

Existing and proposed training areas will be housed on ‘CRSLearns’ and the CRS Safety and Security Community page and will develop over time.

### **Contingency Drills**

HQ, regions, and country programs should regularly “practice” contingency protocols, such as:

- Fire/earthquake evacuation.
- Abduction or other incident management.
- No-communications procedures.
- Security evacuation preparation.
- Spontaneous violent demonstrations; etc.

### **Other Learning**

CRS staff can also build skills and experience in security management through TDY deployments, learning “on the job” by working under a more experienced team leader. In addition, following every safety or security incident (including ‘near misses’), staff involved should be encouraged to reflect on what was learned from the incident. Learning from incidents about what was done well—thereby averting greater harm or loss—and therefore should be reinforced as a “good practice,” or alternatively what could have been done better, should be documented on the incident report format. Learning should be shared with other staff, and reflected in changes in security policies and procedures, as appropriate, respecting of course the confidentiality of the persons involved.

In the case of more significant incidents, implicated teams should be encouraged to reflect together on “lessons learned”, otherwise known as an After Action Review (AAR). After Action Reviews should also produce appropriate modifications to country program operating procedures, contingency protocols, and/or policies; but primarily they aim to assist the team affected to respond more effectively when faced with a similar situation in the future.

### **Visitors**

All visitors must also receive a verbal security briefing as soon as possible upon arrival in-country. See Chapter 11 Useful Forms and Graphics (Non-employee Travel Release Form, Visitor Mandatory Information Sheet, Visitor Briefing Document).

In addition, visitors (from HQ or another country program) should also be briefed on the

security context and the relevant procedures. Each country program should develop a Visitor Briefing document that includes a brief overview of the security risks, important security policies and procedures, and a copy of the Constant Companion.

- Visitor Briefing documents should be uploaded to the country page of the CRS Safety and Security Portal so that travelers can access and review it prior to traveling.
- For large groups of visitors, it might be advisable to develop a tailored briefing document just for this group's visit that includes an in-country itinerary and security-related information specific to the delegation, itinerary, or mission the group is undertaking.
- For meetings or workshops, even when all participants are CRS staff, when participants are unfamiliar with the security environment surrounding the meeting venue, should always begin with a brief security orientation to the location.

### **Hosting (Non-Staff) Delegations**

CRS considers the safety of its staff and visitors to be its highest priority. As the agency expands, the number of opportunities for constituents of all kinds (teachers, students, donors, Volunteers, Fair Trade Ambassadors, Global Fellows, youth ministers, etc.) to visit country programs and learn about CRS' work overseas increases, we need to make sure that all visitors are systematically prepared and oriented to the variety of safety and security risks they might encounter. CRS has a legal and moral obligation to do so. At the same time, individual visitors have a responsibility to seek out information to educate themselves about the risks that traveling overseas implies, so they can consciously assume these risks of their own free choosing.

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide for all CRS staff hosts, delegation leaders and coordinators, delineating standard operating procedures in preparing delegations and other visitors for travel to CRS programs overseas. The single most important aspect of each visit rests in the extensive advance planning and collaboration between HQ and field staff required to achieve success of the mission, as well as to ensure the safety of its members.

### **Pre-Departure**

The Delegation Leader will take responsibility as the go-to person for the entire delegation, sharing plans and information as required, both before and during the trip abroad, with the Country Program.

The CRS Security Community page can serve as a resource, with links to:

- [Employee Locator](#).
- [i-Jet Country Briefings](#).
- [OSAC - Regional Security Reports](#).
- [UN Map Library](#).
- [U.S. Citizen Embassy Registration](#).
- [U.S. Department of State](#).

The leader will then:

- Become current on safety, security and health issues in the destination country.
- Share the CRS-prepared Visitor Briefing document for country(ies) of destination with all delegation members or travelers.
- Arrange for a security briefing as a required component of pre-departure orientation (by meeting or conference call). OSD Regional Representatives or HQ Security Director can do security briefings on site in HQ; depending on the circumstances, a telephone conversation that includes a security overview may be arranged with the CR or RD overseas.



- Register each delegation member, their destination and dates on the CRS Employee Locator.
- Ensure that all Mandatory Information Sheets, passport copies, and signed Traveler Release Forms are collected prior to travel, and that one package of these documents stays with a contact here in the US, while another copy travels with the delegation leader. (Standard Mandatory Information Sheets and Volunteer Traveler Release Forms can be found on the homepage of the CRS Safety and Security Community).
- Browse I-Jet Country Briefings (access via CRS Safety and Security Community)

It is also assumed that *Delegation members will work closely with the leader*, in advance, providing all pertinent documentation, inoculation history and emergency contact information in a timely manner. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Completing the Visitor/Delegation Mandatory Information Form.
- Providing four copies of your passport.
- Acquiring the appropriate travel visas. Information can be found at Department of State U.S. Visa website:  
<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/obtainingvisa>
- Register travelers with the U.S. Embassy, through their website:  
[http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration\\_1186.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_1186.html)
- Reading, understanding and signing the CRS "Volunteer Traveler Assumption of Risk and Release Statement.
- Reading and understanding the CRS-prepared Visitor Briefing document for country(ies) of destination provided by your mission leader.
- Completing necessary inoculations and providing a photocopy of the yellow "International Certificate of Vaccination" (approved by the World Health Organization).
- Purchasing medical evacuation insurance for the duration of the trip.

Prospective visitors can greatly benefit from personal research about international travel to developing countries, including both the joys and important risks associated with travel to the mission destination. There are many things to learn about each destination and many places to find the information needed. Three good sources of information covering all aspects of international travel and specific country health and security information, are:

- U.S. State Department:  
<http://travel.state.gov>
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control :  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- Students Abroad:  
<http://www.studentsabroad.com/health.html>



It is noteworthy that inappropriate personal behavior is the most common cause of insecurity for humanitarian aid organizations. The actions of one person, in some situations, can negatively affect everyone since individual action/behavior is often interpreted as CRS' action/behavior. A personal goal for each traveler should be to avoid offending host country individuals, due to a lack of understanding about cultural differences. A sensitive and empathic attitude is best.

Examples of giving offense: The abundance in the U.S. can be in stark contrast to the scarcity in some rural villages. In one instance, a visitor wanted to feed some apples to a hungry and tired work horse, knowing how horses enjoy them. The CRS guide had to prohibit this, saying, "You cannot feed those apples to the horse, because there are many people in this village who cannot afford to buy these apples even for their children. He continued, saying that "It would



be very unfortunate for them to witness you feeding this horse.”

And, just as in the US, it is intrusive and a presumptuous gesture to touch, hug or pick up small children or to touch or pick up another’s personal possessions, even simply to admire them. In some countries, it is inappropriate even for another woman, to shake hands with a woman.

### **Some Basic Rules Of Conduct:**

- Dress should indicate respect for the local culture and convey a positive message about how you expect to be treated: women, especially, are encouraged to avoid wearing shorts or sleeveless tops.
- Make sure you understand the cultural ground rules for interpersonal relationships between men and women, especially between expatriates and local people.
- Alcohol is illegal in some Muslim countries: drinking by members of delegations is strongly discouraged during mission trips.
- Ostentatious display of possessions may make one a target for theft and contradicts CRS’ desire for staff and visitors alike to maintain a low profile.
- As a visitor to another country, showing humility to all persons encountered is a good way to ensure that behavior will not be seen as offensive to others. A good rule of behavior while in a different culture is: *Be small*.
- Be diplomatic in speech, and respect local traditions.
- In a group setting or in a public place, refrain from speaking about politics or religion.
- Avoid sarcasm as it may be easily misinterpreted.

A common sense approach that demonstrates respect for local culture and customs will lead to good relations in general.

### **In Country: Security Briefing And Protocols**

The receiving Country Program will assign a staff member as Host. No visitor or delegation member can operate outside of, or make decisions independent of, the Country Program or the designated staff member Host. All Visitors and Delegation members must be made aware that scheduled itineraries may change at any time due to safety and security concerns, and that this decision once made by the Country Representative is not negotiable.

All visitors will receive a thorough security briefing as close to arrival as possible, which includes relevant security contact and emergency information and related procedures. This formal security briefing will inform on local security procedures, specific do’s and don’ts, etc., but a good general rule is to always maintain close communication between travelers, leaders and country staff.

The on-site briefing is in addition to the pre-deployment briefing and receipt of a written visitor briefing document given to visitors pre-departure. These briefings are required regardless of the Security Level of the destination country.

During travel, regular check-ins with the leader can help to air and address safety concerns, before they become security incidents. The delegation leader should know at all times the whereabouts of all delegation participants. Although delegations tend to be tightly scheduled and will most likely be always accompanied by a CRS staff member from the host country program, the buddy system is highly recommended for any “down time” spent away from the group accommodations.

Security incidents should be immediately reported to the designated security officer in the Country Program. This will assist CRS management to respond appropriately to address the continued safety of the delegation. If a delegation member is the victim of a security incident, CRS will facilitate medical and psycho-social attention to the extent possible. The Country Program is responsible for documenting and reporting to the region and HQ any and all incidents.

### Health Information And Precautions

The following general health and hygiene information is issued for travelers by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention in Atlanta, GA (<http://cdc.gov/>). All travelers should take the following basic precautions, no matter the destination:

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Don't eat or drink dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself.
- Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it!
- Never eat undercooked ground beef and poultry, raw eggs, or unpasteurized dairy products. Raw shellfish is particularly dangerous to persons who have liver disease or compromised immune systems.
- HIV/AIDS is a highly contagious disease in certain limited circumstances. It is each individual's responsibility to understand the risks and take proper precautions.

### To Avoid Getting Sick

Travelers visiting undeveloped areas should consider these further precautions:

- Don't eat food purchased from street vendors
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles.
- Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by both filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter and adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.
- If you visit an area where there is risk for malaria, take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed.
- Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using insect repellent (applied sparingly every 3-4 hours) and permethrin-impregnated mosquito nets, and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk through dawn
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.
- Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague).
- Don't swim in fresh water. Salt water is usually safer.

### What You Need To Bring With You:

- Long-sleeved shirt and long pants to wear whenever possible to prevent illnesses carried by insects (e.g., malaria, dengue, and leishmaniasis).
- Insect repellent containing DEET (diethylmethyhtoluamide), in 30%–35% strength for adults and 6%–10% for children.
- To purchase supplies online, visit the Johns Hopkins passport health website: [http://www.passporthealthusa.com/specialty\\_services/travel\\_supplies.aspx](http://www.passporthealthusa.com/specialty_services/travel_supplies.aspx)
- Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine to use as necessary.
  - Iodine tablets and portable water filters to purify water *if bottled water is not available*.
  - Sunblock, sunglasses, hat, if you will be outdoors for extended periods.

- Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip as some medications may not readily available overseas.
- Bring copies of all prescriptions.

**Medical Evacuation**

CRS international staff receives the SOS medical evacuation coverage upon employment. ([www.internationalsos.com](http://www.internationalsos.com)). Many Delegation Leaders use/purchase this same health and security product.

Some visiting delegations prefer to use MEDEX as the primary health and security insurance provider: please confirm with the delegation leader which service is covering your group's travel ([www.medex.com](http://www.medex.com)).

Contact has also been made with medical NGOs in the area and/or the U.S. Embassy medical staff for their support in case of an emergency. Contact information for these facilities is contained in the Country Companion document which is given to all visitors.

**After You Return Home**

- If you have visited an area where there is risk for malaria, continue taking your malaria medication upon your return home, for the time period recommended by your doctor—even for as much as four weeks.
- If you become ill, even as long as one year after your return, tell your doctor where you have traveled.

## : NOTES :