

Climbing up to Safety and Security: The Facilitation of an NGO Awareness Culture

Authors : Mirad Böhm, Diede De Kok

Abstract : It goes without saying that for many NGOs a high level of safety and security are crucial issues, which often necessitates the support of military personnel to varying degrees. The relationship between military and NGO personnel is usually a difficult one and while there has been progress, clashes naturally still occur owing to different interpretations of mission objectives amongst many other challenges. NGOs tend to view safety and security as necessary steps towards their goal instead of fundamental pillars of their core 'business'. The military perspective, however, considers them primary objectives; thus, frequently creating a different vision of how joint operations should be conducted. This paper will argue that internalizing safety and security into the NGO organizational culture is compelling in order to ensure a more effective cooperation with military partners and, ultimately, to achieve their goals. This can be accomplished through a change in perception of safety and security concepts as a fixed and major point on the everyday agenda. Nowadays, there are several training programmes on offer addressing such issues but they primarily focus on the individual level. True internalization of these concepts should reach further by encompassing a wide range of NGO activities, beginning with daily proceedings in office facilities far from conflict zones including logistical and administrative tasks such as budgeting, and leading all the way to actual and potentially hazardous missions in the field. In order to effectuate this change, a tool is required to help NGOs realize, firstly, how they perceive and define safety and security, and secondly, how they can adjust this perception to their benefit. The 'safety culture ladder' is a concept that suggests what organizations can and should do to advance their safety. While usually applied to private industrial scenarios, this work will present the concept as a useful instrument to visualize and facilitate the internalization process NGOs ought to go through. The 'ladder' allows them to become more aware of the level of their safety and security measures, and moreover, cautions them to take these measures proactively rather than reactively. This in turn will contribute to a rapprochement between military and NGO priority setting in regard to what constitutes a safe working environment.

Keywords : NGO-military cooperation, organisational culture, safety and security awareness, safety culture ladder

Conference Title : ICRCRC 2015 : International Conference on the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : November 27-28, 2015