World NGO Day 2024 Shines Light on Rising Workforce Risks, Demands Stronger Safeguards

KUALA LUMPUR , MALAYSIA, February 26, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- NGOs operate in an increasingly complex environment and the threats confronting aid workers are rising significantly. Organisations in the sector recognise the need to step up and take robust action on safeguarding their workforce and community, at multiple levels. In light of World NGO Day, International SOS, the world's leading health and security risk services company, provides guidelines for organisations to strengthen their health and safety support for their workforce.

The environments in which NGO workforces travel and work delivering programmes globally present considerable risks to their security, health and wellbeing. International SOS data reveals a concerning trend. In 2023, there was a 15% increase in security-related assistance requests and an 8% rise in evacuation or repatriation requests from the NGO sector compared to the previous year. The risks faced by NGO workers, already significant, are rapidly escalating. Maintaining the optimal conditions of NGO workers should be a priority in this sector. Further highlighting the rising urgency, the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD) latest report reveals that 2022 saw 444 humanitarian aid workers impacted by violence across 235 major attacks globally.

This escalation is further evidenced by the large number of workers requiring medical care reported by Iqarus, a wholly owned subsidiary of the International SOS Group.

> "
>
> Proactive measures, such as comprehensive security training and crisis management plans, are vital to protect those on the frontlines of humanitarian aid and ensure their health needs are met."
>
> *Dr Chan Yanjun*

Last year alone, Iqarus, the world leader in delivering high standards of medical care and training in the world's most challenging operating environments, treated around 10,000 patients who were working across the humanitarian aid sector in conflict-affected and post-conflict locations. This number highlights the immense physical and mental health strains endured by NGO workers on the frontlines.

Operating in high-risk, fluid environments demand more than just reactive incident response. The dynamic landscape, fuelled by escalating conflicts, natural disasters, and emerging health threats, necessitates resilience and agility. NGOs must proactively mitigate threats through comprehensive security awareness training and build robust capabilities for crisis management. It is important for NGOs prioritise the health and wellbeing of their diverse workforce, including those in remote or unstable locations. By leveraging location-specific risk expertise, they can overcome resource limitations and ensure operations continuity, ultimately fulfilling their critical mission despite the challenges.

Dr Chan Yanjun, Medical Director, Singapore and Malaysia Assistance Centers, comments "There is a critical need for NGOs to prioritise the safety and well-being of their teams. Having robust clinical care backup is essential to address the complex health challenges faced by aid workers in these environments. Proactive measures, such as comprehensive security training and crisis management plans, are vital to protect those on the frontlines of humanitarian aid and ensure their health needs are met."

"At International SOS, we've proudly partnered with numerous non-profit organisations on vital projects such as strengthening community health systems in the Democratic Republic of Congo, building capacity in Laos, conducting vaccination programmes, and delivering medical supplies to Ukrainians. We understand the unique challenges faced by NGOs in diverse operating environments and remain committed to supporting their ongoing missions by protecting the health and wellbeing of their workforces."

Noriko Takasaki, Security Director Assistance, Asia, comments "Amidst escalating global challenges like pandemics, natural disasters, and geopolitical tensions, the critical role of NGOs becomes yet more important. Operating in environments often characterised by heightened risks, including volatile political situations, humanitarian crises, and various kinetic threats, NGOs require comprehensive security strategies to ensure their operational continuity and personnel safety. Effective mitigation demands a multifaceted approach combining robust security protocols, real-time as well as forward looking intelligence, and tailored crisis response plans, adapted to the specific operating context. Access to location-specific risk expertise proves invaluable in these scenarios, providing critical insights to navigate diverse challenges and ensure smooth operations, particularly in extreme environments."

For over 35 years, International SOS has been at the forefront of supporting organisations' travel risk management plans and providing bespoke security solutions to NGOs. By prioritising the safety and well-being of their workforce as a foundational element of their operations, NGOs can

not only safeguard their personnel but also guarantee the uninterrupted delivery of essential services to those who depend on them the most.

International SOS shares actionable advice for NGOs to safeguard their workforce and ensure business continuity in a complex landscape:

1. Proactive risk management: regularly monitor and assess how medical and security incidents around the world may impact your staff and volunteers.
2. Provide tailored training: ensure your workforce understands their individual risk profile and how they might be vulnerable in a particular destination. Particularly those who will be travelling to, or living in remote, austere and hazardous environments.
3. Empower with knowledge: provide comprehensive access to up-to-date medical, safety, and location-specific travel information, empowering informed decision-making.
4. Implement robust security measures: ensure protocols are tailored to different operating environments and risk levels. Conduct regular security audits and integrate security considerations into all operational planning and decision-making.
5. Foster personal resilience: enable individuals to recognise and mitigate threats by providing training in personal safety, cybersecurity, bystander intervention, and cultural sensitivity.
6. Streamlined communication: establish clear lines of communication between your organisation and workforces, for reporting security incidents and accessing support.
7. Enhance mental health support: identify the unique stressors impacting your workforce and determine how your organisation's culture can support positive mental health.

Saiful Shamsudin
TQPR Malaysia
saifuls@tqpr.com

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/691301998