

Avail SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE

Crisis Management Policy

For Partners and Associates



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to advise mission workers on how to deal with crisis situations and inform them of the ways in which Avail can support them. It is not possible to cover every eventuality, but a number of the main possibilities are listed. We ask that all Avail partners and associates read the document thoroughly before leaving for the field, and we are happy to address any concerns or questions that arise concerning it.

Some details in this document will not be applicable to everyone. Many workers are single, but to cover the widest possibility of scenarios, this policy is written as to married mission workers with children.

SECTION 1

OVERVIEW

In seeking the resolution of any crisis we affirm our absolute trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so we are fully aware of the many kinds of crisis a mission worker could face and that:

- a crisis can build up slowly or come suddenly without warning;
- age, gender and personality can unquestionably lead to differing opinions of what a crisis constitutes.

Avail's normal role would be to give as much advice and support as possible. We would not expect to take the lead in resolving any crisis and would only do so at the request of the mission worker.



SECTION 2

PERSONAL CRISIS

A personal crisis is one which involves physical and/or mental harm to an individual or family. This includes, for example, robbery, assault, rape, serious injury, bereavement, marriage breakdown, hostage-taking, imprisonment, moral failure, or the loss or serious illness of a child. A personal crisis will in all probability have an effect on other family members and the supporting church; they need to be considered before action is taken. Various kinds of personal crisis and the recommended procedures relating to them are given below.

1. Personal crisis requiring a return home

Avail would be willing to be involved directly in helping, for example by counselling. We would also be willing to arrange appropriate help elsewhere and to liaise with the home church in providing support. The costs of a possible repatriation should be carefully considered as a precaution in estimating a budget (please see Appendix D).

2. Personal crisis requiring a return home

Normally family, friends and church groups would endeavour to help in these circumstances. Avail would also be willing to assist and would consider, for example, sending a trustee, or a trustworthy person who is geographically nearer, to visit the mission worker.

3. Hostage-taking

The release of the mission worker would be Avail's priority if it is asked to act in this capacity. The permission of the mission worker would be needed. Our representative would aim, wherever practical, to contact the host and home governments and to follow their advice. The representative would also issue press releases and information updates, including public statements, as required. Any public statements by Avail partners or associates would need to be agreed at trustee level.

Further, if required, we would seek to help any family members of the hostage who are in the host country. Our basic advice would be that the family of a hostage be immediately removed to a safe location. The deep anguish caused to the next of kin by hostage-taking or kidnapping, and possibly ransom demands, would also need to be given every consideration. Please note that it is not the policy of Avail to pay ransom. For further details on ransom and related matters, see Appendix B.



4. Wrongful imprisonment

Wrongful imprisonment can be authorised by a government for political purposes. It can also, for example, be brought about by the false accusation of an individual seeking financial reward. If Avail were requested to act, similar arrangements as those for hostage-taking would apply. Consultation with the host government may not be possible of course if they are implicated in the imprisonment.

SECTION 3

GENERAL CRISIS LEADING TO EVACUATION OF AVAIL MISSION WORKERS

A general crisis is one which directly affects many people in a community or a whole nation. Examples are natural disaster, pandemic, war, revolution, widespread terrorism, civil unrest, or large-scale persecution. In the case of persecution, Christians may be the specific target. Whilst we may be prepared to suffer for Christ there are times when it is wise to leave a threatening situation. Given the nature of a general crisis, immediate dangers could mean physical harm, wrongful imprisonment, torture or death. Remember that people respond differently under pressure but, generally speaking, the more prepared you are, the better are your chances of staying safe.

If a governing body in the country calls for an immediate evacuation, it is advisable to comply. Avail will not insist on a mission worker remaining in their location during a time of crisis but we recommend that provision for all eventualities be made, as there is a risk of all communication channels being cut off. It would also be sensible to have an agreement with your family and church on these issues. If you have an insurance policy you could well invalidate it if you chose to stay.

Evacuating the mission field can be difficult for the mission worker and, in a different way, for family, friends and churches at home. It should always be remembered that the main aim of evacuation is to protect Avail mission workers and their families from harm. However, we recognize there may well be other consequences such as the onset of post-traumatic stress syndrome which will need to be addressed. The possibility of similar effects on loved ones should also be considered.



RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT OF A GENERAL CRISIS

Three stages of crisis development culminating in the need for evacuation are outlined below. Recommended precautions or actions are given in each case, with fuller details given in Appendix C for items with footnotes. The cost of evacuation and/or repatriation should be considered and allowed for beforehand in each case (please see Appendix D). In areas particularly liable to crisis we would suggest that a first stage state of readiness be maintained at all times.

1. Non-threatening crisis

A crisis exists but it is not a threat to Avail mission workers; it could escalate.

Precautions

Administrative

- Register with your embassy if you have not already done so.
- Obtain exit documents, if required.
- Develop a plan of communication with other team members.
- Consider evacuation plans with others and form a tentative plan.
- Get in touch with your appointed contact person and inform them of the situation.

General

- Be alert and ready to act; remain calm and continue your normal work and social life.
- Follow local, national and international news to stay informed of the situation.
- If appropriate, consult your local and home church, your fellow workers, Avail, expats and host government representatives.



Personal

- Keep your vehicle in good working condition.
- Consider who will look after your interests if you have to evacuate.
- Review personal information held by Avail and advise them of any changes.
- Put aside extra cash in a safe place.
- Consider your health, food and clothing needs, should evacuation take longer than a trip to the airport. Write an essential packing list; use a proper book, not scraps of paper.
- Remember computer data you may need.
- Consolidate important documents.²
- Contact family in your home country as appropriate.

Ministry

- Consider the needs of national ministries in the event of your absence.
- Consider how you will communicate with national workers in case of evacuation.
- Consider the effect of your evacuation on Forget Me Not children.
- Shred or burn sensitive papers (showing names, places, plans etc.) that are not required.
- Likewise delete computer data.

2. Threatening crisis

This crisis threatens the safety of mission workers and could escalate.

Precautions

Administrative

- Arrange for places of refuge in case the situation worsens; if possible, have three destinations with a separate route for each.
- Identify staging posts and ensure that you have all necessary documentation.
- Seek to find accurate news to minimise the effects of rumour.
- Ensure that local and Avail contacts know where you are at all times.
- Communicate developments with relevant contacts.



- Finalise your essential packing list; record this, with your evacuation plans, in a book.
- Communicate the evacuation plans to your home church and Avail.
- Keep in touch with and confirm your contact person.

General

- Prepare to leave at short notice.
- Take appropriate security measures around the house.
- Consider if visits to the town are necessary; if they are, be aware of your personal safety needs.
- To finalise your evacuation plan, gather as much information as possible about the crisis; if appropriate, discuss the plan with your local and home church, your fellow workers, Avail and other expats.

Personal

- Ensure that your vehicle is in working order and filled with fuel; obtain spare fuel, if available.
- Make final arrangements for assets such as home, car, office and so on.³
- Obtain enough cash for all your expected needs.⁴
- Store a supply of family medicines at home.
- Keep emergency provisions on hand.⁵
- Review your packing list and start to pack.
- Prepare an identification card for each child.⁶
- Keep in touch with family at home, if possible.

Ministry

- Conduct detailed talks with ministry partners to assess the level of threat.
- Finalise ministry arrangements with national partners in the event of your departure.
- Secure computer files that are to be left behind.



3. Evacuation crisis

This crisis represents a present or imminent danger to mission workers; immediate evacuation is now necessary.

Actions

Administrative

- Make final evacuation plans (i.e. destination, the route, things to take, and things to leave behind).
- Ensure everything is arranged at the place of refuge.
- Inform your contact person of the decision to evacuate.

Personal

- Ensure that each person has all necessary documents, as well as cash, backup credit card, mobile phone (and charger or spare battery) or international phone card.
- Ensure that all children have a personal ID sheet on them at all times.

Ministry

- Notify national partners of your decision to evacuate.



AFTER SUCCESSFUL EVACUATION

- Inform your contact person as soon as possible of the good news of your safe arrival in the place of refuge.
- Remember that there is no disgrace in evacuating, but do contact and stay in touch with those left behind. You should not become discouraged if they do not reply.
- Talk about your experience shortly after reaching safety and certainly before returning to the field. This will give an opportunity to identify and address any emotional issues which may have arisen for you and your family. Experience suggests that counselling will be important.
- A full debriefing and an evaluation of procedures will be necessary.

KEY EVACUATION PRINCIPLES

Although every situation requiring evacuation is different, as are the persons involved, the following principles will have almost universal application and should be given particular attention:

- Maintain objectivity in assessing the situation; the decision to evacuate should be determined by facts not feelings.
- Plan three possible escape routes and identify staging posts; ensure that all necessary documentation is on hand. If your primary evacuation route is blocked, the stress of the crisis will be heightened; having several routes gives you options, including the mode of transportation that might be available.
- Monitor the emotional state of both adults and children, and familiarise yourself with the signs of traumatic stress.
- Evacuate in small groups if possible, as large groups are difficult to manage.
- Evacuate to the closest safe place to avoid a second evacuation. Take the fastest and safest route, and do not assume that the evacuation will only be for days or weeks; it may be permanent.
- Advise the contact person of a potential crisis, and stay in contact throughout the crisis.



APPENDIX A

PROCEDURE TO PROTECT THE NAME AND REGISTRATION OF AVAIL

In some countries registration carries very strict conditions. If a mission worker were to break a law in that country, the whole mission could be in jeopardy. Where the conduct of a mission worker threatens the reputation of Avail or our ability to remain active in the country, the only recourse might be to sever the association or partnership of that mission worker with Avail.

APPENDIX B

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON HOSTAGE-TAKING

It is not the policy of Avail to pay ransom demands or any other form of extortion, nor to yield to other demands based on hostage-taking.

Should Avail be asked to act as intermediary in a situation that requires negotiation, we will follow these basic principles:

- We will seek all possible advice and help from suitably qualified sources.
- To carry out negotiations we will ensure that various means of long-distance communication are at hand; to be physically near to the crisis may not be necessary, but may become so as the situation develops.
- We will aim to work in conjunction with someone fluent in the language of the area who will act as an interpreter.
- The appointed intermediary will be an Avail trustee or a person nominated by the trustees. The same person will not necessarily be involved in every crisis.
- Contact with the media, press, family and friends will be maintained through an agreed spokesperson without jeopardising any sensitive negotiations.



APPENDIX C

NOTES ON SECTION 3

1. Contact person

A person in the home country should be appointed by the mission worker to be contacted in the event of an emergency. This person could be a family or church member, or an Avail trustee. Communication must be maintained with them at all times during a crisis, and they should therefore be readily available, easily reached, and capable of dealing appropriately with a crisis. If wider communication becomes difficult or impossible, this person will be responsible for passing on all available information to the relevant parties. The appointed person will need to communicate with Avail their willingness to act in this role; their name will be recorded on the crisis management database. If a different person is appointed, Avail should be informed.

2. Important documents

Assemble and make copies of the following:

- Passports
- Country visa
- Marriage and birth certificates
- Driver's licenses
- Personal banking and financial records
- Car registration
- School records
- Health records (i.e. immunisation)
- Property deeds
- University certificates



3. Large assets

Arrange for persons to:

- Watch your home
- Care for your car and perhaps drive you to the airport or station
- Store sensitive documents
- Care for ministry property
- Have access to your bank account and distribute funds as directed.

4. Cash on hand

Obtain enough to:

- Pay the exit tax if you have to leave the country
- Cover all travel expenses
- Pay (in small change and notes) for incidentals en route
- Purchase a mobile phone or phone card
- Pay the probably inflated prices for goods and services during a time of crisis
- Also obtain a backup credit card to be used if the original is lost or stolen.

5. Emergency provisions

Suggested items:

- First aid kit
- Medication
- Bottled water
- Batteries and/or paraffin
- Short wave radio
- Dried food and canned goods



6. Child's personal ID card

This should ideally be made of laminated paper and kept on the child at all times, either around the neck or pinned to the clothing.

Suggested details:

- The names of the child and their parents
- Citizenship and passport number
- Medical information including blood type
- Contact numbers in your home country, country of residence and place of refuge

APPENDIX D

COST OF REPATRIATION AND EVACUATION

The cost of repatriation or evacuation in an emergency will be thousands of pounds sterling per person. Avail cannot be held responsible for these costs. However, we are happy to discuss the matter with mission workers before they leave for the field; we advise that they also discuss it with their supporting church.

