

Managing everyday risk

by Rebecca Dennis

From the moment we wake up each morning we are faced with a variety of risks – when we travel, when we eat, and in our relationships. Some of the risks we face are more serious than others. It is not possible to live our lives without facing risks and deciding how to manage them. We often make an assessment of the risk automatically – making an instant decision on how to respond based on our experience and knowledge. For example, if a storm looks likely, we close the windows and bring the children inside.

can undermine development work, so it is important for communities to identify key risks and then reduce them. The United Nations has a framework for action to reduce the risks associated with disasters. One of the priorities of this framework is 'to use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels'.

Although many of the articles focus on how to manage or reduce risks, in our Bible study on page 13 we consider the importance of taking balanced, measured risks for God.

We hope you enjoy this issue and that you use the knowledge shared by other organisations to learn practical ways to manage the everyday risks you face in your own community.

The next issue of *Footsteps* will focus on Micro-enterprise. Issue 81 will be a celebration of 20 years of *Footsteps*.



Richard Hanson/Tearfund

We face a variety of risks every day.

Risk is defined as the probability of a hazardous event occurring and the impact of that event. Managing risk can be done in three main ways. You can:

- try to eliminate the risk completely
- reduce the risk
- work with the risk.

Risks can be managed at two main levels – individually and as a community. Most of the articles in this issue of *Footsteps* consider how we can manage everyday risk at an individual level. We look at how

we can reduce risks in the home (page 10) and at work (page 6). On pages 2 and 12 we also consider some principles for road safety and personal safety. The centre pages feature a game which can be used with adults and children to teach them about making safe choices. Finally, on page 14 we explain the importance of a written risk assessment and give guidelines on how to carry it out.

On pages 4 and 16 we hear from two organisations that have made changes in their communities to reduce risk. Risks

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Footsteps is a quarterly paper, linking health and development workers worldwide. Tearfund, publisher of *Footsteps*, hopes that it will provide the stimulus of new ideas and enthusiasm. It is a way of encouraging Christians of all nations as they work together towards creating wholeness in our communities.

Footsteps is free of charge to individuals working to promote health and development. It is available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Donations are welcomed.

Readers are invited to contribute views, articles, letters and photos.

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Re-thinking global road safety

by Barry Coleman

American president, Barack Obama, must have received many phone calls he will never forget. But one in particular stands out: the one that told him that his father had been killed in a road accident in Kenya.

Since the invention and development of the motor car, millions of people have received the same news. One reaction many people will have will be the sense of pointlessness; the overwhelming sense that the accident could so easily have been avoided.

But what is an 'accident'? When it comes to road accidents, why are we often so complacent about them? Why are we afraid of diseases and yet apparently unafraid of the bits of steel and glass that speed around us. Why, as drivers or passengers, are we so sure that the glass and steel 'protect' us rather than kill or injure us?

The devastation brought about by poor maintenance of vehicles and driving standards is a serious and dangerous matter everywhere, but particularly in the South.

The situation in Africa

Africa appears to be the continent most affected by road deaths and injuries. Lesotho was for many years the world's most dangerous country in terms of accidents and deaths per vehicle kilometre travelled. The Nairobi-Mombasa highway in Kenya is considered the most dangerous road in the world and in South Africa, which has a population of 45 million, more than 20,000 people die in road accidents each year.

Poor maintenance of vehicles and poor driving skills lead to more accidents in African countries. The numbers of people killed in accidents are often disproportionate because they involve crowded or over-crowded vehicles. If two buses collide, 80 or even 100 lives may be lost.

What can we do?

CHANGE OUR ASSUMPTIONS

For many years Riders for Health has taught people in Africa how to drive cars and trucks, and ride motorcycles safely. The people they have taught have very good safety rates. They are constantly working on ways to improve this record and to share their outlook and techniques with more and more people. Every time they do so, more lives are saved.

What is an 'accident'? Riders for Health teaches people that there is no such thing as an 'accident'. There are only deliberate actions that people took and intended to take, mad as they are. For example, someone drives out in front of you and you hit them because you did not have time to stop. That is not an 'accident'. It was a 'deliberate action'. In fact it was two 'deliberate actions'. They deliberately drove out in front of you, and you were deliberately driving too fast to stop.

So the first change of assumptions concerns passivity. If we are passive about road accidents, we will continue to have them. We must believe that all events

Basic vehicle safety

- always wear a seat belt
- obey the speed limits and do not drive too close to the vehicle in front
- do not use a mobile phone whilst driving
- do not drive after having consumed alcohol
- slow down when driving near pedestrians, animals and cyclists
- carry out regular maintenance checks



A health worker learning the art of controlled, safe riding.

on the road can be controlled and we must do all that we can to achieve this. If everyone did that, there would be no accidents.

Maintenance Secondly, there is the question of maintenance of the vehicle. Uncompromising, perfect maintenance for aircraft is imperative for air travel. Furthermore air-travellers assume that it is being carried out. Are the same standards applied to cars, trucks and motorcycles? No, they are not. For some reason we believe, against all the most obvious evidence, that if we are on the ground nothing will happen to us. We fear the plane far more than the car even though we are far more likely to die driving to the airport.

Everywhere, but particularly in the developing world because of the higher risks, we must maintain vehicles as if they were planes. We must also drive them as carefully as the most careful pilot would fly.

Protection Another assumption which is important to challenge is that our vehicle 'protects' us. Somehow drivers feel invulnerable behind the steering wheel and the powerful engine. In fact the opposite is true. If you are in collision with another vehicle it is your own vehicle that will harm you. The steering column will pierce your chest and, if the impact is hard enough, the engine will crush you. It is your own common sense and awareness that protects you, not the vehicle you are travelling in.

Simple solutions, such as using seatbelts in cars and wearing helmets when riding motorcycles and bicycles, will improve

your chances of survival following a collision.

High speeds Another assumption is that only high speed kills or injures. Ask someone who believes this to hit the back of their hand on a rough wall at 20 km an hour. They will not do it. Deep down they know that an impact of 20 km an hour will be dangerous and hurt them. But once behind that steering wheel, all such instinctive understanding seems to vanish.

IMPROVE ADVOCACY

We must advocate for big improvements in road safety, including vehicle maintenance and driving skills. Advocacy for improved road safety is weak compared to other issues such as HIV and malaria. Even advocacy for issues such as forced marriages and guinea worm, that affect far fewer people, is much better organised that it is for road safety. The World Health Organisation campaigns against road deaths and injuries, arguing that they are a major threat to global health and well-being, and would benefit from more support.



A health worker carrying out the daily adjustments on her motorcycle.

IMPROVE THINKING

As well as more forceful advocacy, we need more and better thinking. People laugh now when they learn that someone used to run in front of the early cars with a red flag to warn people that a car was coming. But there was a serious reason behind it. A car coming down the road was extremely dangerous.

The horn is probably the direct descendent of the red flag – it should be used to warn people ahead of potential situations. Even though, in many African countries, drivers are compelled by law to have one, it is almost never used for the benefit of other road users. Many people use it to show how angry they are after an incident has happened! Therefore, the horn becomes part of the problem and is no help in the solution.

Conclusion

When we have changed our assumptions and decided what we will and will not tolerate by way of vehicle-related death and injury, it will actually be quite easy to do the training and the maintenance.

Barry Coleman is the Co-founder and Executive Director of Riders for Health.

Riders for Health is an award-winning social enterprise dedicated to the effective management of vehicles used for delivering health care in hostile conditions. For more information: www.riders.org

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The damage caused to a vehicle involved in a relatively minor accident.



Dingiswayo Jere

The Mwanalundu river full of sand before de-silting.

The Mwanalundu disaster risk reduction project

by Dingiswayo Jere

Over recent years the Mwanalundu river in southern Malawi has gone through a cycle of flooding and drying up. This was caused by the deforestation of the forest reserves in the hilly areas near the source of the river. The trees were used for timber and fuel, and the cleared areas were used as gardens. Water flowed easily over the deforested land and transferred sand and debris into the river bed which led to flooding. Crops, livestock, schools and houses along the river in the Nsanje district were washed away during the floods. Once the rains stopped, the river quickly dried up and communities suffered water shortages. This article shares how a community managed the risk and reduced the likelihood of it happening again.

Tackling the problem

The local church worked alongside the village chiefs and community leaders to meet with the villagers. They used the Participatory Assessment of Disaster Risk (PADR) process to identify the hazards facing the community, their vulnerabilities to the hazards and then find a solution. They also identified how the community could use their own resources to reduce the risks.

It became clear that the villages' main problem was the way the Mwanalundu river regularly flooded and dried up.

Implementing the project

- The village chiefs set down laws to reduce deforestation and protect the Mwanalundu river from further flooding.
- The villagers were mobilised to start working on the river.
- Using hoes and shovels, they removed the sand and other debris from the river to improve the direction of the river and deepen its river bed. (This is known as de-silting.)
- The communities planted elephant grass, vertiva grass and trees along the river to strengthen its banks.

Results and outcome

In the two years following the de-silting of the river bed, the river has not flooded again. Schools have not been disrupted due to flooding and gardens close to the river have not been washed away. In addition, during both winter and summer last year, for the first time in many years the Mwanalundu river flowed and the community did not suffer water shortages.

'Through the collective effort of the local people, community leaders and development partners, some of these problems can indeed be history like the Mwanalundu river,' says one of the village chiefs who played a vital role in the disaster risk reduction project.

Lessons learned

- Community members have learnt from this experience and are now able to work out how to find answers to their other problems.
- Local people have learnt that they are a solution to the problems affecting them.
- Communities have the capacity to fight disasters through a well organised mobilisation process.

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For more information about the PADR process see *ROOTS 9: Reducing risk of disaster in our communities* www.tearfund.org/tilz

Tools used during the PADR process:

HISTORICAL MAP This tool helps people to identify changes in their locality over many years. Using this tool the villagers discovered that the river used to flow all year round and did not flood or dry up. They found that the cutting down of trees had contributed to the river flooding, and discovered that the large amount of sand and debris caused the floods and droughts.

SECRET IN THE BOX This tool encourages people to work out what objects are in a box in different ways. The group which is allowed to look and touch know the answer best. In the same way, the villagers know the best solutions to the problems they face, as they are the ones who understand the situation.

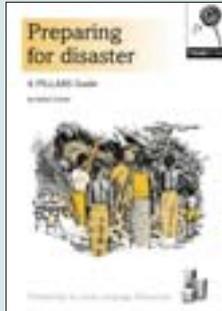
(For guidelines on how to carry out these tools see PILLARS Guide: Mobilising the community. www.tearfund.org/tilz)

tilz website www.tearfund.org/tilz Tearfund's international publications can be downloaded **free of charge** from our website. Search for any topic to help in your work.



PILLARS Preparing for disaster

This PILLARS Guide encourages communities to consider possible risk situations and helps them prepare to respond effectively. It includes information on first aid, emergency stores and community shelters.



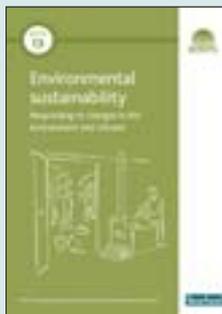
This PILLARS Guide can be downloaded free at: www.tearfund.org/tilz in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

Printed copies are available from:
Tearfund Resources Development
100 Church Road, Teddington,
TW11 8QE, UK

Email: pillars@tearfund.org

Environmental sustainability

This new ROOTS book aims to help development organisations consider the impact of the environment on their work and the impact of their work on the environment. It looks at how projects, organisational practices and lifestyles can be made more environmentally sustainable. A basic environmental assessment tool is included which can be used to ensure that most development projects are not harming the environment or being adversely affected by environmental issues. The book also includes a chapter on advocacy work, and details of how to carry out an environmental audit of organisational practices. It contains Bible studies, case studies and practical tools.



To order, please contact:
Tearfund Resources Development
100 Church Road, Teddington,
TW11 8QE, UK

Email: roots@tearfund.org

Website: www.tearfund.org/tilz

Enticing the learning: trainers in development

by John Staley

This book is about training for people who work professionally with communities, in activities such as development work, social action, community organisations, awareness-raising and voluntary aid programmes.

The approach and methodology are person-centred, participatory and experience-based. The starting point is the participants themselves, individually and as a group in training together.

More than 100 exercises, group events, conceptual inputs and methods are presented in detail, with timings and practicalities. More than 50 handouts (guidelines, case studies and questionnaires) are included. The carefully-written text tells the trainer what to do at every stage, and why and how, in order to 'entice the learning'.

The book costs £18. To order, contact:
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Email: w.banner@bham.ac.uk

A community guide to environmental health

by Jeff Conant and Pam Fadem

How we use natural resources affects our health and well-being. This illustrated guide helps health promoters, development workers, environmental activists and community leaders take charge of their environmental health.

This book contains activities to stimulate critical thinking and discussion, inspirational

stories and instructions for simple health technologies such as water purification methods, safe toilets and non-toxic cleaning products.

The book costs US\$28. To order, contact:
The Hesperian Foundation
1919 Addison Street, Suite 304, Berkeley
California 94704, USA

Email: hesperian@hesperian.org

Website: www.hesperian.org

It is also available for free download at:
www.hesperian.org/publications_download.php

Called to Care No 6 – The Child Within

The Strategies for Hope Trust has published a new training manual about HIV and AIDS as part of the Called to Care toolkit.

No 6, *The Child Within*, enables adults who care for children, such as parents, guardians, volunteers or professionals, to rediscover and appreciate their own 'child within'. Through structured workshop sessions, participants learn how to communicate more openly and effectively with children.

www.stratshope.org/b-cc-06-child.htm

To order:

(organisations in Kenya)

OAIC, Junction of Riara/Kingara Roads

PO Box 21736, Nairobi 00505, Kenya

Email: hiv@oaic.org

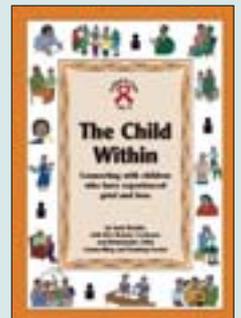
Website: www.oaic.org

(organisations outside Kenya)

TALC, PO Box 49, St Albans, AL1 5TX, UK

Email: info@talcuk.org

Website: www.talcuk.org



Reducing risks in the workplace

by Lucas Caldeira

It is a challenge to ensure healthy and safe working conditions for all the artisans and producers



Geoff Crawford/tearfund

Artisans are expected to follow health and safety standards.

In India, most arts and craft businesses are carried out on a small scale in the homes of the artisans and producers. Usually, one room is used as a workshop. This room is often also used as a bedroom at the end of a hard day's work. Asha Handicrafts is very aware of the challenges to reduce risks and ensure healthy and safe working conditions for all the artisans and producers they work with.

Minimum standards

Asha Handicrafts has set up minimum health and safety standards and all of the artisans and producers they work with are expected to follow them. The workshop has to be well lit and ventilated to

ensure good working conditions. As the businesses develop, Asha Handicrafts invests the profits in improving the workshops:

- Water filters are fitted in the workshops to provide safe drinking water. This is important as the majority of diseases are due to unsafe water.
- The electrical wiring of the workshop is inspected and, if necessary, it is rewired to ensure that there are no accidents due to short circuits or faulty wiring.
- Artisans and producers are made aware of the dangers of connecting loose wires directly into electric sockets, as this can cause a fire.
- A fire extinguisher is placed in the workshop in case of a fire. It could also be used for putting out fires in the local area.

Environmental awareness

Asha Handicrafts' Environment Advisor spends time with the artisans and producers to create awareness about the importance of using surgical masks during processes that generate dust. They are also educated about the importance of disposing of their production waste responsibly. Large bins have been provided to producers of wood products to help them collect the sawdust and wood shavings. These are then given to poor people to be used as firewood.

Preventing accidents

The belts of a lathe machine can cause accidents if they are at floor level. The artisan's traditional flowing clothes can easily become caught in the machinery. This can cause serious accidents including the loss of a finger or limb. Producers are therefore advised to install the belts vertically. This is much safer and also releases the floor space which can be used for other activities.



Asha Handicrafts

Good working conditions are essential.

Improving life, livelihood and lifestyle

A case study

Stone and marble crafts have always posed a challenge to the health of the artisans who make them. Making stone products generates a lot of dust. The artisans are regularly covered in fine dust from head to toe. They also breathe in the dust particles that float around the workshop all the time.

This problem was noticed by the staff of Asha Handicrafts during their visit to the workshop of one of their producers, R.C. Marble Handicrafts. The first step was to find out how the production process could be improved to eliminate this health hazard.

Solving the problem

A consultant quoted a very high price to solve the problem, so Asha Handicrafts asked the lead artisan, Ramesh Chand Sharma, to suggest a solution. He suggested an underground passage fitted with a series of exhaust fans that would suck the dust out of the workshop as it is created. Asha Handicrafts consulted the manufacturers of exhaust fans for technical specifications and finalised the drawing. The plan was shown to a mechanical engineer who said that it would work, even though it was a low tech solution.

At the time Ramesh Chand, his brothers and their families lived together. Three rooms on the ground floor of their house were used as the workshop. It was not possible for the new dust extractor system to be installed in the house. A new workshop would be needed for the dust extractor system to work. Funding from Asha Handicrafts and Tearfund enabled the work to start. Seeing the concern and commitment of Asha Handicrafts and Tearfund for their health and safety, Ramesh Chand offered to raise the remaining amount required to complete the building.

A year later, a suitable plot of land was located and purchased. Initially, Ramesh Chand found it impossible to get a bank loan as the bank managers considered him a high credit risk. Asha Handicrafts supported him to get a loan from a bank. This was used to complete the project. The

interest rates were also reduced to make it easier for him to repay the loan. After three years, the new production workshop with the innovative dust extractor system was opened.

Improvements

The amount of dust particles floating in the air has been greatly reduced and the artisans are able to work in less dusty conditions. Now the only time they have to wear a dust mask is when they are working on the band saw. This is because the dust generated by the three lathes is drawn underground and collected in a chamber outside the workshop, rather than being left to float in the workshop as before. The machines, which are now at floor level, are fitted with covers for the safety of the artisans moving around in the workshop.

Ramesh Chand has become a topic of conversation among the fellow artisans who are astonished at this new dust-free workshop. The number of artisans wanting to work with him has greatly increased. He now regularly works with a team of 15 artisans during busy periods. The number of machines in the workshop has also been increased to expand his production capacity.



Asha Handicrafts

An artisan working on a stone product.

This project to provide a healthy and safe work place also had an unexpected bonus. When the production moved out of their family home, the three rooms previously used for production became available for family use. They converted one room into a study for their children who needed extra space to do their homework without disturbing the family.

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Geoff Crawford/Tearfund

The only time artisans have to wear a dust mask is when they are working on the band saw.

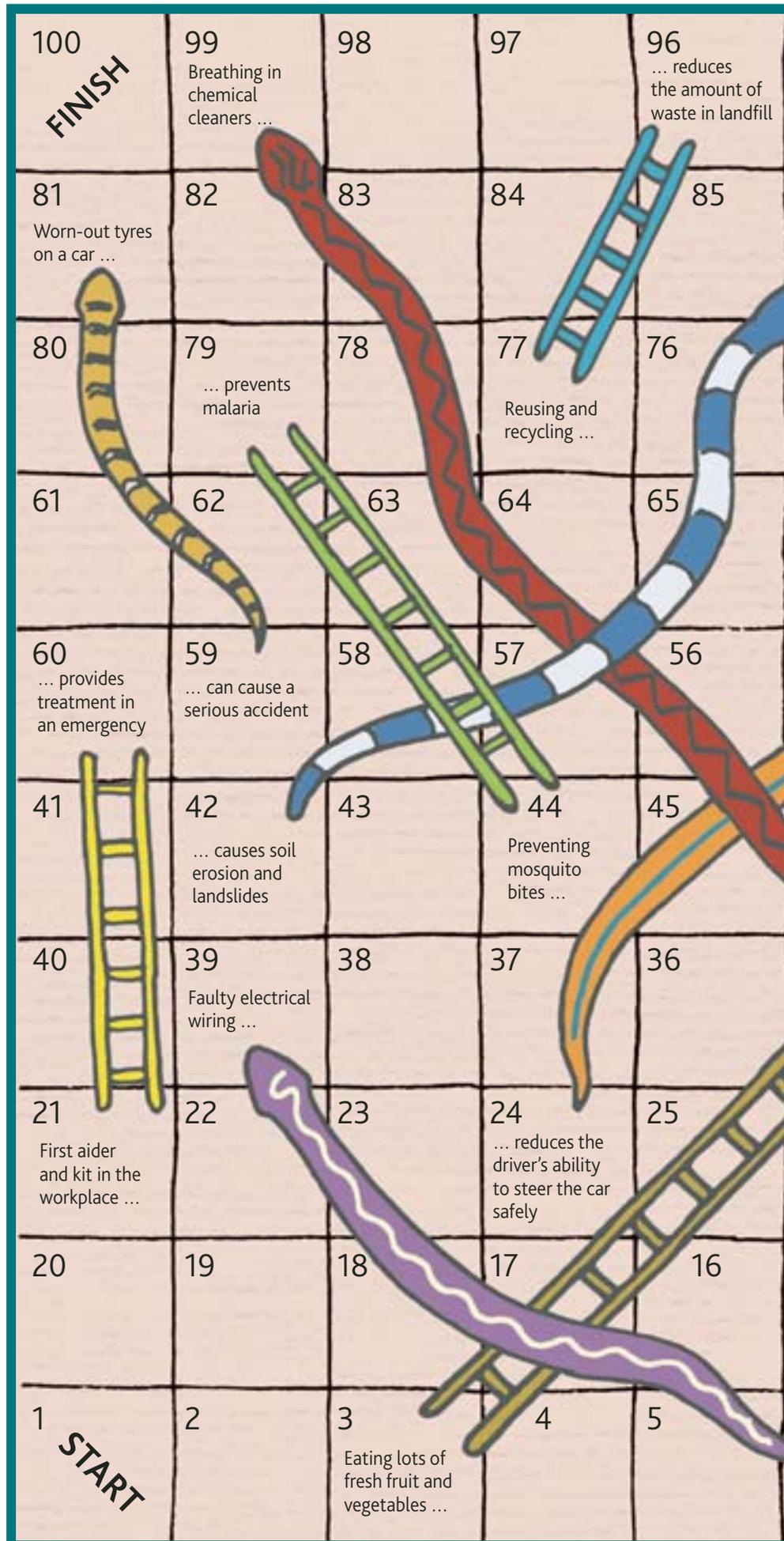
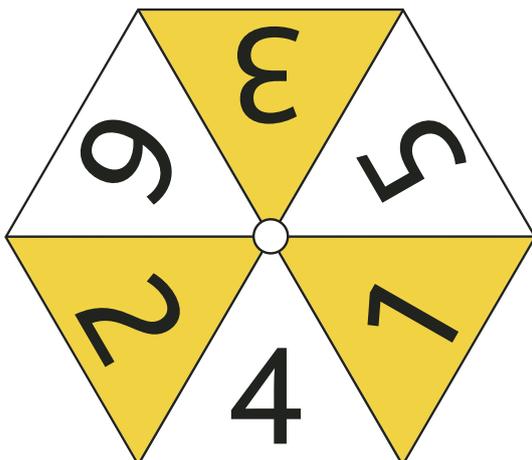
Using games

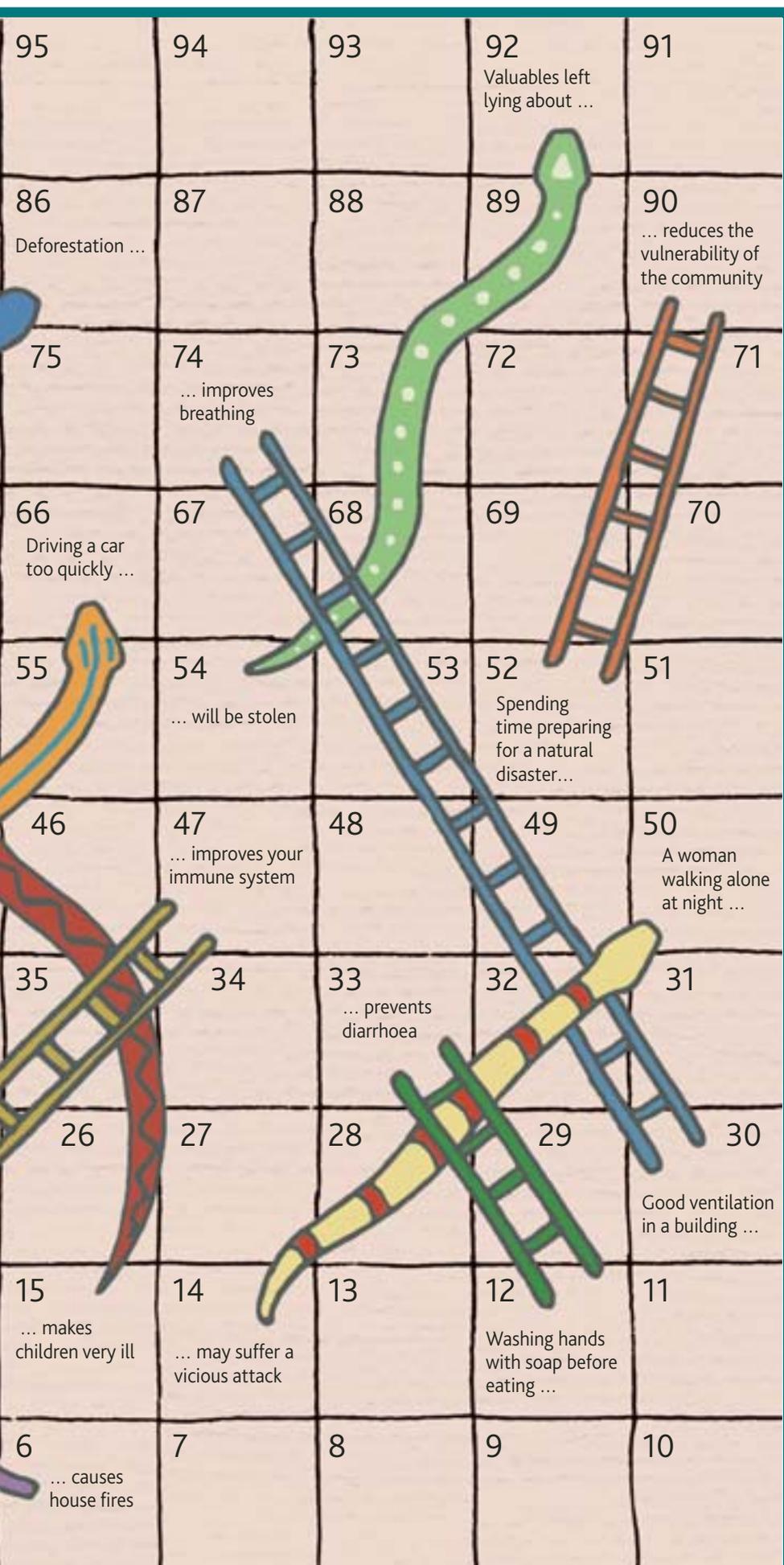
Compiled by Rebecca Dennis

Board games can be fun to play and can be used to teach adults and children (aged seven and upwards) some important lessons. One example is the popular game of Snakes and Ladders, which is shown and explained on these pages. One of the strengths of this game is that the messages and language can be adapted to the local situation. This version shows how everyday risks can be reduced and what can happen if we do not manage them.

Board games work best when the messages on the board are adapted to refer to issues within your community. You can make your own board game by copying this board onto a large sheet of paper, cardboard or wood, and adapting the messages. You should aim to put the most important messages against the longest snakes and ladders to emphasise their importance.

Players should be encouraged to discuss the problems (snakes) and solutions (ladders) that they land on during the game. When the game is over, discuss any other relevant problems or solutions which were not mentioned. Also discuss what actions people can take to manage everyday risks in their own lives.





Snakes and ladders

This game is suitable for adults and children (aged seven and upwards).

WHAT YOU NEED

Dice
Seeds, stones or shells as markers
Game board

(If you do not have a dice, copy the numbered shape opposite on to card or stiff paper, then push a matchstick or thin twig through the centre. Twirl the stick gently. When the dice stops spinning, the side resting on the ground is the number you use.)

HOW TO PLAY

This game can be played by two to six people, or by teams. Each player uses a marker to show the place he or she occupies on the board.

Each player rolls the dice. The player with the highest number starts the game.

The first player rolls the dice and moves his or her marker according to the number shown on the dice, beginning from square 1, marked START. The players then take it in turns to roll the dice and move their marker.

If a player rolls a six, the player moves six places, then rolls the dice for a second turn.

If a marker stops on the **head of a snake**, the player moves their marker down to the tail of the snake. The player reads the message at the head and tail of the snake to all the players. All players then briefly discuss the issue. That player's turn is over and their next turn starts from the square at the tail of the snake.

If a marker lands at the **bottom of a ladder**, the player moves to the top of the ladder. The player reads the message at the bottom and top of the ladder to all the players. All players then briefly discuss the issue. That player's turn ends at the top of the ladder, and his or her next turn begins from there.

The first player to reach the FINISH wins the game.

Risks in the home

It is very easy to associate risks with places and events outside the home, but every day thousands of people are injured within their home by accidents that could have been avoided.

Here are four simple ways of reducing the risk of injury or death to household members.

For more information about staying healthy at home see Footsteps 74.

Preventing fires

To prevent fires occurring in the home:

- keep cooking fires enclosed
- keep matches away from children and children away from fires
- keep a covered bucket of water, sand or dirt, or a fire extinguisher near the stove
- keep flammable and toxic materials, such as gasoline, paint and solvents, out of the house and in well-sealed containers. Keep them far from any heat source
- make sure electrical equipment is safe, wired correctly and is covered
- make sure electric lines are properly installed and grounded
- never run electric wires under carpets, mats or thatch roof materials
- avoid connecting many electric extension cords together to form one long cord. Do not overload sockets with too many appliances
- do not install outlets or switches where they can get wet from water pipes, taps, sinks or rain.

If smoke alarms are available, put one in your house to warn you if a fire has started and give you time to leave the building.



A well-maintained stove reduces the risk of fire.

Well safety

A well cover helps prevent the water becoming polluted from wastewater or objects falling in the well. It also makes the well safer for children. A simple cover can be made using concrete and reinforcing wire.

Another option for making wells safer, is to build a wall around the edge of the well. This will help prevent people and objects falling in.



Covering your well reduces the risk of unsafe water and accidents.

Making safer cleaning products

Many modern cleaning products are made with toxic chemicals which make people sick. When these toxic chemicals are breathed in, swallowed or absorbed through the skin, they can cause health problems immediately or illnesses that may appear years later. Often cleaning with soap and water is just as good, safer and less costly than using chemical products. Natural cleaners can be stored more easily because they are safer, do not go bad and do not need to stay cold. But they should still be kept out of the reach of children.



Cleaning your house with natural cleaners reduces the risk of illness.

Article compiled by Rebecca Dennis using information from A community guide to environmental health, by Jeff Conant and Pam Fadem, published by Hesperian. See Resources, page 5, for details about how to order.

Making a natural refrigerator

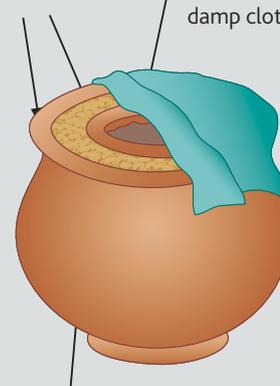
Keeping foods cold, such as fruits, vegetables, meat and milk, will slow down the rotting process. Eating rotten food can make you very ill.

A method called the 'Pot-in-Pot' is able to keep foods cool in dry, hot climates where there is no electricity.

Leave the Pot-in-Pot in a dry, open place out of the sun. As dry air surrounds it, water in the sand passes through the outer surface of the larger pot. When the water passes from the sand, the inner container is cooled, slowing the reproduction of harmful germs and preserving the food inside. The sand must not be allowed to become completely dry. The only maintenance is washing and replacing the sand every so often.

Two clay pots of different sizes, one placed inside the other

Food or drink is placed inside the smaller pot and covered with a damp cloth



The space between the pots is filled with wet sand that is always kept moist

Mosquito nets

My name is Jorge Lacoste, I live with my family in Argentina and I have read about the problem of malaria and mosquito bites in Africa.

I would like to make a suggestion about the use of mosquito nets. Through my training as an engineer, I am aware of a product called Nonwoven which is a very porous fabric made of polyester or polypropylene. It is used in hundreds of different ways, such as in nappies, and it could be used to make mosquito nets.

I presume that a campaign could be started for makers of this fabric to give away scrap pieces that do not quite meet the required specifications, but which can be used perfectly well for this purpose.

I would like to hear from any readers who have ideas about how this can be done.

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EDITOR'S NOTE *It is important that any fabric used as a mosquito net must fulfil strict criteria – any new ideas must be checked with a malaria expert.*

Translation competition

I am very happy to announce that the Spanish translation of the PILLARS Guide *Encouraging good hygiene and sanitation* won the regional prize for the translation competition we entered last year. Here is the link to the website in which it appears: http://dti.unilat.org/panhispanico/edicion_3/ganadores.htm

Elisabeth Frias
Dominican Republic

Medicinal gardens

I have just read *Footsteps 74*. It is a practical summary of many positive ways of keeping healthy at home. I am surprised, however, that you do not mention medicinal gardens. They are a very important part of health care at home. By ensuring that a few effective medicinal plants are available in

the home garden, most common illness can be treated effectively with no monetary cost. Having the plants growing ensures that they are readily available and can be used in a timely way.

So many medical complications can be prevented by early treatment. One easy example is that we encourage the planting of Aloe as close as possible to the kitchen so we can apply the gel from the leaves to a burn immediately. This soothes, assists in healing and reduces any scarring.

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Generating biogas

A theological college in Tanzania has asked me to find information about generating biogas. It would be used for cooking meals for approximately 120 students, and would remove the need to use wood and charcoal.

Is the idea feasible and if so what input is needed to generate a viable output? Are any plans available? If there is any information you could send me I would be most grateful.

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Questions and answers

Do you have a question you need an answer for? Do you have information that you think others will find useful? If your answer to either of these questions is 'yes', then we would like to hear from you!

Please send any letters to:
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Ezang products

In *Footsteps 65* (February 2006), we wrote a letter about *Ezang*: a large African forest tree (*Ricinodendron heudeloti*), also known as Gobo, Ezezang or Njansang. In addition to the training which we provide and the booklets which we publish, we have just set up a small unit to promote all the products that can be obtained from this tree. We produce:

- *Ezang* kernels – these very nutritious kernels are used to thicken and flavour sauces and stews to bring out the taste.



- *Ezang* oil is used in the making of cosmetic and pharmaceutical products.
- The shell of the *Ezang* fruit can be used as mural decoration in building, using cement as glue.
- The ash of the shells of *Ezang* fruit can be used to make soap.

We are looking for partners to help us to develop our project which consists of raising local chickens and also to move forward in our research on *Ezang* oil and the coarse powder which remains after the oil has been extracted. We have thought about making a feed for the chickens.

We would like to hear from any *Footsteps* readers who are able to help us.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have regarding our activities.

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Managing our personal safety

by Jeremy Taylor

Many of us live in, work in or visit places where we have to deal with threats to our personal safety on a regular basis. Managing those threats and keeping ourselves safe can seem like a daily battle.

Be aware of your situation

Depending on where we live, the risks we face are different. We may live in an area of conflict, a city with lots of crime, or maybe a remote village. Whatever the context, the greatest risks are usually crime-related, where people are prepared to use force, or the threat of force, for material gain: for example muggings, burglary and carjacking.

Even in areas of conflict the greatest risks still tend to be crime-related, as people take advantage of the breakdown of law and order to carry out violent crime. A conflict might also boost illegal trade, increasing the market for stolen items, or the profits from crime may be used directly to fund the conflict.

Assess the risk

Being aware of our situation and that of people around us can help us understand if the risk of an attack on our personal safety has changed. For example, are large numbers of people under severe financial pressure or does one group of people feel oppressed by another? These and many other social, political or economic factors can be triggers that cause an increase in crime-related risks.

Sometimes we can get so used to a situation that we become complacent about the risks. It may be that we have spent our whole life in the same place and because we have been safe up until now, we presume that things will continue to remain the same. But situations and environments can change around us. There is a story that people frequently use when talking about managing personal safety – the frog story (see box opposite). In the same way it can be very easy not to notice the small, slow changes that go on around us, gradually changing our situation to one full of risks.

There will be situations which will be more risky for a woman. For example, a female health worker travelling alone will be more vulnerable. People can also be more vulnerable because of their age, nationality or disability.

It is important that all risks are identified for each group of people and are then managed well.

Know your neighbours

With the increase in mobility and communications, many of us do not live in as close a community with our neighbours as our parents or grandparents did. As well as the

The frog story



If a frog is put into boiling water it will jump straight out again. But if a frog is placed in cold water, and that water is heated up slowly until it starts to boil, the frog will stay there and be boiled in the water.

social and spiritual benefits, being part of a local community can also help our personal security. A strong community will look out for those who are marginalised, and could help prevent them from going down the route of crime.

Neighbours who talk regularly with each other, will be aware of new risks threatening a locality. Being part of a community will mean that in the event of a violent attack the community will, if it is able, come to our aid. If a community does not know us they will feel no connection with us and will be less likely to help us in a time of need. It is therefore important that time is spent getting to know your neighbours.

Understand the cultures around you

Wherever we live we can sometimes not be aware of the different ways that people around us view things. Whatever our upbringing we all carry a certain amount of our 'culture' with us. If we do not understand the culture of others, we can easily

Responding to a personal attack

- The first thing is to **stay calm**. Not always easy to do in a threatening situation, but if you panic you could very easily make the situation worse. Thinking about the different threats beforehand, and working out how you might respond, can help you remain calm if you are attacked.
- **Do exactly what your attacker requests**. Do not do what you think they may want. You could be mistaken. Even trying to give them something they have not asked for could bring confusion to the situation. It is better to lose personal possessions than risk personal harm.
- **Be confident**, as this can reduce your vulnerability in the eyes of your attacker, but do not be arrogant, as this could easily incite them to be more violent. The calmer your attacker remains the safer you will be.



Jeremy Taylor

It is important to respect the culture around you. Here people have removed their shoes and the women have covered their heads, which is the cultural norm in Afghanistan.

make a mistake that could cause a small problem to quickly become much worse.

For example, if the culture around us places a large emphasis on status, then questioning the status of another person could cause a difficult situation to become a dangerous one. If someone threatens me with a knife and I do something as simple as look him in the eye, it could be taken as a challenge to his 'status'. Whereas he may have been content just to take my phone or money, now he may feel that he has to re-affirm his 'status' by physically attacking me.

It is not possible to have a set of instructions that cover how to respond to every situation. What might provoke in one culture may actually calm a situation in another. The better we understand the culture of those who could possibly be a threat to us, the more likely we will be able to react in a way that does not provoke a situation. Take time to learn about and understand the culture around you, so that you are able to behave appropriately.

Be prepared

How do we carry on our everyday lives and not live in fear of something happening to us every time we walk out of our home? There are certain places and times that put us at more risk. Understanding these will help us get the balance right between not doing anything out of fear and being careless in our actions:

Times and places where there are not many people around can put us at greater risk, such as late at night, early in the morning, afternoon Siesta time or quiet, unpopulated streets. There is safety in numbers, so if you can walk, cycle or even drive with other people you will be safer.

Speak to people. If you are visiting an area, even if you know it well, speak to people living there. Find out if there has been a recent increase in violence and crime. Ask if there are particular routes that you should avoid. Tell people what you are doing, where you are going and when you expect to arrive somewhere.

Make sure you know what you are doing and where you are going. A criminal could easily spot someone who is lost or unsure and this could mark you out as an 'easy target'.

Do not advertise the possessions you have. If you have a mobile phone, do not use it in an area you are not sure about.

Keep it in your pocket, not out on show – that important phone call can usually wait a few minutes! Keep other personal possessions, such as cameras or jewellery, hidden. If you have a car then consider whether you really need to use it. Could you walk or even take a bicycle to where you want to go?

Essentially, personal safety comes down to being aware: being aware of our surroundings, the risks and our vulnerabilities. But that awareness should not cause us to live in fear.

Jeremy Taylor has worked for Tearfund's Disaster Management Team in West and Central Africa and Central Asia and is currently managing CORD's humanitarian response to the Darfur crisis by assisting refugees in Chad.

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BIBLE STUDY Taking risks for God

A good example of someone who took great risks was Abraham (originally known as Abram). Though the risks that Abraham took were huge, they were measured and balanced because he knew the character of God. He trusted God.

Read Genesis 12:1-5

- How do you think Abraham felt when God asked him to leave his country?
- Is there a greater risk than leaving your home and family, where you feel safe and secure, for the unknown?
- What can we learn from Abraham's attitude in agreeing to leave for the unknown?

Later on, Abraham is presented with a situation in which, this time, he has to risk the life of his own son Isaac, even though he was the son who had been promised by God (Genesis 18:10).

Read Genesis 22:1-18

When Abraham obeyed God's voice and went up the mountain to offer his son as a sacrifice, he demonstrated his faith in God.

- Why would sacrificing Isaac seem the wrong thing to do?

- How did Abraham show his faith?

Consider Hebrews 11:8-12.

- Why did Abraham think this way?

Taking measured and balanced risks is proof of our faith in God. Are we prepared to take risks for God when he asks us to?

What risk is God asking us to take now, so that his name may be glorified and his Kingdom might be extended?

Abraham's faith, which led him to agree to take big risks for God, earned him the name 'friend of God'. Therefore, let us not fear taking risks when God asks us to. We do not need to fear if the risks that we take are based on our faith in the God who can do all things.

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The importance of carrying out a risk assessment

by Lesley and David Mundy

Carrying out a risk assessment is about carefully considering what could cause harm to people or damage to things, so that you can decide which actions to take to ensure that no-one gets hurt and nothing is damaged. Risk assessments do not need to be complicated. Often the hazards are few and obvious. Having seen the importance of managing risk in various situations around the world, this article clearly explains how to carry out a formal risk assessment.



Richard Hanson/Tearfund

Picnics can be fun, but it is important to consider any risks beforehand.

Risk assessments need to be made when large groups of people, or groups of vulnerable people such as children, are involved in an event or are at a particular location. Risk assessments need to be **suitable** and **sufficient**, but they do not need to be perfect. They must be carried out in advance so that there is time to think about them and take action to minimise the risks.

There are two important words when assessing risk:

- **RISK** the possibility that someone will be harmed or something will be damaged by the hazard
- **HAZARD** anything that can cause harm to people or damage things.

Example of a situation that needs a risk assessment

Your church is planning a picnic in a local park for the Sunday School children after the service on Easter Sunday. There are over 120 children aged from five to 12 years old. There are eight teachers in the Sunday School. Five of them are women, and three are under 18 years old. The park is approximately two kilometres walking distance from the church. The Sunday School teachers will provide the food for the picnic. After the picnic they will organise games for the children to play in the park before returning to the church at around 5pm.

There are four basic steps to assessing risks.

STEP 1

Who could be harmed?

First, think about who is involved at an event or a particular location. Then, consider who may be affected even though they are not directly involved (for example, spectators of an event). In this first step you should draw a table and write down in the first column a list of the individuals or groups of individuals who could be harmed (see Table 1 opposite).

Who could be harmed in the picnic example?

- The Sunday School children.
- The teachers.
- Depending on the games played at the picnic, other users of the park could also possibly be harmed.

STEP 2

How could they be harmed?

For each individual and group of individuals, consider what hazards could harm them. Some individuals may be more vulnerable to certain hazards. Remember to also consider hazards in the environment, such as the weather. Consider the harm that each hazard could cause to the individuals and groups of individuals. Rate each hazard as **fatal**, **serious** or **minor**. Write this information in the second column of Table 1 alongside the individual or group of individuals affected.

How could they be harmed in the picnic example? Some of the hazards that could harm the Sunday School children include:

- being involved in an accident when walking between the church and the local park
- being approached by strangers
- getting lost in the park
- hazards already in the park, such as park equipment or broken glass.

Hazards that could harm the Sunday School teachers include:

- being involved in an accident when walking between the church and the local park

STEP 1 Who could be harmed?	STEP 2 The hazards	STEP 3 Risk rating
Sunday School children	Being involved in an accident when walking between the church and the local park. Fatal or serious depending on the accident.	Likely The likelihood of an accident will depend on how safe the route taken between the church and the local park is and how well the children are supervised by the teachers.
Teachers	Being stung by an insect or a plant in the park. Minor.	Unlikely The likelihood of being stung may depend on where in the park the picnic is held.
Other users of the park	Injured by a ball during a game. Minor.	Likely The likelihood of another park user being hit by a ball during a game will depend on where the games are played and what types of games are played.

TABLE 1

- being stung by an insect or a plant in the park
- getting hurt in the games.

STEP 3 How likely are the risks?

Consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm. Rate the likelihood of the risk as **inevitable, likely or unlikely**. This will determine whether or not you need to do more to reduce the risk.

What is the likelihood of the risks to the children in the picnic example? These are explained in column 3 of Table 1.

Using the information in columns 2 and 3, you can now assess the risk according to its severity and the likelihood of it happening. For example, an accident on the way to the park will be **likely** and **serious**.

Giving priority to any risks which are **fatal** or **serious** and **inevitable** or **likely**, you

can now draw up an 'action list'. Ask yourself two questions:

- Can I get rid of the hazard completely?
- If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

Maybe there is a less risky option that can be considered. For example, the choice between walking down a busy road and walking along a quiet road significantly alters the likelihood of accidents. Your aim is to make the risk as small as possible. Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains. What you have to decide for each hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low. With this information you can decide if the risk is worth it.

STEP 4 Complete a written Risk Assessment Form

It is useful to keep a written record of your risk assessment, showing the hazards and

the precautions you are taking to reduce risk. The information you have gathered in Steps 1, 2 and 3 can now be used to complete a written Risk Assessment Form.

A well written risk assessment shows that:

- you have made a proper check of the event or location
- you have identified who and what might be harmed
- you have dealt with all the obvious hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved
- your precautions are reasonable so that the remaining risk is low.

You may find the format below helpful to record your risk assessment; the first row provides an example. Your written risk assessment can help you in the future, reminding you of particular hazards and precautions that you need to be aware of. You can make sure that the precautions are still relevant and still working. You can also use your written risk assessment when the situation changes and you need to reassess risk.

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Dr David Mundy is an independent consultant specialising in organisational development and programme management. Email: dhmundy@btinternet.com

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR VISIT						
Location Bankswood Park			Completed by Josephine Williams		Date 13th December 2008	
WHO IS AT RISK?	HAZARD	RISK RATING	EXISTING PRECAUTIONS	RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONS	ACTION TAKEN (INCLUDING DATE)	REVIEW DATE
Children	Busy road	Likely and serious	Walking along a quiet road	Walking in pairs Warn children of risks before	Children told about activity on 20th January	2 weeks before Easter Sunday

TABLE 2 An example of a Risk Assessment Form

Reducing the risk of domestic violence

by Chester Thomas

Domestic violence cases in Honduras are only now being investigated, despite laws passed in 1998. This is as a result of women standing up for their rights and demanding justice for those who have been abused. Local governments are also beginning to invest in providing services for women who have been abused. Proyecto Aldea Global (PAG – Project Global Village) is helping to improve the situation.

The current situation

In towns there are a few legal and counselling services available to victims of domestic violence, but in rural areas such assistance is limited. Women in rural areas who are abused have three options:

- Pay a lawyer to seek justice. This is rarely done as lawyers are very expensive.
- Make a costly journey to town to get help from one of the busy government offices.
- Seek help from a local non-profit organisation. Most of these organisations, however, do not offer this kind of help in domestic violence responses. Also, staff often think that abuse and harassment are the fault of the victim.

PAG's response

Domestic violence continues to increase. Between 2003 and 2008 more than 84,000 cases were registered but only 20 per cent were investigated and resolved. Due to limited financial resources and personnel, PAG is only able to review approximately 800 cases a year. This has encouraged PAG to work alongside local churches and organisations to help them to reduce domestic violence.

PAG and its networks of female volunteers, are responding to four main problems:

- A lack of capacity in local civil society organisations, such as churches, universi-

ties and municipal commissioners, to respond to victims of domestic violence even when they are willing to help.

- Poor co-ordination of actions taken in favour of women's rights with the authorities, such as the local police and courts. This causes them to be inefficient or ineffective.
- Women having little or no local political representation for their rights. They are not welcome to participate in local community action groups.
- Women being economically dependent on their husbands or partners. This makes it harder to negotiate equal rights in the home and in the community.

The 'Deborah programme'

PAG's 'Deborah programme' seeks to improve the capacity of local civil society organisations to prevent abuse and to provide Christian care, counselling and legal protection to women who have been victims of violent abuse. The programme is managed by trained community personnel who work out of local government offices in six regions.

The future

Many local civil society organisations are keen to reduce domestic violence and gain equal rights for women. These groups want to be trained so that they can defend the rights of women.



Proyecto Aldea Global

The 'Deborah programme' hopes to expand by training more local volunteer organisations so that they can counsel victims of domestic violence and provide legal assistance, especially where women's rights have been affected. PAG also wants to improve co-ordination between authorities and civil society organisations to create more awareness locally and reduce domestic violence cases.

Women need to participate in local community organisations, such as action groups, police and schools, to improve respect for women and their legal rights. They also need to know their rights and use them to stop the vicious cycle of dependency in domestic violence cases. One way to do this is to teach school children about domestic violence as part of their education. This should start as early as possible, and should include education about their rights and the rights of their mothers.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is a problem that requires concentrated efforts by the church, civil society, local and national government so that women in every country can have their rights respected and guaranteed.

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