



Course material

Course:

Understanding the digital supply chain and its stakes for humanitarian actors

Video:

3.2.2 Understand the Digital Ecosystem - ITW

Concepts (extracted from automatically generated subtitles):

Specific risks. Humanitarian work. Context of the data. Specific principles. Important question. Specific examples. Humanitarian organisations. Technology choices. Unique risks. Limited number of technology suppliers. Best measures. Legal aspects. Hate speech. Digital ecosystem. Appropriate contingency planning.



[to video sequence search](#)

(within Understanding the digital supply chain and its stakes for humanitarian actors.)



[to video](#)

Center for Digital Education. More educational support material here:

<https://www.epfl.ch/education/educational-initiatives/cede/educational-technologies-gallery/boocs-en/>
page 1/44

STAKES FOR HUMANITARIANS ORGANIZATIONS

Unique Digital Risks to Humanitarian Organizations

Interview with Benjamin Durieux
Chief Information Officer
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)



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notes

summary

0m 0s





Madalitso Khozi
Risk and Assurance Manager - ICRC

Welcome back. In our previous video, we explored the digital ecosystem that plays a key role in humanitarian work.

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In this session, we will deep dive into the specific risks associated with this digital ecosystem that humanitarian organisations operate in.

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To help us understand these risks, we are joined by Benjamin Durieux, the Chief Information Officer of the International Committee of the Red Cross. -Welcome, Benjamin. -Thank you, Madalitso.

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-It's great to be here. -Benjamin, as we know, technology has transformed the way humanitarian organisations work, but it also brings certain challenges. Could you please tell us the specific and unique risks

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that humanitarian organisations face in their digital ecosystem? Humanitarian organisations operate under unique circumstances,

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and they operate under specific principles and ethical considerations that set humanitarian organisation apart from other organisations.

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We adhere to the humanitarian principles like neutrality, impartiality, independence, and humanity.

For instance, we adhere to humanitarian principles like neutrality, impartiality, independence, and humanity. These principles guide everything we do.

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It's very important that the technology choices we make

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are aligned with these principles and operating modalities. That makes sense. Could you give Are there some specific examples of how these principles influence the specific risks that humanitarian organisations face?

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The *Do No Harm* Principle

The key principle we apply is the principle of do no harm, which means that the populations we are working with

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should not be exposed to additional risks. This is particularly true in the context of the data we collect.

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It's of utmost important that we apply the best measures to protect the data, in particular when it comes to data related to parties to a conflict. If this data would be breached or misunderstood,

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this could have serious consequences to the populations we are working with and to the staff as well on the field.

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This confidentiality is a key element of our ability to operate. It sounds like maintaining trust is a key aspect of humanitarian work. What are some of the risks

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that are specific to the digital operations of humanitarian organisations? Trust is indeed a foundational requirement.

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Operational Disruption



Data Breaches and Insider Threats



Perceived breach of impartiality and independence

Beyond confidentiality, there are several risks that we are facing, including the first one, which is about operational disruption.

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Operational Disruption



Data Breaches and Insider Threats



**Perceived breach of impartiality
and independence**

It includes connectivity issues on the field and the resilience of the critical applications. Without the appropriate contingency planning, it could lead to operational disruption,

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summary

3m 1s





Operational Disruption



Data Breaches and Insider Threats



**Perceived breach of impartiality
and independence**

which could have an impact on affected population and the trust of our donors and potentially, eventually, threaten our licence to operate.

notes

summary

3m 13s





Operational Disruption



Data Breaches and Insider Threats



**Perceived breach of impartiality
and independence**

The second risk is related to data breaches and insider threats. The miss handling of data. Our targeted cyberattacks can lead to unauthorised access to sensitive information.

notes

summary

3m 25s





Operational Disruption



Data Breaches and Insider Threats



**Perceived breach of impartiality
and independence**

This could seriously damage our reputation and jeopardise the safety of those we serve. Finally, the last risk, at least in this context, is to be perceived as partial or one-sided.

notes

summary

3m 37s





Operational Disruption



Data Breaches and Insider Threats



**Perceived breach of impartiality
and independence**

Given the limited number of technology suppliers, there is a risk that our technology choices might be perceived as biased or influenced by specific states, which can undermine our impartiality and independence.

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In the introductory section, we learned that technology vendors are some of your key stakeholders.

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One of the risks we face is change in vendors' profile or strategies.

What are the specific risks that you're exposed to by virtue of being in relationships with the technology vendors? One of the risks we face is a change in vendor's profile or strategies.

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In particular, if a vendor gets taken or merges by another company with a different strategy or different relationships with parties to a conflict.

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Typically, if a company we're working with gets involved with the parties of a conflict, this can create the perception that our operations are not as impartial or neutral that they should be.

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Another issue is the dual use of technology. For example, satellite communication or networks, or a lot of different foundational infrastructures

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are used at the same time by military and civilian organisations. In case of disruption, it could really lead to

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operational disruption on our side and as well the perception of a lack of impartiality and neutrality. Those are significant risks. What about legal aspects?

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How are humanitarian organisations affected by legal aspects, especially around risks in the digital ecosystem? That's an important question. Usually, humanitarian organisations

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are operating under specific jurisdictions like privileged immunities and specific exemptions. These frameworks and these exemptions

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5m 37s





are not always applicable to data and information technologies, depending on the country we operate. In addition, some of these countries do not

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have a very strong legal framework when it comes to data and information technologies. The combination of the risks we are facing,

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Legal challenges are a big part of our digital risk landscape.

the application of privileged immunities or specific exemption, and sometimes the lack of protection for data might create the ground for future legal battles.

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In particular, if we host and operate information systems in countries which are not where we implement these techniques. What about emerging risks such as misinformation or ethical use of new technologies? These are indeed growing concerns.

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6m 25s





The rise of misinformation and hate speech on social media can harm our reputation and affect public trust.

The rise of misinformation on hate speech on social media can harm our reputation and affect public trust. We are monitoring and trying to understand the context in which we operate in this area.

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6m 41s





In addition, when it comes to emerging technologies,

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6m 56s



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we looking very carefully at artificial intelligence and defining a framework to operate these technologies in an ethical manner. In particular, as I would say, obviously, the management of

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personal data and critical information is really at the core of these considerations. It's clear that managing digital risk is very complex.

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7m 13s



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Any final thoughts? Managing risks effectively doesn't mean avoiding technology altogether. On the contrary, technology is important for operations.

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Staying close to affected populations requires the use of advanced technologies and advanced communication tools. We need to appreciate, however, that digital risks are present in our environment, and we'll probably continue to be there as we evolve and as the technology evolves.

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We need to create spaces in our respective organizations to discuss the dilemmas associated with the use of technologies and how we can resolve them.

Therefore, we should create spaces in our organisations to discuss the dilemmas associated with the use of technologies and how we can resolve them.

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Thank you so much, Benjamin, for your insights. Thank you for having me.

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