NGO Security Roles: Country to Global

Fully anonymised role examples for veterans & service leavers

Purpose

This document provides realistic, experience-led examples of NGO security roles commonly encountered by veterans transitioning into the humanitarian sector. It is not recruitment material. It is intended to show how judgement, responsibility, and accountability are applied in practice — particularly where authority is limited and consequences are real.

Country Security Manager / Security Advisor

Role overview
The Country Security Manager is a senior field-based advisory role responsible for supporting safe and effective programme delivery in conflict-affected or high-risk environments. The role focuses on proportionate security management, context analysis, liaison, and decision-support during routine operations and incidents. For many veterans, this is the first senior NGO security role they encounter.

Security systems & planning
• Establish, maintain, and regularly review country-level security policies, plans, and procedures
• Conduct comprehensive and dynamic security risk assessments aligned to programme activities
• Identify when existing procedures no longer fit the operating context and advise on adaptation
• Monitor adherence to agreed systems and provide corrective advice where required

Operational support
• Advise on staff movements, access constraints, and programme feasibility
• Conduct regular field and site visits to assess security conditions and risk exposure
• Provide security briefings to staff and visitors, including induction and pre-movement advice
• Support programme teams in planning activities in volatile and fluid environments

Context analysis & information management
• Monitor political, social, and conflict dynamics relevant to operations
• Maintain internal incident reporting and information-sharing systems
• Analyse incident trends, emerging threats, and second-order risks
• Conduct ad-hoc assessment missions to existing or potential programme areas

Liaison & coordination
• Maintain professional networks with peer NGOs, UN entities, and coordination mechanisms
• Participate in inter-agency security forums and information-sharing platforms
• Liaise with relevant authorities where required to support access and operational continuity

Incident & crisis support
• Advise senior management and crisis management teams during security incidents
• Support incident reporting, analysis, and organisational learning processes
• Contribute to crisis preparedness, contingency planning, and post-incident reviews

How the role feels in practice
The role is operationally close, decision-heavy, and relationship-driven. Information is often incomplete, timelines are compressed, and consequences are real. Authority is limited; influence depends on credibility, judgement, and trust built over time.

Head of Global Safety & Security

Role overview
The Head of Global Safety & Security is a senior leadership role responsible for setting organisational direction on safety, security risk management, and crisis response across multiple operating contexts. The role balances strategic oversight and policy development with direct advisory support during critical incidents.

Strategy, policy & standards
• Develop and maintain organisational safety and security frameworks and standards
• Ensure context-specific security systems are in place and appropriately adapted across programmes
• Align organisational practice with recognised duty-of-care and humanitarian best practice

Advisory & senior leadership support
• Advise senior leaders on risk acceptance, mitigation options, and potential consequences
• Support high-level decision-making during crises, including programme suspension or evacuation
• Present options, trade-offs, and second-order effects rather than prescriptive directives

Crisis management
• Support organisational crisis management structures and processes
• Provide calm, structured guidance during serious or complex incidents
• Ensure learning is captured and integrated following crises and near-misses

Capacity building & external engagement
• Oversee security training, mentoring, and professional development
• Build internal capability so responsibility for risk is shared, not centralised
• Represent the organisation in relevant external coordination and security fora

How the role feels in practice
There are fewer decisions, but each carries greater organisational consequence. Distance from the field increases, while accountability expands. Influence is exercised without command authority.

Progression: what changes

• From operational detail to strategic consequence
• From managing incidents to shaping systems and culture
• From local context mastery to cross-context judgement

Further reading

Security Risk & Crisis Management (SRCM)