

Institution: The University of Manchester		
Unit of Assessment: 25 (Area Studies)		
Title of case study: Making data work for the humanitarian community		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Allard Duursma Dr Larissa Fast Professor Roger Mac Ginty Dr Róisín Read Dr Sophie Roborgh Professor Bertrand Taithe	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Duursma: Postdoctoral Researcher Fast: Senior Lecturer Mac Ginty: Professor Read: Lecturer Roborgh: Presidential Fellow and Lecturer Taithe: Professor	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: Duursma 2015-2018 Fast 2017, 2018-present MacGinty 2012-2018 Read 2016-present Roborgh 2018-present Taithe 2000-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI) research about humanitarian and conflict-related data has impacted on pivotal actors in the humanitarian sector. The research agendas were co-created with non-academic stakeholders to address key evidence gaps related to peacekeeping data in Darfur, the reporting of aid worker casualties, the use of data and technology in humanitarian response, and attacks on healthcare. The research has influenced advocacy and policy development in the UN system, among key organisations in the humanitarian sector, and at government levels in the UK and EU. It has also informed an Imperial War Museum-North (IWM-N) exhibition exploring the experiences of aid workers in conflict zones, visited by 4,637 people in its first month.		
2. Underpinning research Three programmes of HCRI-led research on the varied uses of data in humanitarian or conflict settings underpin this case study: Peacekeeping data [Duursma, Mac Ginty, Read, Taithe; 2013-2017]: This ESRC-funded project [GR1] explored fundamental questions about the collection, use, and representation of data in conflict settings, including how data could be used to improve peacekeepers' understanding of the environments in which they intervene. The project analysed data collected by the UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) about the date and location of reported violent incidents, such as movements of militia, weapons and people, raids on villages, and threats to UN staff. The HCRI project aimed to exploit the UNAMID dataset and to triangulate it with non-governmental organisation (NGO) and academic datasets, the perceptions of local communities, and media sources. The project found that the production of 'real-time' data in peacekeeping settings far outstrips the analytical capacity of actors on the ground [1]. As a result, the interventions humanitarians and peacekeepers undertake may not match the reality of the context [2]. The analysis of these data, even long after its production, can provide insight into conflict and intervention dynamics [1, 2, 3, 4]; this is precisely what partnerships between peacekeeping or humanitarian actors and academic institutions can enable [2, 3]. Moreover, examining the types of data (qualitative narratives; quantitative large-N datasets) and how they are used illustrates the ways that data and evidence combine to generate a narrow, expertise-driven knowledge that privileges international actors and de-politicises issues. While arguably a characteristic of conflict-related data more generally, this is particularly true for data on gender-related violence [4]. The research resulted in a Fulbright-funded collaboration (2016-2017) with an external researcher (Fast) who joined HCRI full-time in 2018, and a journal Special Issue featuring project findings and related research [2, 3]. Attacks on Healthcare [Fast, Taithe, Read, Roborgh; 2019-2020]: Attacks against health facilities, personnel, and transport in conflict zones are a key concern for local and international organisations providing healthcare and for policymakers, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 2286 (2016). HCRI's research since 2014 has documented the range of attacks on healthcare, and the importance of reliable data as a counterweight to the 'moral panic' that may		

result from perceptions of insecurity [5]. HCRI has built a reputation in this area and recruited staff (Fast, Roborgh) to expand its research and expertise.

Although organisations collect data about the number, type, and circumstances of attacks on healthcare, their consequences remain an intractable knowledge gap. The *Researching the Impact of Attacks on Healthcare (RIAH)* project (2019-2023, FCDO [GR2]) is a direct result of HCRI's past [5] and on-going corpus of research. This major collaborative project aims to fill gaps in evidence by analysing existing data in light of the quest to measure the impact of attacks, and by combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies to generate new evidence about impact. The project regularly publishes data about reported threats and violence against healthcare in conflict, and more recently as linked to the COVID pandemic.

The Use of Data and Technology in the Humanitarian Sector [Fast, Read; 2017-2020]: This stream builds upon the ESRC research that highlighted the disconnect between the prolific collection of data and the limited capacity for analysis within the humanitarian sector [1, 3] as well as Fast's long-standing work collecting data about violence against aid workers. Fast's research identified important differences between practitioners and academics that result from their respective epistemologies of data collection and use, using violence against aid workers as one key illustrative example [2]. Moreover, the uncritical adoption of new technologies, such as blockchain, raises ethical questions about risks for and experimentation on vulnerable populations and about the added value of such technologies [1, 6; see Section 4]. Research Council of Norway [GR3] and Wellcome Trust [GR4] awards fund this on-going research on responsible and effective use of data and technology in humanitarian response.

3. References to the research

1. **Read**, Róisín, **Taithe**, Bertrand and Roger **Mac Ginty**. 2016. "Data hubris? Humanitarian information systems and the mirage of technology." *Third World Quarterly* 37(8): 1314-1331. DOI: [10.1080/01436597.2015.1136208](https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1136208)
2. **Fast**, Larissa. 2017. "Diverging Data: Exploring the Epistemologies of Data Collection and Use Among Those Working on and in Conflict." *International Peacekeeping* 24 (5): 706-732. DOI: [10.1080/13533312.2017.1383562](https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2017.1383562)
3. **Duursma**, Allard. 2017. "Counting Deaths While Keeping Peace: An Assessment of the JMAC's Field Information and Analysis Capacity in Darfur." *International Peacekeeping* 24 (5): 823-47. DOI: [10.1080/13533312.2017.1383567](https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2017.1383567)
4. **Read**, Róisín. 2019. "Comparing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Expertise, Politics and Documentation." *Civil Wars* 21 (4): 468-88. DOI: [10.1080/13698249.2019.1642613](https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2019.1642613)
5. Abu Sa'Da, Caroline, Duroch, Françoise and Bertrand **Taithe**. 2014. "Attacks on medical missions: Overview of a polymorphous reality. The case of Médecins Sans Frontières." *International Review of the Red Cross*, 95 (890): 309-330. DOI : [10.1017/S1816383114000186](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383114000186)
6. Jacobsen, Katja Lindskov and Larissa **Fast**. 2019. "Rethinking Access: How Humanitarian Technology Governance Blurs Control and Care." *Disasters* 43 (S2): S151-168. DOI: [10.1111/disa.12333](https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12333)

In addition to the key academic publications above, this case study draws upon a series of publications written for and accessed by policy-makers and the general public, as indicated in Section 4 and supported in Section 5.

Quality indicators: The key articles above are all peer-reviewed outputs. [1], [3] and [4] are outputs from ESRC-funded research. Reference [2] was supported via a Fulbright-Schuman fellowship. The RIAH project and associated outputs are funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Key grants: **GR1:** ESRC, "Making Peacekeeping Data Work for the International Community" (2014-2017). PI Mac Ginty. GBP807,953. ES/L007479/1; **GR2:** Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, "Measuring the Impacts of Attacks on Healthcare" (2019-2023). PI Fast. The University of Manchester (UoM) GBP1,562,153; total value GBP2,500,000; **GR3:** Research Council of Norway, "Do No Harm: Ethical Humanitarian Innovation and Digital Bodies" (2019-2022). Co-I Fast. UoM GBP84,299; total value NOK5,996,000. RCN Norglobal 2, 286836; **GR4:**

Wellcome Trust, “Building a Research Agenda for Critical Medical Humanitarian Data Studies” (2019-2021). PI Fast. GBP30,300. 219280/Z/19/Z; **GR5**: ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA), “Making Peacekeeping Data Work for the International Community: Reframing human-centred design approaches for developing country contexts” (2016). PI Duursma. GBP4,840; **GR6**: ESRC IAA, “Attacks on Healthcare: Making NGO data on attacks on healthcare more accessible for use within a new database” (2018-2019). PI Fast. GBP14,970.

4. Details of the impact

Identifying more effective approaches for coping with the danger and complexity of violence is a central challenge for contemporary humanitarian and conflict response efforts. This challenge is increasingly the focus of data collected by a range of actors, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, and governments, all of which seek to better understand the implications of violence for their activities and how to remain safe in conflict zones. While organisations generate troves of data, it is less clear how they use these data to shape current or future programming, for retrospective analysis to improve practice, or what the repercussions may be of collecting, storing, and sharing these data in a digital age.

HCRI’s research and its focus on humanitarian and conflict-related data emerged out of longstanding and recurrent dialogues with networks of practitioners, NGOs and UN agencies. Some impacts of the research are early and ongoing, and therefore still emerging. HCRI’s cumulative research in this area has shaped (1) state-level policymaking in response to attacks on healthcare; (2) UN and humanitarian sector data policy; and (3) the way a major cultural institution presents the risks aid workers face in their work.

1. Influencing State-level (UK and EU) policymaking – attacks on healthcare

The increased political urgency of responding to attacks on healthcare, and the dearth of research about the *impact* of such attacks, resulted in major UK government funding awarded to HCRI to lead research in this area [GR2]. The RIAH project builds on existing HCRI networks with organisations such as the *World Health Organisation (WHO)*, *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)*, and the *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*, which have been leading voices on the topic of attacks on healthcare. This ongoing research is influencing policymaking and current debates by raising state-level and public awareness.

In August 2019, the RIAH team was invited to contribute to the Geneva-based ‘Protect Medics, Save Lives’ Platform. The purpose of the Platform is to advance implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2286 on the protection of the medical mission in situations of armed conflict. The platform is convened by the EU Mission and comprises ambassadorial-level representatives (or their designates) from the diplomatic missions of the UK, EU, Canada, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, and other EU member states, as well as key international organisations and NGOs, including the ICRC, WHO, MSF, *Geneva Call* and the *Norwegian Refugee Council*. The EU Mission requested that HCRI and RIAH research partner organisation *Insecurity Insight* produce ambassadorial-level digest documents that summarise context-specific data on attacks and provide recommendations on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Afghanistan. The first of these digests, on DRC, was published in November 2019, and drew on RIAH-supported data collection about attacks on healthcare [A.i]. The confidential digest was communicated to participating states and international organisation members of the Platform. A subsequent public-facing digest reporting on attacks for the entire DRC Ebola outbreak (produced November 2020) had an audience of 812 in the first 30 days after publication (based on mailing list opens and website downloads) [B]. The second digest [A.ii] was published several days after the May 2020 attack on a Kabul maternity hospital (audience of 374) [B].

The focus of engagement with the EU Platform work changed course in March 2020 with the acceleration of the COVID-19 pandemic, and media mentions of attacks on healthcare workers in conflict and non-conflict zones. The RIAH team regularly collects and publishes data about attacks on healthcare in the context of COVID-19. The two RIAH-supported COVID reports [A.iii] were each opened more than 900 times before the end of December 2020 [B]. To raise attention among policymakers and the general public, Roborgh and Fast wrote an article for *The Conversation* [C.i] in late April 2020 that had 6,800 readers by the end of November. This article led to an interview with *NBC International* [C.ii].

Since 2019, RIAH has collected data and supported other policy-focused outputs on an ongoing basis, such as data collection for the annual *Safeguarding Health Care in Conflict* (SHCC)

coalition report [A.iv] and associated monthly reports [A.v] on attacks on healthcare. These reports provide summative and current data about the numbers of attacks. Together the 11 monthly (Jan-Nov) reports from 2020 reached an audience of almost 6,000, averaging 538 per report [B]. The work builds on a related HCRI-led impact project in 2018-2019 [GR6] to collate and clean data on attacks on healthcare for 2018 and to compile the dataset for the 2019 SHCC report. The SHCC figures were used in background documents for a UN Security Council debate on 1 April 2019. At that meeting, the UK Ambassador called for better data and mentioned the RIAH research as part of the UK's efforts in this regard [D]. The latest SHCC report (May 2020), has been downloaded more than 3,000 times [B], and the launch event [A.vi] featured representatives from the Permanent Missions of Uruguay and Switzerland.

Fast's work on violence against aid workers [e.g. 2] and the RIAH project also led to an invitation to provide expert comment for the *International Development Committee's* [IDC] *Inquiry on Violence against Aid Workers*. The final report from the IDC (2019) [E] prominently features figures from the 2019 SHCC report. The RIAH project is cited in the supporting oral evidence (April 2019) and in the Government's response to the report [E].

2. Shaping UN and humanitarian sector data policy through co-creation

The research on the importance of and constraints to the role of data in humanitarian policy and practice has informed debate and policymaking in the humanitarian sector. For example, a briefing note by Read, based on the ESRC research, was cited in preparatory documents for the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) *Global Forum* in New York in June 2015. The forum was part of the consultation process in advance of the 2016 *World Humanitarian Summit* (WHS) [F.i]. A revised recommendation for this theme appeared in the final summary report from the Forum [F.ii, p. 61]. To advance this agenda on data and effectiveness, the HCRI team (Read, Taithe) organised a side event for the WHS, co-created with *Save the Children's Humanitarian Affairs Team* and the *Global Public Policy Institute* [F.iii]. The resulting calls for improved data gathering featured strongly in the WHS agenda and the subsequent prioritisation of the effective use of data for humanitarian programming and policy [G, paragraphs 120, 122].

As part of the post-WHS initiatives, the UN Secretary-General launched the *UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Centre for Humanitarian Data* in The Hague in December 2017. The Centre's mandate is to increase the use and impact of data in the humanitarian sector. Fast conducted the research that established the baseline indicators for the Centre's three-year strategic plan in early 2018 [H.i] and has continued to collaborate with the Centre since joining HCRI. This more recent collaboration focuses on shaping and supporting the Centre's thematic work around Data Responsibility. Fast's research on data and technology, published in academic journals [2, 6] as well as commissioned reports, such as on the impact of blockchain in the humanitarian sector [H.ii], resulted in an invitation to contribute a keynote on risks and harms at a discussion on humanitarian data policy in May 2019, jointly hosted by Wilton Park and the Centre. The meeting brought together leaders from 30 organisations, including donors, UN agencies, private sector actors, and humanitarian organisations. It was designed to identify key strategic areas to advance the Centre's mandate and objectives regarding the responsible and safe sharing of data about crisis-affected people. According to the Centre, "Because OCHA has key responsibilities for coordination and information management in the humanitarian sector, the meeting was particularly influential in setting the agenda for the next five years regarding data policy for global humanitarian response" [H.iii].

Based on this meeting, humanitarian sector leaders agreed upon an agenda to promote data responsibility [H.iv]. To progress the agenda, Fast's research examines the processes, policies, and collaborations that support the effective use of data. Currently in progress, the collaboration between HCRI and the Centre focuses on the formal and informal data demands that donors make of their operational partners, how these demands affect trust between humanitarian actors, and align with established guidelines for data responsibility. The findings from this research will inform donor-produced data responsibility guidelines, set to be launched at the October 2021 UN World Data Forum. It exemplifies the co-creation of research that addresses real-world issues [H.iii].

As another example, in 2016 Duursma [GR5, building on GR1] worked with the *Information Fusion Unit*, which conducts intelligence analysis for the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali. This work focused on spatial data and the analytical needs of those leading peacekeeping missions.

The visit helped to clarify data processes within the unit and identify areas of collaboration between UN personnel and researchers, and resulted in academic publications [e.g. I.i]. In July 2017, the HCRI team presented ESRC project findings to representatives from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Operations and Crisis Center, Human Rights section and the OCHA's Humanitarian Data Exchange [I.ii]. The project findings illustrated the potential contributions of analysing peacekeeping data to better understand conflict dynamics [3].

3. Informing curatorial practice through collaboration with IWM-N

HCRI research informed the curation of the Imperial War Museum-North (IWM-N) exhibition, 'Aid Workers: Ethics Under Fire'. The exhibition [J.i] explores the daily challenges faced by aid workers who are supporting people who have been forced to leave their homes as a result of conflict. It is part of *Refugees*, a programme of events and exhibitions during 2020-2021 at IWM London and IWM North that explore refugee experiences throughout history. The exhibition engages public audiences with the experiences of aid workers in conflict zones, including the risks they face. Fast's research insights [e.g. 2] were essential in developing the exhibition content [J.ii]. As the exhibition's curator explains, *"Dr Fast's research insights and specialist knowledge of the humanitarian sphere were essential in developing the exhibition content, especially in the section addressing the risks faced by aid workers. Dr Fast also helped to develop the ideas for and provided extensive feedback on the ethical dilemmas and scenarios that form a key part of the exhibition. These fictional scenarios sit within a series of a touch screen interactives which enable [the] visitor to engage directly with the sort of dilemmas that aid workers face in their work."* [J.ii] As an advisory board member between December 2018 and September 2020, Fast met numerous times with the curatorial team to discuss the exhibition plans and content, commenting on the accompanying objects (such as a rucksack, an innovative temporary shelter, and a 4x4 vehicle) that feature in the exhibition, suggesting names of individuals and organisations for interviews and reviewing all the exhibition text [J.ii]. The exhibition was originally scheduled to open in May 2020, but was delayed due to COVID and opened in October 2020 to run until 31 May 2021. Between 2 October and 5 November (when the Museum closed as a result of a national lockdown), the exhibition was visited by 4,637 people [J.ii].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Corroborating URLs and documents submitted in PDFs A-J.

- A. **State-level policymaking: key policy-focussed outputs:** i) EU Platform DRC Digest (November 2019) – digest document; ii) EU Platform Afghanistan Digest (May 2020; URL); iii) RIAH-supported publications on COVID-19 (URL); iv) SHCC coalition reports on attacks on healthcare (2019, 2020; URLs); v) RIAH monthly reports on attacks on healthcare and underpinning data (URL); vi) SHCC 2020 report launch on YouTube (URL).
- B. **Statement from Director, Insecurity Insight**, providing audience data for policy-focussed outputs (22 January 2021).
- C. **Media contributions: COVID-19 and attacks on healthcare:** i) Roborgh and Fast in *The Conversation* (April 2020; URL); ii) Interview with NBC International (May 2020; URL).
- D. **UK Ambassador's contribution to UN Security Council debate** (1 April 2019).
- E. **International Development Committee:** IDC report on tackling violence against aid workers, oral evidence and Government response.
- F. **Contributions to agenda setting for the WHS:** i) ALNAP Global Forum preparatory document, citing HCRI research; ii) Forum summary report; iii) WHS side event agenda.
- G. **Report of the UN Secretary General for the WHS** (2016), paragraphs 120, 122 (URL).
- H. **Impact on the UN Centre for Humanitarian Data:** i) Centre for Humanitarian Data – measuring results (URL); ii) ODI publication on the impact of blockchain (2019; URL); iii) Testimonial from Team Lead, Data Responsibility, UN Centre for Humanitarian Data (21 December 2020); iv) Agenda to promote data responsibility (URL).
- I. **UN Peacekeeping:** i) Duursma, Allard. 2018. "Information Processing Challenges in Peacekeeping Operations: A Case Study on Peacekeeping Information Collection Efforts in Mali." *International Peacekeeping* 25 (3): 446-68 (URL); ii) Summary notes from meeting in New York with UN agencies (2017).
- J. **Collaboration with IWM-N:** i) 'Ethics Under Fire' exhibition web pages; ii) Testimonial from Senior Curator, Contemporary Conflict, Imperial War Museums (5 November 2020).