

# Field work planning and risk management

---

Abrania Marrero ([amarrerohernandez@g.harvard.edu](mailto:amarrerohernandez@g.harvard.edu))

Clara Pons Duran ([cponsduran@g.harvard.edu](mailto:cponsduran@g.harvard.edu))

Jessica Zamborain-Mason ([jzm@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:jzm@hsph.harvard.edu))

*Rose Postdoctoral Research Fellows*

**Rose Service Learning Fellowship**



## Recap from Session One

---

- Defining community
- Tenets of community engagement
- Co-design and negotiation
- Budgeting

# Something I wish I knew before my community engaged learning experience.

---

*Advice from former Rose Fellows*



# PROCESS

- **Flexibility** to adjust / pivot project when opportunities arise
  - Reflecting on value of **skills gained** and **project impact**
  - **Planning** for multiple project directions / possibilities
  - Receptivity to **partner's changing needs**
- The **slowness** of research and practice
  - Challenges / time intensity of **institutional review**
  - Planning for **delays** ahead of time
  - Adapting to **pace** of partner organization
  - **Limited time** in the field
  - **Relaxing** / letting go of efficiency and the need to accomplish "tasks"
- Tempering promises, and focusing on **relationships** and experiences
- Importance of **communication** and **teamwork**
  - Asking for **help** (from partners, advisor, etc.)
  - Identifying **mentor(s)** to guide your work
- **Tailoring format** of presentations / materials to audience
- **Journaling** about conversations, insights, and future directions

# PARTNERSHIP

- Identifying **organizational priorities** (e.g., intent, strategic plan) and contentions
- Scoping the **size** and **capacity** of the organization
- Meeting with **stakeholders** ahead of time
- Setting clear expectations / delineation of **role** within organization
- Establishing **clear boundaries** for fellowship
- **Learning** about community beforehand, including demographics and challenges
- Connecting with community members who can vouch for you and establish **trust**
- **Ethical bounds** of interaction with community members

# PERSONAL

- Letting go of **expectations** / desire to predict
  - Not chasing or interpreting results **prematurely**
  - Comfort with unknowns / **uncertainty**
- Engaging early and meaningfully, even when it is **uncomfortable**
  - Jumping in, even when we are **not ready**
  - Recognizing positive outcomes from **difficult conversations**
- **Receptivity** to feedback
- Approaching collaboration with **intentionality** and self-awareness
- Letting go of **assumptions** about what is best for community / organization
  - Importance of asking **questions**
- Juggling “insider / outsider” **identities**

# PLACE

- **Transportation** considerations (e.g., roads, public transit, driver's license requirements)
- **Language** differences, even when from same / similar place
- Bringing **medications**, snacks, and other essentials
- **Technical capacities** in the field (e.g., computers, internet, analytical experience)

*Using **field work**  
**planning and risk**  
**management and**  
**awareness to your**  
**advantage***

---





## Primary considerations in field risk management

---

- Do good research
- Do no harm to others
- Do no harm to yourself



# Why is field risk management and awareness important?

Nothing happens until it happens... Operational environments are often more complex than expected.

## US researcher killed by elephant in Zambia

Woman, 29, named as Margarita Metallinou by local media, was in Kafue National Park when the elephant charged



The Telegraph

Like Page 4.4M likes

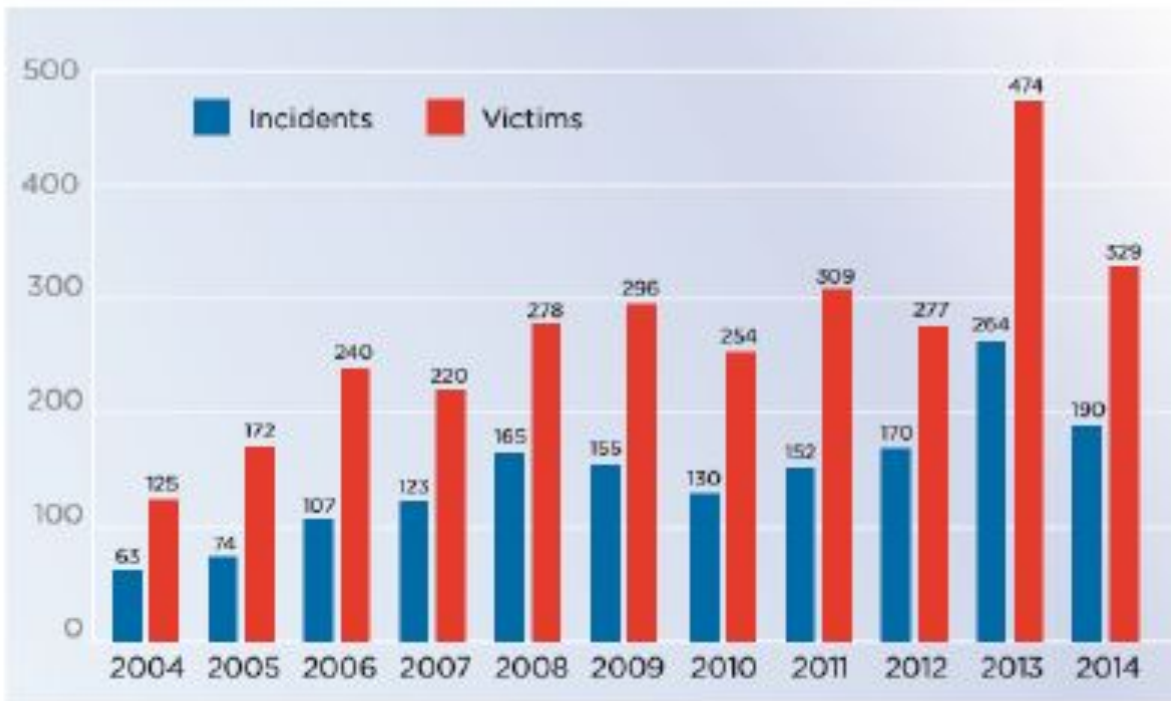


## Scientist eaten alive by crocodile, social media says it might be scientists's mistake

Deadly landslides have been in the news on several occasions in recent weeks. A landslide in Yunnan, China, buried a school, killing 18 children. A series of landslides in Uttarakhand, India, claimed the lives of at least 40 people. In Dorset, U.K., three people died in two landslides triggered by heavy rain.

# Why is field risk management and awareness important?

In many instances, you just have to be at the wrong place at the wrong moment.



In 2000 there were 41 significant attacks on aid workers recorded across the globe. By 2014, it had risen to 190. In those 15 years, over 3,000 aid workers have been killed, injured or kidnapped.

## UC Davis Community In Shock After Researcher Killed By Protesters In Ethiopia

October 6, 2016 at 10:25 pm Filed Under: UC Davis



### Student Jailed for Spying in the UAE Says He Felt Suicidal | Good Morning Britain

26.436 visualizaciones

176 51 COMPARTIR GUARDAR ...

Good Morning Britain  
Publicado el 18 dic. 2018

SUSCRIBIRSE 396 MIL

Ph.D. student Matthew Hedges was accused of spying for the UK and was sentenced to life in prison. His wife, Daniela Tejada, was vocal in a campaign for Matthew to return home which gained the attention of Jeremy Hunt. The couple join Good Morning Britain to talk about his release and

## Why is field risk management and awareness important?

---

A personal example

# Papua New Guinea

Official advice:  
**High degree of caution**

[Home](#) > [all](#) > [news](#) > [PNG News](#) > Enquiry to be set over beheading and shooting of youths in Madang

## Enquiry to be set over beheading and shooting of youths in Madang

© Thursday, April 19, 2018 [all](#) [news](#) [PNG News](#)

# Field trip planning and risk management tips **before, during,** **and after field work**

---



## Before field work

---

What we **can** do: research, keep researching, plan, and keep planning.

**Look at location-specific traveler advice** (more than one due to political agreements).

- Medical (e.g., vaccines, injuries)
- Visas and permits
- Natural hazards
- Accidents
- Criminology
- Political situation (pre-conflict, post-conflict)
- Kidnapping risk
- Terrorism



Travelers' Health

Travelers Health > Advice for Travelers

**Think through your site selection:** If it a high-risk environment, do you need to do your planned research there? Is there a safer location you can do the same thing?

## Before field work

---

### Culture codes and practices

Every field site will have particular expectations for, for example, clothing, symbols, and behaviors. Think about your own codes and practices and how comfortable you feel adapting to your field site. Otherwise, it may be best for you to change your field work location plans.



## Before field work

---

Consider **not only your field site** but also public transit, airports, ground transport, communication services, emergency services, etc.



Choose your **accommodations** and security measures (e.g., door wedge) well.  
Sleep is your most vulnerable time!



# Before field work

Do a **risk assessment** to recognize and assess complexities that will help you get prepared.

Ranking		Consequences				
		Catastrophic	Very serious	Serious	Not too serious	Not serious
Likelihood	Very likely	High risk	High risk	High risk	Moderate risk	Moderate risk
	Likely	High risk	High risk	Moderate risk	Moderate risk	Moderate risk
	Moderately likely	High risk	Moderate risk	Moderate risk	Low risk	Low risk
	Unlikely	Moderate risk	Moderate risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk
	Very unlikely	Moderate risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk

## Risk / Impact Probability Charts

Allows you to:

- **Prioritize measures** to reduce risk (e.g., for funding)
- Avoid, mitigate, and manage risk (e.g., first aid kit, medications, change transport)
- Have **contingency plans** like evacuation plans
- Create a **field safety plan** and a **communication plan**
- Think through **data confidentiality**, including back-up plans and ethics (e.g., uploads, cybersecurity)

## Before field work

---

Your **community partners** have incredible knowledge, and it is important to include them in your planning process.

It is also important to recognize that those in the field may have different personal experiences.



## In the field

---

Know what is under your control and how you might respond.

### **Examples within your control:**

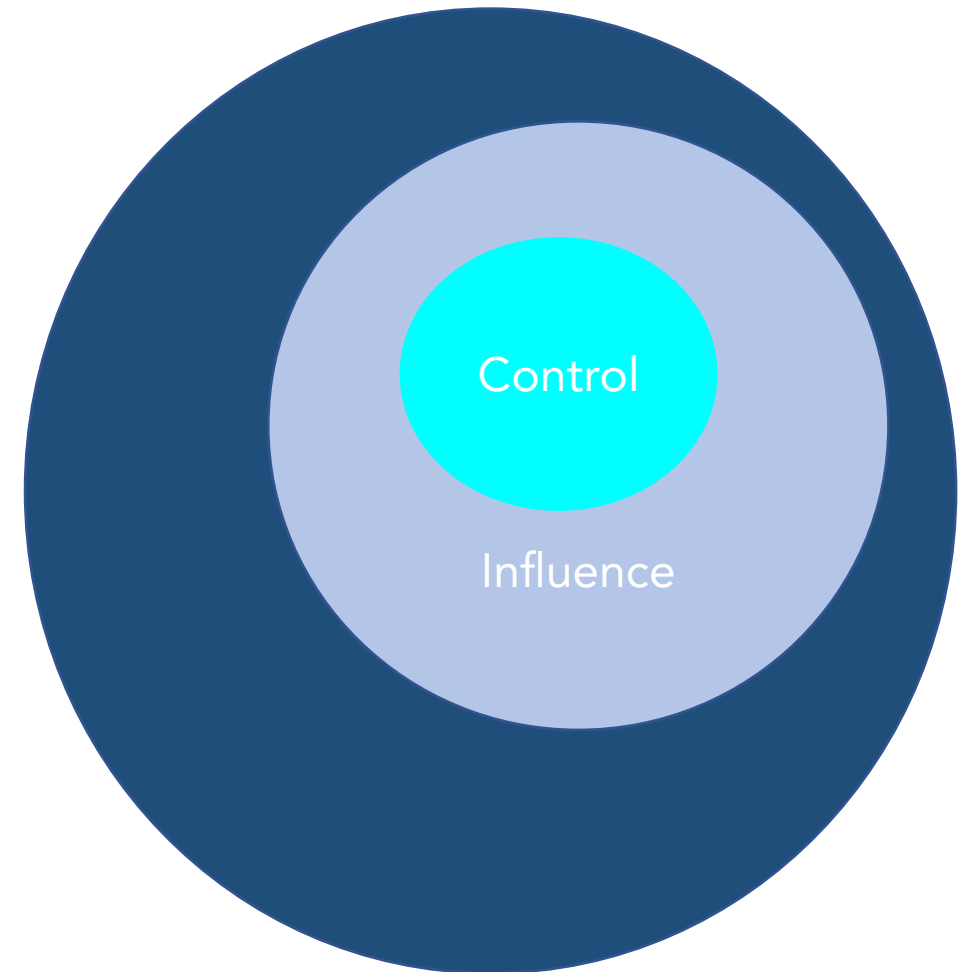
- Physical and mental fitness
- Diet (to a degree)
- Learning language / culture

### **Examples within your influence:**

- Communication with research partners
- Community involvement / participation

### **Examples out of control / influence:**

- Natural hazards
- Political conflicts



## In the field

---

Avoid putting **you** or **the community** at risk.

- **Know what is normal in your context.** Always be aware but allow yourself to be hypervigilant only when you need to
- Have **allies** (e.g. taxi drivers, community partners) and identify who might be able help and who cannot (e.g., police in some places)
- Take your **field safety** and **communication plans** seriously
- Identify your **triggers** (e.g., illness) and appropriate responses - when do you pull the plug?
  - Act on your contingency plans when triggered
- Try not to make **promises**
- If your presence or research puts you or the community at risk, it is completely okay to leave before planned



## After field work

---

- Many things are out of our control happen. Do not be too hard on yourself! Use field work as a learning experience for future projects.
- Do not leave your community partners stranded (e.g., follow through on pending reports or conversations)
- Monitor your mental health (e.g., stress, PTSD) and, where applicable, “reverse culture shock”
- **Get help and support**



# Resources in and outside Harvard

- [Harvard Global Support Services](#)
- Your mentors and research teams
- [UC Safety and Loss Prevention](#) for considerations around first aid, equipment, operation, and handling specimens in remote environments
- [Overseas Research: A Practical Guide](#)
- Examples of country-specific travel advice and risks:
  - <https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>
  - <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>
  - <https://travel.gc.ca/>

The screenshot shows the Harvard Global Support Services website. The header includes the Harvard logo and 'Global Support Services' on the left, and navigation links for 'TRAVEL', 'PLAN ACTIVITIES', 'CONTACT US', and 'EMERGENCY' on the right. Below the header, there is a breadcrumb trail 'Home / Travel'. The main heading is 'TRAVEL TOOLS AND RESOURCES'. A sub-heading reads: 'Wherever you're headed, start the journey here. We offer resources and services to help you execute a well-planned trip and stay safe and informed while abroad.' Below this, there is a section titled 'TRAVEL' with three columns of content:

01	02	03
<b>RISK RATINGS</b>	<b>COUNTRY GUIDES</b>	<b>REGISTER TRAVEL</b>
<i>Look up the travel risk associated with your international destination. Our ratings reflect the</i>	<i>Curious about your destination? Our country guides offer a helpful overview of safety &amp; security, health,</i>	<i>Accidents and natural disasters can happen anywhere. Registering your Harvard-related trip is</i>

## Remember our primary considerations!

---

- Do good research
- Do no harm to others
- Do no harm to yourself

All of this - from field planning to risk management - is relevant when preparing your RSLF applications (e.g., funding, project, milestones, communication with partners, timeline).

