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# CRISIS MANAGEMENT & HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

– A kidnapping case based on the company  
VERGNET



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## CRISIS MANAGEMENT & HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

**Context:** For several years, not a week goes without the media seek the public opinion by the term "crisis", used for about everything or anything: geopolitical crisis, environmental crisis, economic crisis, etc. Our civilization seems to be facing a long unbroken procession of crises, more or less essential. Nowadays all companies face crises; the difference will be in their strategic way to handle them. Most of the time crises require that decisions be made quickly. As the number and variety of crisis to which any organization is potentially subject is huge, it is difficult to guarantee success and to provide typical formulas that can be applied to all cases. Nevertheless, this research will show steps that companies could follow in order to shield themselves against a crisis.

**Objective:** The thesis can be used to find crisis management solutions, to provide necessary elements for crisis management, to show the impact of the press during a critical event and to create a standard process type to cope with a kidnapping case.

**Design/ Methodology/ Data:** Three main research questions are proposed to achieve the stated objective. The thesis process was implemented by a qualitative research process. In order to get a picture of the crisis management process, focusing here on the the kidnapping, the case study Vergnet was adapted with their own experience. Interviews from members of this company were conducted to get primary data. The secondary and tertiary data were collected from related literature, books, articles and reliable internet sources.

**Findings:** The research reveals that the number and variety of crisis to which any organization is potentially subject is huge. It is difficult to provide typical formulas that can be applied to all cases but companies could prevent and minimize loss against a disruption by following major steps of protocols and processes. The research showed that each company could react differently to a crisis regarding their size and where they are implemented. One major result of this thesis is in Appendix 3, this concern a standard process to help organizations which could have to deal with kidnapping crises.

**Keywords:**

**Crisis Management, Kidnapping, Human Resources Management, Sahel, French company, Vergnet.**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

CMT	Crisis Management Team
JRA	Japanese Red Army
CNIL	Commission Nationale de l'Informatique et des Libertés ( the French Data Protection Authority). This French Data Protection Authority was established in 1978. It is an independent administrative authority which ensures that the information technology does not violate the freedoms, rights, human identity and privacy (Larousse dictionary, 2015).
HRM	Human Resources Management
HRD	Human Resources Department
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, is an Islamist militant organization.
QSE	Quality Safety and Environment

# 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

## 1.1 Context

For several years, not a week goes without the media seek the public opinion by the term "crisis", used for about everything or anything: geopolitical crisis, environmental crisis, economic crisis, etc. Our civilization seems to be facing a long unbroken procession of crises, more or less essential. But in fact what is a crisis for a company? How are they able to organize face to these crises?

A crisis can start for a variety of reasons such as the merger of two companies or a world war, it could be also because of a kidnapping. So, in this thesis I will focus on this last aspect: the kidnapping of an employee of a company. Therefore, the aim of the thesis is to present the crisis management challenge within a company. A crisis management is the process by which an organization will bring together techniques and ways to cope with a major event. (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015). The challenge for business will be to be prepared, to face a crisis and to learn in order to improve the procedures.

During a crisis, all the company is touched, so do the departments. As the Human Resources Department is directly in relation with all employees, it will be entirely touched by the crisis. Due to the writing of this thesis I was able to realize that very few pages were devoted to crisis management in human resources' general books for example Human Resources Management by Gary Dessler. It is even more difficult to find data on kidnapping, which is the topic that I will focus on my thesis.

Therefore, based on more specialized sources about crisis management one can learn that since 2000, many organizations have to deal with cases of kidnapping in the Sahel, such as Areva and Vinci in Niger in 2010, or the company Vergnet in 2012 in Nigeria (L'Express, 2013). In 2009, over 3,000 people were kidnapped in the world; this event is becoming an industry to lucrative income (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2014). The number

of kidnappings in the world has increased by 70% in 8 years, from 2006 to 2014 (2014, Hiscox). Each year 50,000 employees are sent abroad on missions by their companies. In 2008, 59 French were prey to kidnappers in the world, against only 11 in 2004 (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2014).

Thanks to these examples we see that hostage taking becomes a real problem for companies. Companies have to face this important challenge. For the company Vergnet, which is the company on which I will support to write about hostage taking on this thesis, after the kidnaping of one of their employee, the company had to face a terrible chaos. The human resources department was in danger. The company has to face multiple aspects like the media issue, the employee or the communication.

## **1.2 Personal Motivation**

I had the opportunity to do an internship in the company Vergnet. Unfortunately, the period of this internship matched with the kidnapping of the company's employee. Nevertheless, through this situation I had the occasion to get to the heart of the matter. This disruption period was very interesting and I was able to realize the impact of such event on an organization. I observed the human resources department and how it interacted with other departments.

The fact that the human resources department needed to manage different aspects such as communication in the company, media coverage, the family aspect, the hostage-taking process, management of employees in the company made this service very important, and again at the heart of the business. Having to be universal and manage various specific things at the same time inspired me to get interested in this topic. That's why I would like to develop this interesting and particularly topic because it would highlight what kind of effective methods are important to manage such an event. In addition, I want to work in human resources later and this crisis management dimension could have added value to my knowledge in this area. Moreover, the fact that the company Vergnet has asked me to find other solutions to a hostage taking case within a

company made this work even more motivating because I felt more involved in order to be able to bring new idea in providing concrete information.

### **1.3 Objective of the thesis**

In this thesis I would like to present the different aspects the company Vergnet needed to manage during a kidnapping case. These findings might be useful for other companies managing a similar event. Due to a discussion with a manager of the company Vergnet, I concluded that it was necessary to focus on the media impact management to face this kind of event, but also on the human resource management, and finally on the interaction between the departments of Human Resources and Communication in order to solve a problem.

The thesis can be used to find crisis management solutions, to provide necessary elements for crisis management, to show the impact of the press during a critical event and to create a standard process type to cope with a kidnapping case. I am going to answer to this research question:

1. What are the main steps to manage a crisis in a company ?
2. What are the main kidnapping actors in a company ?
3. How did the company Vergnet deal with its kidnapping case ?

### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

In the second chapter of this thesis called the theoretical frameworks, the concept of crisis and crisis management are introduced and developed in this order. The specified crisis case about kidnapping is also explained in order to focus on the case study Vergnet. The theories used were chosen based on their relevance to this subject with the aim of helping the company Vergnet to deal with a possible future kidnapping case. Different types of the theories were used in order to combine many elements with a large panel of sources with intent to develop the empirical part.



In the third chapter the methodology choices are presented and justified. This chapter includes the data collection of this research and the reliability and validity of this thesis.

The fourth chapter is dedicated for the empirical analysis of the research findings. Following the interview of several people in the company Vergnet, the responses were analyzed and combined to the theories. This chapter shows a presentation of the company Vergnet which will be the case study of this research. There is an introduction of the company and an introduction to its kidnapping case. This chapter include also a process of the steps to follow during a kidnapping case which combine all the elements founded.

The fifth and final chapter concludes all the aforementioned parts and brings the research findings together. This chapter also collects the answers to this thesis' research questions. There are also the recommendations for further research that have been done thanks to this study.

Finally, the appendix 3 is one major result of this study. This result is a standard process to help organizations which could have to deal with kidnapping crises. It is a small guide that SMEs could follow and could give to employees.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Crisis Management

#### 2.1.1 What is a crisis ?

A crisis is, by definition, 'an event, revelation, allegation or set of circumstances which threatens the integrity, reputation, or survival of an individual or organisation. It challenges the public's sense of safety, values or appropriateness. The actual or potential damage to the organisation is considerable and the organisation cannot, on its own, put an immediate end to it.' (Sawalha et al., 2013)

As one can see from the paragraph above, crisis is defined as any emergency situation which disturbs the employees as well as leads to instability in the organization. Crisis affects an individual, group, organization or society as a whole. They emerge on a very short notice and create a feeling of fear and uncertainty of the employees. It is essential for the superiors to recognize the early signs of crisis and to inform the employees about it. Once a crisis is being detected, employees must quickly jump into action and take quick decisions. (Mitroff et al., 2000)

Paul Krugman (2000) has said that "there is no generally accepted formal definition of a currency crisis, but we know them when we see them". We can recognize a crisis with a combination of different elements when the event is sudden unexpected and unwanted or when the decisions must be made swiftly. Also when the event has a low probability but a high impact, it interrupts the normal operations of an organization. This event may threaten company's profitability and cause significant psychological stress (Mitroff et al., 2000). Otto Lerbinger (2012) in addition to define the crisis as "an unexpected event threatening the reputation and stability of the company", has categorized seven types of crises:

1. **Natural disaster:** The destruction created by the forces of nature may seem like unmanageable events. However, unlike other forms of crisis, natural disasters tend to be predictable. Only their timing and severity are unknown. It could be earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, storms, volcanic eruptions, floods, tsunamis. For example in 2008, 90,000 people in total were dead or missing in an earthquake in China. This earthquake had a huge impact on the agriculture, the economy, the tourism (Time, 2008).
2. **Technological crises:** Those crises are caused by human application of science and technology. They are seen as the result of human failure and are far greater in number and consequences. It could be oil spills at sea, industrial accidents, software failures...(Kippenberger, 1999) For example in 2010, at least 21 workers died and 50 were hurt when a fire swept through a Bangladeshi factory. This factory made clothes for H&M and other firms. All these people have died in part due to bad working conditions. H & M is currently still on trial (The Independent, 2010).
3. **Crisis of confrontation:** These are crises deliberately caused by individuals or groups determined to win acceptance for their demands and expectations. They might be members of general public, employee, protestors or single-issue activists. Some examples as boycotts, blockades, occupation of buildings, disobeying. For example in 2014, following a Greenpeace attack through a campaign "Save the Arctic", the company Lego left Shell! Greenpeace activists had launched a publicity campaign against the oil company Shell and its oil operations at the North Pole (Nevethic, 2014).
4. **Acts of Malevolence:** Those crises are numerous and it's really difficult to foresee them. They include: Terrorism, kidnapping, extortion, corporate espionage, rumor. As example, two Islamic terrorists attacked the building of a French satirical newspaper in January 2015. Among the victims of this attack, there were the main designers of this newspaper (Le Monde, 2015).
5. **Misplaced management values:** This category is described as when the company will place the short term economic gain above societal responsibilities. This is illustrated by a narrow focus on shareholders at the expense of other stakeholders.

6. **Acts of deception:** As misplaced management values, acts of deception are also deliberate acts. Such cases occur when management hides or even misrepresents information that might affect the sale or use of its products. It could be because the profit motivation is more powerful than concern for consumer safety. For example the company will make insufficient product testing, or will fail to acknowledge negative findings (Kippenberger, 1999). For example in 2012, McDonald's was selling expired and unsafe food in China. It has created a negative impact on sales and consumer confidence (Forbes, 2014).
7. **Management misconduct:** These are wrongful acts which, once publicly revealed, quickly become scandals. It includes cheating, fraud, bribery, embezzlement, offering kickbacks and other swindles (Kippenberger, 1999). For example, Enron, a former company of the US energy sector has known a financial scandal in December 2001. The company artificially inflated its profits by using a variety of front companies and falsifying accounts. The aim was to boost the stock-market value (The Economist, 2002).

### 2.1.2 Crisis outlines

In contrast to the disciplines of emergency and risk management, which deal primarily with natural disasters, the field of Crisis Management deals mainly with man-made or human-caused crises, executive kidnapping, fraud, product tampering, workplace violence etc. Unlike natural disasters, human-caused crises are not inevitable. For this reason, the public is extremely critical of those organizations that are responsible for their occurrence. (Mitroff et al., 2000)

As one can see from Figure 1, crisis management is globally made in 6 main steps:

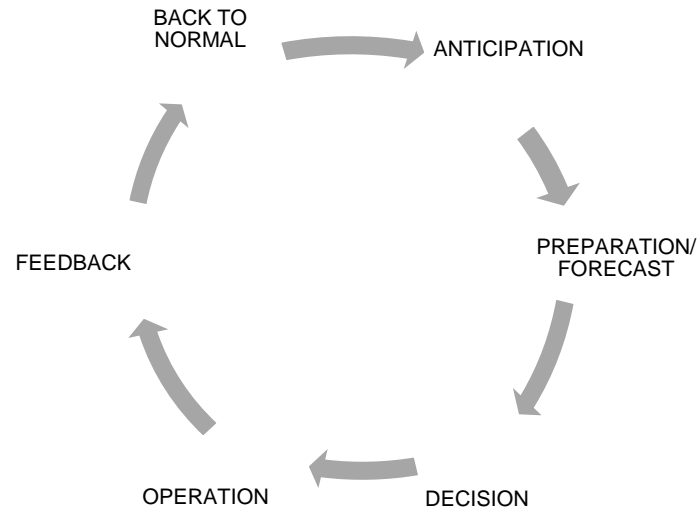


Figure 1. Crisis management steps, Heiderich's process (2010)

The part which happens before the crisis will be under the orders of the usual direction. It concerns, for example, decisions on the structure of the crisis management and the training of people who are involve (Pearson et al., 2007).

The first step is the “**Anticipation**”: Identification of risk's areas, simulation of events. The purpose of this step is to identify risks and their causes. It is important to implement measures to eliminate these risks or to implement prevention and/or protection measures. This phase aims to anticipate the possible occurrence of generators crisis events thanks to the implementation of appropriate measures (Heiderich, 2010).

The second step will be called “**Preparation/Forecast**”: Location and accurate methods to implement, creation of geographic infrastructure to mobilize.

This step aims to consider and plan how to manage a crisis. The goal is to ensure that each individual and entity knows his role and responsibilities.

The company will prepare the necessary tools to manage a crisis (action plan, communication plan, continuity plans of activity). They will ensure the location of the hazard. The purpose of the forecast step is to reduce the severity of the event if it occurs. Protective measures are reviewed and pre-deployed in advance. They will take their importance when the risk will happen; they are designed to limit the impact and collateral damage (Heiderich, 2010).

The stage during the crisis will happen with a declaration of a state of crisis and during the convening of the crisis management cell. This stage involves the crisis-control activities and ends when the end of the crisis is declared. Unlike the phase "pre-crisis" it will be a specialized team who will manage this step (Heiderich, 2010).

The third step is the "**Decision**": diagnosis, choice of positioning, means commitments, intervention areas, decision

This step will be used to identify and qualify the crisis from its beginning. It will be important to keep the internal communication channels open. The crisis management team will have to provide relevant diagnosis to react effectively.

It is crucial to quickly perceive the seriousness of the situation, priorities and the most appropriate decisions regarding the circumstances (Heiderich, 2010).

The fourth step is the "**Operation**": transmission of information to field actors, monitoring of committed resources, collection of localized information.

The goal is to make a reasonable and decisive action. It is important to quickly and clearly communicate to maintain its credibility and to protect its reputation. The company should keep informed the key stakeholders in priority (shareholders customers, staff, partners). Crisis management also requires about responsible authorities the ability to organize and unite the efforts of various contributors and institutions.

Then, crisis communication is fundamental: internally, it is to reassure all stakeholders and optimize the reaction time communicating. Externally, communication will allow to warn and to inform but also to maintain the confidence of stakeholders or public. This external communication deals more with an economic and a political interest (Pearson et al., 2007; Heiderich, 2010).

After the crisis marks the complete change of the crisis management to the return to normal. This phase takes place partly in the context of crisis management and partly in that of the current management. The company's

activity returns to normal. It is important to monitor and to assess the measures to be taken by direction boards in response to the crisis (Heiderich, 2010).

The fifth step will be called “**Feedback**”: analysis of the consequences of tactical situations, simulation of the crisis with scenario

The purpose of this stage will be to ensure a comprehensive and sustainable treatment of the source of the crisis. The company will have to communicate effectively regarding the solution used. In order to be effective in the prevention and intervention, the appraisal of the crisis must be efficient (Pearson et al., 2007).

The sixth step will be called “**Back to normal**”: definition of reconstruction priorities, methods modifications to limit future risks, communication.

This step aims to strengthen a positive effect on the image and company’s reputation. The goal will be to create value for the company from an improved reputation but also to enhance the confidence of partners (Pearson et al., 2007; Heiderich, 2010).

### 2.1.3 Crisis management tools

Depending on the generating event and the impacts and consequences that were created, the crisis will have to be resolved by a governance method and a communication mode specifically adapted to the situation. When the event affects different business activities, crisis management is generally accompanied by a business continuity plan which is part of the protection measures. Nevertheless, whatever the type of event which must be faced, crisis management has certain permanent features. (Heiderich, 2010)

In a crisis event, a company will first use a **Crisis Management Plan** that will be used to define prevention strategies, major guidelines and responses strategies in case of disclosure (Sapriel, 2003). It is only afterwards that will be created the Crisis Center. The Crisis Center is a team, office or agency that serves as a clearinghouse for information and coordinates action during an

emergency or disaster (Oxford dictionaries, 2015). This Crisis Management Team (CMT) must command and control and not get lost in endless debates to make decisions. This CMT must not only have the responsibility, but also the authority to act and make decisions (Sapriel, 2003). The CMT have to all at once take care of the logistics surrounding the disaster, centralizing information and define the communication strategy. For this, this team is composed of a small number of people of different skills; experts in the field of the situation, the key decision makers, communications professionals, those relating to the Human Resources Management and lawyers (Boeck, 2005). Every member of the crisis management team should be prepared to answer three basic questions: what has happened? Why? And what do/will you do?

Before, the CMT should choose a spokesperson who will be clearly identified as the official voice of the company and should be limited to 2 people, before starting the creation of the **Crisis Communication Plan** (Farnel, 1993). "Crisis communication is the life blood of crisis management. When crisis communication is ineffective, so is the crisis management effort" (Farnel, 1993)

The team will have to provide factual information in order to reduce the risks of interpretations, deformation or misinformation. The CMT will have to ensure that their communication is understood and in line with expectations by listening and analyzing the answers to the information provided. This stage is important in order to be able after to involve all employees in the crisis by **Internal Communication** (Heiderich, 2010). This internal communication is a priority. Its first purpose will be to organize the crisis management, and to allow the push information up. The second objective is to enable each employee or member of the organization to have the same version of the crisis and to prevent speculation and dissonances. Each member of an organization is a spokesman power to his relatives. The goal is to reassure and to make internal audiences allies. The third objective is to provide communication instructions (eg relay media inquiries to the company's communication service, lists of people to contact, talking points). (Heiderich, 2010)



Then, the priority given to public reports is a strategy based on the interaction between actors in the crisis. This strategy is also based on the position of the players in the crisis, closer to the crisis to far (Figure 2). Media must regain their role as intermediary between an organization and its publics, hence the role of external communication (Heiderich, 2010). **External communication** is very delicate especially because today the media are the key players of contemporary crises. Journalists are strategically located and everything is in place to attribute them a major force. (Farnel, 1993)

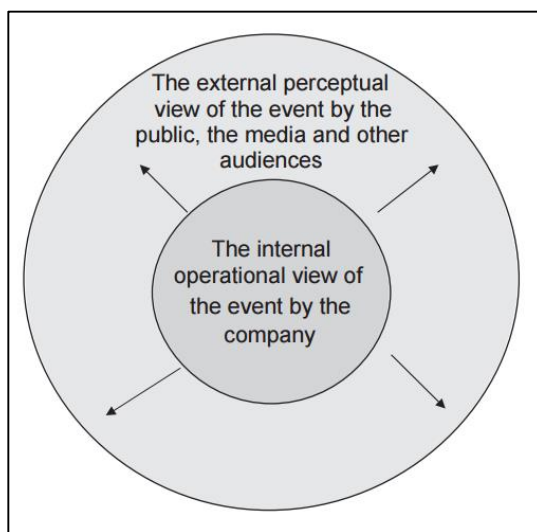


Figure 2: Managing perceptions (CS&A, 2015)

The CMT will have to manage media relations by planning. However, only the spokesperson will deal with the media. The challenge of the spokesperson in the external communication will be more focused on the defense of the image of the company and the veracity of the information published. The speech will be adapted to changes and impacts of the crisis on the company. The information must be consistent with the image and the company's values (French Coordination of Economic Intelligence Service, 2010).

## 2.2 Kidnapping

As we saw in the previous section "What is a crisis", kidnapping is one type of "crisis" that Lerbinger (2012) categorized as an act of Malevolence. These types of crisis are difficult to forecast.

### 2.2.1 Generality of the kidnapping

Most kidnappings seek to achieve two kinds of goals: political or financial. Other objectives that terrorists pursue through kidnapping include vengeance, protection of a group's secrets, or creating a pervasive climate of fear as a way of controlling a local populace (Williams, 2010). In the world, the most common type of kidnapping deals with three steps: seizure, payment of a monetary ransom and release. In 2010, an estimated \$1.5 billion was paid as ransom to kidnappers around the world. In Somalia alone, it is estimate that \$110 million was paid in ransom payments to pirates (Forest, 2006).

Criminals and terrorist groups have been engaged in this type of activity for centuries. For example, on 28 September 1977, Japan Airlines Flight from Paris to Tokyo was hijacked by the Japanese Red Army (JRA) after a refueling stop in India. The terrorists took the passengers as hostage, and demanded \$6 million and the release of nine imprisoned JRA members. On 1 October, the Prime Minister announced that the Japanese government would accept the hijackers' demands and pay the ransom (Syon, 2012).

Most recently, religiously oriented terrorist groups in North Africa and Sahel have become increasingly active in kidnapping. In a May 2006 a report was published by The Times about ransom payments for expatriates and tourists made by France (\$25 million), Italy (\$11 million) and Germany (\$8-10 million). (The Times, 2006).The English insurer Hiscox, leader in kidnapping insurance shows, in one of his 2010 studies that French are the most likely kidnapped abroad. The main explanations for this ranking, depending on the insurer, are

linked to the strong presence of French companies in hostile regions. In Nigeria, a French life can be negotiate between 50 000 and 250 000.

More examples include a French expatriate experiencing a plant against malaria kidnapped in northern Mali, the employees from a French automotive industry abducted in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, an employee of NGOs disappearing in the heart of Somalia, a French engineer overseeing the construction of schools kidnapped in Kabul, etc. (Le Figaro, 2010). According to the results of January 2009 provided by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the list of dangerous areas continues to grow. In addition to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen, it appears Peru, Chad, Venezuela, Algeria, Colombia, Sudan, Nigeria, Georgia and even Madagascar. Faced with the sensitivity of the phenomenon, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has decided not to disclose the number of French hostages held or released from the year 2009.

Since ten years, kidnapping of employees abroad exploded. Constantly looking for new subsidiaries can serve as growth drivers to make new profits, companies tap to new areas increasingly complex and are more exposed to a multidimensional threat (Kurkinen, 2010). While the warning against terrorism is highest in France, the threat is hanging over the French living in risks countries and also for thousands of executives who go on business trip for their companies. Most affected are those working in the area called "EMEA" (Europe-Middle East and Africa). Companies must ensure the safety of their expatriates or travelling employees (Le Figaro, 2010).

At the French telecommunication company Orange, very present in Africa and the Middle East, "the instructions were given since a long time to the executives not to go in too remote areas, and do not take the same journey every day," says a spokesman from the firm. There are not, strictly speaking, hardening of the rules in response to recent events because "rules are already strict. We cannot do more," he says. All work orders are covered by the group's hierarchy,

with each time, an assessment of the need for travel and the risks involved (Le Monde, 2011).

Among those companies victims of employees kidnap, the French company Vergnet has known a case of kidnapping in 2012 of one of its employees. Among those companies victims of employees kidnap, the French company Vergnet has known a case of kidnapping in 2012 of one of its employees. The kidnapping will be the purpose of the thesis and the company Vergnet will be the case study. This case of disruption is a sensitive issue and it is difficult to find reliable information published in books, articles or on the internet, that is why it is interesting to focus on the subject via this company.

### 2.2.2 Kidnapping actors

These events demonstrates that security in areas called "dangerous" has become one of the major concerns of companies. The insecurity in some countries not only relates to the states. Employees of large groups can be victims today, every day, of terrorist or criminal acts. The successful resolution of a kidnapping requires the cooperative efforts of different actors within the company (Heiderich, 2010). These four main actors are the following:

#### 1. Human Resources Department

When a critical event such as kidnapping happen, employees panic and the company risks to lose its resources (Heiderich, 2010). As Marc Ronez explained, Managing Director from the Asia Risk Management Institute, depending companies, a kidnapping can occur at any time and the Human Resources Department (HRD) has to protect the welfare and safety of affected employees. The HRD should not wait for something terrible happen to learn how unprepared the employees are. This is a serious problem as organizations need to pay greater attention to the impact of critical events on employees, their families and the community as a whole because a business recovery cannot occur without motivated employees. For organizations with inadequate HR crisis plan in place, the effects of any crisis on your workforce could be

catastrophic and might include different problem as a loss of key staff and knowledge, absenteeism, a negative publicity for the organization and badly damaged reputation, rocketing health benefits costs, HR-related legal concerns and costly litigations, etc. (Ronez, 2008).

As the HRD are the primary caretaker of employee welfare and motivation they have to take charge proactively on the employees. This department is in the best position to ensure that an organization's human capital can be preserved and can continue to create value under any circumstance. It can play this strategic role in the company through advance preparation which includes safety and security initiatives to help prepare and reassure employees and talent management plans to support effective crisis management (Ronez, 2008) Before the crisis, the HRD has to provide copies of kidnap procedures to all the employees and to train the employees about a case of kidnapping. A Kidnapping is accompanied most of the time by a ransom. The perpetrators will therefore have to contact members of the company. It is not possible to prepare everybody in the company to handle such a contact. However, the most likely recipients such as switchboard operators, assistants to senior executives, staff in product complaints departments and security personnel should be prepared for any crisis contact. The perpetrators may use a telephone contact, written communications as email, electronic mail or by post (Hiscox, 2014).

By Telephone it will be important to:

- Write down the message and any useful background information  
 What is the threat you are making? What is the demand? Why are you targeting the company/family? What organization do you represent? When will you make contact again? How will you make contact again?  
 They should also note the time of the call; the time the call finished; the name of the recipient; the date; the caller's voice: male/female; loud/soft; high/deep; aggressive/normal; local/regional/foreign accent; speech delivery: educated/fast/normal/slow/deliberate/distorted/lisp/stutter; caller's language: poorly educated/uneducated; their manner: calm/irate; rational/irrational;

coherent/incoherent;backgroundnoises:factory/office/residence/animals/traffic /children/music; the phone: private/pay phone/mobile.

- Inform his/her manager, who should alert a senior executive, the security manager or a management committee member.
- Be briefed to keep the call confidential  
(Hiscox, 2014; Ronez, 2008)

Kidnapping perpetrators may use the internet or company websites to deliver messages. This might mean that the kidnapping becomes public knowledge very quickly. They can use video for example. So, it is important to send the information as soon as possible to the senior management of the company.

By written communications it will be important to: Avoid handling the letter and packaging to preserve evidence, keep a record of anyone who has handled the package, and make a written record of all the information on the outer packaging (Hiscox, 2014).

The HRD has to permit the employees to understand and learn to cope with the effect of stress and traumatic events by conducting crisis simulation exercises. This department has to give also immediate emergency guides and assurance of safety guides. In order to help the employee to return to a normal work, after the crisis, the HRD need to reassure the employees by giving a psychological support and provide them an online resource with accessible support information (Hiscox, 2014). To be more effective, Human Resources Managers should work in collaboration with other key organizational functions involved in crisis management such as the communication department to support the development of the company crisis plans (Ronez, 2008).

## 2. Company

Although every kidnap will be different, there are common elements to any incident for which companies can prepare. It is a best practice to have contingency plans in place, repatriation plans, a proper Crisis Management Team and key executives trained in advance to manage the response (Ronez, 2008).

First, the company will have to contact the authorities and provide maximum information related to the kidnapped persons (name, age, sex and executive position of the victim; date and time of the kidnap; location of the kidnap; description of the abduction). Then, the priority for the company will be to assess the degree of risk specific to the area and the type of extortion that they might face. By being aware of the type of extortions that may occur and the likely perpetrators, the company can take measures to reduce the risk and start the Crisis Management Plan. Afterwards, it will be important for the company to establish in advance whether local law enforcement could assist during an incident. It is also useful to seek help from specialist consultancies during a kidnapping because they will manage professionally the response to the threat. Law enforcement agencies and consultancies can also advise whether other companies/families are facing a similar threat, and details of similar incidents that have taken place previously (Hiscox, 2014).

Subsequently, the company will see if the prepared repatriation plans can be used. For example, check the capacity of company vehicles, start liaising with country managers of international airlines operating scheduled flights, check if the country managers are able to advise on whether flights to the country are available. But also buy 'open' airline tickets for remaining personnel and identify other possible exit routes: road, rail, sea or river, private aircraft, another airport, on foot (Hiscox, 2014). Furthermore, the company will have to clear the communication lines, because they may be overloaded, and prepare lists readily available with contact details of in country personnel, embassies and other foreign companies (Hiscox, 2014).

Regarding the response to the threat, if criminals use the telephone channel, the company will have to prepare a response. They will have, with the Crisis Management Team, to make a detailed assessment of the situation about the method of delivery of the threat and the credibility of the threat. It could be a first step to likely identify the authors of the kidnapping. The CMT will have to look

for the time available before the response, to look for the law enforcement assistance, and prepare for further contact from the criminals (Hiscox, 2014; 2015).

The CMT will look for a process and decide upon a response strategy, appoint a communicator, prepare a detailed briefing on the points for any future call from the criminals and allocate a dedicated telephone line and install a tape recorder. The CMT will brief the recipient of the original call that, if the perpetrator calls back again, they should instruct them to call back on the dedicated number and give the same instruction to anybody else who may receive the next call. It will be important to record all calls, make a copy of the tape and type a transcript. The company will have to store the original tapes in a secure place to use during any future legal action (Hiscox, 2014; 2015).

There are a number of options to respond to the threat. The company could choose to do nothing because it is sometimes a credible option in order to discourage the extortionist; the company could choose to make excuses for not complying to test the resolve of the extortionist and discourage further contact. Company can also choose to negotiate for a lower demand or some other concession; or cooperate with the law enforcement agencies to set up an arrest operation; use the local community to put pressure on the group to discontinue; or just conceding to the demands (Hiscox, 2014; Ronez, 2008).

### 3. Intermediary

As the French companies develop in an international environment increasingly changing, the risk of kidnappings multiply. To cope with this hostage taking problem, lots of insurance companies has implemented the contract Kidnap & Ranson. This is a tailor-made insurance policy, able to anticipate and manage this type of crisis. This insurance try to be as discreet as possible. Some of these companies also sell their services as a consultant in crisis management. They can then be used as intermediaries (Le Nouvel Economiste, 2011).



Among these companies there is Hiscox which is a company based in London. This company covers other companies against various risks including kidnapping and also sells its services as a consultant (Hiscox, 2015). The Ackerman Company, a consultant company during a crisis period and also handles cases of kidnapping (Ackerman's website, 2015). The company Amarante International, which offers in addition to its consultant role, training periods for the employees (Amarante's, 2015).

The consultant into the head office will identify the options for responding to communications from the kidnappers and make recommendations. He will assist in liaising with third-parties including law enforcement and identify other initiatives that might assist in resolving the problem. The consultant will advise on the method, frequency and content of briefings for the hostage's family, he will advise on the collection, storage and delivery of ransom monies. The work of this intermediary would be also to advise on the recovery and rehabilitation of the released hostage and be available to the client until the hostage has been released (Hiscox, 2014).

#### 4. Communication & Media

The objectives of the communication in times of crisis are as vast as the strategies implemented to achieve them. Its main role is to better meet the information needs of the public concerned in the company and to manage more effectively media relations (Coombs, 2011).

The CMT have to organize a communication plan, it will be established to answer to different targets, the company and employees and their families, the media, the public via the media, the authorities and the authorities of the communication teams, the environment (shareholders, financiers, contractors, partners, etc.). It will be important to communicate quickly, that's why the CMT will ensure to name a spokesperson who will speak with the media as soon as possible and transmit an image of calm, clarity, competence, but also empathy for victims. These spokespersons must demonstrate the skills of the company

specifying the current case actions or planned actions in very short notice (Coombs, 2011).

The CMT must gather basic, reliable and easy information to interpret. In order to prevent speculation, it is important for the credibility of the company to provide verified information. Only the rigor pays off in a crisis so the company should insist on the rigor of speech and the information provided to the media. It should also be strict on the review of various publications including the Internet, which should not harm to the company (Coombs, 2011).

We have seen in the part "Generality of kidnapping" that it was an act which has long existed. If today everyone is aware of kidnap acts it is because the media occupy a very important place in the society (Coombs, 2011) :

First, Internet weighs more and more heavily on public opinion directly or simply because this vector has become a major source of information for journalists. The company's website can be used to relay information provided to take into account the different targets. There are however many other sites that can relay about the company for example website of Ministry (Farnel, 2006).

The print media, with few exceptions, prefers words to images and therefore the analysis. It allows time for the reader to form his own opinion as it allows him to create his own image of the crisis. However, the print media is becoming less popular because of the publication of newspapers on Internet, but it still permits the reader to appropriate the information at their own. It is therefore an important media to be taken into account (Farnel, 2006).

The news still reigns on public opinion. With television words are unimportant compared to images. Time spent on each topic is very short; it requires that the viewer takes the image as the evidence, even if it is an archive image. It means that if the company faces this media, the importance of the physical attitude import and immediately shows if the words are sincere or not (Farnel, 2006).

Radio strongly affects the nomadic population and is at the forefront of broadcasting information with appointments more frequent than regular television or newspapers. For example in France, the radio program "France Info" broadcast continuously information, and set the tone for other media. This type of radio is therefore preferred in a crisis communication (Farnel, 2006).

Finally, for any type of chains used the spokesperson should avoid to give details about the kidnappers' demands, the negotiating strategy, about the victim, other than to confirm his/her identity or about the victim's family. If the journalist is investigating a rumor, the company should express surprise at the call and state that it is not aware of the rumor and ask what information the journalists have. It is important to thank the journalists for the call and say that the company looks into it. Then, if there is a large volume of calls, the CMT must decide whether to continue to handle them individually or issue a verbal or written statement. Therefore, the company could use the media to its advantage for example by letting the hostage know that he/she has not been forgotten. This may be necessary during a lengthy kidnap in order to break a period of silence, or pressure the kidnappers to prove that the victim is alive and well (Hiscox, 2014).

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research method and the research design of this thesis. This part begins with research methods followed by data collection method, then the interview.

#### 3.1 Research Methodology

Research means the entire process which will lead to solve problems and answer research question (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Within this Methodology part the purpose was to explain the different sources used and the methods for solving the problem. This study include different research techniques as books, publication research, articles, interviews, personal experiences in order to answer to different research questions related to the topic of kidnapping and the way it is handle within a company. These research questions have been changed several times based on the litterature review obtained and on answers received by the company's interlocutors. Here are the latest version of the research questions:

1. What are the main steps to manage a crisis in a company ?
2. What are the main kidnapping actors in a company ?
3. How did the company Vergnet deal with its kidnapping case ?

In order to get information, a careful analysis is required. This analysis can be done by gathering data's which are usually categorized into two different types: A **quantitative method** related to numerical interpretations, it involves collection techniques such as questionnaires or data analysis procedure and a **qualitative method** refers to data which generate or use words rather than numbers, it is more focus on understanding, interpretation and observation. (Jha, 2008)

First, the aim of this thesis is to know the point of view of the company and the human resources department on kidnapping crisis management. So it was logical to target a few people in the company in order to gather information in

their globality and to learn about the reaction of the business. It was impossible and unnecessary to use a questionnaire because I needed open answers and discussions. This is why I chose to give interviews, to pass phone calls and send emails to have a maximum of no fixed elements. This is why a qualitative approach was more appropriate. By studying the case of Vergnet, it was easier to understand how companies dealt with a case of kidnapping and to establish a typical process for this type of company for this type of disruption.

### **3.2 Data collection**

In order to answer the research questions, various sources of data can be used. They are categorized as primary, secondary and tertiary data. In this thesis the interview results are being considered as the primary data and the conclusions have been mostly drawn from those findings additionally with phone calls and emails. As I made an internship in the company at the same period that the employee was kidnapped I have used my own experience and my observations to bring other ideas to the research and to add value. Then, the theoretical frameworks about crisis management and kidnapping are considered as the secondary data. To find different secondary sources of data, several libraries and e-libraries have been useful to find books. Emerald has been helpful in order to find articles and additional sources which dealt with the crisis management subject. The questions for the interview have been made regarding the theory. Finally, tertiary sources of data have been used in order to provide some definitions inside the theoretical part. These definitions found in dictionaries and encyclopedias allowed to understand the generality of a topic.

### **3.3 Research Design**

With a case study, it is easier to understand the complex of crisis management within a real-life activity. So, in order to get a picture of the crisis management process, focusing on one field, here the kidnapping, the case study Vergnet was adapted with their own experience.

In order to collect primary data, I have chosen to conduct interviews (see appendix 1). There are three types of qualitative interviews: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews and I have chosen to conduct the three types. First, in preparing questions in advance with some closed questions to send it by email, the choice was to plan structured interviews in order that respondents may have an idea of questions and answers to save time. Then, I made Skype interviews which were semi-structured and unstructured. The decision to conduct unstructured interviews has been done to eventually have answers to unspoken questions and discussions that can enrich the thesis.

The aim was to select company's members with different views. I initially chose to interview a member of the human resources to be in connection with the subject of my thesis. This is why I interviewed Claire Perriard, a Human Resources Assistant in the company who gave answers concerning the Human Resources Department, but also concerning the employee's reaction face to the event. Then I chose to interview Brigitte Gonflorot-Le Manh Ho, a former supply chain and logistics manager, because she was my tutor during the internship, I knew she was available for my questions. Moreover, she was present during the kidnapping case and she was one of the oldest employees in the company, therefore she has an extensive reliable experience. Finally, I needed to have the point of view from a field employee, this is why I chose to interview Romain Dubreuil, who is a project sales manager at Vergnet and is regularly on mission abroad.

In order to objectively analyze and in order to establish a standard process of reaction to a kidnapping case, I needed more experiences in this crisis management, other sources of reliable information. This is why, in addition to these interviews I made few calls and I sent e-mails to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Mrs Marina Bara, the Human Resources Manager of the subsidiary Total Chad, to the insurer Hiscox, to Mr. Régis Pinet, the Sales Overseas Director of the German group GWE and to Mr. Jean-Claude Botz an

employee of the French company Areva. Even if the subject is sensitive, these interviewees all gave me some information about the reaction in time of crisis but also on the type of process during a kidnapping. Thanks to each answers I was able to analyse more easily and particularly to create the result of this study available in Appendix 3. However, they didn't allow me to publish the documents they sent me.

### **3.4 Reliability, Validity, Generalization**

Validity and reliability are important in research because they will determine the objectivity of it. The validity means empirical conceptions about universal laws, evidence, objectivity, truth, actuality, deduction, reason, fact etc. (Winter, 2000). The reliability is the extent to which results are consistent over time and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable (Joppe, 2000).

The analysis was performed based on the responses received through interviews, but also through exchanges with business in the same sector as Vergnet or state institution employees, and finally through my personal experience. This is why one can confirm that this thesis is reliable.

The questions of my interview were created by using different theories in the literature review, this has increased the validity of the thesis. In using this same method, one can assume that this study could be replicated, so it creates a valid research.

By solving the problem of this company one can realize that the subject is highly focused. The elements founded can not be generalized, but they may be applicable and relevant for other company in the same field. In addition, these research have been done with the basis of French companies according to laws and French or European directives, it is important to adapt the key findings regarding countries.

## **4 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH**

### **4.1 Case company**

Vergnet is a French industrial group offering renewable energy solutions. This SME counted 250 employees around the world. Vergnet's Headquarter is located in the French city Orléans, below the capital Paris. Marc Vergnet founded the company in 1988. The first activity of Vergnet is water supply of rural areas, with more than 45 million people served today. Vergnet has expanded his area of expertise in selling wind turbines that may serve cyclonic areas and solar/photovoltaic panels. This Group is today the first independent French company, leader in the rural water sector, wind power and solar/photovoltaic power that can equip complex areas. Its clients are governments, associations, banks, farmers, schools, etc. (Vergnet's website, 2015).

The company's strategy is to develop original and adapted technologies and also to develop a spirit of partnership, to transfer the Vergnet's know-how to users so that they may appropriate the operation and maintenance of the products. Marc Vergnet has been engaged in a participatory development approach where natives have to manage the products by themselves. In addition to governments that receive a comprehensive learning Vergnet policy, local people are trained to be able to help to install, manage and maintain the sites. Therefore, in addition to selling its products, Vergnet offers full service. The idea is to entrust a private operator, associated with existing small local entrepreneurs, the implementation and the management of water supply networks, wind and solar site, through funding with public participation of the private operator. So, the products must be as simple as possible, while being perfectly adapted to the conditions of use of these markets (Vergnet's website, 2015).

The water entity of the company is called Vergnet Hydro and handles the supply of drinking water in rural and isolated areas, to local authorities, governments,



NGOs, international agencies and individuals. Hydro aims to supply drinking water to rural and semi-urban populations in the least developed countries and middle-income. The markets held by this entity extend over sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. The wind part of the company is called Vergnet Eolien, extend its subsidiaries network in Africa, Oceania, Asia, and America. Today, over 700 Vergnet's wind turbines are in operation worldwide. Again the aim is to transmit its knowhow because wind turbines can be maintained by local staff that is recruited and trained by the company. The solar entity of the company is called Photalia and is dedicated to photovoltaic and solar applications since its creation in 2007. Photalia develops optimized solutions for access to solar and photovoltaic energy. The products are self-kit manufactured with hybrid systems. This entity is specialized in equipping difficult environment for emerging countries and island areas (Vergnet's website, 2015).

Employees of the company Vergnet are required to travel very often, and in countries at risk. In December 2012, an engineer, employee of the company was kidnapped by an Islamist group in northern Nigeria next to Niger border. Vergnet was developing a wind farm of 37 wind mills in this region. The kidnapers, who were about 30, attacked the residence where lived the engineers of the company Vergnet. After various attempts of negotiations made by the company, by the authorities, by the French President, the kidnapped escaped in November 2013. In other words, almost a year later. This is the first hostage taking that the company Vergnet has known (Corpguard, 2012; L'Express, 2013).

The northern and central Nigeria are frequently the target of Islamist groups attacks responsible for the death of hundreds of people since 2009. Expatriate kidnappings for ransom are a very lucrative business in Nigeria and are nevertheless relatively concentrated on oil production sites (L'Express, 2013).

## 4.2 Media, company & kidnapping

The analysis is based on different interviews conducted by members of the company Vergnet. Three people from the company were interviewed. Brigitte Gonflorot-Le Manh Ho, a former employee in the company Vergnet, Supply chain and logistics manager who was present during the kidnapping. Romain Dubreuil, a project sales manager in the company, regularly on mission abroad. And, Claire Perriard, Human Resources Assistant in the company who gave answers concerning the Human Resources Department, but also concerning the employee's reaction face to the event. This analysis is also based on my personal observation as I was working in the company when this event occurred. And finally this analytical part was complete thanks to different members of organizations and companies.

Nowadays, Media occupy a very important place in the society. During a crisis period, companies have to deal with Media depending the crisis that occur. This is part of the external communication which as a huge importance for the image of the company.

### 4.2.1 Media & types of tools used

As we saw in the section "Kidnapping actors" in chapter 2.2.2, Media play a very important role in society. It is important to pay attention to the broadcast information in order not to put the company or employees in danger. That is why, as Claire Perriard explained, the assistant of human resources Vergnet, the company did not want to broadcast concrete information through the press. Nevertheless the media that the company Vergnet used was the radio via the French radio "FranceInfo" in order to be the most discreet. This channel was used to limit the spread of misinformation and rumor. In this chapter 2.2.2, we saw that radio was the ideal tool for travellers as the information is given with repeated rhythm. So it was an interesting tool in order to broadcast the minimum relevant information.

In addition, the French President François Hollande made a press conference announcing the tragic event in television. Thanks to this intervention the public felt more involved in this event. As the distribution was done by the television, the information could be seen by everyone. We saw in the Communication and Media section that television had a strong power towards the public opinion and that the physical attitude was important. The tool has been mastered thanks to the status of the person who made the conference, here the president.

#### 4.2.2 Press & impact

By gathering the answers of the three interviewees, we can see that the feeling and the point of view toward the press was negative even if they do not consider that the press played a negative role during this event on this business. However, Claire, Brigitte and Romain agree on the fact that the press, while it can be a useful tool, can also have a negative impact and endanger businesses and employees as one has seen in the chapter “Generality of the kidnapping”.

On the other hand, Claire told me her uncertainty regarding the information to be given to the press. The company was responsible to choose a spokesperson to answer the many questions of the Media and at the same time stay discreet enough. By choosing to transmit the least possible information, company’s directors were worried to trouble the public because of the interpretation they could make, namely to keep secrets in order to hide the seriousness of the crisis. This issue was raised in the “Crisis outlines” 2.1.2, because external communication is very important and crucial in a crisis management but it is sensitive. Indeed, companies should pay attention to the information transmitted to be as clear as possible to avoid speculation. It is important for a company to find the right balance by giving basic information without endangering the kidnapped person. Therefore, the company will avoid to give information relating to the employee’s private life and avoid to give information about the employees who are on business trip.

Then, Brigitte expressed her point of view about the role of the Media in relation to the fact that many written articles expressed false information about the kidnapping and how this could generate doubts in public minds. Finally, Romain explained also that the importance given to media has too much value because everyone can have the information, included employee's families. These families of travellers' employees might be worried because of false information that they saw.

#### 4.2.3 Media as a tool

As mentioned in section "Communication and Media", Media can be useful to get messages across to reassure the person kidnapped. Vergnet's company used the radio as a tool to get a message to their employee in order to reassure him.

However, contrary to what was proposed in the literature review in the chapter "Crisis outlines", the company did not use the Media neither during the crisis to reassure company's shareholders, nor after the crisis in order to ensure a return to calm after the employee's repatriation. Indeed, the company preferred to make internal press conferences.

### 4.3 Vergnet and its kidnapping case

According to companies crisis management methods are different. For the company Vergnet, after the kidnaping of one of their engineer in Nigeria it was a terrible chaos. The company has to face multiple aspects that we will see below.

#### 4.3.1 Internal communication

According to the employee's answers to this question, they learned that their colleague was kidnapped by the Human Ressources Management. However, the responses seemed hesitant, Brigitte and Romain did not seem to have received the information but most hearing it as a rumor. This may show a lack of

communication. This internal communication during a crisis period have to go through the spokesperson so that all employees can receive at the same time exact and reliable information. As mentioned in the theory in the chapter 2.1.3 “Crisis management tools”, it is recommended to use one or two spokesperson during meetings with all members of the company in order to avoid misinterpretations or rumors.

#### 4.3.2 Impact on business and stakeholders

According to the response of the human resources assistant, Claire Perriard, this event created a general panic in the company. The employees were uncertain about the idea of going on a business trip and seemed panicked at the idea of not receiving a sufficient number of answers to their questions. One could even notice a communication problem but this time the problem could have been solved by the human resources department. Indeed, we noticed in the section “Kidnapping actors” 2.2.2 that this department is in the best position to ensure that an organization’s human capital can be preserved and can continue to create value under any circumstance. This department should reassure employees to support effective crisis management.

Then, Claire explained that executive members of Vergnet did not know whether to repatriate the foreign employees or not. As mentioned in section 2.1.2 “Crisis outlines” the solution to this problem could have been anticipated, as Heiderich (2010) classified “Anticipation” and “Preparation” steps during a crisis management which are the first steps to follow in order to . By preparing this trouble, the executives members could have know the solution, save time and avoid panic. Moreover, as seen in the section 2.1.3 “Crisis management tools”, the solution of this problem could also be established by the CMT in the crisis management plan in order to centralize information and to be effective. Internal communication is a priority during a crisis because it would enable each employee of the organization to have the same version of the crisis, and it will reassure them.

Finally, concerning the suppliers and shareholders of the company, Claire explained that the spokesperson managed to establish meetings within the company to explain the impact that this kidnapping would have on the company and on them. Also, as the company chose to continue to work normally, this helped to reassure stakeholders.

#### 4.3.3 Process

Unfortunately this type of process has to remain confidential and Claire was not authorized to answer this question. However she still suggested that a team had been selected with different members from all departments to manage the crisis. As what was mentioned in the chapter 2.1.3 “Crisis management tools”, it is recommended to the company to use a CMT to manage a crisis because this team is composed by different specialists who will be able to organize different method to solve the problem. The CMT must be selected and prepared in advance before in order to save time and to anticipate the crisis.

#### 4.3.4 Types of protocols

By asking whether the company Vergnet used standard protocols or not, the objective was to understand if Vergnet was following the steps in chapter 2.1 "Crisis Management". The other goal was to know if the company had financed training sessions for their employees, had planned escort systems, and had planned a repatriation plan, as seen in section 2.2 “Kidnapping” where we learn different methods recommended repatriation methods. According to the answer of Vergnet’s Human Resources Assistant, one could understand that the company was aware of the protocols seen in the chapter 2.1 “Crisis Management” but did not followed them to solve the problem for several reasons: The first reason was because these protocols are not adapted to SMEs in relation to financial means. Mr. Jean-Claude Botz an employee of the French multinational company Areva, confirmed that apart from large companies such as Areva and some company in mining research (gold, uranium) very few companies have a strong security level for their employees

and their infrastructures. For example, for Mr. Botz security, a 24/24 permanent escort in Niger was negotiated with 5 Republican guards at his home, at the office or at the working base, with the interdiction to go out from the city where he works. For its bush trips whatever duration, Mr Botz has an escort with 2 road vehicles equipped with machine guns. Mr. Botz said that this type of protection is only deterrent to an attempt operate by a small rebel group which suggests that means should be higher depending on the region and threats. This corresponds to the information given in the part “Kidnapping actors” 2.2.2. Moreover, thanks to the interview one could have seen that the state and governments can help businesses to deal with crises like the kidnapping. Brigitte also confirmed that the company does not follow standard protocols by opposition to the theoretical part. She said that Vergnet’s employees just had an assistance card, a number to call in emergency and basic safety instructions.

Additionally, Mr. Botz explained that in Niger in the red zone (see map Appendix 2), a military escort is mandatory, however it costs about 800 euros per day after a good negotiation. It also tells us that since the kidnapping of two Areva employees in 2012, the company established a fortified camp where every employee must be present from 6Pm to 6Am. Any movement outside the secure zone must be reported, subject to authorization and accompanied by a military escort. Also, each hour a radio contact is mandatory.

Finally, after talking with the French Embassy in Nigeria, I learned that they organized fallback blocks that are sort of safe rooms inside this Embassy. In these areas, there is a relay between the authorities and the French Embassy as well. As mentioned in the part “Kidnapping actors”, 2.2.2 intermediaries can help to manage the crisis. Embassies will make sure to pass the instructions by text message, by giving information on the repatriations methods, or by embassies radio frequency. However such procedures are especially true for people who are in the capital, because the few expatriates outside the capital must wait to be exfiltrated by the army.

#### 4.3.5 Employees' preparation

In the chapter "Kidnapping", inside the part "Kidnapping actors" 2.2.2., it was recommended that all employees must be prepared for a possible crisis, not just those who go on mission abroad. For example, secretaries may be contacted by the terrorists by phone or email because they ensure a key position in the company, this is why they must be prepared for a kidnapping case. However, thanks to the interviews, one was able to learn that in the company Vergnet, only employees who go on a mission received instructions and training once a year to be prepared for a crisis. Indeed, one can learn that Romain due to his position in the company is sent once a year for a training about crisis management cases, unlike Brigitte who never been because she was an office worker.

#### 4.3.6 Employees' prior guidances

Vergnet's employees are not all prepared for a crisis because this preparation is focused on employees who go on business trip because of financial reasons. Among those employees who go on abroad missions, according to the interviews, they all receive prior guidance before they leave. This prior guidance follows what was shown in the part "Kidnapping actors" 2.2.2. For example, thanks to Claire Perriard one was able to learn that employees should have in their possession emergency numbers and small crisis reaction process. Before leaving abroad only the Director valid departures and business trip employees must register on the Ariane website. Ariane is a French website run by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The portal allows, when an employee makes a business trip or a specific engagement, to report himself for free and easily from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The inscription on the Ariane website, designed in consultation with the CNIL (a French authority which ensures the data protection, see Abbreviations p5), offers all the guarantees of security and confidentiality of personal data. However, this registration does not replace the registration to the register of French outside France provided that the residence time is longer than 6 months. Once the data is entered on Ariane; the employee



will receive safety recommendations by email if the situation in the country deteriorate. He will be contacted in case of need in his country of destination. The contact person designated by the employee may also be notified if needed (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015).

One could have learn also thanks to Claire Perriard and Romain Dubreuil that these employees receive files concerning the countries where they are going (see Appendix 2). Employee movements are limited because of those areas. Red areas are forbidden for them. Orange areas are highly not recommended, and if despite these advices employees have to go inside these areas they have to be escorted. But once again, because of insufficient financial means escorts are inadequate. And finally green areas, which are safe and where employees could move freely. This is where employees, expatriates and people who are on business trip are housed. These accommodations are appropriate so that in case of danger emergency signals alerts the different services for an effective intervention (Human Resources Management Services, Quality Safety Environment, police services and embassies).

Despite all these actions, and quite often insufficient protection measures, Romain said that he is not scared and suggests that most employees of Vergnet are not too because they all know the risks of their job. Even if Vergnet's employees are not afraid they were a bit worried and more reluctant to go on business trips after hearing the bad news from their colleague. To minimize the risk of abduction, Romain recommended that employees need to be careful, to not attract the attention, to not provoke and that mobile phone have to be turn on 24/7.

Finally, Brigitte explained that before, employees did not use to meet this type of threats. Employees were "leaving fresh and joyful", without looking at all those different terrorists groups as AQIM, at the Islamic State or Boko Aram. This is why she confirmed that today only the director validates business trips. Brigitte narrated a past event, more than ten years ago, where there was

political upheaval in Guinea-Bissau, and without preparation, the project manager took refuge in Gambia and all ended well.

#### 4.3.7 Intermediaries

In part 2.2.2 “Kidnapping actors”, one could learn that resort to an intermediary is common and useful to cope to this kidnapping disruption. There are different types of intermediaries, public intermediaries such as embassies or the authorities, but there are also private intermediaries such as consultants, insurance policies or specialists.

According to what was mentioned in this theoretical framework, Vergnet has appealed to various intermediaries. First they used the services of an appropriate negotiation specialist in order to know as many details about the conditions of detention of our colleague and to establish a mediation. This consultant also advised on the collection, storage and delivery of ransom monies even if Vergnet did not had resort to a ransom to release the hostages. Then, the Nigerian authorities and the French Embassy in Nigeria were great help to Vergnet to repatriate their colleague.

### 4.4 Vergnet’s Human Resources and kidnapping event

During a crisis, all the company is touch, so do the departments. As the Human Resources Department is directly in link with all employees, it is involve in the crisis management and it will be entirely touch by the crisis.

#### 4.4.1 The role of Human Resources Department

As mentioned in the part 2.2.2 “Kidnapping actors” about the Human Resources Department (HRD), this department is really important during a kidnapping case even though it is helped by the other departments or the CMT. The HRD has to permit the employees to understand and learn to cope with the effect of traumatic events by supporting them during the entire crisis. Based on the interview, I was able to learn that Vergnet's HRD has to train employees for

safety and protection. The HRD has to take care about the employees training and has to prepare them of a possible kidnapping case, methods of work during a crisis and a return to the norm after that kind of event, even if the budget is weak. One could learn different steps to follow during a crisis period in the part “Crisis outlines” 2.1.2. Claire Perriard confirm these steps in explaining that during this kidnapping case, the HRD manage the phase before the crisis by preparing employees and during the phase after the kidnapping because they had to work on the whole employee’s management system. This department was present for employees who needed to discuss and who needed answers after the critical event took place.

#### 4.4.2 Department involved to fix the crisis

Based on several parts in the literature review as in part 2.1.3 “Crisis management tools” and in part 2.2.2 “Kidnapping actors”, one could learn that there are several players in crisis management as executive members of the company, CMT and different departments. This was confirmed by the interview because the HRD assistant explained that this department worked with the Quality Safety and Environment Department and the Communication Department to set up things before, during and after a crisis.

Claire added that the Quality Safety and Environment Department worked on fallback sites manufacturing for the employees in case of war crisis, natural crisis, terrorism etc. so that they can be effectively repatriated. This department also worked on fallback blocks in embassies in order to have another safety place, more formal. This QSE department creates the expert team with safety and security experts to cope with the crisis. This is why they worked close with this team to establish a plan which would be applied after checking social and political climates.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

### 5.1 The Research Findings

Crisis management is a way of preventing and minimizing loss against a disruption around or inside an organization. Nowadays all companies face crises, the difference will be in their strategic way to handle them. Most of the time, crises require that decisions are made quickly. As the number and variety of crisis to which any organization is potentially subject is huge, it is difficult to guarantee success and to provide standard formulas that can be applied to all cases. Nevertheless, there are proven action that organizations could follow in order to shield themselves against a crisis.

In order to help to understand this crisis management topic, three main research questions were formulated, which were successfully answered. I found the research data and the received information valuable and reliable. Therefore, after collecting the answers received from the interviews I was able to analyze by making a link with the secondary data.

#### 1. What are the main steps to manage a crisis in a company?

First, the company should define the type of crisis. After having classified the type of crisis that can appear or appeared, the company could start planning a response plan to face this crisis. This plan will follow 6 steps starting by the **anticipation** to the crisis for the company, then employees will have to be **prepare** to face the crisis. During the crisis, executive members of the company will have to take **decision** with their positioning in order to **operate** with efficiency. After the crisis it is important to give **feedbacks** to all members of the company in order to improve for the next period of crisis. Finally, the **return to normal** work of the business; this stage is crucial for employees and for the company's image.

Depending on the generating event and the impacts and consequences that were created, the company might use some tools including a **Crisis Management Plan** specifically adapted to the situation which will be used to

define strategies and guidelines. And then, will be created a **Crisis Management Team**. This team will have the authority to act, make decisions and handle the crucial plan of **Crisis Communication**.

According to interviews, because of the expensive cost of these protocols and the fact that they are not adapted to SMEs the company only followed this process partially. Indeed, they followed the main steps but did not use the tools. For example, only employees who go on business trips were prepared and received instructions and trainings to face a crisis. Moreover, it is recommended in the theory to have a solid communication plan but at Vergnet the internal communication was not enough prepared.

As noted in the result of the thesis (appendix 3), if a company has to deal with a kidnapping case, executives members will have to establish a plan before and select the appropriated tools. The company will have to select a Crisis Management Team (CMT) which might be composed by members of the company only, to save costs.

## 2. What are the main kidnapping actors for a company ?

Kidnapping is one type of “crisis” that Lerbinger (2012) categorized as an act of Malevolence. Recently, religiously oriented terrorist groups in North Africa and Sahel have become increasingly active in kidnapping and companies who are working in those areas need to consider this threat. Employees can be victims today of terrorist or criminal acts. The successful resolution of a kidnapping requires the cooperative efforts of the company with different aspects. But in this paragraph too, there is no “one size fits all” approach that can be exactly followed against a kidnapping.

Regarding the theory the first actor is the **Human Resources Department (HRD)**, another actor is the **company** thanks to the executives members and the Crisis Management Team. The third actor is about the **intermediaries** that the company can use. And finally the **communication** which has to be prepare internally and externally. As what was mentioned in the interviews, Vergnet’s

HRD was well involved in the kidnapping crisis management as much as the Quality Safety and Environment department which help to provide tools for business trips employees and repatriation plan. Then, regarding the interviews, the company played an important role in the management and appealed to a consultant, Nigerian authorities and Embassies as intermediaries. Finally, concerning Vergnet's communication plan, they selected a spokesperson as recommended in the theory but the internal communication was not properly done.

As noted in the result of the thesis (appendix 3), if a company has to deal with a kidnapping case, the CMT will have to act quickly and gather several information regarding the hostage taking (date and time of abduction, location and method of abduction, contact details for the hostage's family, etc.). The CMT will have to give a huge importance to the legal part and contact the different state institutions. Executive members of the company could choose to delegate the kidnapping management by an intermediary, it might be sometimes more appropriated and easier, especially for SMEs.

### 3. How did the company Vergnet deal with its kidnapping case ?

For the past ten years, kidnapping of employees abroad exploded. While the warning against terrorism is highest in France, the threat is hanging over the French living in risks countries and also for thousands of executives who go on business trip for their companies. Among those companies victims of their employees' kidnap, the French company Vergnet has known a kidnapping case in 2012. According to the companies, kidnapping management methods are different. For the company Vergnet, after the kidnaping it was a terrible upheaval. The company has to face multiple aspects that we will see below.

As the Media play a very important role in society, Vergnet did not want to broadcast concrete information through the press. Nevertheless they used the radio to inform the people concerned without endangering the company or

employees. They also used a spokesperson. They used the radio as a tool to get a message to their employee in order to reassure him and they preferred to make internal press conferences to reassure the stakeholders. In addition, the French President made a press conference announcing the tragic event in television. As mentioned in the result of the thesis (appendix 3), if a company has to deal with a kidnapping case, it will be important to prepare a defensive media statement by preparing a questions and answers document in advance. Then, as example, if the journalist has background knowledge of the event the company should admit that there has been a kidnap, relate publicly known facts concerning the abduction and explain that it would be dangerous to make any further comment as someone's life is in danger.

Thanks to the interviews one can noticed a lack of internal communication within the company. The spokesperson did not transmit the information to all employees which created a general fear. Despite this lack of internal communication the company continued to work and the stakeholders were not afraid and not any employee left the company.

Regarding the typical protocols seen in the theory, Vergnet used them only partially because they are not adapted for SMEs and too expensive. This is why I created a basic notice more suitable for SMEs that is available in appendix 3. Indeed Vergnet chose to only prepare employees who go on business trips. They receive a training once a year against terrorist threats. They also receive an assistance card with the numbers to call in emergency and basic safety instructions.

Vergnet has appealed to various intermediaries. First they used the services of an appropriate negotiation specialist. Then, the Nigerian authorities and the in French Embassy in Nigeria were great help for Vergnet in order to repatriate their colleague.

The Vergnet's HRD was well involved in the kidnapping case. They managed the phase before the crisis by preparing employees, and they managed the phases during and after the kidnapping because they had to work on the whole employee's management system. This department was also present for employees who needed answers after the disruption. Moreover, the HRD worked with the Quality Safety and Environment Department and the Communication Department to set up things before, during and after a crisis.

Regarding the process in Appendix 3, companies which have to deal with a kidnapping case should prepare the employees even if every kidnap will be different by providing them kidnap procedure guidelines, contingency planning, training sessions for business trips employees, etc. This department should also name in advance the person who will act as a communicator for the Human Resources Department, prepare in advance the legal requirements for a kidnapping case and prepare all employees for a potential contact with the kidnappers.

## **5.2 Suggestions for Further Research**

The elements found cannot be generalized because the subject is highly focused. However these elements might be applicable and relevant for other companies in the same field this is why it could be interesting to analyze how the crisis is managed in other companies. However, there are multiples other further research for this crisis management case. Concerning Vergnet it could be interesting to know if the company would use the same type of crisis management face to a potential other kidnapping case. In a different way, it could be relevant to study another crisis type such as a natural disaster for example. Finally, it would be interesting to write more specifically about the employee side, for instance about the employees' motivation during a crisis.



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## **APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW**

### **1) What types of tools have been used by Vergnet for media coverage of the event? (Internet, TV, newspaper, radio, other)**

Claire Perriard: We did not really want to use the press during this event because you should know that the more information remains in the company better it is. I guess that in doing your research it was hard to find concrete information on the kidnapping in general, this is because the embassies, as companies, as governments try to keep a maximum of secret information. However, the media that has been useful was the radio via radio embassies, but also through the national radio "France Info" that explained events without much harmful information. However we did get different articles about the event, the news, internet where you can find different articles, and also press conferences where the French President announced the drama and announced his help on behalf of the France.

### **2) Did the press have a positive or negative impact on the company?**

Claire Perriard: Media may be tools; however for this kind of events, I can compare them to nightmares. Although we had a spokesperson who was making the statements accompanied by the director. We were always afraid of the interpretation that they could do, especially since we had chosen to keep a maximum of information for us, it was a risk because this can be seen as if we wanted to keep secret and to hide the seriousness of the crisis. Therefore, we had to pay attention to what can endanger the company. But I will not say that the media played a negative role because we have been able to manage the information transmitted.

Brigitte Gonflorot Le Manh Ho: Unlike the terrorism episode against Charlie Hebdo, I will not say that the press has played a negative impact on the company. But the press did not play a positive impact too. One observes that Media exaggerate all the time. What was written in the articles!!! Some items were talking about AQIM, some about Boko Haram, some were thinking that it

was members from the company... many ideas to confuse the public. All indications show that Media wanted to be at the center of the crisis but without help us.

Romain Dubreuil: For my part, I find that the importance given to the media is too important and unfortunately, the transmitted information may worry. For example, my family began to ask me many questions, I felt that they were not reassured by the idea that I was going to business trip. Knowing that I am abroad almost a third of the year, it is tricky.

**3) Did you use the Media to reduce tensions related to kidnapping? (On the internal relations of the company but also external with shareholders)**

Claire Perriard: Yes, we did, the radio helped us to get messages to our engineer kidnapped so that he knows that he was not alone and that everyone was present for him. For suppliers and stakeholders and others we did not use the press. First, we looked to make a press conference in the company to reassure them. During the event we continued our activity so the external parties were able to see for themselves that the company still operated normally. Even when the kidnapped employee came back in France we did not use the media tools. We tried to make internal press conferences.

**4) How did you hear this bad news about your employee in hostage-taking? How did you hear this bad news about your employee in hostage-taking?**

Claire Perriard: We received a signal and we have been contacted by the French Embassy in Nigeria. Communication is very important at these events, but I think we were not very communicative. We explained to employees what had happened without providing other information to reassure them. This is also partly because we did not have much other information.

Brigitte Gonflorot Le Manh Ho: I heard the bad news from the director of the company and also by the Human Resources Managers. We talk a lot inside of each department; however we were a bit stuck when it comes to communicating



with other departments. So in this case of kidnapping, it was not easy because of this communication problem, especially because the Human Resources Department did not give us relevant information on the disruption.

Romain Dubreuil: I thought it was Human Resources Managers who informed us.

**5) What impact this event has created about your business and stakeholders?**

Claire Perriard: I have to admit that it was a little chaos inside the company, employees made us understand that they were afraid to go on business trip and they asked a lot of questions that we could not answer because first we did not have so much information, and secondly we were not allowed to share the few information we had.

The challenge was to manage the other employees abroad. We did not know if we had to prevent them or not and also if we were supposed to repatriate them for security measures. We did not want to commit big movement in order to avoid an alert creation. This was important to be careful because of Media often create public panic about not much. Shareholders were not scared because our spokesperson has different conferences to reassure them. We tried to continue the activity of the company in order not to lose customers or suppliers, and especially not to scare employees.

**6) What process did you use to deal with this problem?**

Claire Perriard: These are unfortunately information that I'm not allowed to share with you. I can only say that different people among the services have been selected to implement a negotiation. We each had a role and we should stick to it. For my part I had to manage employees within the company, however, the HRM of the department was part of the crisis team and they followed a plan.

**7) Did you follow standard protocols?****If so, which?****If not, why? (You did not receive the necessary information, you did not know where to look, you do not find that the protocols are adapted to your business, etc.)**

Claire Perriard: I understand the protocols you mentioned but first you have to know that these protocols are terribly expensive that we couldn't follow them exactly.

First of all, we cannot train all employees, whether in the preparation kidnapping or training to the reaction in case of kidnapping. Then military escorts are very expensive, a day escort costs on average € 1,000. We have repatriation protocols but they are standard also because they are based on financial means.

I should add that the state, despite what it says, helps very little or not at all the businesses to protect themselves, however they recommend us to use intermediaries in case of crisis. Using an intermediary within a crisis case seems like a good solution.

**8) Have all company members been prepared for this event?**

Claire Perriard: I would say yes and no, all members of the company are not prepared for such cases. Firstly because it is very expensive and only big companies can get a complete preparation of individual employees. Then, only employees who are regularly on mission receive instructions and are subject to verification. Expatriates and field employees are trained every year on security measures and on the first steps to have in case of terrorist attack.

Brigitte Gonflorot Le Manh Ho: I do not remember being prepared for any event.

Romain Dubreuil: I'm training once a year on security for expatriates and reactions that we should have but no I was not prepared for this particular event.

**9) Do the company's employees receive prior guidance before a mission?**

Claire Perriard : Yes employees receive guidance. We provide them some index card concerning the countries where they are going (see Appendix 2).

They also have in their possession emergency numbers and small crisis reaction process. Before leaving abroad only the Director valid departures and employees going on abroad mission must register on the Ariane website.

Romain Dubreuil: Yes, we receive guidelines to follow and to apply. First of all, our movements are limited. There are different types of zones to follow: the red areas where we are ban to move. Then, the orange areas where it is not advisable to move, if in spite of that we have to move there we must be escorted. But unfortunately, we are not a multinational and the financial means are limited. Can you imagine if all the employees from Vergnet had to be escorted by 10 guards? Knowing that most of the areas where we work are likely dangerous. Finally the green areas, they are called "safety areas" where we can move freely. This is where employees, expatriates and people who are on business trip are housed. These accommodations are appropriate so that in case of danger emergency signals alerts the different services for an effective intervention (Human Resources Management Services, Quality Safety Environment, police services and embassies). But I am not really worried and I think most employees are not here. That is our job and we know the risks. You should know that the media always exaggerate in terms of communication. We have to be careful, not to attract the attention to us and do not provoke, use common sense! Also, our phones must be turned on 24/24 7/7. But obviously when we learned that one of our colleagues had been kidnapped we were a bit worried and we were more reluctant to leave on mission. We all have family, this is not easy.

Brigitte Gonflorot Le Manh Ho: It is true that at the time, that means around 1992 we did not use to meet this type of threats! Employees were "leaving fresh and joyful", without looking at AQIM, at the Islamic State, Boko Aram or others who did not yet exist ... We could go freely. Today only the director validates the business trips. I remember there is a dozen of years where there was political upheaval in Guinea-Bissau, and without preparation, the project manager took refuge in Gambia. And all had ended well. With Vergnet, considering that we

are not these big companies or multinationals we had no standard protocol to follow, we just had an assistance card, a number to call in an emergency and basic safety instructions. Threats of attacks and kidnapping remain relatively high in the Sahel and travels are made by zones. I know that people who go on business must register on the Ariane web site.

**10) Have you appealed to intermediaries to manage the hostage-taking?**

**If so, explain**

**If not, why?**

Claire Perriard: During this kidnapping case there have been different intermediaries.

First we used the services of an appropriate negotiation specialist in order to know as many details about the conditions of detention of our colleague and to establish mediation. We have not resort to a ransom to release the hostage.

Then the Nigerian authorities and the in French Embassy in Nigeria were great help to us to repatriate our colleague.

**11) Does the Human Resources Department played a role in this event? If yes, explain If not, what department or what team managed this type of event?**

Claire Perriard: The HRM here is the "eye" of the whole company. We are trained [speaking about the HRD] in safety and protection of employees in partnership with the Environment Quality Safety Department and the Communications Department. The three of us must take care about the employees training and prepare them of a possible kidnapping case, the method of work during a crisis and a return to the norm after that kind of event, even if the budget is weak. During this kidnapping case we manage the phase before the crisis by preparing employees and during the phase after the kidnapping because we had to work on the whole employee's management system. We were present for employees who needed to discuss and who needed answers after the critical event took place.

**12) Does the Human Resources Department has partnered with another department to fix this crisis?**

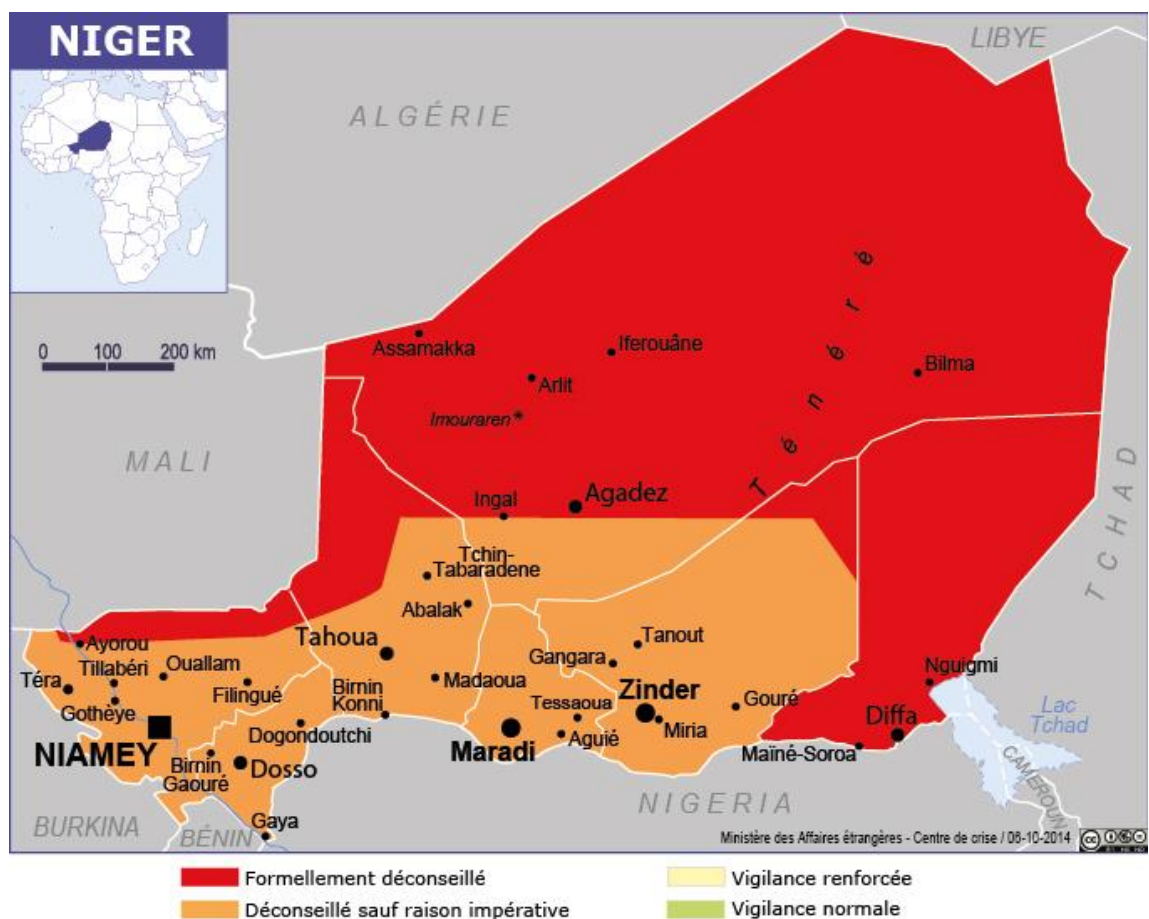
Claire Perriard: As I said before, we used to working with all departments and directors to be the most effective. However, the Quality Safety and Environment Department and the Communication Department are the two departments with whom we put more things in place before, during and after a crisis.

For example the Quality Safety and Environment Department worked on fallback sites manufacturing for the employees in case of war crisis, natural crisis, terrorism etc. so that they can be effectively repatriated. They also worked on fallback blocks in embassies in order to have another safety place, more formal. This department creates the expert team with safety and security experts to cope with the crisis. This is why they worked close with this team to establish a plan which would be applied after checking social and political climates.

## APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLE DOCUMENT GIVEN TO EXPATRIATES BY THE HRM

### SITUATION SECURITAIRE AU NIGER / SECURITY SITUATION IN NIGER

Risque terroriste persistant dans l'ensemble du pays / Persistent risk of terrorism in the country



Les récentes attaques de Boko Haram dans la région de Diffa pourraient se reproduire, ce qui rend plus nécessaire que jamais le strict respect des conseils de vigilance. La région de Diffa étant en zone rouge, il est donc formellement déconseillé de s'y rendre, quel qu'en soit le motif, même pour une courte durée. Par ailleurs, il est recommandé aux ressortissants français :

- d'éviter dans la capitale (zone orange) la fréquentation de lieux (hôtels, bars restaurants, boîtes de nuit) non sécurisés, sécurisés de manière aléatoire et/ou excentrés et de limiter les déplacements nocturnes ;
- de ne circuler en province, en zone orange, qu'en cas de nécessité absolue, et de ne pas le faire sans une escorte armée.

**La partie du Niger classée en zone rouge reste formellement déconseillée. Les autorités françaises rappellent qu'elles déconseillent formellement tout déplacement dans les zones signalées en rouge.**

Ces zones sont situées au nord de la ligne passant par Ayorou - Ingal - Agadez - Nguigmi (toutes ces villes étant localisées en zone rouge, voir la carte). Les Français qui se trouveraient encore dans ces zones doivent prendre contact avec l'Ambassade de France à Niamey.

**S'agissant de la zone orange en province, il est vivement déconseillé de s'y rendre, sauf raisons impératives, notamment d'ordre professionnel.**

Dans ce cas, il est indispensable d'avoir recours à une escorte armée permanente (à solliciter auprès des autorités nigériennes) et de prendre contact au préalable avec l'Ambassade de France à l'adresse ci-dessus. Dans la zone frontalière avec le Nigeria, de nouvelles attaques de Boko Haram dans les régions de Diffa – Bosso peuvent se produire, ce qui rend plus nécessaire que jamais le strict respect des conseils de vigilance. La région de Diffa étant en zone rouge, il est donc formellement déconseillé de s'y rendre, quel qu'en soit le motif, même pour une courte durée.

De manière générale, les consignes de sécurité et de prudence doivent impérativement être respectées : ne pas voyager de nuit, se montrer discret sur les dates, horaires et conditions du déplacement. La possession d'un téléphone satellitaire peut s'avérer utile pour communiquer dans certaines zones.

Dans la capitale (zone orange), circuler de préférence en voiture portes verrouillées, limiter les déplacements nocturnes, éviter les quartiers excentrés en particulier de nuit. Sélectionner les hôtels, les restaurants et autres établissements de nuit les plus sécurisés. Respecter les consignes diffusées par sms par le Consulat de France ou le ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Développement international en cas de troubles à l'ordre public susceptibles de donner lieu à des violences.

Il est vivement recommandé de privilégier les liaisons aériennes pour accéder à Niamey et pour tout déplacement en province dans la zone orange.

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English translation:

The recent attacks of Boko Haram in the area of Diffa could breed, making it more necessary than ever strict compliance with vigilance councils. The Diffa region being in the red zone, so it is not advised to get there, for whatever reason, even for a short time.

Furthermore, it is recommended to French nationals:

- avoid in the capital (orange area, see map) attend places (hotels, restaurants bars, nightclubs) unsecured, secured randomly and / or eccentric and limit night shifts;
- not circulate in the provinces, in the orange zone (see map), unless absolutely necessary, and not do so without an armed escort.

**The part of Niger in the red zone (see map) remains formally discouraged.**

**The French authorities recall that they formally advise against any travel in areas marked in red (see map).**

These areas are located north of the line through Ayorou - Ingal - Agadez - Nguigmi (all these cities being located in the red zone, see map). The French who are still in these areas should contact the France Embassy in Niamey as fast as possible.

As for the orange zone in the provinces (see map), it is not recommended to go there, unless compelling reasons, in particular professional order. In this case, it is essential to use a standing army escort (to seek from the Nigerian authorities) and take first contact with the Embassy of France to the address above. In the border area with Nigeria, new attacks of Boko Haram in Diffa - Bosso can occur, making it more necessary than ever strict compliance with vigilance councils. The Diffa region being in the red zone, so it is not advised to get there, for whatever reason, even for a short time.

Overall, the safety and caution instructions must be followed: do not travel at night, be discreet on dates, hours and conditions of travel. Owning a satellite phone can be useful to communicate in some areas.



In the capital (orange zone, see map), move preferably by car doors locked, limit night shifts, avoiding the outlying districts especially at night. Select hotels, restaurants and other night most secure facilities. Observe the instructions issued by sms by the Consulate of France or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development during disturbances to public order that could result in violence.

It is highly recommended to use flight connections to reach Niamey and for any movement in the provinces in the orange zone (see map).

## APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH RESULTS

This process I created is designed to help organizations which could have to deal with kidnapping crises.

### I) KIDNAPPING: HOW TO REACT? (Kidnapped person)

These can include expatriates, business trips employees, local employees.

Precautions, avoid:

- poor or secluded areas of towns or cities (stick to “allowed” areas),
- driving along quiet roads, especially at night,
- stopping at traffic accidents,
- stopping at traffic lights late at night,
- parking in deserted areas,
- leaving a restaurant, bar or nightclub late at night,
- taking cash from an ATM when there are few people on the street,

If they are the victim of a kidnap:

- always assume that the criminals are armed,
- do not resist,
- stay calm,
- do not start shouting for help,
- do not try to escape unless it is absolutely sure to get away,
- do not make any sudden movements that might startle the criminals or be interpreted as an attempt to resist or escape,
- listen carefully to instructions,
- do not try to argue or make provocative comments,
- keep your hands in view at all times so there is no danger of the criminals thinking that you are reaching for a weapon,
- cooperate.

When the employee is released:

- Obey any instructions,
- move away in a controlled manner; do not panic and run,
- write down all details of the incident and what you have lost, while the incident is still fresh in your mind.

### II) KIDNAPPING: HOW TO REACT? (company)

#### 1) Before the kidnapping

##### a) Steps

The company will have to follow these 6 steps below to manage the crisis:

- **“Anticipation”**: Identification of risk’s areas, simulation of events.
- **“Preparation/Forecast”**: Location and accurate methods to implement, creation of geographic infrastructure to mobilize, tools to manage the kidnapping
- **“Decision”**: diagnosis, choice of positioning, means commitments, intervention areas, decision
- **“Operation”**: transmission of information to field actors, monitoring of committed resources, collection of localized information.
- **“Feedback”**: analysis of the consequences of tactical situations, simulation of the crisis with scenario, communication
- **“Back to normal”**: definition of reconstruction priorities, methods modifications to limit future risks, communication.

## b) Tools

Usefull tools to cope with a kidnaping crisis:

- **Crisis Management Plan**: define strategies and major guidelines
- **Crisis Management Team**: choose a team which will have the responsibility and the authority to act and make decisions. Composed by: experts in the kidnapping management, key decision makers, communications professionals, lawyers, members from the Human Resources Management and Quality Security Environment.
- **Crisis Communication Plan**: choose a spokesperson to handle an internal and external communication.

## 2) During the kidnapping

**Immediate actions**; as soon as the company is aware of an incident, it should gather information as:

- the identity of the hostage,
- the date and time of the abduction,
- location and method of abduction,
- whether there were any casualties at the scene of the abduction,
- whether the hostage was injured,
- any demands which have been made,
- the method used by kidnappers to communicate their demands,
- contact details for the hostage’s family,
- whether local law enforcement is involved or knows about the incident,
- whether the media knows about the incident and if there has been any publicity,
- identity of the kidnappers.

**Others actions**:

- Assign responsibility for maintaining a record of events, and collecting and securely storing all documents relevant to the incident,
- Confirm dedicated communications channels for the communication of the incident
- Brief those who know about the incident to keep all information strictly confidential,
- decide the help or not of a consultant and if yes, the specialist will be called immediately,
- Prepare a repatriation plan

**Legal:**

- confirm the information about the local laws governing kidnap incidents.
- prepare any written report that the company will have to submit to the local authorities,
- If the hostage is not a national of the country where the incident has occurred, inform the national embassy,
- Agree on the authority between the head office and the local office.

**First meeting** with the answers about:

- who will be the spokesperson,
- what is known about the incident;
- what actions have been taken and will be taken,
- what actions have been taken by the media,
- and agreement on a time of the next meeting.

**Victim's family:**

- If the family is resident in the country of the incident: inform them of the incident right away; agree on procedures for helping and protecting them, if the hostage's family lives outside the country of the incident: inform them of the incident and pass them to the head office crisis management team,
- for both cases : any unknown letters sent to the family should be opened and read by a member of the local crisis management team first.

**The media**

- Appoint the spokesperson,
- prepare a defensive media statement, but only use it if there is an approach by the media,
- prepare a questions and answers document,
- start monitoring the media for coverage of the incident,
- review and update your defensive media statement, and questions and answers documents regularly as the incident develops,
- monitor newspapers, magazines, radio, television and internet sites for any coverage of the incident. The CMT will have to decide whether to correct any inaccurate or speculative reporting, or to ignore it.
- Defensive media statements,
- information given to journalists must be factually correct,
- avoid disclosing anything sensitive that could endanger the life of the hostage,
- if the journalist has background knowledge the company should admit that there has been a kidnap, relate publicly known facts concerning the abduction and explain that it would be dangerous to make any further comment as someone's life is in danger.

### III) HRD: guidelines

The HRD should prepare the employees even if every kidnap will be different, this department should :

- Provide kidnap procedure guidelines to all employees,
- Provide training sessions to at least the business trips employees,
- Prepare contingency planning,
- Prepare the legal requirements for a kidnapping case,
- Prepare procedures for managing the media,
- Prepare procedures for informing the family of a hostage,
- Name the person who will act as a communicator for the Human Resources Department,
- Prepare the employees for a contact with the kidnapers

In case of a contact by the kidnapers it will be important to:

- Write down the message and any useful background information  
What is the threat you are making? What is the demand? Why are you targeting the company/family? What organization do you represent? When will you make contact again? How will you make contact again?
- note the time of the call; the time the call finished; the name of the recipient; the date; the caller's voice: male/female; loud/soft; high/deep; aggressive/normal; local/regional/foreign accent; speech delivery: educated/fast/normal/slow/deliberate/distorted/lisp/stutter; caller's language: poorly educated/uneducated; their manner: calm/irate; rational/irrational; coherent/incoherent; background noises: factory/office/residence/animals/traffic/children/music; the phone: private/pay phone/mobile.
- Inform a superior, who should alert a senior executive, the security manager or a management committee member.

During the kidnapping the HRD should :

- Ask for a meeting with all employees.
- Ask what is known about the incident
- Explain what actions have been taken to date
- Explain globally what actions will be taken

After the kidnapping the HRD should:

- Explain everything about the situation
- Explain what actions have been taken
- Organize a psychology unit
- Organize some informal meetings

### IV) SOURCES

(Heiderich, 2010 ; Sapriel, 2003 ; Farnel, 1993 ; Hiscox, 2015 ; French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015 ; Mrs Bara, Total Chad, 2015 ; Hiscox, 2015 ; Mr. Pinet, GWE, 2015 ; Mr. Botz, Areva, 2015 ; Mr. Dubreuil, Vergnet, 2015 ; Mrs Le Manh Ho, Vergnet, 2015, Mrs Perriard, Vergnet, 2015)