



Defining Operational Space for Development NGOs

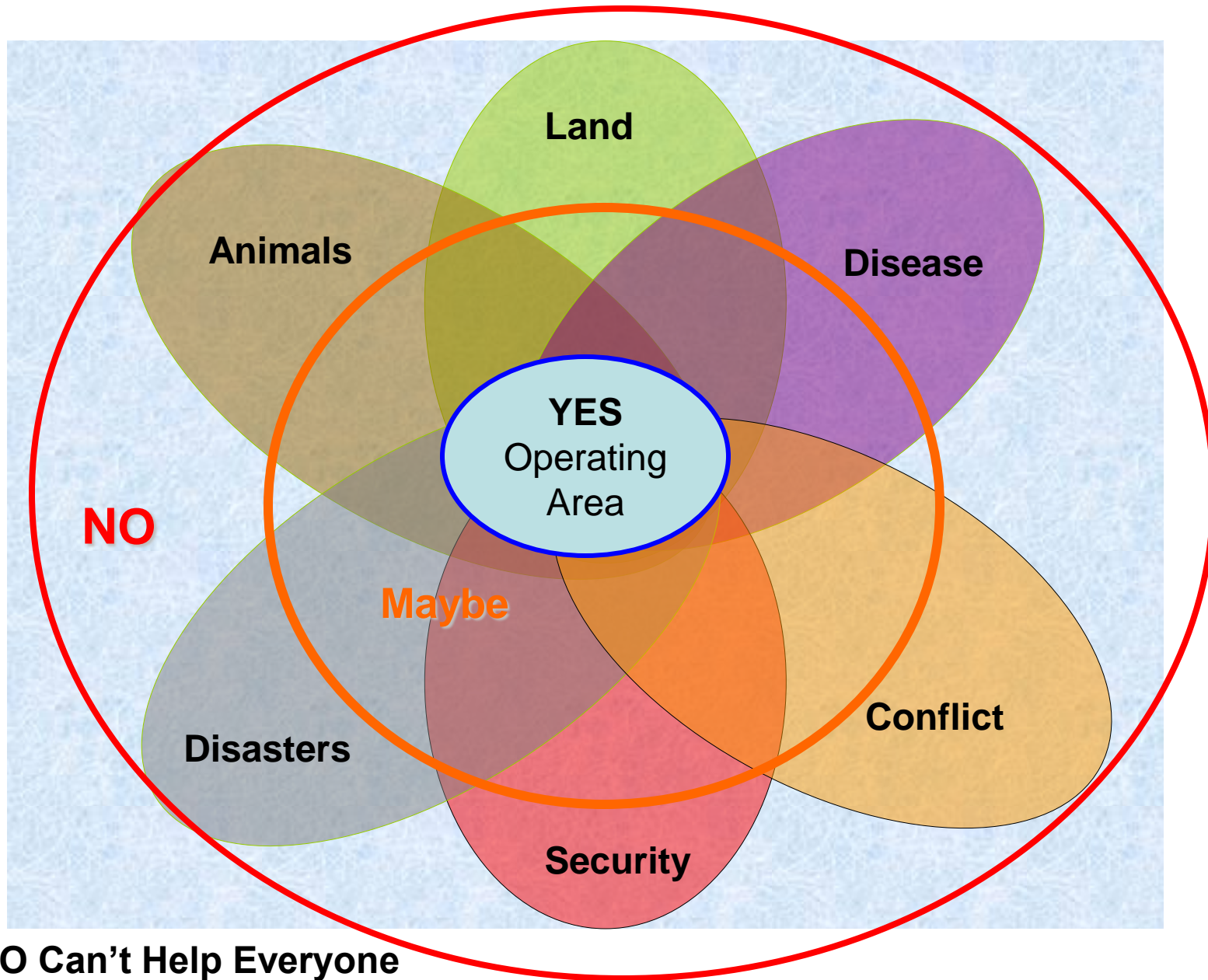
January, 2010

A Short Brief By Larry Winter Roeder, Jr., Former Policy Adviser, On Disaster Management, IO, US Department of State and originally developed in 2004 as an aide for NGOs, then later amended to help in specific circumstances. This version is fresh as of January, 2010 and is geared towards development NGOs that help both animals and people. The principles however could be of use to any development NGO.

Build a Decision Matrix

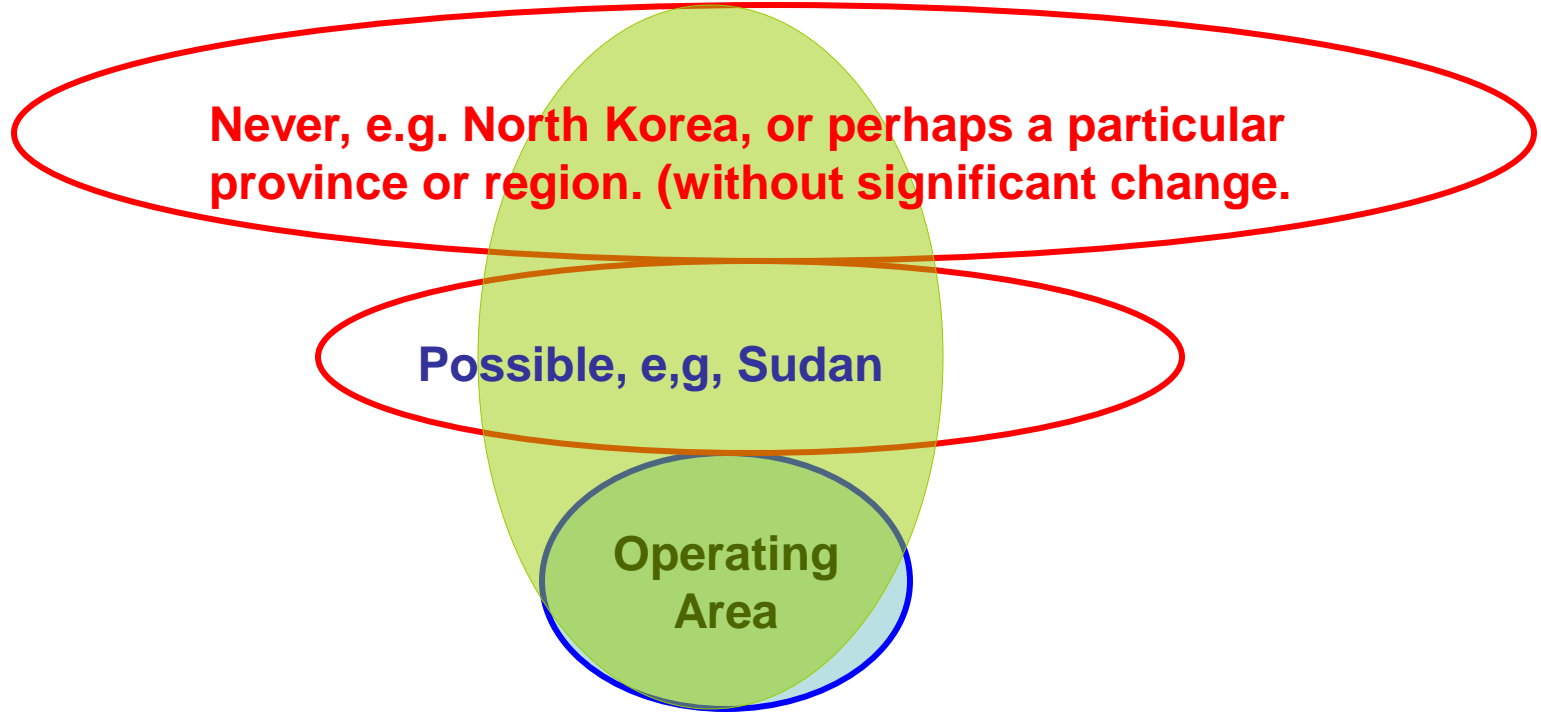
- Ovals show classes of questions
- The answers should be depicted in a matrix.
- This approach will greatly simplify decision making on resources, when or where to deploy and who best to send by defining the Operational Space in which an development NGO might operate.
- Sample questions are provided in Ovals. Others could be used.
- Once the operational space is defined, the job isn't over. Questions on available resources, talents and other issues will also limit the space under a wide variety of circumstances.

How does the NGO Decide Who to Help, Who is Most at Risk



One NGO Can't Help Everyone

Choosing Nations -- First Filter



First choose the nations the NGO will not work inside without significant changes, if any. This might be a nation like North Korea, which has a terrible human rights records, or perhaps a western democracy where the need for the NGO's services do not arise.

Next choose countries which under special circumstances the NGO might operate, like Sudan, which has both human and animal needs.

This leaves the rest of the world. (Normal Operating Area,). The NGO is willing to operate in any of these nations, except as further filtered by the rest of the questions.

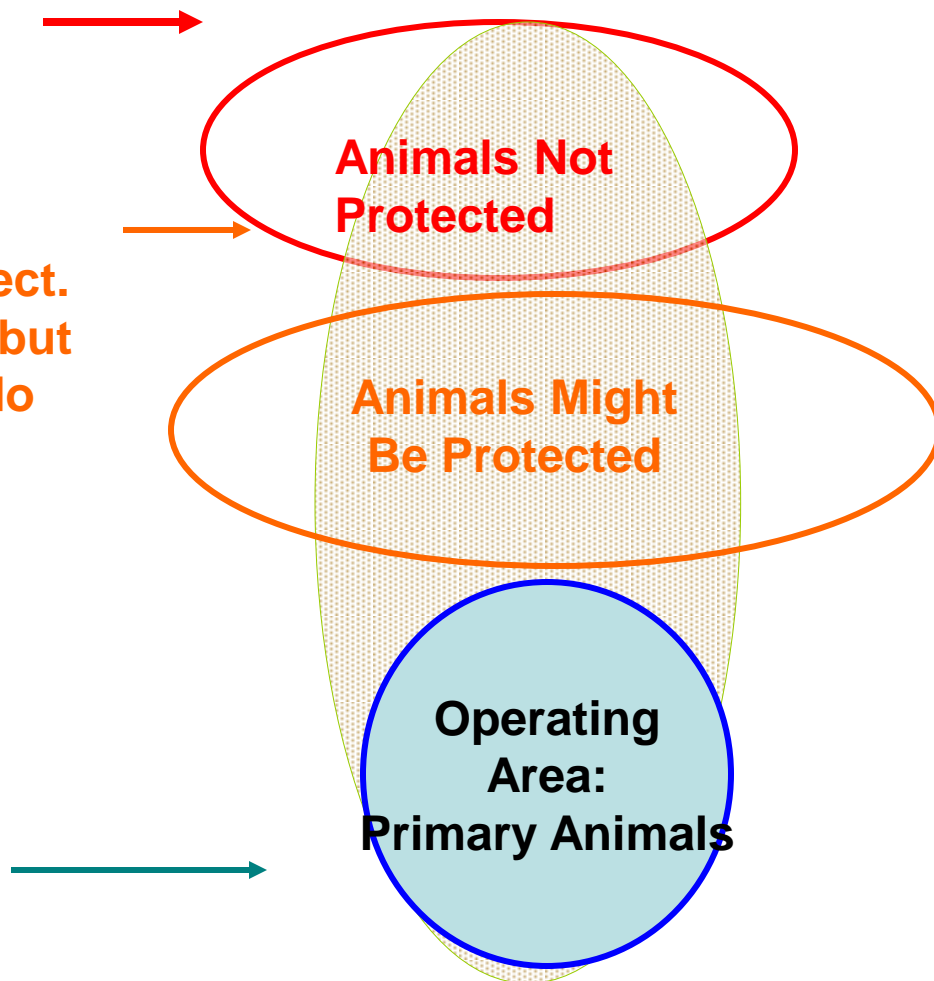
Second Filter – What does the NGO Care For? Every NGO has a focus.

This slide is orientated towards a development NGO. A similar slide could just as easily be developed for cultural items, perhaps Museums, works of art, etc. The logic is the same.

First choose the animals the NGO does not protect, e.g. insects or fish, a breed or some other limitation. Perhaps the NGO only does cattle

Animals which under special circumstances, the NGO might protect. Some NGOs only do small livestock but under certain circumstances might do cattle or camels.

This leaves the rest of the animals. (Normal Operating Area). The NGO will protect all of these, except as filtered out by other questions. For example, even if an animal would otherwise be helped, the NGO will not if the animal is in a country the NGO can't otherwise operate inside of.

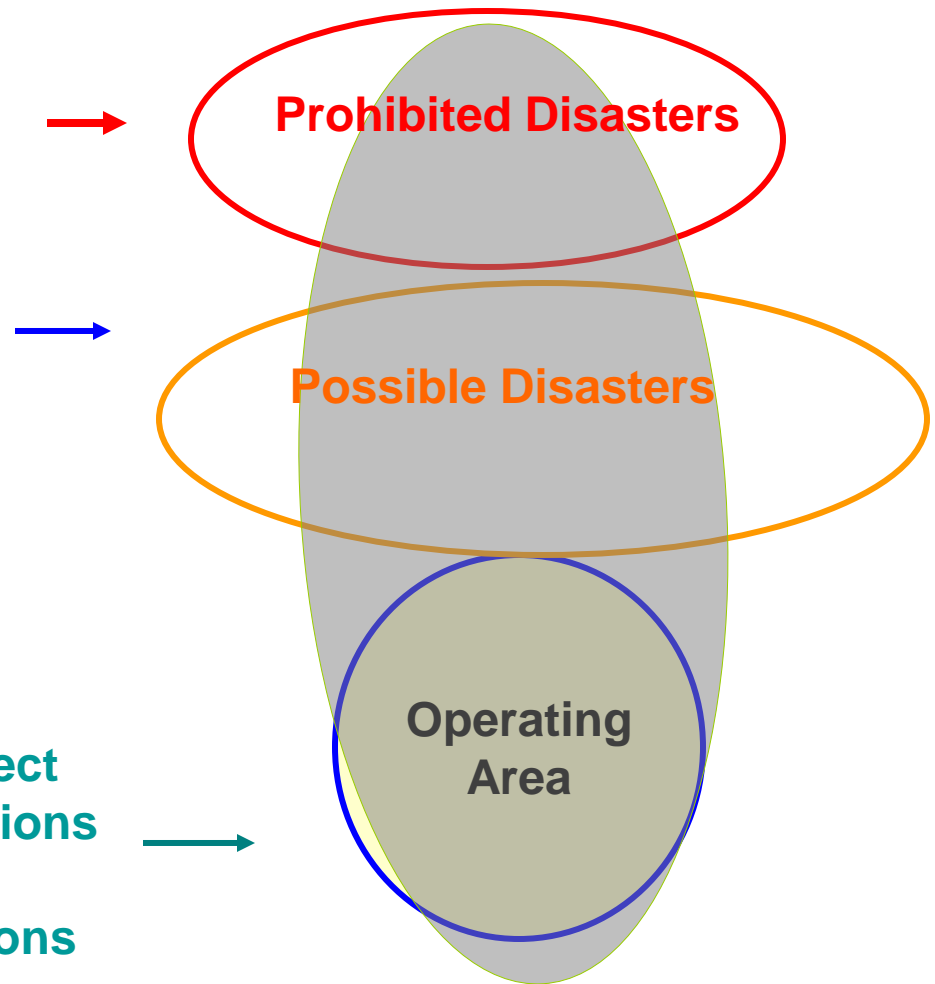


Third Filter – Which Disasters Does the NGO Deal With?

Most NGOs only dealing specific class of emergencies. Perhaps not oil spills, nuclear or kinds of disease disasters like hemorrhagic fever..

Next choose disasters which under special circumstances, the NGO might consider. For example, if the focus is on floods, it might consider mudslides.

This leaves the rest of the disasters. (Operating Area). The NGO will protect any animal or farm or human populations (as the NGO's mandate determines except as filtered out by other questions



Fourth Filter – What Diseases or Injuries Will WSPA Treat?

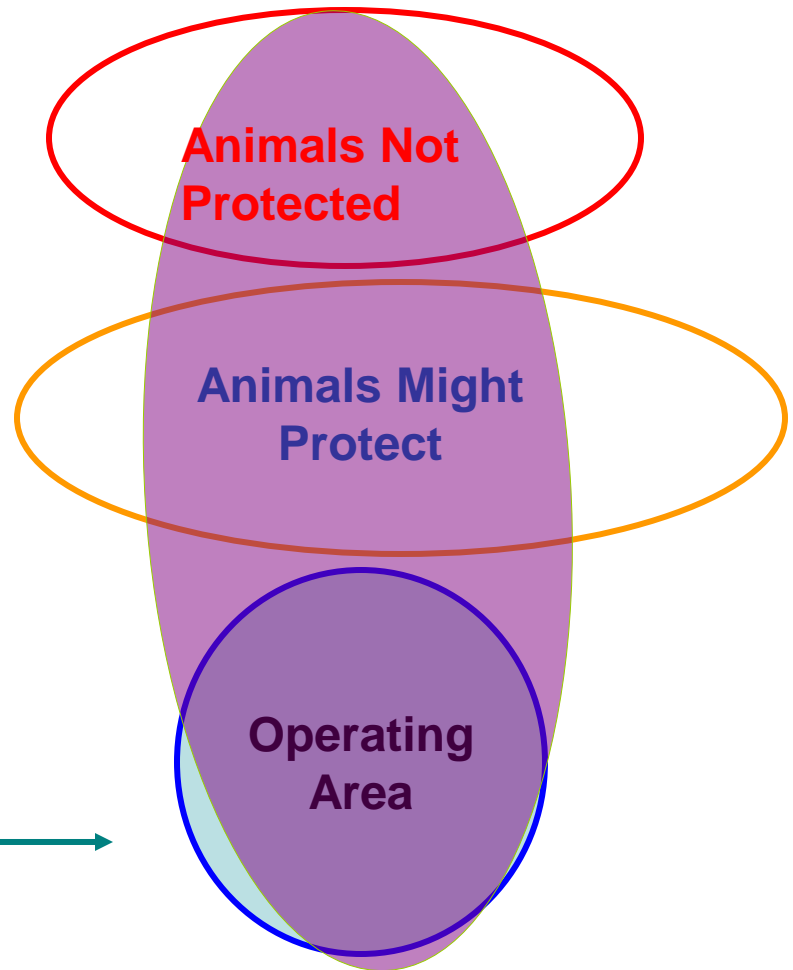
First choose types of diseases or injuries WSPA will not deal with, (even in countries WSPA operates in.



Next choose diseases or injuries which under special circumstances, WSPA might handle.

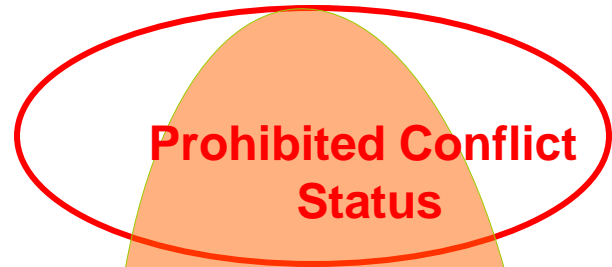


This leaves the rest of the diseases or injuries. (Operating Area). WSPA will handle any of these, except as filtered out by other questions. For example, even if rabies or broken bones might be handled ordinarily, they won't be in a prohibited country or circumstance.



Fifth Filter – Levels of Acceptable Conflict

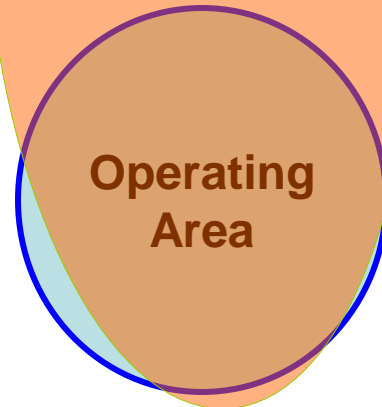
First choose types of conflict that are not acceptable for WSPA operations, e.g. open warfare.



Next choose types of conflict where WSPA might operate, e.g. peacekeeping like Afghanistan.



This leaves the rest of the types of conflicts. (Operating Area), political demonstrations, mild civil unrest.



Sixth Filter – Levels of Acceptable Security Risk

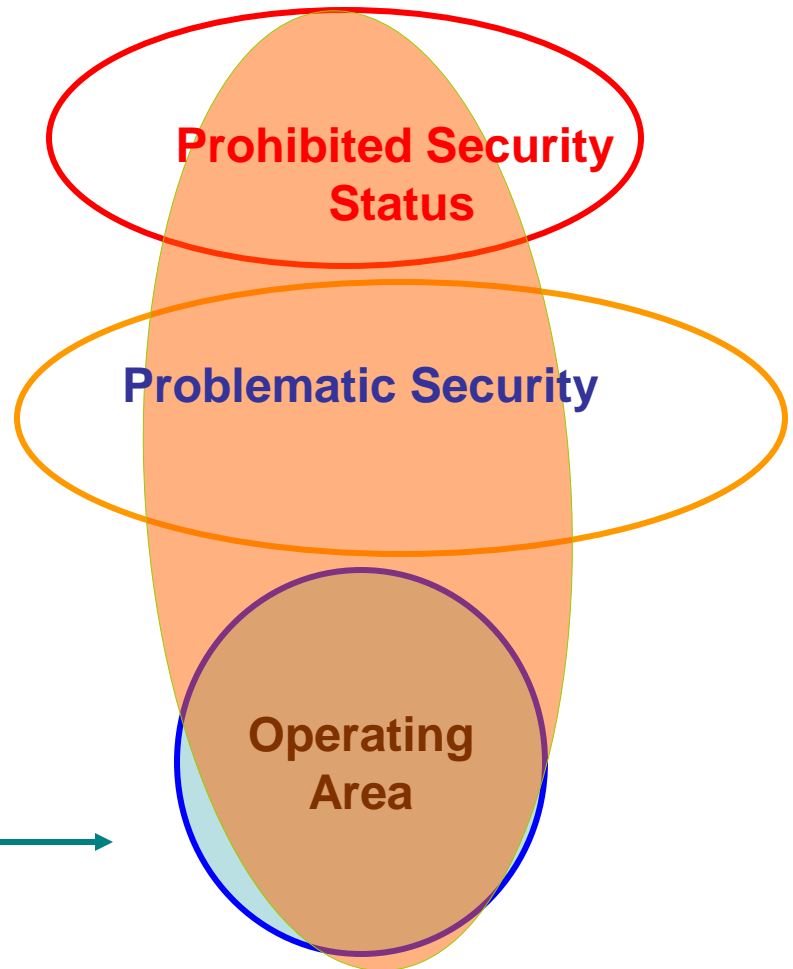
First choose types of security risks that are not acceptable for the NGO's operations, e.g. targeting of NGO's by insurgents.



Next choose types of security risks where the NGO might operate, e.g. high crime.

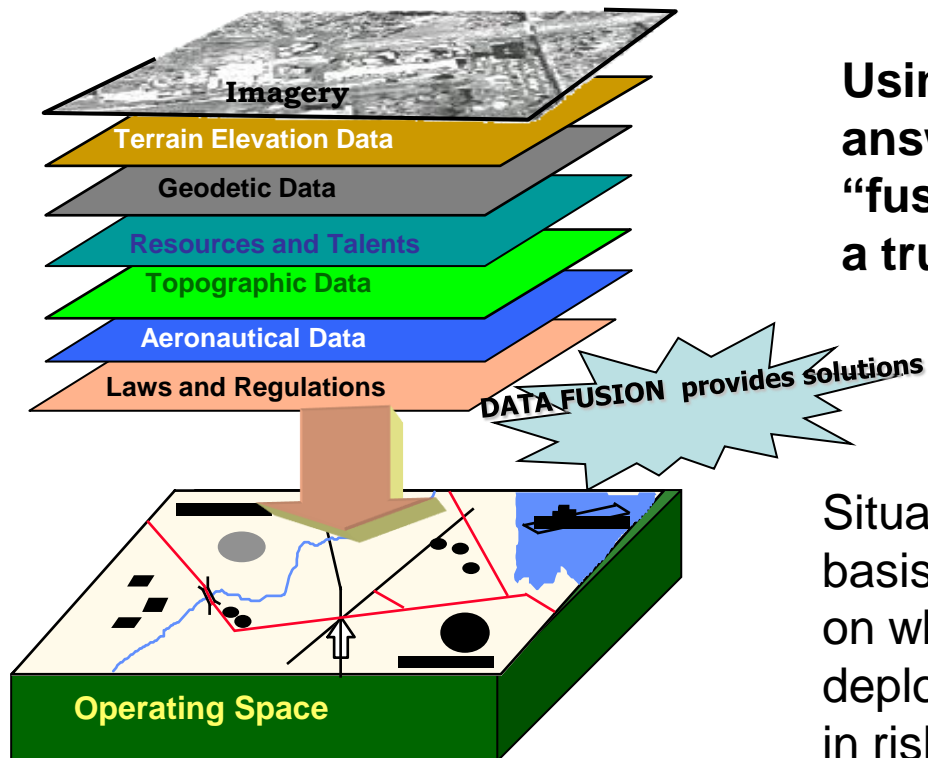


This leaves normal security – low crime, low risks of targeting of NGO's. (Operating Area),



Situation Awareness: A Continual Iterative Process

Once the basic operating space is defined, it needs to be set against a backdrop of other filtering questions, e.g. existence of animal cruelty, national laws, international standards, etc., as the emerging situation in any crisis, availability of funds and talents in member societies. All of these things can be graphed.



Using interlocking graphs, the answers to these questions can be “fused” using GIS software to present a true situational awareness.

Situational awareness provides the basis for providing professional advice on which NGO resources should be deployed before and after a disaster, or in risk reduction.

Questions

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