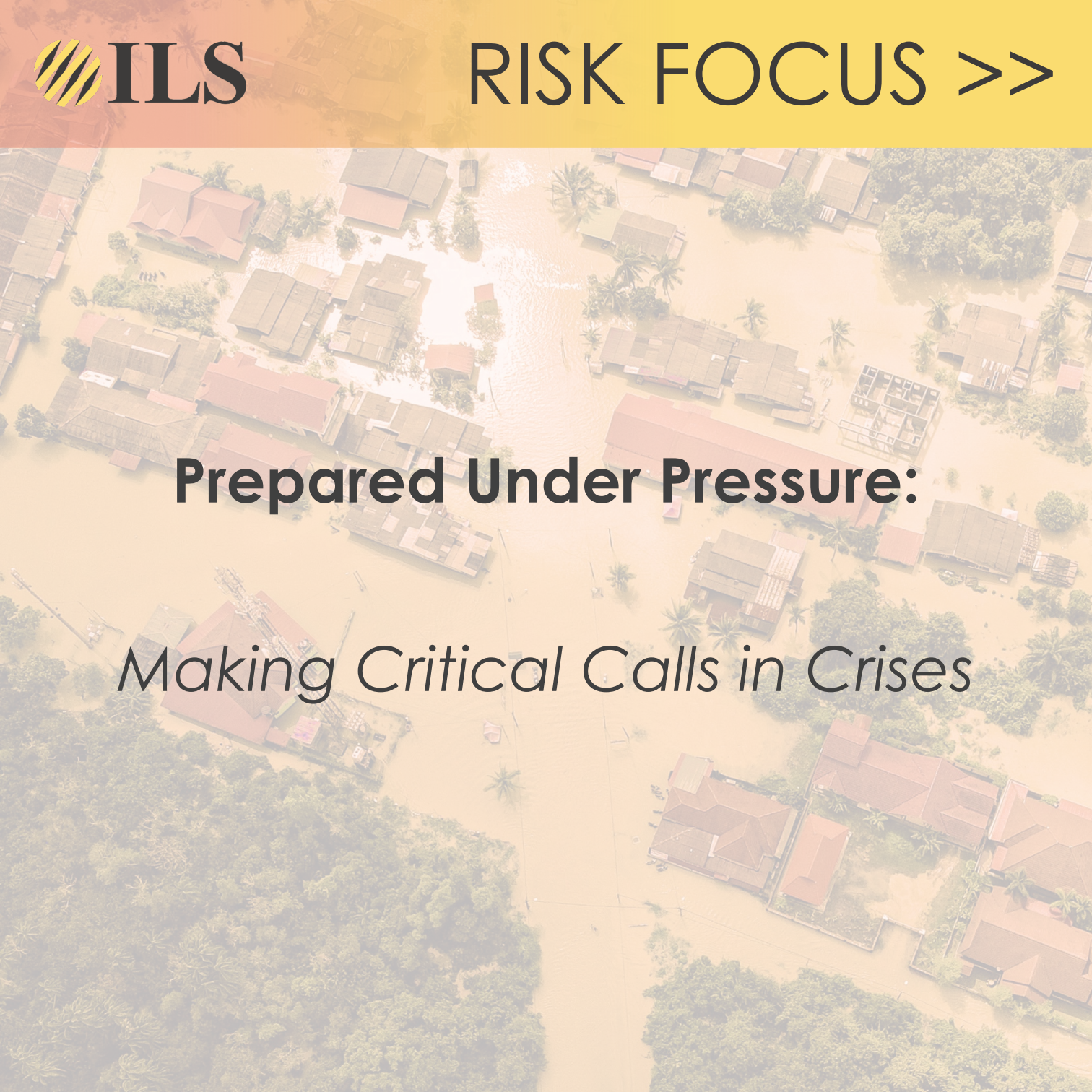




Prepared Under Pressure:

Making Critical Calls in Crises

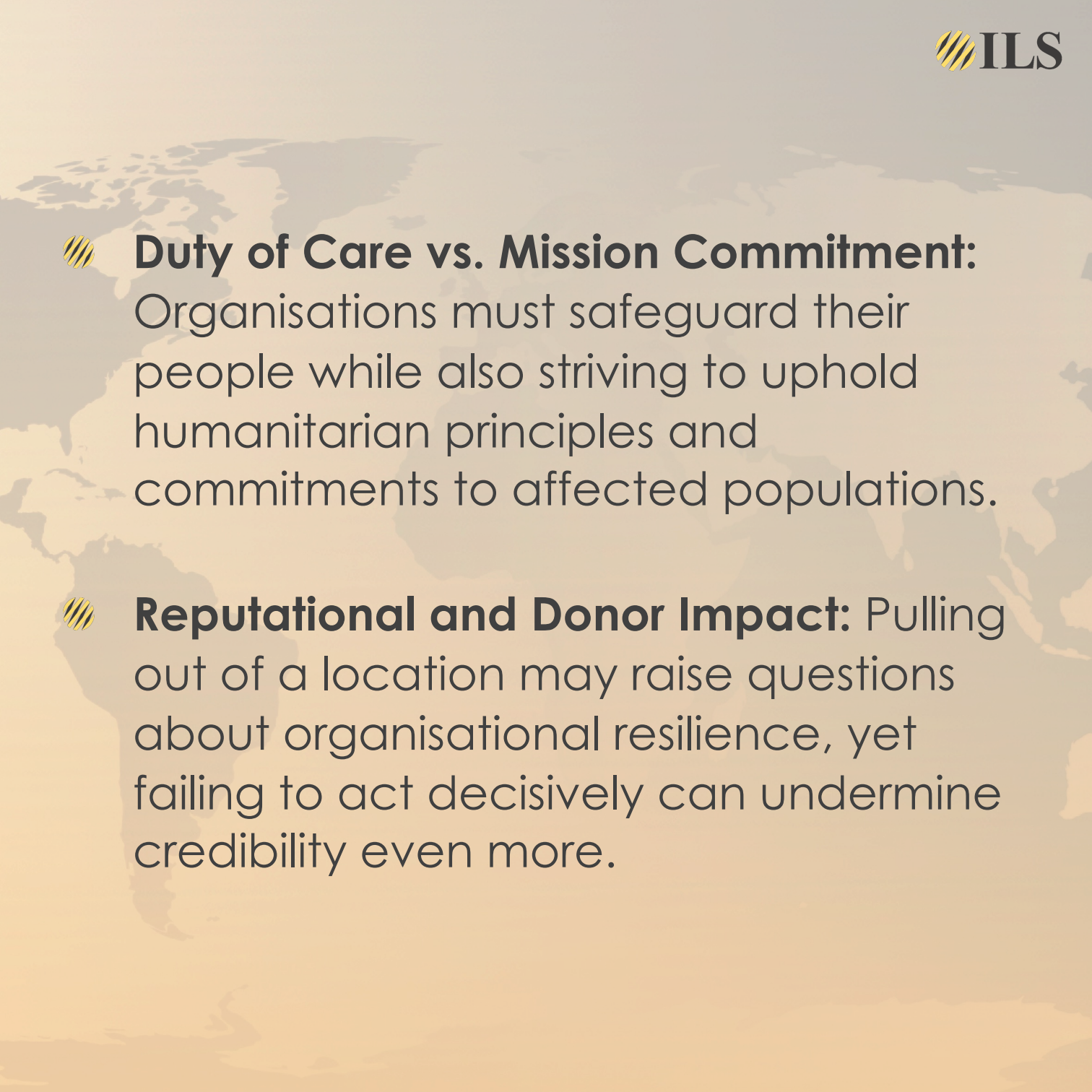
In the humanitarian, NGO, research, and media sectors, decisions around **hibernation, relocation, or evacuation (H.R.E.)** are among the most difficult we face. These measures are never taken lightly—they directly impact staff safety, program continuity, and the communities we serve.

When environments shift rapidly - whether due to conflict, political unrest, natural disasters, or sudden security incidents - leaders and security managers are forced to weigh risks against responsibilities.

The **stakes are high**: stay *too long*, and you expose teams to unacceptable danger; leave *too early*, and you risk abandoning critical operations or damaging community trust.

So, what makes these decisions so tough?

-  **Complex Risk Environment:** Crises are fluid. Situations can deteriorate or stabilise overnight. Acting prematurely may waste resources; acting too late can cost lives.
-  **Duty of Care vs. Mission Commitment:** Organisations must safeguard their people while also striving to uphold humanitarian principles and commitments to affected populations.

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- **Duty of Care vs. Mission Commitment:** Organisations must safeguard their people while also striving to uphold humanitarian principles and commitments to affected populations.
 - **Reputational and Donor Impact:** Pulling out of a location may raise questions about organisational resilience, yet failing to act decisively can undermine credibility even more.

To navigate these dilemmas effectively, organisations should take a structured approach to plan and prepare for **H.R.E.:**

-  **1. Risk Assessment:** Base decisions on objective, real-time security analysis - factoring in threats, vulnerabilities, and program criticality.
-  **2. Scenario Planning:** Develop clear triggers for hibernation, relocation, or evacuation, so decisions are proactive rather than reactive.

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- 3. Defining Risk Appetite:** Establish a clear risk appetite statement at the organisational level to guide consistency in decision-making and ensure alignment between leadership, staff, and mission objectives.
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- 4. Inclusive Decision-Making:** Engage leadership, security staff, program managers, and local colleagues - ensuring diverse perspectives shape the outcome.

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- **5. Clear Communication:** Ensure all staff and programme participants/community members understand the rationale, procedures, and next steps to minimise confusion and anxiety.
 - **6. Aftercare and Continuity:** Support evacuated and remaining staff with psychosocial resources, and plan for how programs can continue remotely or via local partners.

Ultimately, these decisions are about balancing humanity with pragmatism. They test our leadership, our preparedness, and our ability to adapt under pressure.

The strongest and most resilient organisations invest in preparedness and training, so when the time comes, the choices - though still painful - are informed, deliberate, and in the best interest of both staff and the communities they serve.

Because at the heart of it all, ***safeguarding people is what enables us to safeguard missions.***



At **ILS**, we support our clients by developing **comprehensive, tailored contingency plans and delivering preparedness training** that minimise the disruption caused by H.R.E. - ensuring staff safety while protecting program continuity.



What approaches or lessons have you found most effective when making these tough decisions?