

Integrating EPN and People In Aid:

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Introduction

This short paper answers questions for EPN participants and People In Aid members about the integration of EPN with People In Aid, for the best interests of the sector. The integration will provide, more effective and cost-efficient, services and networking opportunities for HR and management staff working in the humanitarian sector.

EPN has been a successful community-owned initiative and will retain that unique quality.

Summary

EPN and People In Aid are two initiatives which share the objective of improving HR and people management in the humanitarian sector. People In Aid is a membership organisation and a UK-registered non-profit, while EPN has no legal or other status. The integration costs nothing and will clear the sector of the confusion of two similar initiatives. The merger will increase benefits to individuals, organisations and the sector: all People In Aid activities and all past EPN activities (the conferences and EPN Online) will continue and be enhanced through closer integration.

What was EPN?

EPN used to be known as the Emergency Personnel Network. It brings together HR practitioners and line managers to network and discuss issues related to the recruitment, retention and development of staff involved in emergency situations. It is an informal network which relies on the funds and staff time offered by People In Aid and the organisations who have representatives on the steering groups. Since 1998 EPN has run 15 conferences in 4 continents and, since 2008, EPN Online. Output from all EPN conferences has been posted on www.epn.peopleinaid.org, along with a link to join into EPN Online.

What is People In Aid?

People In Aid has been a UK charity since 1999 and has a remit from its members to advocate, support, and recognise good practice in the management of people in the humanitarian and development sector worldwide. The People In Aid Code of Good Practice was developed to create and recognise a high standard for human resources in the sector.

EPN activities contribute to People In Aid's mission, but People In Aid is far broader. People In Aid works for development organisations as well as humanitarian, runs training and other events, offers conferences beside EPN ones, carries out research, responds to its members queries, networks people in fora beside EPN Online, produces benchmarking – and more. People In Aid has responded directly to needs coming from the EPN community.

As with EPN, People In Aid services are available to any individual or organisation engaged in emergency work. People In Aid member organisations receive discounts on events and exclusive access to certain information and output.

Who ran EPN and who runs People In Aid?

EPN has no staff and no legal status. Since 2004 People In Aid has had sole responsibility for EPN, which RedR founded and ran until that date. People In Aid raises and manages EPN funding, manages each of the conferences, set up and hosts the website, contributed to the setting up of EPN Online and now moderates this online network. There are steering groups for each conference and for EPN Online. These steering groups are made up of representatives of operational agencies and service providers – all with a specific interest in HR for emergencies. The steering groups have a moral responsibility for ensuring the services respond to participants' needs and aspirations, in the case of the conferences by deciding on the topics and the speakers, the agenda format, and also by facilitating some sessions.

People In Aid is a membership network of NGOs which has been a registered charity since 1999. People In Aid's Board of Trustees is elected by its members and most Trustees are from member NGOs. People In Aid has 7 UK-based staff and 4 regional representatives around the world who respond to members' needs for information, collaboration, resources, advocacy and recognition.

What will change as a result of the integration?

The name EPN will disappear: that is the only change which is at all substantial. People In Aid will continue to run the online network for the benefit of the participants. People In Aid will continue to run the conferences as it does today. The steering groups will remain in place. The current financial climate may have an influence on fundraising and conference attendance, while participant reactions may suggest changes to the events in the future. Conference costs would only increase as far as steering groups and market forces suggest.

Most EPN participants work for organisations which are members of People In Aid and thus already receive member benefits. EPN participants that do not work for People In Aid member organisations will not receive People In Aid member benefits, and People In Aid members will not receive special benefits related to EPN activities until, at the earliest, 2011. Finally, to date we have been cautious, for data reasons, about promoting People In Aid output to EPN participants: once integrated everyone will benefit from what we produce for the sector, and the forum will remain available for all relevant organisations to post information.

For the time being the email address for HHR online discussion forum will continue to be epn@dgroups.org

Why integrate?

There are three key reasons:

1. Consolidation. Similar activities are being offered to the same audience from the same office by two different 'brand' names. The confusion among donors and EPN participants, about EPN's status and People In Aid's role, will end.
2. Benefits for participants: we will be able to integrate the Online network with People In Aid's other online services (for reward specialists, health and safety experts etc) and add other features (eg blogs); EPN participants will be linked more closely to the far wider network and collection of materials available from People In Aid.
3. For People In Aid the management of our activities will be far easier. Fundraising will be clearer with just one brand, as will be the fiscal accountability we have to our members. We can save costs by integrating activities such as the hosting of the online networks.

What happens next?

Activities will continue as normal, but under different names:

- September 2009: EPN online has been evaluated for the impact it has had since inception and participants have said how much they value the network and identified improvements or changes that will help it grow.
- Later in 2009: EPN Online will change its name to 'People In Aid Humanitarian HR Online'. At the time the hosting arrangements change a new community guidelines document will be issued.
- EPN website: as of the end of October 2009, the materials from the EPN website (www.epn.peopleinaid.org) will be migrated to www.peopleinaid.org. These materials are primarily the reports from the EPN conferences.
- In May/June 2010 a European conference with the traditional format of EPN will take place.
- In March 2010 a Nairobi conference with the traditional format of EPN will take place under the name 'People In Aid/IAWG Conference' (the Inter-Agency Working Group has always been EPN's local partner).
- Funding is being sought for an Asia conference during 2010, most likely in Jakarta or Australia.

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