

**Report on**

# Concern Worldwide

**Systems and Practice Audit for Implementing  
The People In Aid Code of Good Practice**

**Richard Evans, *ethics etc...***

**15<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

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Kate Malone, March 2010

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## Objectives

- i. **to provide assurance to managers of Concern Worldwide** that the policies, strategies and systems it has in place for the management and support of personnel are consistent with the People In Aid Code Principles, understood throughout Concern Worldwide and implemented in practice. This process will assess the performance of Concern Worldwide against the PIA Code as well as providing assurance that reliable management and information systems are in place.
- ii. **to provide assurance to People In Aid that Concern Worldwide's** HR management systems and performance are consistent with the requirements for the award of PIA's Second Kite Mark;
- iii. **to facilitate continuous self-evaluation** against the People In Aid Code.

## Method

### The Systems and Practice Audit for Code Implementation

It was agreed with People In Aid and Concern that Concern Worldwide would be subject to an alternative method of accreditation that did not involve the production of a 'compliance report' by the organisation. The alternative method would use the same assurance criteria based on the principles set out in AccountAbility's AA1000AS Assurance Standard:

- **Completeness** – has the organisation provided sufficient evidence that it is implementing policies in each of the areas of HR management covered by the seven PIA Code Principles and that these are applied consistently to all personnel in all areas where the organisation operates?
- **Materiality** – has the organisation provided sufficient evidence that it understands stakeholders' concerns and interests and is providing relevant (material) information that will help them make informed judgments about the organisation's HR management performance?
- **Responsiveness** – has the organisation provided sufficient evidence that its HR policies and practice are responding to employees' concerns, their needs for information, and the specific commitments it has made to improve its performance?

In addition the assurance process will seek:

- to ascertain the extent to which adherence to the PIA Code Principles is **embedded** in operational and management practices throughout the organisation
- to ascertain the **quality and effectiveness of consultation and communication** of its policies and performance with stakeholders.

## **What we did**

We established Concern Worldwide's strategies, standards (policies and practice) and performance in relation to each of the seven Principles of the PIA Code through:

- an examination of policy and strategy documents, records of relevant consultations, training initiatives and correspondence (completion of Policy Matrix).
- face to face interviews, in Dublin, with managers in the Human Resource Management Group, with staff from selected departments to establish what policies and strategies relevant to the PIA Code are in place and the management systems established to ensure consistency of implementation;
- reviewing results and feedback from the November 2009 Staff Survey.
- investigating governance arrangements for human resource management and support and forming a view about the effectiveness of policy and strategy implementation and on-going development and consultation processes with staff including the Staff Consultative Committee.

## **Worldwide Staff Survey**

In November 2009 Concern carried out an e-based survey made available to all of its staff in all locations worldwide. The survey was carried out between 27<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and 30<sup>th</sup> October 2009. 684 individuals responded out of a total staff at the time of around 3,250. The results were analysed by Scancapture Ltd, Blackburn, Lancashire ( [www.scancapture.co.uk](http://www.scancapture.co.uk) )

## **Interviews list**

### **20-21 January 2010 DUBLIN**

**Anthony Brennan**, Director HR

**Will Devas**, Project Manager – Strategic Planning Process, Disaster Risk Reduction Advisor

**Alice Flaherty**, Internal Audit

**Kate Malone**, HR Manager,

**Honor Marr**, HR Projects Manager and HR Manager UK

**Barry Roche**, Amicus Staff Representative (Dublin HQ only), Network Infrastructure Manager, Corp Services Directorate.

### **3 March 2010, overseas based staff**

**Laura Commetta**, Humanitarian Protection Advisor, based in Geneva

**Nick Richards**, HR Manager, South Sudan

**Lucille Tapfumaneyi**, HR Manager, Zimbabwe

**Yapin Um**, General Systems Manager, Cambodia

**Aimee Uwanahoro**, HR Manager, Rwanda

## Conclusions regarding People In Aid accreditation

Based on the documentary evidence, staff survey feedback and interviews with staff in Dublin, Geneva and overseas, I believe there is good evidence to support the following conclusions.

1. The policies, strategies and systems Concern Worldwide has in place for the management and support of personnel are consistent with the People In Aid Code Principles.
2. The policies, strategies and systems are understood throughout Concern Worldwide and implemented in practice.
3. Adherence to the PIA Code Principles is embedded in operational and management practices throughout the organisation.
4. The quality and effectiveness of consultation and the communication of Concern Worldwide HR policies and performance with all staff is consistent and is managed systematically to a high standard through the HR Directorate and regional HR Managers, the Senior Management Team and the work of the Staff Forum.
5. Processes and systems are in place for continuous and effective self-evaluation against Irish Employment Law, HR best practice and the People In Aid Code.
- 6. Concern Worldwide's HR management systems and practices are consistent with the requirements for the award of PIA's Second Kite Mark.**

## **Other findings**

### **Internal Audit**

The current Internal Auditor has been in post about 18 months, but stated that Concern has 'always' maintained an internal audit function. Concern also employs a Risk Manager and both work within a HQ Finance Directorate of 15 staff.

An Audit Risks Committee meets every quarter and the Risk Manager has conducted a major review of the risk register and directors' responsibilities in 2009.

The Internal Auditor works with accounting managers in the department, regional and country accountants in all the country offices and country directors. She undertakes a planned cycle of country audits as well HQ audits, including, recently, fundraising and IT vulnerability testing. Country audits cover all financial processes and the following HR activities: payroll; recruitment and learning; interviewing; performance development reviews; contracts and partner relationships. The work of internal audit within Concern is a valuable support to the HR department and strengthens the implementation of both HAP and People In Aid Codes of Good Practice.

The Internal Auditor, who previously worked with PWC and a multinational company, believes Concern has excellent communications and an impressive level of professionalism.

### **The Staff Survey**

Given the large number and geographical spread of staff the response to the e-based survey in November 2009 of 21% of all employees with a proportionate spread across all regions and countries is acceptable. Comments were added by nearly a third of the respondents. In future surveys Concern should consider during the planning stage how it can increase this response rate. The processing and analysis of responses was carried out independently and professionally.

The HR Manager correctly states that: "The results are very similar across all regions and categories of employees with no unique significant issues coming out for any particular group of employees. This in itself is positive as it shows consistency in HR policy implementation and understanding across the organisation and equally any issues highlighted through the results are issues in all locations that we work in."

(Appendix 1: 'People In Aid audit – analysis and overview of results', Kate Malone, March 2010)

The results are being communicated to regional managers and relevant actions included in the Action Plan (Appendix 2)

## **Competency Framework & Personal Performance Development**

The development and roll out of the Competency Framework is a very positive initiative especially given the size and cultural diversity of Concern Worldwide's staff. It reinforces principles and expectations enshrined in the People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the management and support of people working in the organisation. In addition the Concern Competency Framework will allow employees to assess themselves and be assessed by their line manager against the specific competencies that they require to effectively carry out the duties assigned to them and to discuss this assessment with their line manager, through the Performance Development Review process.

## **Performance Development Reviews**

It is Concern policy that all staff have the opportunity of performance development reviews with their line manager. A considerable effort has gone into training managers and developing appropriate protocols and forms for carrying out and recording reviews. However, there was a lot of evidence that PDRs were not being carried out consistently and that systematic monitoring was absent. There is also anecdotal evidence and comments in the survey about inadequate management of underperformance. These issues are to be addressed in the Action Plan.

## **Consultation and Communication**

While the survey responses to questions about 'consultation' and 'communications' are fairly positive, and this is supported by anecdotal evidence, I have received comments from staff and noted in the comments added to survey responses that there are concerns about communications from the senior management team (SMT) and a lack of trust in their leadership skills. The HR Manager has commented: "Given the huge level of uncertainty and turmoil that our organisation has faced over the last 18 months, it is understandable that a number of staff feel that their voices are unheard. There is a commitment from Senior Management to improve and change the way they engage with and communicate with staff going forward and a number of initiatives from the Great Places To Work (GPtW) Working Group have been presented to Senior Management in HQ for consideration on how to improve communication, consultation and engagement with employees."

(Appendix 1: 'People In Aid audit – analysis and overview of results', Kate Malone, March 2010)

## **Career Development and Succession Planning**

There are a significant number of comments added to staff survey returns regarding the inequality of treatment and career development opportunities between 'international' and 'national' staff.

Across the organisation there is concern about the shortness of contracts and lack of career development opportunities. There does not appear to be any process for succession planning.

### **Training & Learning**

Training and learning has been well supported in the past but at the time of the audit was at a complete standstill due to budget constraints. I was unable to identify any coherent plan for the future although it was stated that training budgets would be reinstated.

A commitment from the HR Department to set up and pilot a formal coaching and mentoring scheme across the organisation is welcomed. While it is envisaged that this scheme will initially focus on management skills and expertise, Concern hopes that it can be expanded to include the technical expertise it wishes to develop and harness within the organisation.

### **HR Management**

There is ample evidence of very good work being done by the HR team and my perception is widely supported by the staff survey results. In my view their activity has developed the management and support of Concern's staff to a high level that is reflected in staff enthusiasm for the job and the organisation. However, there is a lack of both resources to complete projects in a timely way and coherence in leadership, both strategically and in relation to other priorities in the organisation.

Richard Evans  
Alnwick, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2010