

Onwards and Upwards

Mission East's People In Aid Audit

AUDITOR'S STATEMENT

To be included in Mission East's '*Review and Suggested Improvements to Mission East's HR Management Practice, December 2008 - January 2009, dated June 2009*'

I received the original Mission East report at the end of April 2009 and responded with my initial analysis on 2nd June. I met with Nicki Davies-Jones, Mission East's Human Resources Director on 9th June. A revised report was sent to me on 18th June.

Mission East has held the People In Aid Kitemark '*Verified Compliant with the People In Aid Code*' since mid 2005. Prior to completing this report, Mission East undertook three significant reviews: A policy compliance review; an organisational review commissioned by the board and carried out by a non-executive board member; and a survey of Mission East's field staff. The organisation is also, at the time of the audit, finalising a new three year strategic plan. The report is based on the findings of these reviews and up-to-date HR performance measures.

Mission East's Headquarters Office is in Copenhagen, the main operations and field-administration office is in Brussels and the HR Director is based in the UK. There are also field offices in Afghanistan, Armenia, Nepal and Tajikistan.

Whilst still operating from multiple HQ locations, the head offices are increasingly functioning as one unit through the use of IT and shared protocols.

AUDITOR'S REMIT, INDEPENDENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

I have been appointed by People In Aid to carry out audits of the reports submitted by member agencies on their performance against the People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel. The auditor is otherwise independent of both People In Aid and the member agencies and their stakeholders.

Richard Evans, the auditor, the Director of ethics etc.... is a Certified Member of the Institute of Social and Ethical AccountAbility. He has extensive experience of development (Intermediate Technology Development Group, Traidcraft, Christian Aid, Irish Agency for Personal Service Overseas) and has been involved in developing the AccountAbility AA1000 standards and the GRI Sustainability Reporting Guidelines.

PURPOSE OF THE AUDIT

The main purpose of my audit is to form an opinion as to whether Mission East's *Review and Suggested Improvements to Mission East's HR Management Practice, December 2008 - January 2009, dated June 2009* gives an accurate and balanced view of the organisation's performance against the People In Aid Code of Good Practice, and whether there is adequate evidence to support the claims made.

In evaluating the content of the report I am seeking to apply the three principle tests set out in AccountAbility's AA1000AS Assurance Standard. As they relate to the People In Aid Code, these are:

- **Materiality** – Is the information relevant to staff's concerns and interests and will it help them make informed judgments about Mission East's performance in relation to managing and supporting their work?
- **Completeness** – Does the report provide sufficient evidence that Mission East has understood and reported on all its significant social and economic impacts in relation to the seven People In Aid Code Principles?
- **Responsiveness** – Does the report demonstrate Mission East's responses and commitment to improving its performance?

As well as examining and testing the claims made in the report I also evaluate the scope of the people management policies in place and the systems for implementing these policies.

The aim of the audit process is to help managers reflect on their people management and support systems, to give them an external opinion as to whether they are in compliance with the People In Aid Code Principles and to provide an independent report to People In Aid, on the basis of which it decides whether to award the organization the Kite Mark verifying compliance with the People In Aid Code.

AUDIT METHOD

The audit of the report was limited to examining the report, reviewing supporting documentation and interviewing the HR Director regarding the claims made and the management systems that support staff in HQ and in field operations. I have not interviewed other staff and have not visited any field operations or offices in Brussels or Copenhagen.

FINDINGS

People management policies

I have verified the following claims in the report:

Mission East's HR policy is drafted and regularly updated in line with good practice, legal requirements and with reference to People In Aid indicators. An outline explaining this is included as an introduction to the policy section of Mission East's Handbook.

Over the past 3 years, Mission East has worked hard to ensure that policy is developed and introduced throughout the organisation. However, as yet there has been only sporadic monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness.

As a means of ensuring that policy is properly and effectively implemented, a full policy compliance review was undertaken earlier this year. It is the intention that this review will become an ongoing formal means of ensuring both policy compliance and good practice HR management.

Appendix 5 of the report details the current status of all Mission East's HR policies detailing compliance measures and reporting methods. The appendix also includes a detailed analysis of how compliance is being implemented in each country and a set of recommendations for further action.

I can confirm that policies are consistent with the People In Aid Code Principles and that a rigorous and detailed process for monitoring performance is in place.

Employee engagement survey

A critical part of the People In Aid social audit process, or any social audit process, is to find out what employees think about the HR policies and the performance of the organisation. Since Mission East had already involved HQ and international field staff in the Board's *Organisational Review*, the content of which substantially overlapped with the People In Aid Code Principles, it decided to conduct a separate staff survey with national field staff. The method adopted was to use structured focus group discussions. This departure from the usual People In Aid Staff Survey was cleared with People In Aid, and I am satisfied that, when taken together with the results of the *Organisational Review* and the *Policy Compliance Review*, staff across the organisation have been able to express their opinions freely and that their views have been adequately reported.

The analysis of the results of the survey was carried out by the HR Director. I am satisfied that the survey was carried out and analysed properly. The report contains an analysis of survey responses set out under the People In Aid Code Principles. The analysis is detailed and honest, particularly where staff was critical of the organisation's performance and HR management practices. The analysis is followed by management commentary on the principal issues arising from the survey and a list of action points.

Actions already taken or necessary have been set out in detail in Appendix 1 and I have reviewed the HR strategic action plan and budgets. I am satisfied that Mission East has demonstrated its commitment to the People In Aid Code and to implementing improvements in its policies and practices.

MY OPINION

On the basis of the report, the documents I examined and my interview with the HR Director, I believe the report presents a *complete* and honest view of Mission East's implementation of the People In Aid Code of Good Practice.

Further, I believe it has heard through the staff consultations, identified through the Board and Policy reviews and addressed the issues which are of concern (*material*) to employees and has clearly set out how it will *respond* to any shortcomings in its practice and to their needs.

In my opinion, Mission East complies with the requirements for the award of the Kitemark for compliance with the People In Aid Code of Good Practice.

This is a well produced report containing a comprehensive and thorough analysis of Mission East's policies and performance in managing and supporting the people who work in the organisation. I am grateful to Nicki Davies-Jones for her work in preparing the report and supporting documentation and in responding to requests for further information during the course of the audit.

Richard Evans

ethics etc...

Alnwick, 30th June 2009