

**Report on
Save the Children UK's Accreditation Process for
The People In Aid Code of Good Practice
by
Richard Evans, *ethics etc...***

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Objective

- i. **to provide assurance to managers of SC UK** 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 SC UK and implemented in practice. This process will assess the performance of SC UK against the People In Aid Code as well as providing assurance that reliable management and information systems are in place.
- ii. **to provide assurance to People In Aid that SC UK's** HR management systems and performance are consistent with the requirements for the award of People In Aid's Second Kite Mark;
- iii. **to facilitate continuous self-evaluation** against the People In Aid Code.

Method

‘Normal’ People In Aid Process for awarding the second Kitemark for “compliance with the PIA Code”.

The ‘normal’ process is described in the People In Aid Code *Implementation Manual*. Up to this point in time, all member agencies seeking accreditation for the second People In Aid Kitemark have submitted a report, the purpose of which is:

to inform people, who are interested in, employed by or otherwise involved in, or affected by your organisation, about how you manage your staff and the extent to which the organisation complies with the principles of the People In Aid Code of Good Practice.

(People In Aid Implementation Manual)

The report will include:

- a profile of the organisation, its activities and its current situation;
- a description of how it is governed and managed;
- a statement of the board’s vision for HR management;
- an outline of how the information in the report has been sourced and put together;
- a complete account of relevant performance data, including the results of staff opinion surveys, organised to provide evidence that the organisation complies with each of the People In Aid Code Principles;
- the organisation’s HR department’s assessment of its activity in relation to the People In Aid Code of Good Practice;
- an action plan to address any weaknesses and to provide for continuous improvement;
- a statement by an independent verifier (or auditor)

On the basis of this report and the auditor’s statement that there is sufficient evidence to support the claims made, People In Aid consider awarding the second Kitemark.

The accreditation process for SC UK

SC UK is a very large international organisation (more than 4,000 staff in 40 plus countries). This makes the 'normal' People In Aid compliance reporting abnormally onerous and *ethics etc...* worked with People In Aid in 2007 to develop an alternative method acceptable to People In Aid that did not involve the production of a 'compliance report' by the organisation. The alternative method would use criteria based on the assurance 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 People In Aid 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 People In Aid 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.

The framework of this alternative accreditation process was considered appropriate by SC UK for the following reasons.

1. SC UK has a highly devolved management structure.

Local: The key focus of human resource development, policy and practice is at a local level, reflecting local law, practices and culture within clear global frameworks and standards. This approach applies across all areas i.e. HO departments, regional teams and countries.

Regional: The regional resource, including the Regional Human Resource Manager, is focusing on capacity building at country level and contributing to wider regional and global objectives.

Global: The human resources function at the global level focuses on the strategy (e.g. what we work on, how and where); setting core frameworks and monitoring progress and standards against them and providing special global expertise, for example resourcing, global talent development and succession; global good practice HR, measurement & benchmarking etc.

HR data is collated and managed at local level. It is audited at local and regional level. Duplicating this auditing process with an independent People In Aid Code compliance audit would be costly and time consuming. The alternative method would focus on SC UK

systems for communicating policies, managing performance, auditing outcomes and supporting improvements.

2. SC UK has a developed set of 'People Management Good Practice Standards'

In the process of devolving management responsibility increasingly to local, country and regional levels SC UK has developed its own 'People Management Good Practice Standards'.

SC UK specifically requested that its HR performance be judged against its own 'People Management Good Practice Standards' and that the auditor provide **assurance to managers of SC UK**, and to People In Aid, 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.

What we did

Established SC UK's strategies, standards (policies and practice) and performance in relation to each of the seven Principles of the People In Aid Code at a Global and Local level, through:

- an examination of policy and strategy documents, records of relevant consultations, training initiatives and correspondence (completion of Policy Matrix).
- interviews, face to face at HO and by telephone, with selected country programme managers to establish what policies and strategies relevant to the People In Aid Code are in place and the management systems established to ensure their implementation and the consistency of implementation;
- reviewing results and feedback from the 2006 and 2007 employee surveys and preliminary results from the 2008 Employee Engagement Survey.
- telephone interviews, with managers, Human Resources Managers and employees to ascertain whether the policies are implemented effectively at an operational level in: recruitment and selection; induction; security; health and safety; remuneration; retention; performance appraisal; safeguarding and communication.

Investigated governance arrangements for human resource management and support and formed a view about the effectiveness of policy and strategy implementation and on-going development at local and regional level, through:

- interviews with key managers at a global, regional and local level
- consideration of documentary evidence

Interviews list

London Head Office

Leonie Lonton - Global Good Practice, Development & Performance
Jaishree Mistry - Global Compensation and Benefits
Anna Acland - Global Resourcing, International Recruitment & Staff Welfare
Anne Kristine Asbon - Global Core Learning Manager
Richard Powel - Child Safeguarding
Greg Ramm - Deputy Director International Operations
Helen Minikin - Global HR Manager
Derek Manuel - Global HR Director (briefly)

Islamabad Office

Mandy Wright	Country Director
Sarah Shaukat	HR
Anil Faisal	Support Services
Hassan Saadi	Programmes

Harare Office

Sipiwe Mhlanga	HR Manager
Rachel Pounds	Country Director
Jenifer Tavengerwei	Programme manager for Child Protection

Addis Ababa Office

Mesfin Tadesse	HR/Administration Director
Getu Woyesa	Deputy Operations Manager
David Throp	Country Director

East + Southern Africa Regional Office, Addis Ababa

Lucy Mutthee	Regional HR Manager E+SA
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Colombo Office

Judy Lister	Interim Country Director
Branko Golubovic	Acting Programme Operations Director
Julian Chellapah	District Manager, Batticaloa Office
Dillon Gomez	HR Manager

Note on the 2008 Employee Engagement Survey

Detailed results and analysis of the 2008 full survey of all staff were not available at the time this report was written. However, the headline results were made available to the auditor on a confidential basis (pending full analysis and communication to staff). 75 % of staff had responded to the survey – which is an excellent result. The headlines demonstrate significant improvements in all areas covered by the survey compared to the previous full survey in 2006. Furthermore, they indicate a high level of engagement with the organisation and its values and very satisfactory levels of confidence in its leadership, management and strategic direction.

Conclusions regarding People In Aid Accreditation

Based on the documentary evidence, staff survey feedback, interviews with London HO managers and interviews with operational regional and country staff in Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Sri Lanka, I believe there is good evidence to support the following conclusions.

1. The policies, strategies and systems SC UK has in place for the management and support of personnel in its People Management Good Practice Standards are consistent with the People In Aid Code Principles.
Evidence: Appendix 1 Matrix of People In Aid Code Principles SC HR Policies
2. The policies, strategies and systems are understood throughout SC UK and implemented in practice.
Evidence: Interviews + Appendix 2: People Management Standards 2008 Summary
3. Adherence to the People In Aid Code Principles is embedded in operational and management practices throughout the organisation.
Evidence: Key Global PEOPLE Performance Indicators (Directors Business Meeting 22.02.2008) + Global HR Gateway
4. The quality and effectiveness of consultation and the communication of SC UK HR policies and performance with all staff is consistent across all countries and operations, and is managed systematically to a high standard through Global HR and the Regional HR managers.
Evidence: Based on interviews with HO managers and employees in four countries.
5. Processes and systems are in place and effective for continuous self-evaluation against SC UK's People Management Good Practice Standards and the People In Aid Code.
Evidence: Appendix 2: People Management Standards 2008 Summary + interviews with Country Directors, Country HR Managers and one Regional HR Manager.
6. **SC UK's HR management systems and performance are consistent with the requirements for the award of People In Aid's Second Quality Mark.**

Other findings

During the interviews with field staff a number of issues were raised which do not materially affect the assessment of SC UK's HR policies and their implementation in relation to compliance with the People In Aid Code of Good Practice. However, they are relevant to the retention and development of people in the organisation and may be of interest to Global HR and senior HO management.

The interviews were conversational rather than restricted to a pre-determined set of questions. Interviewees were encouraged to raise issues they considered relevant.

The main issues my questions raised were:

- familiarity with the SC UK Good Practice Standards and their country's performance and progress in recent audits
- areas of weakness or difficulty in implementing HR policies
- action plans
- is the practice of auditing and monitoring performance (check-lists and traffic lights) helpful in delivering operational effectiveness or a distraction from the real job?
- are there sufficient resources (qualified staff and money) to deliver the standard of people management and support?
- do the standards cover the issues relevant to your situation/context?
- the quality of relationships with London HO and Global HR – communications and responsiveness
- relationships with other SC organisations in country ref HR issues
- relationships with other NGO's in country ref HR issues
- value of Regional HR Manager office and activities
- their personal experience of working with SC UK – and compared to other NGO employers where relevant
- I also encouraged interviewees to talk about SC UK's support for their personal skills and experience development and careers.

The following paragraphs summarise and aggregate comments from interviewees on the issues I raised and that interviewees raised themselves. SCF have responded to these findings and its responses have been included at the end of each section (in italics).

Global HR and Regional HR Managers

Without exception, interviewees were very positive about the support they get from Global HR and from their Regional Office. There were very positive assessments of the work that has been done to professionalize HR management throughout the organisation during the past two years or so. Although the systems introduced involved more work at country level, interviewees said this improved operational productivity and effectiveness.

SC UK Response: It is only through the successful collaboration and mutual support at Global/Regional/local levels that we can achieve the improvement in people good practice standards we strive for to create the kind of people environment that our people need to give of their best.

Regional HR Meetings and Staff Secondments

Regional meetings were seen as a valuable support providing specific training opportunities as well as opportunities to learn from other countries where the context and culture may differ.

Global meetings of RHMs were also seen as very valuable and the participation of the Directors' group was especially appreciated and valued.

Interviewees who had been seconded to other country offices placed a great deal of value on the experience from a personal career development perspective and in relation to their home based responsibilities. They would like to see more people involved in secondments and more opportunities created for using relevant expertise and experience in this type of short term assignment. More than one interviewee commented on financial restraints reducing the scope for cross-country programming and staffing.

SC UK Response: The value of secondments as a way of retaining and developing our talented staff is well recognised, but still currently under utilised. 'People' has been identified as a cross cutting theme in our annual priorities for 2009 – and within this we have made a commitment to focus on learning and development activities which will enhance the development of our nationally appointed staff globally.

Remuneration & terms and conditions for local staff

Some interviewees reported difficulty in recruiting and retaining quality local staff (esp. Ethiopia). While recognising that SC cannot compete with multilaterals like the UN organisations, they felt their salary scales were out of step with other comparable international NGOs operating in the country. Particular problems arose where inflation was high and the interval between salary reviews and benchmarking was too long.

One national staff interviewee commented positively on the ways in which international and national staff were treated equally in terms of their assignments, responsibilities and team working but negatively on the big differences in salaries and benefits. Another suggested that greater transparency and more explanation and communication around the nature and reasons for differences might diffuse the sense of in-equality.

SC UK Response: Global Compensation and Benefits Manager is working with International Operations and specific country programmes to provide technical advice

and good practice guidance as needed. We will look at the communications point as raised above.

‘Auditing’ Good Practice Standards reporting

While country checklists reporting on the minimum standards are reviewed by the Regional Offices it is not clear whether any audit of documentary records takes place. Interviewees did not give the impression that this was a problem or that the current system was seen as unreliable. However, SC might consider extending the remit of country office financial audits, undertaken or commissioned by HO Internal Audit, to include strategically important aspects of HR performance. Cyclical random sampling would satisfy any requirement for verification of self-certified reporting.

SC UK Response: Global HR Good Practice Manager to consider with Deputy Director of International Operations in 2009 possible ways of strengthening the verification of self-certified reporting (including the appropriateness of cyclical random sampling).

Alignment of HR Practice and corporate operational strategy

Another issue that related to overall management of the Good Practice Standards is the alignment of HR practice and priorities with corporate operational strategy. One manager affirmed the importance of current strategic operational needs influencing Global HR’s priorities in planning training and policy reviews. They suggested there was scope for greater engagement between International Operations, Global HR and the Regional HR teams in reviewing performance and development of HR policy and practice.

SC UK Response: We are constantly striving to improve the alignment between our organisational and people related strategies.

Health Advice/ Counselling

Several of the international staff commented on the change from SC having an in-house doctor/ health adviser to contracting InterHealth to provide advice. Those who commented felt that the less personal nature of the current arrangement i.e. not knowing the counsellor/ health adviser and not being able to contact the same person every time reduced their confidence in and use of the service, not only for personal issues but also for issues with staff they manage. This has a bearing not only on day to day management and issues around critical or chronic illness but particularly affects people coming back from ‘traumatic postings’ who need time and continuity of advice/ counselling to come down to normality.

SC UK Response. Global HR to review current staff health arrangements (within the scope of an annual review and possible re-tender of services). This to be discussed with the Deputy Director of International Operations.

Performance appraisals

Twice yearly performance appraisals for all staff were seen as a demanding target. Some were struggling to complete annual appraisals. However, all saw great value in the discipline and real benefits for the manager and the managed. Training had been very important especially in cultures where face to face critical appraisal is not normally accepted or practiced. Few people raised the issue of performance related pay.

SC UK Response.: Annual performance management reviews are mandatory within Save the Children – and 6 monthly review is considered good practice and therefore encouraged. New (18 mth) position of Global Performance Management Adviser recently recruited to within GHR will provide additional support for a further push on improving performance management and accountability within the organisation.

Individual learning and development plans

All agreed that appraisal was valued where it identified learning and development needs AND implied that individual learning and development plans would be agreed and implemented. Most interviewees reported that unrestricted funds were very short and few donors included funding for staff development.

Is there scope for Global HR to develop a separate funding line dedicated to staff training and capacity development below senior management level? Have major donors been approached and informed about SC UK's long term capacity development strategy?

SC UK Response: 'People' has been identified as a cross cutting theme in our annual priorities for 2009 – and within this we have made a commitment to focus on learning and development activities which will enhance the development of our nationally appointed staff globally. In addition to our successful Leadership and Senior Management Development Programmes, we have also developed a modular Management Development Programme which we are running at country level across all regions.

Leadership development, SMDP and MDP

Interviewees who had participated were very enthusiastic and recognised the “huge effort” made by SC UK over the last three to four years to improve management development.

One participant in SMD Leadership Behaviour training said, “It not only helped me to manage more effectively – I could see the change in my life!” The same participant expressed an ambition to become a trainer because of the difference it could make to people.

ICT – International Core Team

While the longer term strategic vision behind ICT was welcomed and participation valued, several interviewees expressed the view that the programme was stalling in terms of strategic development generally and in providing clear direction for their involvement. Some expressed the view that the proposition was not very attractive and was not being 'sold' effectively to staff.

SC UK Response: Currently considering recommendations made by external consultancy re: our internationally mobile workforce – including future proposals re ICT. Reviewing this will be the responsibility of the Head of International Talent

Career breaks and ICT

One very experienced manager, who was enthusiastic about management training, said that the lack of continuity between contracts for people in the ICT who took or wanted to take career breaks, was a weakness and undermined the potential of the programme. As well as career breaks for family reasons, managers should be encouraged to take time out to do relevant academic studies and research or to extend their experience in other fields.

SC UK Response: Currently considering recommendations made by external consultancy re: our internationally mobile workforce – including future proposals re ICT

Key role back-up

A senior manager suggested Country Directors should routinely identify the critical roles where the risk of their being vacated suddenly would damage operational effectiveness and make sure someone is in post and in training as back-up. Some functions in a country team are so critical that provision should be made for back-up if the person filling that role leaves at short notice.

SC UK Response: Re-Engage (to be launched in March 2009) has been developed to fulfil this requirement.

Specialist advisers

A number of interviewees said SC UK was not good at recruiting and retaining highly qualified sectoral specialists in the field and in London. This, they felt had an impact on SC UK effectiveness operationally and was a constraint when considering involvement in strategically important operations and in developing integrated responses.

SC UK response. First go at skills mapping for senior staff internationally and in the UK currently being conducted. Strategies for attracting and retaining senior technical staff – prioritising those needed for our Newborn and Child Survival Campaign (including Health) being developed and will be taken forward in 2009.

As well as the recruitment activity we are also focusing on development of technical experts within programme. We have launched our Logistics Skills Development Programme and already have a well established Child Protection Trainee Scheme and Emergencies Foundation Course.

Re-Engage will support both these activities in providing us a way of maintaining contact with our technical experts.

Working in partnership

Several interviewees talked about the importance of developing partnerships at an operational level. Some spoke about issues that arose when SC has a Unified Presence in a country, others about working with other organisations. It was suggested that Global HR should develop new training initiatives to develop greater openness to partnerships and to promote their effective implementation.

SC UK response: Global Learning and Development are currently reviewing the agenda for 2010 and beyond and will add this to the list for consideration.

Child safeguarding

I interviewed the Head of Child Protection. As he said “This is business critical – we should be doing what it says on the tin!” I was assured that strategic development, SC UK global leadership initiatives, staff training and monitoring performance had developed in importance and penetration throughout the organisation. There is work to be done in developing country champions, peer support and a stricter auditing regime for all activities relating to child protection, though there does not appear to be any evidence of significant breaches.

Very few of the other interviewees discussed issues relating to child protection. While I considered it safe to assume that they all considered the issue fundamental to what they are doing, it would, in my view, be a positive indicator of its importance to the organisation if there was more open, up-front discussion of initiatives in this area relevant to the different country situations and the programmes and partner organisations SC UK is working with, such as ‘protection through participation and empowerment’.

The first sentence in SC UK’s statement of values is:

“We’re outraged by child exploitation, neglect and suffering. We demand justice for the world’s poorest and most vulnerable children. I find that – and the use of the word “outraged” inspiring.

Whatever it takes, I think it would be good if the ‘outrage’ was more evident. While my interviews were focussed on HR management systems and issues I had expected to hear more undercurrents of ‘outrage’ and perhaps a few stories of how training and effective HR management systems were saving children.

This is not intended as a criticism. It is an observation. It is clear that the organisation and the people within it are deeply committed to protecting and saving children from exploitation, abuse and poverty. The observation may simply say something about raising the level of dialogue and making room for language that embraces passion as well as professionalism.

SC UK response: Global Child Safeguarding Director and Deputy Director of International Operations to consider this observation.

Richard Evans

ethics etc...

26 January 2009