

Information Note



Basic Training for NGO workers

Contributor:
Barney Mayhew –
Independent consultant

Organisations have a responsibility and legal liability to ensure their staff are adequately prepared and equipped for their work, and this particularly relates to the area of induction, briefing and training prior to deployment. Ignoring or neglecting these areas will certainly have a detrimental impact on programmes, but agencies should also be aware that they risk damaging litigation should negligence on their part be alleged and proven.

The People In Aid Code states that adequate induction, and briefing specific to each role, together with any relevant training, should be given to all staff (Principle 6 indicators 1 and 3).

There are a number of key areas that every NGO worker should be familiar with, and we have termed these 'humanitarian essentials'. A basic underpinning level of knowledge and training is a pre-requisite for staff to be able to discharge their responsibilities effectively, and the example of several agencies suggests that 5 days is an appropriate amount of time in which these humanitarian essentials can be conveyed. A top-up course of 1 to 2 days may be appropriate at intervals thereafter.

Humanitarian Essentials

- **Humanitarian principles**
 - ◆ Introduction to humanitarian principles
 - ◆ Introduction to relevant law (International Humanitarian Law, Refugee Law and Human Rights Law)
 - ◆ Local participation in programme design
- **Basic outline of the humanitarian system**
 - ◆ Introduction to UN agencies and ICRC / Red Cross
 - ◆ Introduction to NGOs
 - ◆ Introduction to major donors
 - ◆ Explanation of humanitarian jargon
- **Standards, manuals and guidelines**
 - ◆ Red Cross / NGO Code of Conduct
 - ◆ SPHERE standards
 - ◆ People In Aid Code
 - ◆ Other manuals, handbooks, guidelines
- **Cultural awareness**
 - ◆ Cross cultural working
 - ◆ Inter-personal skills (listening, team work, conflict handling)

- ◆ Dealing with local authorities
- ◆ Practical tips for deployment (dress/possessions/social etiquette)
- ◆ Common ethical dilemmas
- **Personal equipment**
 - ◆ Essential personal equipment for relief workers
- **Security**
 - ◆ Assessing the risks
 - ◆ Precautions at home and at the office
 - ◆ Precautions when driving
 - ◆ Armed checkpoints
 - ◆ Reacting to security incidents
 - ◆ Evacuation
 - ◆ Dealing / working with the military
 - ◆ Dealing with rebel/irregular troops
- **Communications**
 - ◆ Radio handling
 - ◆ Handling satellite phone, fax, email
- **Media**
 - ◆ Basic tips on dealing with the media
- **Vehicles**
 - ◆ Safe driving / basic vehicle handling (inc 4 wheel drives)
 - ◆ Essential vehicle equipment
 - ◆ Basic vehicle checks
 - ◆ Changing a wheel
- **Medical**
 - ◆ Health and hygiene in the field
 - ◆ Handling stress / team living and working
 - ◆ Medical evacuation

Induction

Clearly experienced staff would not need such a comprehensive induction or training prior to commencing employment, but every incoming post holder can benefit from a specific induction covering the basic areas of:

- Organisational Code of Conduct and disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Terms & conditions relating to the period of employment, including specific benefits
- Medical arrangements
- Accommodation / living arrangements
- Security policy and guidelines
- Insurance cover and mutual liabilities
- Organisational view on participation in sector-wide initiatives such as People In Aid.
- Specific management structure and composition of the team, including reporting lines and accountabilities
- Handover notes from (or meeting with) outgoing / previous post-holder

Useful references

www.redr.org

RedR Essentials of humanitarian practice (5 days)

www.msf.org

MSF H Preparation Primary Departure (2 weeks)

www.icrc.org

BRCS Basic Training Course (8 days)

www.medair.org

Relief and Rehabilitation Orientation Course