

Managing retention and the People In Aid Code of Good Practice



HIJRA is a national NGO in Somalia and a partner of an ECB member. The growth of its operations has in recent years increased its need to retain its skilled members of staff. At the same time its competitors for talent include large INGOs and the UN agencies.

Introduction to the organisation

Humanitarian Initiative Just Relief Aid (HIJRA) is a Non-Governmental Organization founded in 1992 as a collective response to the humanitarian crisis that erupted in Somalia following the fall of the Siad Barre government in 1991. Since its inception, HIJRA Somalia has implemented a range of programmes from humanitarian relief and recovery to development programmes mainly in South Central Somalia.

With the outbreak of the civil war in 1991, most of the qualified and experienced people left Somalia to neighbouring countries. Others sought refuge in Europe, Asia and America. This meant that the recruitment of staff with relevant skills in Somalia remained a major challenge. Staff started acquiring skills in different aspects of project implementation and some were fortunate enough to receive capacity building from the agencies. Over time these skilled people understood their skills were in high demand and they were marketable. They began to seek better paying jobs within non-governmental and governmental organizations. Agencies with limited funding like HIJRA found it difficult to retain experienced and qualified staff.

Since 2000 HIJRA has expanded its programmes tremendously. It is now able to generate internal resources to fund some of its activities ensuring HIJRA can offer stable employment for some positions. However many positions are still funded by short term project funding. Staffs still leave the organization after a short period. To effectively manage its human resources, HIJRA established HR Department in April 1st, 2009.

Background to implementing the People In Aid Code of Good Practice

With the HR department in place HIJRA was able to analyse its retention situation. HIJRA concluded that retention was caused by:

- Poor remuneration due to unstable funding from the donor community:
- 90% of all HIJRA recruitment is due to project implementation. This means without continuing programmes HIJRA cannot hire many staff for long. Consequently at the end of a specific program staff contracts would also come to an end
- Lack of learning, training and staff development: With such a working environment based on projects, proper training and long term staff training and development is lacking because HIJRA could not guarantee the costs for staff training and development due to lack of funding
- Weak HR systems- poor recruitment procedures, staff orientation and job placement: Though HR systems were operational they remained weak since staff supervision was the preserve of programme officers in various sectors. This reduced

the role of HR to that of an observer waiting for the contracts to end before recruitment began again.

- Lack of staff recognition- lack of staff grading based on qualification: The absence of salary scales and non adherence to qualifications and experience impacted negatively on staff wanting to remain in HIJRA for longer duration. Therefore they looked to other organisations for career progression.
- Lack of staff policies and practices: All staff policies and practices were not in place and this meant staff were not well informed and created poor communication and within the organization

Addressing retention through the People In Aid Code of Good Practice.

To address these staff retention problems, it was critical that HIJRA'S new HR department had the full support of the senior management. Their support led to the inclusion of the department's new HR strategy being included as integral part of HIJRA's overall strategic plan. A primary objective of the HR strategy was to obtain internationally recognized human resource accreditation. HIJRA began to implementation of the People In Aid Code of good practice.

This improved their current HR systems and tremendously increased staff confidence in the organization. Paving the way for hard work and open communication within the organization .

HIJRA Somalia Mohammed Ibrahim Nur, HIJRA Human Resource Manager

Guided by the Code of Good Practice HIJRA undertook the following initiatives:

Employee Survey

HIJRA conducted staff survey with the help of the People In Aid to find out the employees perspective on issues such as organizational culture, roles, leadership and management, pressure, engagement and the People In Aid Code of Good Practice.

- Developed staff policies and practices: The introduction of staff health, safety and security manual assured the employees how much HIJRA is committed to the safety, health and security of its most valued asset, its employee
- Improved compensation packages: HIJRA put in place compensation package based on formal organizational grading and salary scales and improved the employee's remuneration package by rewarding competitively and introducing new rewarding approaches based on performance.

Employee Recognition Initiatives:

To recognize the staff contributions and to demonstrate that our people are central to achievement of our vision, mission and goals, the HR department organized the first HR Award ceremony where HIJRA appreciated and valued the commitment and dedication of its staff. Certificates were distributed at the event which came after the completion of HIJRA's strategic review meeting for 2010-2012

- Encouraged growth: HIJRA promoted personal growth and professional training and development programs throughout the organization. The organization sponsored a

number of professional courses to help the staff improve their knowledge and skills. Internal staff training and development programs were also conducted

Evaluation of success

After the start of the People In Aid Code implementation, HIJRA has seen a number of significant changes:

- Improved staff relations is the key to improved retention.
- Implementation of People In Aid Code and Human Resource policies has improved both staff morale and donor confidence and support to the organization. They have significantly raised motivation and engagement levels among all employees.
- The importance of staff communication
- The creation of a HR manual and its subsequent implementation has resulted in better understanding of staff job obligations and enhanced teamwork. When HR systems are in place and functional, potential qualified employees are attracted to the organization.
- Listening is a key to staff retention. Conducting the employee survey and developing action plans for the survey findings assured employees at all levels that HIJRA is committed to continuous improvement program.
- Reduction in recruitment costs.
- Succession planning and career progression: key skills, knowledge, experience and ideas remain within the organization.

Conclusion

Employee retention, especially of your best, most desirable staff remains a key challenge in any organization today. However HIJRA, believe that when you think about employee work satisfaction, morale, positive motivation, and retention. knowing what makes employees want to leave an organization is half the battle.

“Where employees feel safe, they will tell you what's in their minds, whether they are planning to try something else. Your work culture must foster trust for successful two-way communication. Above all, look at the remuneration aspect of your employees based on the market needs for comfortable living. Clear staff policies and practices, personal growth and professional development, recognition and communication are three basics in employee retention. These three practices, which are also highlighted in People In Aid's Code of Good Practice, are the initiatives that led HIJRA retain its best talented employee successfully.”

HIJRA Somalia Mohammed Ibrahim Nur, Human Resource Manager