

PEOPLE IN AID

*Promoting good practice
in the management and
support of aid personnel*

Understanding HR
in the
Humanitarian Sector
– a Baseline for Enhancing Quality in Management

Handbook 1



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Key



Practical examples of how agencies have dealt with human resources management issues through case studies, highlighting specific measures organisations have adopted by focussing on an aspect of practice



Tips and guidance



The aspects which require more detailed consideration by agencies



Material to provoke further thought or to act as a potential catalyst for action

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the following agencies for their co-operation and participation in this project. These organisations have either responded to the survey we sent out (see appendix 1), attended one of the five seminars or have conveyed relevant information to People In Aid in another form. Some agencies contributed in more than one way and we are particularly appreciative of their support. In addition we are grateful to the Humanitarian Aid office of the European Union, (ECHO) for providing information on their partners for the purposes of this research, a list of FPA partners as at December 2003 can be found at appendix 2.

ACF†	Healthnet International†	OXFAM Solidarité Belgium†
ACSUR†	Helpage International†	Reach Out Project‡
Action Contre la Faim‡	Humanitarian Dialogue Centre‡	RedR/IHE‡
Action Medeor†	ICRC†	Save the Children Denmark‡
ActionAid†	IFRC	Save the Children UK‡
ADRA Denmark‡	IMC UK‡	Solidarites‡
Alisei†‡	International Aid Services†‡	SPW‡
Amnesty International‡	International Childcare Trust‡	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan†‡
BMS World Mission‡	International Organization for Migration‡	Tearfund‡
BRCS‡	International Rescue Committee-IRC Belgium‡	Terre des Hommes‡
British Red Cross†	Islamic Relief	The Global Fund to Fight AIDS‡
CAFOD†	ITDG†	Tigers Club Project‡
Caritas France	Latin Link‡	Toybox Charity‡
Caritas Germany†	Le Rucher Ministries‡	UNEP/GEF Biosafety Unit‡
Caritas Secours International‡	MAF Europe†	UNHCR‡
CESVI	Medair†	VOICE‡
Church of Sweden‡	Médecins du Monde	VSF†
Comité d'Aide Médicale‡	Medico International‡	VSF-DZG Belgium‡
Concern Universal‡	Mercy Corps Scotland†	VSO†
Concern Worldwide‡	Merlin†‡	Womankind Worldwide‡
CUAMM†	Mission East†‡	World Health Organisation‡
DanChurchAid†‡	MPDL‡	World Vision Germany†
Danish Peoples Aid	MSF - Belgium†	World Vision UK‡
Danish Red Cross†	MSF - France†‡	WSP International‡
Danish Refugee Council‡	MSF - Holland	ZOA Refugee Care‡
DFID‡	MSF - Germany‡	
Enfants Réfugiés du Monde ‡	Norwegian Church Aid†	
EPER / HEKS?	Norwegian Refugee Council†‡	
EU-CORD‡	ora international‡	
Everychild‡	ORC Worldwide‡	
German Red Cross HQ ‡	OXFAM GB	
GOAL‡		
Handicap International		

† Responded to survey

‡ Attended seminar

Foreword

Every year ECHO partners, those agencies which have qualified to receive funding from ECHO, gather together in Brussels. Human resources (HR), along with other aspects of quality in aid delivery, has been a recurrent theme and in 2001 People In Aid was invited to run a workshop on 'quality in human resources' at the conference. In 2002 we again participated in the conference and addressed the plenary on human resources issues. We are greatly encouraged by this recognition of human resources' centrality to effective aid delivery, to the extent that ECHO representatives speaking at the 2003 conference suggested that: "We cannot claim to be humanitarian if we don't treat our colleagues in a humanitarian way." and drew attention to the fact that: "[Quality in aid means] accountability to beneficiaries and donors; responsibility towards the humanitarian personnel".

In 2002 we bid for, and were awarded funding from ECHO 's annual training grant facility to produce an overview of human resources in the relief sector and gather together practical information for use by HR managers and for operational staff with responsibility for people. The work, which has received co-funding from Development Cooperation Ireland and People In Aid's own unrestricted funds, consists of two handbooks.

The proposal suggested to ECHO that we look at 'what agencies do, and why'. So this first handbook describes the sector to you, providing the backdrop against which your human resources decisions must be made. We offer you insights into the inner workings of the sector and the key elements of its main constituent part, the agencies, so that each agency can learn from the characteristics and activities of the others. We look at the key external and internal influences on the agencies and consider their impact on how agencies do, could or should work with their staff and volunteers. The discussion on humanitarian space, for example, concentrates on staff security, and the section on voluntarism covers the impact of the many definitions and gradations of 'volunteer'.

There are some overarching messages emerging from handbook 1 which I will summarise here, but please do take the time to read on. And not just you: please ensure that these handbooks reach senior managers, those responsible for the governance of your organisation, managers working in your programmes and those working in your HR team.

For the first message is that you cannot plan and execute a programme of relief work without first considering the people: "It is the available personnel resources which dictate what degree of outstanding needs can be met through a programme - and so must be a controlling factor in planning."

A further overriding message is that agencies need to know more about each other and need to think more about collaboration. There is much that can be made easier through collaboration. Collaboration was one of the reasons People In Aid was established by agencies in the first place, and this handbook looks at structures agencies use to collaborate. But before trying to reach out to your peers you must understand them: "The way staff and volunteers work is hugely influenced by the mandate, structure and mission of the organisations which they work for, and a greater understanding of the agencies that make up the sector and the people who work within it is essential in order to understand the context of the issues which affect staff and volunteers". Handbook 1 will help everyone with this for, as the handbook says: "Many agencies have a high staff turnover, not least in the human resources department, and it is intended that the handbooks are a learning tool for new staff who may not be aware of other agencies' activities or their structure, or the way agencies are addressing issues affecting staff and volunteers."

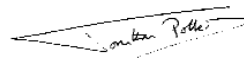
A further message from the preparation for the handbooks was that human resources are still under-resourced in many agencies. The preponderance of data and case studies from larger and faith-based agencies which you will find in the handbooks is not meant to suggest that all good practice lies with those agencies, but rather it highlights the fact that those agencies have

prioritised a function inside their organisations which collects data and can relate policy and practice to the external environment. Management information systems also seemed, in many cases, not to be able to provide the kind of information which would assist an agency to, for example, develop its nationally-recruited staff or provide clues for retention strategies.

There are of course many many systems, policies and practices which agencies can be proud of, and staff satisfied with. People In Aid's perspective, having looked at the performance of the sector in terms of human resources for nearly a decade now, is that great strides have been made. Better than that even is our certainty that the human resources issues which really affect staff and agency performance are rising up agency agendas. We hope the handbook contributes further to this objective.

We also need human resource issues to rise up donor agendas. As the handbook says: "Agencies are also aware that donors do not tend to support HR-related initiatives". Yet this time, ECHO which is the major funding partner to hundreds of agencies in Europe, is funding a project specially designed and intended to support, promote and encourage development of HR capacity and quality". As we found with an earlier ECHO-funded research project looking at training, funding was a significant problem for agencies. For many the same will be true of making improvements to the management and support of their staff and volunteers. We urge you to use some of the arguments and evidence in the two handbooks in asking donors for funding specifically for human resource-related matters. We urge you to remember that well-managed and supported staff and volunteers are key to achieving your mission cost-efficiently and effectively.

In 2002 we bid for, and were awarded funding from ECHO 's annual training grant facility to produce an overview of human resources in the relief sector and gather together practical information for use by HR managers and for operational staff with responsibility for people. The work, which has received co-funding from Development Cooperation Ireland and People In Aid's own unrestricted funds, consists of two handbooks, this one and handbook 2: Enhancing quality in human resources management in the humanitarian sector - A practical guide.



Jonathan Potter

Executive Director
People In Aid

Executive summary

Almost every programme evaluation in recent years mentions the quality of field personnel and human resource (HR) management as factors affecting effectiveness and efficiency. Yet very little is known about human resources within the humanitarian sector, and the factors and issues which affect it.

People In Aid, with funding from the Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Union (ECHO) and Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI), has carried out a substantial study titled Enhancing Quality in Human Resources Management for Relief Agencies. The purpose of the project is to:

- Describe and analyse the way the humanitarian sector and agencies work and are structured, in terms of HR management
- Analyse the wider contextual issues which affect international and nationally recruited staff and volunteers
- Identify, through agency responses to a survey, the HR issues which agencies themselves are concerned about
- Analyse and debate these issues, identifying where agencies have been able to respond, and where constraints still exist, with examples of good practice and links to sources and useful tools

The outputs of the project comprise two handbooks and a series of seminars in five cities in Europe:

Handbook 1 - Understanding HR in the humanitarian sector

Describing the way HR is addressed in the humanitarian sector and the factors which affect efficiency and potential.

Handbook 2 - Addressing quality in the management of staff

Analysing the issues which agencies identify as of concern, and providing access to resources, tools and good practice.

Seminar series – providing a forum for agencies in Europe to meet and discuss the findings of the study; debating issues of concern, and promoting inter-agency collaboration.

Overall, the study found that, for most aid workers the situation has improved considerably in recent years, with a greater level of professionalism in the workers' own skills, and also the management and administration of workers in the field.

However, the study also found that constraints which applied in the past continue to affect agencies today:

- Many agencies lack the funding necessary to invest in human resource development, and HR management is not as high a priority for agencies as it should be
- Donors require improved levels of professionalism and management but are unwilling to fund HR management, or invest in its development
- Recruitment and retention of experienced staff is the most significant constraint, together with preparation of staff, career planning and development - the same issues which have been recorded as priorities for the last ten years
- Insufficient management information exists about nationally recruited staff, restricting maximisation of their potential. Indeed, there is insufficient information generally about nationally recruited staff and the issues which affect them
- Basic levels of remuneration are not a controlling factor - the perceived effectiveness, ethos and professionalism of the employing agency are more important in maintaining loyalty
- Volunteers are extremely important within humanitarian aid, but there is little standardisation in their treatment or remuneration, and the interpretation of the concept of voluntarism is uniquely complicated

- The wider context - the changing nature of politics, aid and the humanitarian system fundamentally affects human resources. The failure of the system to provide 'humanitarian space', and the failure of the agencies to state and defend their unique role have undermined the sector and put staff and volunteers at greater risk
- A great deal of work has been done to improve quality, and inter-agency collaboration is much more prevalent, but there is a great deal more that could be achieved through further pan-European co-operation

The specific issues identified by the agencies will be discussed in detail in handbook 2, but the lessons from this part of the study are already clear:

Agencies have achieved a great deal to improve the situation for staff and volunteers, though not necessarily with assistance from the logical source: the institutional donors requiring ever-increasing quality in aid delivery.

However, more is needed from the agencies:

- To be more proactive in developing HR management and information systems necessary for effective HR management, particularly relating to nationally recruited staff
- To be much more collaborative on HR issues, both at the field and at HQ level, in order to reduce competition and duplication
- To engage more coherently with the other actors involved in emergencies, to define and defend humanitarian agencies' role, added value and space, in order to protect all staff and volunteers
- To engage with donors, and with agency governance structures to prioritise people and HR management, and encourage the investment which is overdue and urgently needed.

Section 1

Introduction

Almost every recent programme evaluation of humanitarian work has stressed the importance of effective, professional staff and volunteers, both international and national. Hundreds of returning staff have questioned the level of human resource management and the support and welfare provided in the field.

Are the evaluations right? Surely the agencies are not all the same? Where is there good practice or positive investment in human resources (HR) management? How can we best learn from the experience of other agencies?

Of course, human resources departments are under pressure to respond quickly to emergencies with skilled, experienced and suitable staff, and to provide professional support, training and planning when resources available are often scarce, and HR issues have lacked strategic priority.

When making decisions about policy, it is essential for agencies to have an understanding of the workings of peer agencies - How does that agency deal with this issue? Are we competitive with our peers? Why does that agency remunerate its staff in that way?

This project undertakes an analysis of the humanitarian sector and its agencies, and (in terms of HR management) puts their structure, ethos and way of working into perspective.

Agencies can also benefit from looking outwards and asking questions of the other stakeholders whose actions affect HR - Why is it that staff and volunteers are victims of violence or aggression? Why is it that funding is so difficult to obtain for developing staff? What could we do about it?

Another aim of the project is to develop better understanding and knowledge between the agencies by describing:

- What agencies do and why they do it
- The issues which both negatively and positively affect the potential to maximise HR effectiveness

- How the wider context affects agencies, their staff and volunteers
- How agencies can work together to maximise understanding, collaboration and access to expertise, policy information and good practice

The European Union's (EU) mandate to ECHO¹ is to provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters or armed conflict outside the European Union. The aid is intended to go directly to those in distress, irrespective of race, religion or political convictions.

ECHO's task is to ensure goods and services get to crisis zones fast. Goods may include essential supplies, specific foodstuffs, medical equipment, medicines and fuel. Services may include medical teams, water purification teams and logistical support. Goods and services reach disaster areas via ECHO partners.

Since 1992, ECHO has funded humanitarian aid in more than 85 countries. Its grants cover emergency aid, food aid and aid to refugees and displaced persons worth a total of more than Å600 million per year (2003).

ECHO is supporting this project through its training grant facility as a contribution towards the enhancement of understanding of HR in the sector and of HR issues affecting humanitarian agencies. The project involves a consultative review of HR management within the humanitarian sector, with approximately 280 European agencies (including ECHO partners) invited to participate. The outputs will provide agencies with a significant resource. The outputs define the range of approaches to HR within the sector, and the issues which affect effectiveness, and provide guidance, opinion, case studies and details of resources to assist managers in their day to day searches to resolve HR issues.

People In Aid

What does People In Aid do?

People In Aid is an international network of development and humanitarian assistance agencies. People In Aid helps organisations whose goal is the relief of poverty and suffering to enhance the impact they make through better HR management and support. It does this by offering relevant services and tools, such as the People In Aid Code of Good Practice.

- **The People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel.** The Code provides agencies with a framework for ensuring good practice in the management of agencies' most important resource - the people who work for them.
- **People In Aid publications** contribute to good practice in HR management and development, and are produced for agencies in the relief and development sectors which wish to improve the management and support of their staff. They include benchmarking exercises, policy research and awareness-raising papers.
- **A forum and catalyst for networking, debate and advocacy.** People In Aid is able to support and represent the HR needs of its members and the sector and to provide a focal point for access to information and for collaboration between agencies.

Other People In Aid resources include:

- Handbooks on specific policy areas such as health and safety, work-life balance and debriefing
- Guideline policies on key areas such as security, codes of conduct and rest and relaxation
- Support for members in implementing the Code
- Training on topical HR issues for the sector, such as distance management, mentoring and people development
- Research on topics such as insurance and remuneration
- Group meetings on immediate priorities, e.g. HIV/AIDS in the workplace, staff supervision in refugee camps and development of nationally recruited staff
- Quarterly newsletters
- Resource centre and information network

Project methodology

The project comprised four elements:

- **Consultative phase**, involving contacting 280 humanitarian and development agencies in Europe, requesting details of their involvement in sending staff overseas, and their deployment of international and locally recruited staff.
- **Handbook 1 - Understanding HR in the Humanitarian Sector.** A handbook describing HR practice and policy trends within the sector. The handbook describes what agencies do; the different approaches to HR questions and the reasons why; and identifies some of the key trends, issues and challenges in HR.
- **Handbook 2 - Enhancing Quality in Human Resources Management in the Humanitarian Sector.** This handbook describes and analyses the issues and challenges which affect agencies, and how agencies have responded. Through their experience, and by giving case studies, the aim is to provide information to practitioners on methods of addressing issues and problems, together with suggestions of resources where expertise, information and examples of good practice might be accessed.
- **Seminar Series.** A series of seminars held in March 2004 provided a forum for further discussion and debate on the issues identified by the agencies and how they could be tackled.

An introduction to the handbooks

The handbooks are intended both as a source of reference in understanding the humanitarian sector and the factors which affect staff and volunteers, and for use both in planning agency HR strategies and relationships with other agencies. They are also a resource and source of reference for headquarters and field managers who are involved in HR management.

Humanitarian agencies are an incredibly diverse group, and many agencies do not have professional HR managers, or have HQ and field managers with little experience of HR management.

The handbooks are intended to assist agencies and managers in understanding the breadth of the sector and the challenges it faces, and also to be a resource when addressing quality in HR management. At the same time, the handbooks represent the primary outputs of a consultative

study involving dozens of European humanitarian agencies, and are a snapshot of the humanitarian sector in HR terms, reflecting the issues and concerns agencies are dealing with on a day-to-day basis.

Many agencies have a high staff turnover, not least in the human resources department, and it is intended that the handbooks are a learning tool for new staff who may not be aware of other agencies' activities or their structure, or the way agencies are addressing issues affecting staff and volunteers.

The handbooks will also provide an important resource and source of reference in the field - where access to contextual and issue analysis is rarely available and information about other agencies' experience, practice, tools and resources is often lacking. Yet these are critically important when managers must respond to situations on the ground. Many smaller agencies do not have HR specialists at regional and country level - but the hope is that all their managers will benefit from access to the handbooks.

Handbook 1 defines and analyses humanitarian agencies, in HR terms and the framework within which staff and volunteers work, and discusses the effects, in HR terms, of recent changes in the international system, and also within the humanitarian sphere as a whole.

Why is understanding how other agencies work important?

While it is not easy to categorise humanitarian agencies, there are certain features of some agencies which explain how and why they behave the way they do.

For example, faith-based agencies often have a similar approach to staff care and support which is in keeping with their religious ethos, perhaps going beyond what could be considered a basic minimum, and extending to include dependants as well.

At a technical level, for example when undertaking a remuneration review, it is important to understand why other agencies do what they do, which provides the context for the remuneration or benefits they provide.

The way staff and volunteers work is hugely influenced by the mandate, structure and mission of the organisations which they work for, and a greater understanding of the agencies that make up the sector and the people who work within it is essential in order to understand the context of the

issues which affect staff and volunteers. The handbook undertakes an analysis of the humanitarian agencies, and the staff and volunteers who work for them - in order to show how and why the agencies do what they do.

What are the trends in HR-related issues?

The handbook then considers, firstly the global trends, and secondly the specific issues which have been identified through the consultation process in this study.

There has been significant improvement in many areas of the management of staff and volunteers. In terms of HR management, policies and procedures there have been significant improvements and many agencies have established and implement comprehensive policy and administrative frameworks. In capacity development and training, and support and welfare, much again has been achieved.

What does the external environment have to do with HR?

For many people, it is not immediately obvious how the changing nature of conflict impacts agencies' activities and staff. However, the security and safety of staff is fundamentally affected by the way the international system works (or does not work), and the military, political and economic response by donors and governments (through the UN). Perhaps even more significantly, the safety and security of staff is hugely affected by the changes which have taken place in the international system, in recent years. Agencies have to understand how these factors influence their work and should use the knowledge to engage with the other actors - through debate, negotiation and advocacy.

The handbook describes the way in which the external environment influences human resources, through an analysis of the changes which have taken place recently in the international system, the changes which have affected the humanitarian sector and agencies, and also the implications of recent emergency situations, such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

The handbook describes in detail the scope, scale and range of the sector and the agencies, and the way in which agencies have responded to the external pressures which have affected them. Examples are given, from the responses provided by agencies to this study, to illustrate the scope and scale of the sector and the factors affecting human resource potential.

Handbook 1 shows us that the sector is a great deal more diverse than might be thought, and is a lot more robust - many of the agencies are prospering and have made very significant commitments to human resource development and management. Many agencies reported significant improvements in systems and procedures and in the quality of preparation, management and support to staff and volunteers. However, other parts of the sector are struggling, and the reasons for this are explored in detail.

The handbook underlines the need for increased clarity, coherence and professionalism within the sector. It also strongly promotes greater interagency collaboration, and finally introduces the second handbook which deals with the technical HR related issues identified by the agencies themselves, in some greater detail.

Handbook 2 concentrates specifically on the issues which affect, both in a positive and negative way, the scope and potential of staff and volunteers to maximise their contribution to humanitarian programmes and agencies. The handbook is intended to be a management tool for HR practitioners both at HQ and in the field, and analyses in detail the HR issues which have been identified by operational agencies and HR managers consulted in this study.

Agencies were requested in the survey questionnaire to rank a number of issues which are generic, and also to add or comment on any of the issues.

The handbook describes the issues and details how agencies have addressed them. Areas where progress has been made are indicated, and remaining gaps in good practice are identified. Agency experiences are shared through case studies, and examples given where good management practice exists, including input/tools suggested by external specialists.

In addition, the handbook identifies and describes tools and resources which have been identified during consultation with agencies, and which might assist other HR managers in responding to problems as they arise.

Agency responses to the survey

This study is not a complete quantitative analysis of the personnel in humanitarian organisations, but rather a qualitative study of the factors

affecting human resources and their potential. However, some quantitative analysis can be found in section 4, of those agencies that participated in the project.

Survey methodology

A survey form (see Appendix - 1) was sent to all the agencies with Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA) with ECHO, as listed in the ECHO FPA Partners list, Appendix 2, together with members of the People In Aid network, and also a number of European agencies which were on neither list. In total the survey was sent to 280 agencies, almost all of which were based in Europe.

The survey form and documentation were translated into French and Spanish for despatch to agencies preferring to receive the documentation in those languages.

The survey form was emailed to the named ECHO contacts at the agencies, and follow up messages (and in many cases two or three follow up messages) were sent to agencies that did not reply. Where possible, the survey was addressed to an HR contact, and where no details were held in this respect, the named ECHO contact was asked to forward it to the relevant contact.

Where emails were returned or not delivered, further contact addresses were obtained and messages resent.

The initial contacts were made during the summer and autumn of 2003 and in an effort to mitigate the impact of the summer holiday period, follow up messages were sent in autumn.

A number of respondents mentioned that similar questions had been asked in the ECHO audit which was underway at the same time, but in reality there were some important differences between the two. However, data from the ECHO audits has informed this work and we are grateful to the Commission for making this information available.

The survey form was specifically designed to burden recipients as little as possible, by asking for information or documents to be provided for analysis by the consultant, rather than answers to a questionnaire which would be time-consuming and might not provide the necessary information in sufficient detail.

Responses

A total of 59 agencies responded to the survey, and of that number 38 gave detailed replies. Details of responses are as figure 1 below:

Figure 1 - Agency responses

Positive replies including detailed information	38
Positive replies with limited information	3
Replies from agencies without staff overseas	3
Correspondence with limited information	5
Correspondence with no information	10
Total	59

The total number of replies represents a response rate of 21% of the total number of agencies contacted with the survey form.

Replies were received in English, French, Spanish, Italian and Danish.

A significant response came from the UK agencies, which was to be expected, as People In Aid, although having international membership, is a UK-based organisation. However, the overall response rate was lower than anticipated, and this could be attributed to several factors:

- The study was carried out over the summer period when HR departments are particularly under stress
- Staff would have been burdened with major workload associated with Iraq, Afghanistan, and Southern Africa emergencies
- The survey required a range of information, both operational and specifically HR related, involving different contacts within an organisation
- Anecdotal evidence suggested that the some of information we sought might not be known or recorded by agencies

It is interesting to note, the response rate for this project was very similar to that encountered in the ECHO funded study into quality management among ECHO FPA partner agencies, which received 44 replies from a questionnaire sent to 215 FPA agencies².

As the number of positive detailed responses to the survey was relatively low, additional research was carried out using a combination of desk study, extensive internet searches, telephone interviews and meetings with agencies in order to provide a more representative sample of the sector. This added substantially to the workload of the project, but provided baseline information on

a further substantial number of agencies (approx. 40 additional to the survey-respondents). This information has been included in the report, as appropriate, and supports the evidence put forward.

Even with this additional effort, the project does not cover the breadth of the sector that would be desired.

Analysis of agencies' replies

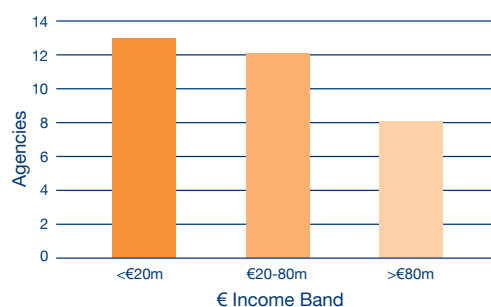
The information provided by those 38 agencies which replied in detail to the survey is supplemented by extensive research of other agencies, using internet websites as a primary source of information. Although not included in the statistical analysis here, the details of the structure and function, together with information about employment policies were included within the text of the report where appropriate.

Although not every agency provided comprehensive data, it is possible to make some general observations and draw some basic conclusions.

Total scope

In total, the 38 agencies had a total annual income for 2002 of approx. Å2.17 billion with approx. 2,750 international staff and volunteers and approx. 34,300 nationally recruited staff. 36 of the 38 respondents providing full data gave details of annual income and this is summarised below.

Figure 2 - Agency incomes



Expatriate staff, volunteers and nationally recruited staff

Figure 3 - National staff

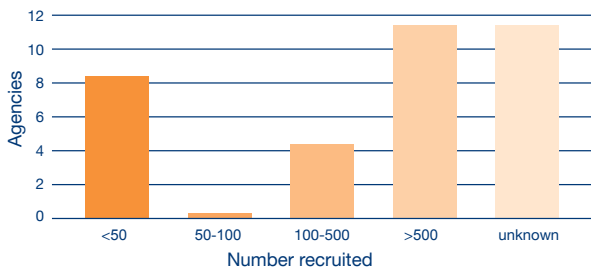
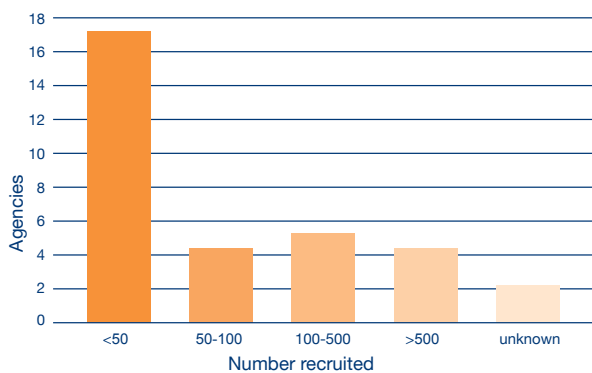
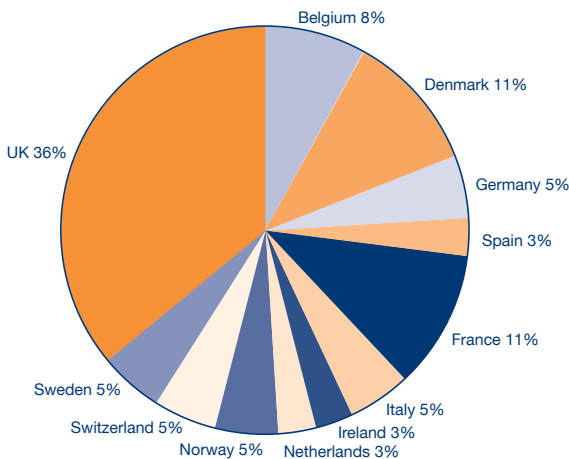


Figure 4 - Internationally recruited staff



Replies by country

Figure 5 - Replies to survey by country



From the data gathered, two key observations are worth making at this stage, and they will be considered in more detail subsequently:

- The agencies replying to the survey represent a good cross-section of the sector, with a range of size of agency and also involvement in staff overseas
- Over half the agencies have fewer than 50 international staff or volunteers

About the agencies that responded

The range of agencies that responded includes large and small, emergency relief and development, volunteer-sending and partner-orientated, and independent or networked.

In staff numbers, agencies ranged from the ICRC and MSF France and Belgium, with very large numbers of both international and nationally recruited staff, to EPER, from Switzerland, which works only with and through local partner organisations and has neither international nor nationally recruited staff. In general, small agencies have small staffing levels overseas, but there are exceptions, and Swedish Committee for Afghanistan is one, because of the nature of its work.

A number of agencies however, have a similar profile, they are small to medium in size and send between 20 - 50 international staff and volunteers and employ about 250 - 300 nationally recruited staff. It is these agencies that are referred to so often in this report as the agencies under threat, because they do not have the benefits of scale available to the larger agencies, nor the protective support available through international networks.

In activity the agencies included the ICRC, directly operational in service delivery programmes in many areas of conflict, and VSF Belgium an NGO working on community based veterinary rehabilitation programmes.

Reflecting the balance of nationally recruited and international staff, responses were also received from VSO, with a large number of international volunteers, and ITDG where all staff are nationally based. The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan has 17 international and 568 nationally recruited staff in one country (but also funds the salaries of 6,000 others) while Merlin has 97 international and 1,500 nationally recruited staff in 11 countries.

The data confirms that the number of international staff or volunteers is more dictated by the type and style of work undertaken rather than the financial size of the agency.

Some respondents were members of a network and their profile in terms of involvement with staffing overseas is different. World Vision Germany is part of a massive international global network to which it provides 35 international staff, but has no involvement with nationally recruited staff, unlike Merlin, which must establish its own offices and representation in each country of operation. Similarly MSF UK has a contractual agreement with MSF Netherlands which involves provision of volunteers, but MSF UK is not itself operational.

Section 2

The organisations and the people

There are vast numbers of non-profit organisations in the world, covering every possible aspect of life, at every level and in every corner of the globe. This study is particularly aimed at the humanitarian sector and local and international NGOs which work in emergencies and disaster relief. It is also focussed on the European international NGOs, in terms of analysis, but is also intended to provide resources, through the handbooks, for national NGO managers working in HR-related issues.

A few statistics give an idea of the scale of the sector:

- In 2000, it was estimated that there were 37,281 international NGOs³ worldwide
- In 2000 it was estimated that worldwide, more than 19 million people were working with NGOs which had a combined income of over Å870 billion⁴
- In 2002 the 147 European agencies with FPAs with ECHO (which were subject to audit in 2003) had a combined budget exceeding Å3.16 billion

In the United States:

- The largest NGO - the National Council of YMCAs - alone received in excess of Å3.16 billion income in 2002
- The five largest international US-based NGOs had total income exceeding Å1.5 billion in 2002 of which approx. Å500 million was received from the US government⁵

For the ECHO FPA partner NGOs (excluding Red Cross):

- In a recent audit, 140 agencies reported budget figures for 2002 - only seven exceeded Å79 million, and 104 were less than Å20 million⁶

In the UK:

- Of approx 164,000 UK charities, approx. 100,000 have annual income less than Å12,000 and approx. 4,000 have an income greater than Å1.19⁷ million

- The network BOND comprises approx. 280 member agencies, employing approx. 7,500 staff in the UK, approx. 14,000 staff overseas and with a combined annual turnover of approximately Å2.1 billion per annum⁸
- The largest five UK international agencies combined income in 2002 was approx Å632 million⁹

This section of the study is intended to show that the nature of the organisation and the types of people that work in them affect HR capacity and potential. Many managers within the sector have a limited understanding of the way other organisations work, and the analysis is intended to help them develop a wider understanding of the nature of the agencies and people, as part of the resource base they will need for their own interagency collaboration and consultations.

This section also outlines trends affecting agencies and the staff and volunteers which work for them, some of which have wider implications for the sector, and the issues which are affecting all organisations and staff. Unless agencies recognise the significance of the trends and react constructively and collaboratively to them, many agencies will continue to struggle to address the issues, and will miss an opportunity to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. The risks, especially for the smaller agencies, are severe¹⁰.

Why is this analysis relevant to my agency and staff?

Whether your agency is large or small, has substantial resources or not, employs expatriates or not, self-insures or not, will have a fundamental effect on recruitment, management and development of your staff and volunteers.

Understanding how and why other agencies work the way they do should also guide you in your strategic thinking and planning, and in encouraging co-operation with other agencies with a similar profile.

Understanding something of the characteristics of the different categories of people who work in the

sector will help to explain the way the agencies deal with them, but will also indicate areas where potential issues and problems might be arising, and ways in which they might be addressed.

The humanitarian agencies

The way in which organisations are structured, funded and function has serious implications for the staff working for them, and for their well-being, potential development and welfare. Some of these factors are outlined below in order to show the trends affecting the sector.

One trend is that donors are specifically seeking to limit the number of partners they deal with, and to limit their interaction to the larger agencies with global reach and impact. In consequence the smaller agencies are increasingly at a disadvantage, and unless they are willing to collaborate and enter strategic relationships with other similar agencies, the prospects for the future are bleak.

The analysis below is intended to illustrate the diversity of the sector, both in terms of the size and scope of the agencies, their structures and systems, and the specific features affecting human resources management.

International organisations and the Red Cross

The Red Cross movement comprises the ICRC, IFRC and the almost 200 national Red Cross Societies around the world. It is the largest humanitarian network in the world. Its status is slightly separate from the NGOs, in that the commitment for nations to support the ICRC in its work is mandated by international statute through signature to the Geneva Conventions, and the establishment of a Red Cross Society is also a legal obligation.

The ICRC, IFRC and many of the European Red Cross national Societies are also recipients of substantial ECHO funding. The ICRC and IFRC have separate agreements as international organisations.

Figure 6 - Red Cross funding

	Income Total 2002	From Government	From ECHO
IFRC	Å188 million	55%	10.5%
ICRC	Å532 million	80%	0.4%

IFRC: (2001) 681 expatriate staff (450 provided through National Societies) in the field working with approx 3,000 local staff, in 150 countries

ICRC: 1,230 expatriate staff (205 provided through National Societies) in the field working with 9,000 local staff, in 79 countries

The international organisations of the UN system are outside the scope of this study, but it is worth noting that while grouped together as part of the humanitarian sector, the UN agencies are very separate indeed, and although there are linkages, these are not systematic. For example, the UN agencies are increasingly competing with NGOs directly for funding, and have made strenuous efforts in the last couple of years to improve the functionality of the Consolidated Appeal Process, partially to respond to the reduction in funding the agencies were receiving. The international agencies are also themselves important donors for NGOs, and often offer subcontracting relationships to NGOs.

Implications for Human Resources

An organisation as large as the Red Cross is able to have fully global reach, and to access funding from every potential source. It can access personnel and funds through an international network covering almost 200 countries.

With huge international funding and large amounts of unrestricted funding, the Red Cross is able to make substantial investments in human resources, and in developing systems to maximise the potential of personnel. It has developed systems for the proactive development and promotion of nationally-recruited staff and volunteers.

This does not at all mean that the Red Cross is the most effective in these regards, but simply that it is much easier for an international network of this nature to be so.

The large multinational agencies and networks

The largest international NGOs dominate the sector, and almost all have formed large international networks or confederations, with funding bases in a number of countries and operational activities in many more. In 2000, CARE, CRS, Save the Children (US) and World Vision together received 25% of the total US Government funding for emergency and development assistance¹¹.

The growth of international networks

International networks have existed for many years - for example the Red Cross movement, World Council of Churches (working via Action by Churches Together), LWF, LWR, Caritas Internationalis etc. Many of these networks are clearly linked to international organisations and churches.

Many of the larger NGOs have more recently also internationalised and become global confederations. This not only gives a decentralised management structure, and decreases the need for expensive expatriate staff, but also builds capacity at the country level, and more truly develops the potential for partnership, rather than simply funding and working through an independent local partner NGO.

For example:

World Vision has 65 affiliates and works in 92 countries

Save the Children Alliance has 32 members and works in 121 countries

MSF has 18 operational and partner Sections and works in 80 countries

Islamic Relief has fundraising offices in 14, and field offices in 18 countries

Developing networks in 'northern' countries also permits access to other sources of funding - in the US, the European Union, and other European countries, and Australia for example.

Implications for human resources:

- The large international networks have many of the characteristics of the Red Cross movement, and benefit in the same way
- Network members are able to develop funding and personnel capacities within the management systems and procedures already established
- Fewer expatriate staff are needed as a global network already exists
- More opportunities are available for nationally recruited staff to access training and skills development, to gain senior positions and to access international experience

The pressure is on the smaller NGOs to enter strategic alliances which provide some of these benefits, and without them, it is unlikely that the precarious financial situation of many will improve. This detail is considered under 'strategic alliances' in section 4 under strategic collaboration and co-operation.

Funding

Some agencies have developed affiliates in other parts of the world, which have been able to both develop their own funding capacity, and to access funding from official donors.

MSF has 18 operational and partner Sections which raise funds and provide staff and volunteers for programmes. The sections are thereby able to access a much greater pool of funding - via ECHO, government donors (such as USA, UK, Canada, Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium etc.) In addition, the Sections can represent the agency in local fora of debate and advocacy, and raise profile and media attention. In addition, the Sections mobilise and recruit volunteers who are able to work on international programmes, and bring back to the Section their experience and commitment. In MSF's case five of the Sections are operational and mount programmes in their own right, and the remaining 13 support them, but are not themselves operational.

The large agencies receive very substantial government support, but in most cases the official funding represents a relatively small proportion of total income, which means that they are less reliant on their government's financial support than is generally thought. In addition, unrestricted voluntary income comprises a substantial proportion of the total. In consequence, a higher proportion of funds can be used for training, career development, institutional learning and human resources management in general, than would be the case where the agency is more dependent on restrictive official funding.

ActionAid, with net income exceeding Å83 million, has affiliates in five countries, and works in over 20 countries, but there are only approximately 20 expatriate staff (in certain nominated positions) and currently none are British.

All other staff (1,700) are on nationally based contracts. They may also be assigned internationally, in which case expatriation benefits would apply.

The large established agencies also have very substantial investments in fundraising in the long term and can invest in legacy development, and long term support programmes through regular giving. For example, those agencies involved in child sponsorship programmes also have a very long term commitment from donors in most cases, and can therefore plan much more long term, and make long term financial commitments to programming, skills development, career planning and development etc, than is the case in an



agency dependent on programme funds and a yearly struggle for funding.

As one agency stated on the subject of training and skills development, as part of this survey - "The main limitation is having to resource it using private funding, as (official) donors give us hundreds of requirements for more professionalism but no funding to meet them"¹².

In 2003, in the USA, CARE, World Vision, Save the Children and CRS spent a total of approx \$86.9 million in fundraising, which, while a relatively small proportion of total income (approx 10%), represents a significant sum.

In 2002, Save the Children UK, Oxfam, Christian Aid, ActionAid and Concern Worldwide spent approx \$95 million on fundraising for a gross income of approx \$630 million.

In 2002, MSF France spent approx \$6 million raising a total of approx \$96 million (<7%). Approx \$67 million was received from private sources, and only 10% from official sources.

This demonstrates that the large agencies have the huge advantage of being able to invest substantially in fundraising (which produces unrestricted income), and the small agencies simply do not have the funds to do so, and so are much more dependent on restricted funds. Therefore unrestricted funds for investing in people and management are not available.

For example, in the year 2003, Oxfam GB:

Total net income was approx \$173 million, of which approx \$55 million was official funding, and approx \$98 million was unrestricted income.

Staffing and personnel

An advantage of the global reach and impact of the international networks is that they create an internal market in staff and volunteers whereby staff in one country can be quickly and easily moved to another in an emergency, and staff skills, capacities and exposure to the wider global aspects of the organisation can be developed through secondment or international assignments.

Profile

Save the Children UK:

- Annual income in 2002 \$135 million of which \$70 million was official funding
- 200 expatriate staff and 3,200 nationally recruited staff

- 3% of country budgets notionally allocated to staff development
- Detailed policy documentation and procedures available for all aspects of HR management including briefing and debriefing, and a staff review framework
- Detailed policies and guidelines on security management, including Security Management Policy, Action Points for Regional Directors, Security Management Guidelines and 'Safety First' a field security handbook
- Core training programme for UK based staff and learning resource centre

The internal market is created because there are sufficient numbers of international and nationally recruited staff for a significant database of skills to be maintained and accessed, without disturbing on-going programmes. In addition, the number of programmes is sufficient to maintain the possibility of exchanges and secondments between programmes, for example: Oxfam International is developing a policy on seconding staff between its 12 member agencies following enthusiasm for secondments among their approximately 5,000 staff¹³.

However, even the larger agencies are not always aware of the potential for such an internal market, and have insufficient knowledge of nationally recruited staff and their skills and potential. Some agencies that responded to this survey do not appear to have access to statistical data on numbers, skills or contracts of nationally recruited staff. The potential for increasing utilisation of the skills base among nationally recruited staff clearly exists with these agencies, and is increasingly being exploited.

For example, Islamic Relief is currently purchasing an HR management software system which will provide the basis for programmes to develop managers from within field offices' staff. The database will also be a register of skills which can be accessed for secondments in case of emergencies or for sharing skills and experience between country programmes.

Medair is also implementing a personnel database to provide more effective management information for both nationally-recruited and internationally-recruited staff.

Large agencies are better able than smaller ones to respond to short term needs for expansion of staff levels when an emergency arises, and to be able to absorb contractions when the need for higher staffing levels eases.



Smaller members of large networks are hugely advantaged by having access to the physical, programmatic and financial resources of the network as a whole. They benefit from the resources and institutional database of the larger members of the network - in terms of fund raising, policies and procedures, handbooks and guidelines etc, as well as their institutional size and reputation. This represents a substantial financial advantage, compared to small independent agencies, for which such investment represents a substantial cost. For example, in the UK, Mercy Corps Scotland, Project Hope, Action Against Hunger and Handicap International are all affiliates within larger international networks, while CARE UK and World Vision UK are examples of medium sized agencies linked to very large worldwide networks.

It also benefits the staff and volunteers working with a member of a network because they have an identity with the member agency, but also benefit from the resources etc of the network as a whole.

Management

Larger agencies have to some extent regionalised, moving decision-making to the country level, and management to the regional office. In consequence, the headquarters tends to be much more involved in fundraising, quality control, institutional learning and advocacy and lobbying. Although often considered a cost-cutting exercise, regionalisation does not always deliver the cost benefits anticipated and therefore may not be an option for the smaller agency.

Regionalising management also creates the possibility of recruitment of staff at regional level, and provides access to a much wider skills base. For example, staff and volunteers could be recruited through a regional office in Harare, for an international assignment in Botswana or Democratic Republic of Congo or elsewhere.

The relief and development agencies

Many of the larger agencies started their activities as a consequence of major emergencies, and because of the changing nature of emergencies, have also become involved in longer-term development activities. The reverse is also true and agencies which concentrated on development have had to respond to emergencies, which affected their development programmes.

In many cases where an emergency situation exists for a long time, the distinction between

relief and development programming is no longer clear, emergencies have become the norm for many people, especially in long-running conflict or violence. Similarly, many development programmes are continually stressed by natural and man-made pressure. An example might be Malawi which is subject to recurrent food shortages due to previous conflict, to drought and also floods, and even more so to the catastrophic effects of HIV/AIDS on the population.

Historically, the emergency agency has been focused on the short-term intervention whereas the development agency would be seeking a commitment to a programme normally exceeding 10 years. Strategically, therefore the development agency would have a much longer perspective on programming, and be much more involved in developing capacity and potential in local partners and staff, whereas the emergency agency would be looking for skills to be available at the outset and will not be so involved in developing capacities.

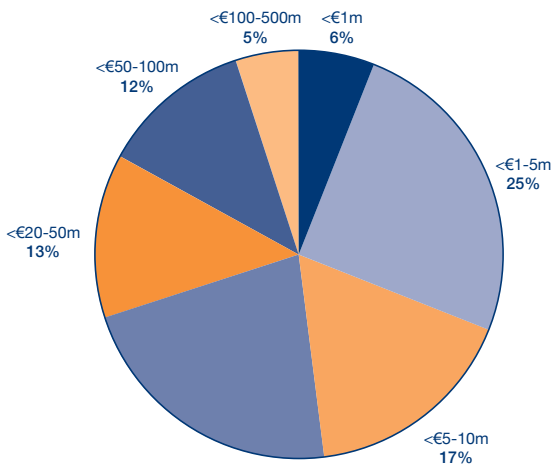
This however has changed substantially in recent years, and the emergency agencies have become much more developmental in approach and vice versa. Donors and host governments will not support agencies arriving for the short term, and many donors are only supporting agencies which already have a presence on the ground, which is positively discriminating in favour of the agencies with global reach, and against the opportunist NGO only there for the short term.

The implications for nationally recruited staff are clearly that there is the possibility of greater security and likelihood of access to skills development, training and international mobility if agencies have a long-term perspective and presence and commitment.

Small and medium-sized agencies

Of the ECHO FPA agencies recently subject to self-assessment audit, 74% had annual budgets for 2002 of less than €20 million and would therefore be classed as small agencies. (However, many agencies in the development sphere in particular are much smaller, and annual income of less than €1.5 million is quite common).

Figure 7 - ECHO FPA agency budgets

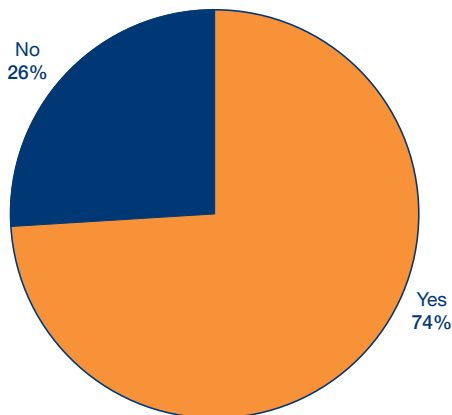


Of the 142 agencies that returned questionnaires to ECHO in 2003

- 70 had less than 20 staff at headquarters, and 82% have annual income less than Å50 million per year
- 26% (37) of agencies did not have a Human Resources department

Figure 8 - HR departments within FPA agencies

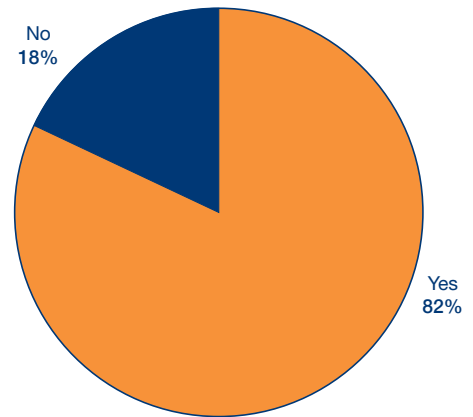
Do you have a dedicated human resources department/Manager?



- 1 in 5.5 agencies did not have a formal HR policy

Figure 9 - HR statement/policy/charters within FPA agencies

Does your organisation have a staff policy statement, personnel charter or equivalent?



- 60% of agencies do not give formal security training to all staff going overseas, and 1 in 4 agencies have no formal security/evacuation procedures

Figure 10 - Formal security training prior to departure within FPA agencies

To ensure security for field staff, do you have formal training on security issues for all staff prior to departure?

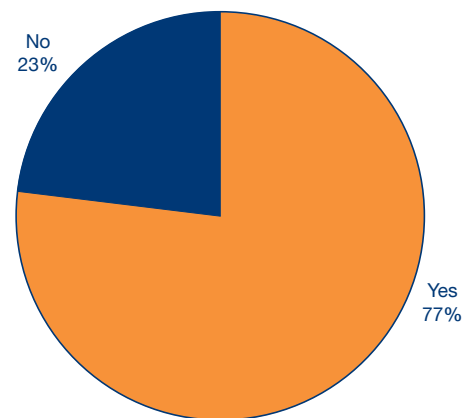
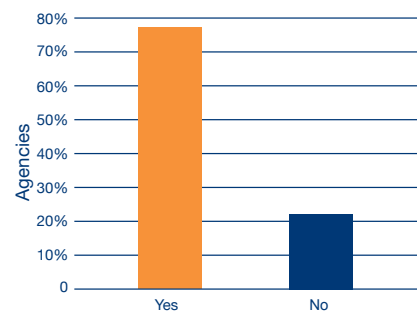


Figure 11 - Written security and evacuation procedures within FPA agencies.

To ensure security for field staff, do you have formal written security and evacuation procedures?



Most of the FPA agencies are relatively small, in terms of geographic reach, income and staffing levels, and a substantial proportion do not have formal management structures and practices which would be essential in situations of conflict or insecurity.

Yet these same FPA agencies employ over 57,000 project staff.

Funding

Such agencies tend to be much less well balanced in terms of funding than the larger multinational networks; they are much more dependent on official funding, often relying on relatively small, voluntary, unrestricted income. Many would appear to use the funding of one official contract to represent the co-funding necessary to access another co-funding contract, for example linking DFID funding with ECHO funding or with Comic Relief or National Lottery (in the UK). This leaves them tightly bound in contracts which have little flexibility, and which are not supportive of the managerial, support and learning activities that are so important in developing HR capacity and skills.

Such contracts are also relatively inflexible and do not respond well to adaptation in emergency or crisis, the costs of which must be borne by unrestricted funds and reserves. In general, small agencies have very small reserves, and such a strategy may leave them unable to survive a catastrophic shock to their finances.



In its reply to the survey for this study ACSUR said:

"Financial planning for personnel in the midterm is difficult when the agency relies on official funding, which is linked to specific projects. It also makes continuity and retaining personnel difficult. ACSUR is trying to increase the proportion of private funding to greater than 50% within the next 5 years"¹⁴.

AC SUR received 57% of income from the European Union, and a further 36% from Spanish national and regional government. Only 7% of funds received were from the public, (of a total income of approx. Å4 million), in 2002.

The large agencies can afford to fund start-up and assessment costs, but the small agencies are often guilty of "ambulance-chasing" because they know that their survival depends on accessing the latest source of funding, and getting to the media to raise profile and more funding. However the donors are becoming less willing to fund agencies unless they can show global reach and impact, and also long term presence on the ground. It is becoming much

harder for the small agencies to access funds, and yet the needs are there and the agencies do have the capacity to make a contribution.

Small agencies have been substantially affected by changing donor policies, and particularly the move away from service delivery towards right-based programming and advocacy. While more obvious an issue in development programming, donors have moved away from funding international NGOs implementing their own programmes with and through local communities, to funding local community based organisations. As a result, the cash flow of smaller international agencies has been adversely affected.

Reserves

Larger agencies generally have substantially larger levels of unrestricted reserves than small agencies. As a result, they can much better manage their cashflow, and are much better equipped to respond to temporary shortfalls or emergencies.

A smaller agency might have little or no reserves, and operates on an overdraft for most of the year. When funds are plentiful this is possible, but if donors do not remit funds on time, or there are other calls on funds, the financial position of an agency might easily become critical. For example¹⁵:

Figure 12 - Annual reviews - sample agencies

Income	Large Agency	Small Agency
Total	254 million	3.4 million
Government	61 million (24%)	2.6 million (76%)
Public	100 million (39%)	0.8 million (24%)
Other	93 million (37%)	-
Unrestricted Reserves	29 million (11.5%)	55,000 max (1.6%)

For a small agency it is very difficult to cover the costs associated with employment, remuneration and support and welfare provision for staff - they are seen as overheads by donors. Agencies are forced to cover HR costs from the small percentage allowed in contracts for overheads (7-12%) that is rarely sufficient, and certainly not enough to allow for investment or staff development activities. Even training is difficult to fund.

What are the implications for HR management?

All the advantages which have been mentioned in relation to large networks are the same which

disadvantage the smaller agencies, many of whom find their very existence under threat.

Their funding base is heavily dependent on restricted income, and income from official donors. Funding agreements are strict and inflexible and often do not support people-related costs - either the on-going costs of supporting staff, or the cost of investing in their skills and potential.

Because of the lack of unrestricted funding, there are few other resources available for the agency to invest in staff. When a crisis occurs, low levels of unrestricted reserves compromises the agency's ability to respond. Retention of staff becomes impossible without funds, compromising any potential for development of skills and people, particularly nationally-recruited staff.

Because nationally recruited staff are not prioritised for funding, they are even less likely to benefit from capacity development initiatives. Their basic remuneration, support and welfare provision may be compromised for lack of funds.

Management

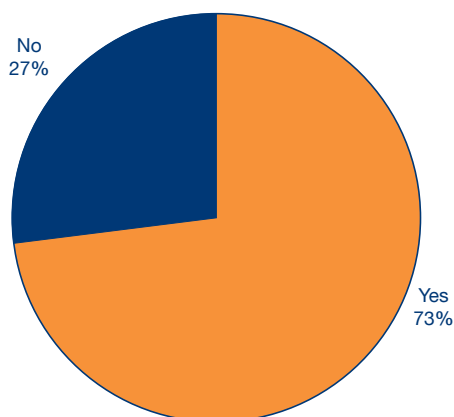
Small agencies are much less able to fund the development of management and information systems and policy and procedure development, and often rely on the experience of senior managers to carry them through, where management systems are inadequate.

The level of organisational and personal risk to which agencies and staff are exposed, at the present time, suggests that it is no longer possible to rely on a few experienced managers in this way, and the pressure is on agencies to develop appropriate management systems.

73% of agencies have a code of conduct

Figure 13 - Code of conducts within FPA agencies

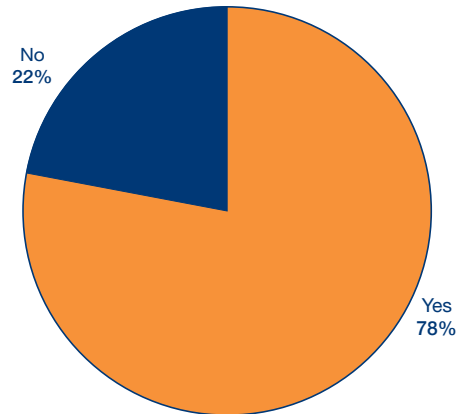
Does your organisation have internal procedures to ensure that it is an equal opportunities employer?



1 in 4 agencies completing an FPA form, did not have internal policies which ensured that they are an equal opportunity employer.

Figure 14 - Equal opportunities procedures within FPA agencies

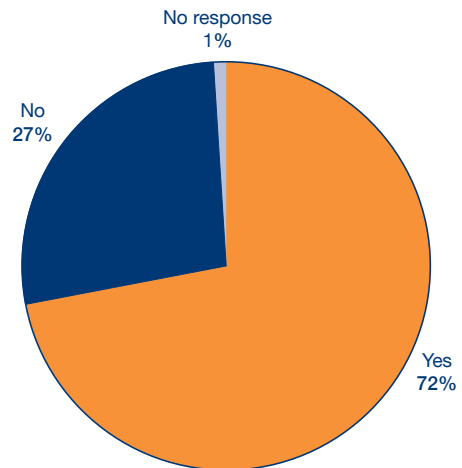
Does your organisation have internal procedures to ensure that it is an equal opportunities employer?



27% of agencies completing FPA forms did not have a training policy for staff.

Figure 15 - Staff training policies within FPA agencies

Do you have a training policy for your staff?



Small and medium sized agencies - a disenfranchised group?

Taking the UK as an example, recent changes have meant that the medium and smaller agencies have lost much of their influence in terms of dialogue with major donors, and have lost many of the direct links that they had with DFID and the EU - both donors are also reducing the number of agencies with which they interact and fund, and this will be to the detriment of the small and medium agencies, and to the larger agencies' advantage.

DFID has made strategic alliances with larger agencies (through strategic framework agreements, and also Programme Partnership agreements) which are long term financial commitments, often not tightly restricted. The smaller agencies do not have access to such funding, and would only be eligible for such if they enter strategic alliances, consortia or networks.

In addition, DFID has recently sought to work with a much wider interpretation of civil society in the UK and away from the focus on NGOs, and for example has recently signed a Strategic Grant Agreement with a consortium to be established from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups and organisations in the UK. The funding £350,000 per year for three years will enable the consortium to seek and promote ways in which the BME organisations in the UK can more closely be involved in international development issues.

Anecdotal evidence suggests this trend is reflected in other European states:

“Considering that a number of French NGOs are experiencing a crisis, while a major British NGO has recently gone bankrupt after becoming heavily indebted, it is obvious that, under pressure from the current political and operational imperatives, the basic trend can only be towards a regrouping”¹⁶.

There appears to be considerable pressure for the smaller agencies to merge, or to form structural alliances in order to attain global reach and impact, and in order to access substantial donor support.

There is also anecdotal evidence that the larger agencies will seek to distance themselves from the smaller ones, and establish accountability mechanisms which establish them as the ‘first division’ agencies. Smaller agencies ignore this at their peril, and should be more actively seeking to identify their added value, and to engage in debate with other stakeholders in order to defend their access to financial support and to debate with donors, and will need to put pressure on the networks which seek to represent them if they are to achieve this.

Agencies in other countries might benefit from considering the changes which have taken place in the UK in case there are lessons that can be learned from the changes in donor policy there.

The volunteer agencies

The deployment of volunteers is a very significant part of the work of international agencies working in both emergency and development programmes, perhaps much more significant than is generally thought.

Many of the agencies working internationally interpret the term volunteer in a specific way, and the terms and conditions of appointment of the volunteers may vary considerably as a result. However, in most cases the basic remuneration is not considered a salary, and is not competitive with a market-rate salary for someone with those skills on an employment contract.

It is confusing - there are volunteers that receive nothing, some that have to pay themselves, and some that are paid. There are some with employment contracts and some with volunteer agreements, but who are not employed. The use of the word volunteer is uniquely interpreted within the humanitarian sector, and this is why the description of this category is substantial.

What is a volunteer?

According to the standard definition in English usage, a volunteer is not an employee, and is not subject to a contract of employment. Their services are given without receipt of any salaried payment, and only incidental expenses may be given to cover subsistence and travel costs.

In the humanitarian sphere, such an arrangement applies to only a relatively small number of agencies. Most of the humanitarian and development agencies operate on one of several models - in which the volunteer receives limited remuneration based on local costs (as in the host-based system), or an allowance based on maintaining costs at home, with an element for local subsistence costs while on mission (as in the VSI model referenced below). Accommodation is generally provided and a package of benefits which would include insurance, travel costs, training, resettlement allowance etc.

The Volunteer of International Solidarity (VSI) model refers to those agencies which are, at least historically, based on the French system of the ‘association’ and the *Volontaire de Solidarite Internationale*, which is a hugely important and very successful group and is described on [page 24](#). In this case remuneration is generally linked to the maintenance of costs at home. Many agencies recruit only volunteers, but others have staff on salaried contracts of employment.

There are, however, also volunteers who make a substantial contribution to the costs associated with their assignment - particularly for short-term assignments. This group includes many of the young people going on expedition assignments, and also the missionary organisations.

Some examples of the diverse approach to voluntarism:

Profile

United Nations Volunteers

5,234 professional experienced volunteers worked for UNV in 2002, in a total of 5,554 assignments. Of the placements, 3,698 were expatriates and 1,856 were nationally recruited.

The volunteers were assigned to 139 countries, and came from 158 countries.

70% of the volunteers came from developing countries¹⁷.

Profile

Médecins sans Frontières

An international network comprising five operating and 18 partner Sections.

Sends approx. 3,000 expatriates overseas each year (for approx. 1,500 positions in about 80 countries), on both volunteer terms and employment contracts.

Approximately 1/3 of workers will be on first mission.

MSF is the largest international network sending volunteers overseas, and while having a common basis, the members of the network vary in their employment policy and practice. In addition, there are features of the 'agences de solidarité internationale' (ASI) system which are of wider interest. For these reasons, MSF is used to provide examples of agency practice

Features of voluntarism

Commitment - for experienced qualified people to go overseas, often to difficult environments and perhaps even on-going conflict requires very considerable commitment. Their remuneration will be limited and their working and living conditions may be difficult. In addition, they will not be paid a salary, and can expect at best to cover their living costs while away.

Yet there are tens of thousands of people throughout Europe interested and willing to undertake such hardship, and who are often

strongly committed to the cause and ethos of the agency.

Unlike many other agencies, MSF is actively committed to recruiting first-time volunteers, who represent as much as 1/3 of the volunteers overseas, and in some ways the reduced terms and benefits available in the first assignment are a rite of passage reinforcing the level of commitment of the volunteer to the MSF movement and ethos.

Quite simply, there is a unique atmosphere in an agency sending committed volunteers, and a very special ambience of shared commitment and solidarity.

Remuneration - In the humanitarian sphere, most of the workers are not volunteers in the dictionary sense, but they are undoubtedly volunteering their skills and themselves in support of a cause they believe in, and without expectation of reward (Note - this refers to reward in its broadest sense, and not simply financial reward).

They receive benefits, but these are limited, and they receive field-based allowances and accommodation in most cases. However, many agencies have volunteers who are placed on employment contracts, and are effectively full-time employees on fixed term contracts, even if the levels of remuneration are those which might apply to volunteers on a volunteer agreement. The tendency towards employment contracts has been necessary because of recent changes in European employment law, which for example would be unlikely in the UK to recognise volunteers receiving remuneration in the UK as anything except employees, who would therefore be subject to all legislative benefits in regard to their employment (such as minimum wage legislation, holidays, redundancy etc.).

The implications of these changes may be substantial in future years, because an employment contract substantially changes the relationship between the volunteer and the agency - not only practically through liability for benefits, welfare costs and possibly income tax, but also philosophically because of the change in the nature of the working relationship through the contract.

In a network such as MSF:

- Different approaches are taken by different Sections
- A volunteer on a first assignment would be on more restricted terms than a volunteer with

previous experience. This would involve a volunteer agreement, and the payment of an allowance (or stipend)

- After six months or one year, the ‘volunteer’ would receive a more substantial allowance, or be placed on an employment contract, and would receive a salary (similar in size to the allowance).

In both cases above, the worker is a volunteer but their status in the two regimes is different:

- The level of social welfare cover which is possible for the volunteers in the two categories may be different
- The stipend volunteer agreement is not a contract and the rights of both parties to the agreement are not the same. For example, the volunteer is not committed in a contractual way and may exercise choice
- The employment contract means that, in law, the volunteer is subject to all aspects of employment law, and also to the protection it affords

With 18 Sections providing volunteers to five operational Sections, and more than five different countries’ legal and employment systems operating, the level of complexity in terms of differing regimes of employment and volunteer agreements is immense, particularly in maintaining equity between groups of volunteers.



Medair, also actively encourages first missions. In the first year the volunteer is, in effect, training, and contributes financially to his/her travel costs, with Medair covering subsistence and accommodation. In the second and further years the volunteer receives an allowance which increases with experience gained with Medair, (but is not linked to level of qualifications).

Levels of remuneration

Whatever the structure, the volunteer receives considerably less than a fully contracted aid worker. However, the volunteer agencies are flourishing and are recruiting more and more volunteers and the absolute level of remuneration is not a controlling factor in attracting new volunteers, or in retaining experienced ones.



For example:

- MSF recruits around 3,000 volunteers a year, but receives applications from about 10 times this number of qualified people

Responses to the survey for this report indicate that:

- The volunteer agencies have the same problems attracting, keeping and developing senior field managers, but do not generally have problems recruiting or retaining other grades
- The volunteer agencies do not see themselves competing against the agencies which pay staff more, but they compete against each other
- The volunteer agencies do not find that the level of payment is a controlling factor in attracting or retaining staff and volunteers

The host-salary model

Perhaps the largest UK agency sending volunteers within this category is VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas), which sends approximately 2,000 people on international volunteering assignments each year.

Profile

VSO in brief

Approximately 2,000 volunteers (recruited primarily in the UK, Canada, and the Netherlands, contracted to overseas partner organisations. Volunteers are experienced professionals on two year assignments.

Based on a local salary equivalent, an allowance is paid by the partner agency. VSO has a very comprehensive package of benefits designed to support the volunteer overseas, through insurance, a range of grants including a substantial resettlement allowance and welfare support in the field and from UK. VSO also ensures that volunteers rights and employment status is maintained at home, through payment of social welfare contributions.

VSO recruits over 100 volunteers in Kenya, Philippines and also Uganda in an expanding programme of recruitment of Southern volunteers.

VSO receives seconded business professionals from partner businesses in a structured secondment programme overseas, and also sends young people aged 18-25 overseas for shorter periods (10-12 months) in a Youth for Development programme.

Key features:

- A large established development agency with comprehensive induction, selection, pre-departure training and learning systems
- A printed Volunteer Handbook of exemplary quality, together with a CD-based Programme Staff Handbook which comprehensively covers

every aspect of programme policy, administration and guidance for field offices and volunteers - an exceptional resource. Includes a very interesting and useful self-audit tool which includes checklists to ensure policies and procedures are in place

- Recruits committed and mature professionals who are committed to long term development - probably working for a limited period before resuming career, but also a significant source of younger development professionals who may move on to other agencies

Generally the experience of volunteers is seen as a very positive addition to their experience by employers, which contrasts to the situation with medical staff whose experience with medical agencies overseas is often seen as negative.

Many smaller agencies also exist in the UK which work on a similar model - for example, Skillshare International, International Service, CIIR (Catholic Institute for International Relations), and ICD (International Cooperation for Development) for which 92 volunteers worked with 76 different local organisations in 12 countries in 2001.

There is a network which links the work of these agencies - the BVALG (British Volunteer Agencies Liaison Group). Membership includes VSO, International Service, ICD, CIIR and BESO (British Executive Services Overseas). (BESO provides volunteers for shorter periods, but these volunteers are more mature and experienced professionals often towards the end of their career). In total some 3,000 volunteers are sent to 80 countries worldwide. British Government funding of £39.5 million supports these agencies, of which VSO received £33 million in 2002 - representing 75% of DFID's total funding and 80% of VSO's total income.



Implications for HR and the study:

It is disappointing that there appears to be little interaction and exchange between these agencies and the other agencies involved in relief and development and the networks which service them. They have much to contribute, and to benefit - not least in sharing experience and learning, but also in relation to recruitment of new staff and returned volunteers. Sadly, of these agencies, only VSO provided information for this survey.

The volunteer who pays

Although outside the main scope of this study, it is also valuable to mention another group of

volunteers - those who actually pay to undertake the assignment. There are several entirely different groups of volunteers within this category, including the missionary and the eco-volunteer.

The **missionary agencies** send clergy, teachers, health and development workers overseas for both short and long periods. For the shorter periods, the bulk of the costs are normally covered by the church sponsoring the missionary or the missionary him/herself. The costs for a one year placement are estimated at £3,950. The person would be linked with a church or mission overseas.

Profile

CMS - Church Missionary Society

CMS sends young people (to age 30) overseas on short term (up to 18 months) on self-financing assignments with local partner churches, and approximately 150 (primarily British) mission partners overseas each year, (and organises for 20 overseas missionaries to work in the UK). Mission partners receive an allowance and CMS covers the cost of accommodation, education, health care and pensions. The normal period of assignment is between four and six years.

Profile

Leprosy Mission International (UK)

The Leprosy Mission International (UK) sends professional health workers overseas to 28 countries - including some medical electives, short assignments for newly qualified workers, and longer assignments (one - two years) for experienced professionals. For all short-term assignments, the worker is expected to cover the bulk of the costs.

Like CMS and The Leprosy Mission, USPG has a similar range of opportunities for missionaries, some of which are paid, and others require financial contribution from the person. Clergy, teachers, nurses, trainers and other skills are provided to partner churches requesting support.

The above represent a small number of what is a relatively significant number of agencies, and a substantial number of people¹⁸.

The **expedition** is a relatively new phenomenon where non-technically qualified people are able to go all over the world and work in a supervised way on development projects with local or international organisations. The volunteer pays for the costs of the assignment and also generally contributes financially to the project, as well.



This group is mentioned within this study as an important group of committed people who will have been exposed to the developing world and who may be a potential source of staff and volunteers for humanitarian work. In addition, the mechanism is a potentially important way in which young people gain first exposure to development and to need.



Earthwatch Institute with offices in USA, Europe and Australia sends over 4,000 people on expeditions in 45 countries, and since 1972 has involved over 50,000 people in field research in ecology, zoology and archaeology. The trips are not tourism. The volunteer pays a share of all costs and also for his/her transportation.

Raleigh International sends young people (up to 25 years) on expeditions which involve community development, environmental and an adventure project component. Expeditions are fully inclusive, and the person is expected to pay approximately Å4,000 to join an expedition. Raleigh International links with well-established development organisation partners in the field, for example, ActionAid, World Vision, SOS Children's Villages etc.

With large numbers of committed young people becoming involved in these programmes, and raising the funds for them, there is scope for considerably more engagement with the agencies of the humanitarian sector.

The volunteer of international solidarity model

A substantial number of the agencies sending volunteers overseas are based on a system which has its basis in the French and Belgian international volunteer systems, (and a similar mechanism also applies in Italy in Spain). The relevance of the system is that it is very successful, and unlike the situation pertaining in other countries provides a unified framework for management of volunteers in different organisations. The system has also been applied in other countries in various forms, and the background to the application of the system may be unclear.

To provide an insight into the way the system works, description is given below of the principles of the system as it is understood to apply in France - and similarly in Belgium although the systems will have national differences. Note - the Belgian volunteer is called a cooperant, which is a much less confusing term than volunteer, particularly when the terms and conditions of appointment of a volunteer vary so significantly.

The association

Anyone who visits other NGOs offices recognises that there is a unique atmosphere, e.g. in MSF, Médecins du Monde or Handicap International, and perhaps this is partially explained by the fact that NGOs (Associations) in France are based and governed on a different model than the Anglophone charity concept. For example a volunteer working within an Association is a member of the Association, and by joining is committing him/herself to the ethos and mission of the organisation. He/she is a shareholder in the mission of the organisation, and there is an obligation that the members are given the opportunity to be consulted or even to challenge policy at a General Assembly (in much the same way as a shareholder in a business).

By comparison, many of the agencies in other countries do not have this concept of membership or shareholding, except perhaps in the case of the faith-based agencies where a fundamental commonality in belief and ethos links volunteers and staff.

The level of commitment is particularly strong in the VSI agencies, partially linked to the nature of the organisation as mentioned above, partially to the concept of solidarity on which involvement is based, and partially to the system in which people work.

The French NGO sector

A recent study by the Commission Cooperation Développement¹⁹ reviewed 157 French NGOs sending volunteers overseas, and the following are some of the key findings of the study:

- 157 agencies with total budget (2001) of Å700 million
- Income from private sources of Å440 million and official sources of Å273 million (Official funding support has tripled over the last 10 years)
- Only 8.4% of funding comes via the French government, but 17% from the EU
- The 157 agencies sent 2,656 volunteers overseas, who worked with 16,164 salaried local staff and 3,397 local volunteers
- Only 18 agencies have an annual income > Å10 million. 86 have an income of Å1 million or less.
- 75% of total income is taken by 20 agencies and 12 of the 20 largest agencies are part of international networks

Several agencies reported in 2002 that obtaining funding from official sources was more difficult, involving a substantial funding deficit in at least one case.

According to statistics published on Coordination Sud's website²⁰:

- A total of 2,028 VSI volunteers sent by 30 French agencies in 2001
- Of these VSI volunteers, six agencies sent 1,696 volunteers
- Approximately ¾ of the VSI volunteers were aged between 25 and 34 (in 2002)

The report of a 2003 conference²¹ describes in further detail the NGO sector in France and the UK, compares them, and discusses perceptions of NGO legitimacy, relationships with Government and relations between agencies in North and South.

The French international volunteer system

Each year over 2,500 volunteers are sent by French agencies within a system based on the statute of *volontaire de solidarité internationale* which was created in 1986 as a legal framework for sending volunteers overseas, where previously there had been no legal basis for such volunteers, which fell between the frameworks for 'benevoles' or the employed.

The original decree was replaced by a more complete version - the *decret 30.1.95*. By this decree, the volunteer is guaranteed certain benefits, and obligations are placed on the sending agency. In addition, subject to certain conditions, the French government contributes towards the cost of the assignment. The agency must be recognised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the recommendation of the Commission du Volontariat (FONJEP).

The volunteer must only receive an indemnity for subsistence, which is not, in any event, remuneration for their activities, nor for their skills and competences, but permits them to live to a decent standard. The agreement is not a contract of work and does not arise from a right to work.

- The volunteer and dependents receive social coverage including sickness, maternity, invalidity, death, accident at, or illness through, work, old age pension, as well as complementary health cover and repatriation insurance. Benefits include the right to unemployment benefit on return from mission, in particular for people who left employment to

go overseas, who receive benefits at the level they would have been entitled to before leaving

- The volunteer receives an indemnity covering subsistence, which depends on the cost of living in the country of assignment
- The volunteer receives training prior to assignment
- The volunteer receives (for a two year agreement) a reintegration allowance of $\text{€}3,600$

The Government contributes to the agencies management costs, training costs, pays for the reintegration allowance, and contributes to the cost of social security coverage.

The programme is open to adults of French or EU nationality, who, strongly motivated, go 'bénévolement'²² to make his/her skills available to partners or populations which expressed the need in foreign countries, for a fixed period of minimum one year, with a recognised organisation in an emergency or development situation.

Not all agencies participate in this system, and not all volunteers fall within it either - if the volunteer or assignment does not meet the conditions (e.g. an assignment of less than one year), or the agency chooses a different system, as is the case with MSF France which sent 949 volunteers and staff overseas in 2001, of which only 59 were VSI on *Decrét 95* terms - the remainder were either volunteers outside the scheme (which comprised the majority), or salaried expatriates, (which were primarily senior managers, but also termed volunteers).

There is currently a process under way to assign the basis for VSI in law, and update the *Decrét 95* and its interpretation. Agencies are welcoming the recognition in law of the status of volunteer, that the volunteer remains outside employment, and the fact that the system would apply to volunteers leaving for assignments of six months up to six years, but there are concerns that it has to be applied universally, restricting the individual agency's flexibility, and that it does not ensure rights to unemployment benefit on return.

A similar system exists in Belgium, described in the *Guide Pratique du Coopérant ONG*²³.

The great advantage of the system is that a framework exists, which even if it is occasionally adapted to suit an agency's needs, does provide the volunteer with a clear set of generic benefits, a Government Commission to oversee it (FONJEP) and creates strict obligations on the sending

agencies to provide adequate management, training and coverage while the volunteer is away, as well as maintaining rights to benefits when the volunteer returns home. Such a framework does not exist in the UK, or in many other countries, and might be a very useful mechanism for ensuring some form of coherence within the sector. For the agencies themselves, the framework provides for Government financial support for sending personnel overseas, which also contrasts with the UK where the proportion of Government support to the agencies sending volunteers (e.g. VSO) has dropped in recent years.

However, there are also problems, not least the lack of clarity of the status of the 'volunteer' in relation to tax and employment laws in Europe which are increasingly becoming standardised, and do not recognise a special status of volunteer. Dealt with in more detail in handbook 2, examples of the problems include:

- Status of volunteer not recognised in law
- Differences between systems for people coming from different countries
- The effect and implications of minimum wage legislation
- A volunteer agreement versus a contract of employment

For the larger agencies, such as MSF and Handicap International, where other countries also provide volunteers, there have been problems in managing equity between international systems, and also difficulties in applying policies which are really based on the French legal system in an international context. While this has been manageable in the past, not least because each country could work independently, this is more difficult as the level of European integration increases.

The faith-based agencies

There are literally thousands of faith-based agencies, of every shape and size involved in every aspect of international work, and this study cannot consider them in detail. However, there are certain features of the group which have bearing on the people who work in them, the way the agencies themselves work, and the potential problems they both face.

Inevitably, because of the European focus of this study, and the long history associated with Christian agencies involvement internationally, this section refers more to agencies based in

Christianity than other faiths. This is unfortunate but reflects the fact that little is known of the international humanitarian activities of other faiths. This is an area where study is urgently required, and much greater knowledge gained of the work of other faiths. In the context of recent world events this is particularly true of the Islamic faith with which the humanitarian sector should be actively engaged in developing understanding and interaction. M. Osman of Islamic Relief, for one, has described the special role which Muslim agencies can play in co-operation with other agencies in accessing Muslim culture and communities in co-operation with other agencies and faiths²⁴.

Profile

Islamic Relief

In the UK, Islamic Relief, founded in 1984, is a successful NGO, that has experienced considerable growth in recent years

- An international network with offices in 14 countries
- Turnover in 2002 was Å23.5 million, the great majority of which is from public support and donations, not institutional funding
- Over 2,000 nationally recruited staff working in field offices in 18 countries

Funding

The overwhelming feature of the faith based agencies is the enormous potential for fundraising that they are able to access through partner churches and congregations. Some detail about World Vision exemplifies this:

Profile

World Vision International

Employs 18,000 people, and received income of Å0.8 billion in 2002, 80% of which was voluntary income. Has a worldwide network comprising 65 national affiliates contributing Å381 million in income. Works in 96 countries with an estimated 85 million people.

World Vision UK

Received income (2002) of Å39 million, over 70% of which was voluntary unrestricted income

Implications for HR and the study

Agencies with such a high level of voluntary income are insulated from the pressures of competition for official funds, and are also able to use voluntary income as a lever to obtain earmarked counterpart funding from donors.

The income is much more predictable as it is invariably coming from a committed funding base, and not necessarily subject to the changes associated with competitive fundraising from the public.

Faith-related basis of work

It is of note that World Vision is not linked to a particular church or denomination, unlike most other faith-based agencies and works in the field with staff and communities of many cultural and religious persuasions. Many of the other faith-based agencies concentrate their support base at home within a single faith or denomination, and their overseas work with partner churches and missions of the same faith.

Some countries, notably within the Asian subcontinent and some Islamic countries are suspicious of faith-based agencies which they might consider to have evangelical or proselytising objectives. This has reinforced a more general suspicion that aid agencies and their staff are representing 'Western values, faiths or religious norms.' Because there is a lack of regulation of the humanitarian sector as a whole, and no boundaries to the work undertaken, the reputation and perceived independence of faith based agencies has been undermined, which has in some cases placed agencies and staff at risk and has restricted access to people who could have benefited from their assistance.

As part of larger international networks

Agencies which represent a relatively small constituency are able to work within larger international frameworks - for example, through the World Council of Churches, Caritas Internationalis, CRS, LWF, LWR etc in much the same way as the Red Cross, benefiting from the organisational capacity, reputation and financial and skills base when developing its own profile, funding base and activities.



For example, DanChurchAid carries out its own humanitarian de-mining programmes, but otherwise works internationally through local partner organisations or ACT with regional offices in Southern and Eastern Africa, South Asia and Latin America and country offices in a further four countries.

Other agencies are the regional base of a larger international network, and are able to access programme linked donor funding as well as general fundraising via the public, and in addition

can access skilled personnel not based in the organisation's home country.

Profile

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF Europe)

MAF Europe are a regional focal point for a larger worldwide network providing aviation services operating almost 150 aircraft in approx. 40 countries. MAF Europe utilised 28 aircraft in 9 countries to transport over 19,000 passengers, involving a total of 66 international and 180 locally employed staff. 26 international staff are British, the remainder of 11 different nationalities, all employed and funded by the 10 sponsoring MAF groups in Europe, (terms linked partially to costs in country of assignment, and partially on home-based norms).

The people

Are there features of the people involved in humanitarian assistance that influence management and performance in humanitarian programmes?

The report has already considered the diverse nature of the agencies that send people overseas, and has highlighted some of the features associated with the people themselves. This section of the report discusses the different types of people who work overseas, and where this has a bearing on the way agencies work, or the effectiveness of what they do.

Historically, evaluations have often identified weaknesses in human resources management and procedures, and the level of skills and experience of staff as central to the failings in emergency programmes. For example staff were not there on time, they lacked experience or skills and they were inadequately prepared and managed.

In truth, the vast majority of staff and volunteers in almost every agency are committed hard working professionals who are undertaking extraordinary tasks in very difficult, and often dangerous, circumstances, with limited resources with people in desperate need, and are probably achieving miracles in the circumstances. As ALNAP's review of programme evaluations stated²⁵:

First, the majority (approximately 75 per cent) of the programmes evaluated were implemented by NGOs. Over recent years humanitarian NGOs have been criticised, at times strongly, by the media

and other observers. While such criticisms may have been warranted in the particular cases, the overall evidence is that NGOs generally perform well in providing assistance 'on the ground'.

Second, much of this achievement appears to have been due to the quality and commitment of the staff employed by humanitarian agencies. The sense one gains from the reports and the overall assessment, is that it is the quality and commitment of the staff that compensates for the inefficiencies and failing of the sector in its operations, and enables 'the job well done' verdict. Yet, we know from the evidence presented in section 2 that the sector's record in its treatment of those same staff is often poor, with low investment in skills development and inadequate training provision, all factors that contribute to the high attrition and turnover rates in the sector. For the performance of a sector to be dependent on a continuous supply of willing and able staff prepared to 'give it their all' for a few years and then drop out to work in sectors that offer a more stable and secure lifestyle cannot be sustainable. It is certainly not conducive to increased professionalism and the development of a strong learning culture.

Where failings exist, they are much more likely to be because of the external context, the local environment and available resources, and the weaknesses of the humanitarian system, rather than the failings of staff.

For this, they are usually underpaid, often have little job security, and are often at a disadvantage (career-wise) when they return home. Yet thousands upon thousands of people believe that they can help and do - that is a real tribute to the commitment and professionalism of the aid worker.

*Aid workers as amateur enthusiasts are a dying breed. Increasingly they are being replaced by highly competent professionals, who work to agreed sector-wide standards and are monitored by donors who demand high levels of accountability and cost-efficiency.*²⁶

The modern aid worker is in many cases much more technically skilled than his/her predecessors, and is much better prepared, briefed, managed and cared for. But there is variability in the standards applied, not least because of the degree to which agencies have the resources and systems centrally, and the degree to which funders will support initiatives dealing with HR issues.

But there are also new skills that are needed, some identified in an article by Hugo Slim, as long ago as 1995, and still as relevant today²⁷:

...a range of key skills required by today's relief workers:

- Informed political analysis
- Negotiation skills
- Conflict analysis management and resolution
- Propaganda monitoring and humanitarian broadcasting
- A broader understanding of vulnerability
- The moral skills required by today's humanitarian practitioner if they are to work out a new model of humanitarian identity and positioning which supersedes the traditional but devalued notion of neutrality

Finding people with the technical skills and experience is difficult enough, but people with a wide range of other competencies are very rare. Smaller agencies are not able to find them from within their own resources, nor can they develop them in-house without significant financial investment. They are therefore obliged to compete with other agencies for them.

Other required skills were identified by Hammock and Lautze²⁸:

Today's aid workers need to be professionals. They must be trained to understand the complex social, economic and political conditions of the societies in which they intervene, as well as the broader international context.

Staff and volunteers can never be too well prepared, equipped, skilled or trained, but it is possible that too much is being expected of them. One of the key questions for workers, trainers and for decision makers concerns the difference between information and analysis. Aid workers and managers don't need so much to know more, they need to understand more. By this is meant that it is the capacity and skills to analyse or to access analysis which is much more important than receiving more information, of which in most cases there is too much already!

How many times are experienced staff sent or sought, to compensate because basic management systems are not in place for a new manager to move straight in and be effective?

"The expectations on (staff) are still increasing. We demand so much under more and more



complex conditions and we still have not learned to praise or to say thank you”²⁹.

Aid workers in general

There are very few studies of the range and scope of staff in humanitarian actions - perhaps it is time that such a study was undertaken. It is very difficult to make clear assessments of the trends associated with aid workers and so this report will consider some of the broad trends which have affected the people working in humanitarian programmes.

Partnerships with local agencies

Many more agencies now work with and through local partner organisations - churches, NGOs and civil society organisations - and are much less directly operational in the field. As a result, they send many fewer expatriates than would be necessary in a traditional operational programme, and those expatriate’s skills would be more associated with developing capacity, management and monitoring. Where levels of expatriate staffing remain high, this is because the range of skills supplied is different - for example in specialist emergency relief programmes.

People In Aid has recently published a detailed analysis of human resources in NGO relationships, entitled *People in Partnership*³⁰. This is summarised in handbook 2.

Expatriates vs. nationally recruited staff?

Sending expatriates is an expensive business, and agencies are well aware of the added costs associated with an expatriate, whether on an employment contract or as a volunteer. Agencies are also keenly aware of the need to concentrate on supporting local structures wherever possible, and not setting up parallel systems. Overall, one would expect that expatriate numbers would be decreasing, and nationally recruited staff levels increasing, and although there is no empirical evidence, anecdotally this appears to be the case. However as the number of NGOs has increased substantially, there has surely been an increase in the number of staff in both categories.

Yet these ideals (supporting local structures) sometimes conflict with other priorities - for example, the need not to undermine overstretched health facilities in times of an additional medical emergency. Medical staff might also be much more involved in capacity building, sharing of expertise and a supportive or training

role than would have been the case in the past, and new roles requiring new skills might alter the profile of staffing.

What is more unlikely is that agencies are sending expatriates to undertake tasks which could just as easily be carried out by a staff member recruited locally, and financial and policy pressures are being put on recruiters for the more appropriate (and most cost-effective) recruitment method.

An increasing trend is for recruitment to be related not to the status of the staff member but to where the contract is held - in other words, whether the contract is made at national or international level.

ActionAid has approximately 1,700 staff recruited in-country and 20 expatriates in nominated positions on international contracts. Currently none are British.

For other agencies however, the nationality of senior country representative might always be that of the HQ of the agency - "Donors want to see their nationals working for ‘their’ money”³¹.

Several agencies within the study are redefining staff categories. For example:

Oxfam GB will have two categories of positions wherein all positions will be based on those on national contracts except for a cadre of international specialists who will be on international contracts. This represents a significant change in the approach to overseas HR management by Oxfam, and will represent a substantial investment in career development for the internationally-contracted group.

MSF France has undertaken a review of staffing and is seeking to redefine categories according to the time commitment likely to be involved - those categories which will be short term, such as doctors and nurses who would do one or two missions, and those which will involve a long term commitment which might be nationally recruited staff and management positions. MSF has also reassessed the way in which appointments are made to ensure that expatriate staff are not automatically placed in senior positions which might adversely affect the potential of national managers and staff to work or to develop.

Agencies are increasingly nominating a limited number of positions as international contracts, and then only recruiting internationally for other positions where there are specific circumstances which require it. Such occasions certainly exist, where there are particular political or cultural sensitivities, or increased risk associated with a



national appointment, or the position requires a particular level of international experience or organisational understanding. However this should be regularly reviewed to ensure it does not undermine good practice.

A study³² in 1999, asking whether expatriates are necessary, identified six key problems associated with this staff group:

- the frequent changes of expatriate staff
- tendency for local staff knowledge to be undervalued
- emergence of structural barriers in staff relationships
- lack of cultural sensitivity and awareness
- contradictions and lack of clarity in overall staffing policy
- tensions around lifestyles and living standards

Agencies would recognise all of these factors, and have undoubtedly invested in addressing them to some extent. The challenge is to encourage agencies to challenge their strategies and approaches, in the way that MSF France and Oxfam GB have done.

Short or long missions?

It is a common criticism of the emergency agencies that mission lengths are too short and aid workers are sent for too short a period, particularly in the early stages of a response to a disaster.

Some of the problems which lead to shorter mission lengths and which do lead to high turnover of staff are highlighted in the ALNAP Annual Review³³ and are adapted here:

- Funding pressures that lead to short term contracts, or for staff to be laid off after funding runs out
- The need to rotate staff, and provide leave and R&R in stressful conditions
- Replacing short term rapid response staff with longer term personnel
- Short term secondments from HQ to the field
- Use of short term consultants
- Preference of experienced staff for short term assignments
- Limited scope in small organisations for redeployment of staff elsewhere, because the vacancies do not exist

However, it is not possible to generalise, and there are numerous occasions when mission will be short - for example a rescue team after an earthquake might have completed its assignment in one week, or a surgeon performing urgent war surgical interventions in one month, and so it is difficult to make general conclusions about the appropriate length of assignments or contracts.

VSI volunteers, for example, are often contracted for 26 months, but may undertake four or five emergency assignments during that period.



However, neither does this mean that short assignments are universally sound, and there have rightly been criticisms in the past of 'humanitarian tourism'. The trend is inevitably for missions to be longer, not least because long-term emergencies demand longer presence in the field, but analysts should take care - a short assignment also has its place.

The report cites the evaluation of UNHCR's operation in Kosovo in 1999, where 21% of staff were deployed for one month, 45% were deployed for two months and 34% were deployed for longer periods.

The modern aid worker

For both salaried and volunteer staff, as many as 90% of applicants to work overseas will not get an assignment, and in most agencies, applicants will have to pass a testing selection process which might involve an extended period of assessment and basic training.

For example:

- Red Cross would require, before gaining access to the personnel register, attendance at a Basic Training Course, a standardised one week residential assessment and training course. Other agencies work in a similar way
- Of ten applicants to MSF only one will achieve an overseas mission
- Medair requires all applicants to attend a ten day Relief/Rehabilitation Orientation course (ROC), which is a combined information exchange and selection procedure

A study in 1997³⁴ found that while agencies reported receiving over 3,000 enquiries a week about international work, they actually recruited 2,603 expatriates during the year. The same agencies also reported that 372 posts could not be filled, suggesting that the right applicants and skills were not being accessed.

Once an applicant is informed that they have appropriate skills, there is no guarantee of an assignment, and many people might never go overseas - it is not easy to enter the humanitarian sector, even if the person already has the basic qualifications and experience.

There are various types of aid workers. Many will undertake one or two assignments and will then return to their previous work at home, and while this is valuable experience which is lost to the agencies, it is nevertheless very valuable experience for the aid worker.

This is particularly true of technical staff in the medical or engineering fields. In many countries, great progress has been made in arranging for staff to be released, often at short notice, by employers for humanitarian assignments, and RedR in the UK has done much to encourage employers' support of humanitarian assignments for engineers. However, for medical staff the situation remains difficult, and in the UK and France for example, prolonged absence from 'homebased' employment is seen as negative, and employers may even consider that humanitarian experience is a disadvantage to a practitioner's career.

It was reported that one surgeon in France has two CV's - one which lists international humanitarian experience and another which does not refer to it.

There is a second cadre of permanent aid workers whose careers are dedicated to the humanitarian agencies - working either in the field or with periods at headquarters. These often tend to become the senior managers and representatives and are the people who are most often disadvantaged by the temporary nature of assignments and the lack of career planning which affects many agencies. It is these people who the agencies most need to retain, but these people are increasingly subject to the financial burdens associated with families and children, and with the need to provide for their long term future as well as their immediate needs, education, welfare and safety.

In many agencies this group of people also represents the institutional memory of the organisation, especially where learning is not otherwise taking place. It is amazing how many times the 'old hand' is called on when a new emergency arises, or a crisis occurs.

Yet prior experience is not always the advantage it seems:

"Those who have solid experience with several different organisations often lack the ability to adjust to and adhere to the mandate of our particular organisation. Indeed we often find that the best people for top management positions have been working internationally in other sectors and have solid management experience, and for whom we are the first humanitarian organisation for which they have worked"³⁵.

There is also a third group, and one which is often underestimated - this is the group of people who do not want to work fulltime, or to stay with one agency, but who are interested in and willing to undertake assignments, if the right position or challenge arises. This group is a very important one, because many experienced people could be accessed from it, if registers could be efficiently kept, and if more time could be spent keeping contact with people who have returned from assignments.

The agencies need to understand more about the lifestyles of the people that they wish to attract and retain, (as well as those that they do not!), and adjust their systems accordingly. Many of the problems associated with attracting and retaining staff, and especially experienced ones, are management issues, and not due to issues such as the level of remuneration, stress, burn-out or lack of further job opportunities.

Staff turnover has always been a problem in the field, especially in large emergency programmes. It is nearly always cited as a barrier to effectiveness³⁶ - which it certainly is where lack of thought, planning or capacity leads an agency to send people for too short a period, and the aid worker is unable to make a significant or cost-effective contribution. But not everyone has to be in the field for the long term, and a short term positive contribution by an expatriate might be a lot more effective in the long run than long-term presence with no output.

Staff turnover is also necessary to enable new ideas and skills to enliven and sustain organisations - as was stated in a presentation to the EPN 5 seminar:³⁷

We will always have turnover

It is welcome!

Do we have enough?

Managed turnover requires greater support for staff to find new employment and agencies, such as ICRC and MSF France, are encouraging staff to move to other agencies or return to other sectors.

In addition, agencies are seeking to attract new people from outside the humanitarian sector, and Oxfam GB in particular has sought to bring people into the humanitarian sphere from other areas, such as the commercial sector. Larger agencies are also able to rotate staff from field to headquarters, but smaller agencies may not have the positions available.



The ICRC, for example, has invested heavily in making staff mobile (with contracts which are field-based for all positions, and which require mobility, and then reward it accordingly). The organisation has also established a career advisory service which monitors, supports and advises staff, and has also invested substantially in developing opportunities with potential employers after employment with the ICRC is completed³⁸.

Oxfam GB is also currently establishing a globally mobile cadre of expatriate staff, rather than programme based contracts.

Different forms of contract

Where an agency recruits only from its home-country base, there is normally only one contract, and only one set of employment laws governing the contract. However multinational agencies have the confusion associated with multiple legal and employment systems which can result in substantial differences between the terms and conditions (and rights and obligations) of staff living and working in different countries.

The different systems which are operated by agencies reflect this complexity.

Profile

The IFRC

For example, the IFRC in January 2003 had 327 expatriates in the field, of which 130 were on HQ-based contracts. The remaining 197 were on contracts issued by the National Society which provided the staff member on secondment to the IFRC.

The IFRC has a central role in promoting the harmonisation of terms and conditions so that they are broadly equivalent, but is not involved in setting remuneration levels, except in providing guidance. A form of equity is guaranteed, though, because the benefits received in the field are the same for every expatriate staff member.

The advantages for the IFRC are that they are not directly involved in the management of a large proportion of the delegates in the field, but do

have management responsibility for issues such as security, discipline etc, because the seconded delegates are subject to an agreement with the IFRC, which forms part of their contractual obligations.

For other international networks, such as Oxfam, the linkage between systems is looser, and terms and conditions are set by each partner - there is no direct relationship between the systems of Oxfam GB and Oxfam Solidarité in Belgium, for example.

MSF has, until recently, had five operational Sections recruiting and employing staff independently, but with considerable efforts and progress made to develop comparable systems, which has proved very difficult because of the different employment systems in the five countries.

In the end, agencies must compromise in their search for equality or equity, because the multinational agencies are too complicated for everyone to be treated the same as everyone else. Within Europe though the tax and employment systems are slowly becoming more coherent, and also more universally applied, and this will assist agencies eventually, but there are still huge differences in the systems and their application.

Not least of these is the question of whether income tax is payable, which differs between the countries - and can easily make a difference of up to 40% in salary.

The volunteer

It has been discussed above, that many of the agencies use the term volunteer to include staff who have more in common with employed salaried staff than 'true' volunteers, but this section of the report asks whether there are particular features of the system that affect his/her capacity and potential.

There is an immediate and fundamental difference between someone on a voluntary agreement and an employment contract, in that the voluntary agreement implies just that - it is the person's choice whether and what work they undertake. Therefore the volunteer has a much more substantial right of refusal of an assignment, and may terminate the agreement much more easily than an employee. This is a right that volunteers might guard jealously, and does not make it easy to schedule new

assignments, when the volunteer may simply choose not to take the assignment.

The host-based volunteer agreement

This applies mostly in development agencies, and in the UK to a group of agencies, the largest of which is VSO, which has 2,000 volunteers overseas. The agencies have a reputation for professionalism in preparing and managing the volunteers, and for detailed and comprehensive policy frameworks. Although primarily concerned with long-term development, many of the volunteers will still work in stressful situations or may find themselves working in conflict areas of some description.

The contract is with the agency which has requested the volunteer and not with the sponsoring agency.

Advantages of the host-based agreement are that most elements of human resources management can be handled at the most appropriate level, and are not subject to a legal system thousands of miles away. HQ managers can also limit their involvement to quality control, monitoring and policy development, rather than hands on micromanagement at a distance.

Volunteers receiving an indemnity

The VSI system and its equivalents elsewhere are hugely successful, and thousands of volunteers go overseas, often several times.

Profile

MSF

Analysis of the profiles of MSF (all MSF Sections) volunteers (on indemnity and salary) suggest the following in 2002:

- 34% of missions were first missions with MSF
- 25% of volunteers work with MSF for two years or more
- The average age of a volunteer is 35.7 years
- 51% of volunteers are women and 49% men
- Average mission length is seven months

MSF France in 2002

- sent 1,012 people of 64 nationalities overseas for 443 positions
- 40% of expatriate posts are management positions
- 1,993 nationally recruited staff positions, in 39 countries

This profile reflects a vibrant and healthy organisation, and together with the firm funding base and the large number of applications to work with MSF, suggest a strong future.

However, this is not the same for all agencies and there are possible problems both for individual organisations and for the group as a whole. At the group level, the problem is due to the very specific interpretation of volunteer status, which has both practical and philosophical implications. Taxation and employment systems do not recognise this status, and will increasingly consider such agreements as employment, and therefore subject to full employment legislation. Minimum wage levels would then apply, as would holiday and benefits entitlements. The VSI system would meet many of the legislative requirements anyway, but it would fundamentally change the basis for remuneration and benefits, and the whole concept of voluntarism on which the agency historically is based.

At the individual agency level, several agencies sending VSI volunteers reported a reduction in official funding receipts during 2002, and ACF and Handicap International both reported financial deficits in 2002.

Profile

ACF

- Income 2002 €41.5 million, of which 29% was EU (ECHO funding and 2.9% French government). 25% of funding was received in public donations
- Attracted 2,581 potential candidates for overseas work in 2002 and interviewed 495 for 108 positions filled
- 220 volunteer positions, of which 92% are VSI (Decret 95) working with 2,850 local staff in 19 countries
- Average age of volunteer 30.3 years and average experience with ACF of volunteers 25.4 months

Funding for the future is undoubtedly an issue unless the level of funding from the EU and/or the French Government can be increased in a sustained way. By comparison with agencies which pay full market rate salaries, this is a very cost-effective mechanism for providing medical and paramedical responses in emergencies, and especially in complex emergency situations.

Another issue might be the constitution of the allowance paid, which is structured, in MSF's case, on costs based at home, rather than the

subsistence which the Decret 95 provides for, and which might be prone to interpretation by the authorities as remuneration for employment, rather than subsistence in the field, which is covered by another allowance.

Medair operates an allowance based remuneration system, not based on the French model - but similar in some ways to the spirit of solidarity, Medair links the volunteer to 'Mission' and volunteers must be committed to the mission and values of Medair.

In the first year, (again similar in some ways to the French model), showing their commitment to the cause, the volunteer receives a basic package of support - accommodation, subsistence etc, but no remuneration except a small allowance of Å79 per month. Other costs, including air travel, are paid by the volunteer. After one year, the volunteer receives a more substantial allowance of between Å790 and Å1,200 depending on the period of service.

"We are currently consulting our staff to see if we should review the system. Surprisingly we get very little complaint regarding this matter although the package is quite basic."³⁹

Voluntarism vs. professionalism – a non-debate

The volunteers who work in the humanitarian sphere are in almost all cases highly skilled and experienced technical specialists, many of whom have substantial prior experience of working in difficult and dangerous situations, and often in conflict.

The quest for increasing the levels of professionalism in staff and systems and procedures plays an important part in driving forward our quest for continuing learning and improvement.

There is sometimes an implication that a volunteer is somehow less professional than an employed 'professional' aid worker. This is simply nonsense - the volunteer has simply chosen a different sort of organisation structure and system to work in.

The concept of volunteer as described in this report covers a wide range of different systems - many of which involve being paid, or even paying for the privilege of volunteering raises what is perhaps the greatest challenge to the volunteer ethos, and that is that the unique character of the volunteer risks being diminished, unless the particular characteristics of voluntarism can be

identified, disseminated widely and defended vigorously.

First missions, interns and electives

One of the key features of the volunteer agencies, has been the stated policy and priority to recruit a substantial percentage of volunteers on their first mission overseas.

MSF France aspires to 50% of volunteers being on first mission (currently 35%).

Other agencies such as Merlin (which has its roots in ex-MSF volunteers) was for ten years also strongly committed to first mission volunteers, but has now changed the policy.

Most other agencies try to recruit aid workers who already have overseas aid experience.

The problem arising is that fewer agencies are interested in sending inexperienced staff overseas, and funding agencies have been unwilling to fund investment in developing new staff in this way. Donors need to be encouraged to support staff development initiatives which benefit the sector as a whole.

ACTED requires post qualification five years experience of its team members, (of which there are 65 expatriates who are employed and receive salary) working with approx. 1,000 local staff in nine countries. ACTED also makes provision for unremunerated field assignments for newly qualified young people and students at the end of their course - 'postes de stagiaires'.

Even the largest agencies have struggled to develop programmes which could accommodate 'trainee' or first mission staff, and IFRC initiatives in the past struggled against the critique that these people were 'not qualified', or a waste of resources. Evaluators and analysts need to show a little vision too!

This also reflects a wider problem whereby humanitarian agencies are rightly challenged to improve quality and increase skill levels, are criticised when weaknesses are exposed, but are not receiving the financial and material support they would need to finance such initiatives. This is clearly wrong.

Very few agencies send unqualified aid workers, and rightly so, but one way in which agencies can develop young people with an interest in overseas work is to involve interns in short assignments in stable programmes. Other agencies, including Merlin, are sending medical students to established stable programmes in their elective

period. However, neither of these replace the contribution that can be made by qualified people in their first assignment and agencies should be supported in developing first missions as a means of bringing new talent and potential managers into the system.

Nationally recruited staff

Historically, staff recruited in the country of operation have been referred to as local staff or nationally recruited staff, both categories implying that the person is of a particular nationality or residence. This is increasingly not the case, and there is an increasing tendency to refer to the locus for the contract, rather than the status of the worker - hence nationally recruited staff or staff recruited for national positions.

The first and most significant problem which arises in trying to analyse nationally recruited staff - is that very little is known about them. The literature is very sparse, but even more surprisingly the agencies themselves often do not know basic information about their own staff. Indeed, a significant number of the agencies consulted within this study do not appear to have

Figure 16 - Staff recruitment

Agency	Intrn'l staff	Nationally recruited staff
ICRC	1,200	9,000
MSF Belgium	750	2,449
ITDG	0	450
Norwegian Refugee Council	55	700
Caritas Germany	19	0

basic statistics concerning their 'local' staff, let alone a database of their names, details, skills etc - the basics for an HR management system. As an employer, the duty of care would require basic information systems, and with quality and probity being controlled in most agencies at the HQ level, saying that this information is held locally is not enough. This may be a reflection of weak human resources management or practice - all agencies should have access to this strategically important information centrally.

One new director of an agency was informed by the interviewing panel for her job that the agency employed 83 people overseas, her induction trip alone led her to count over a hundred⁴⁰.

This section of the report looks at who the nationally recruited staff are, and the factors which influence their employment, potential and safety.

- Taking a selection of 24 agencies that replied to the questionnaire, and for which information is readily available, collectively they employed over 34,000 nationally recruited staff in 2002.
- The same 24 agencies had 4,446 international staff

The table is included to show the variation in agencies approaches and structures:

- ICRC is an agency fully staffing its own offices, with a specialist role and responsibility requiring large numbers of expatriate and nationally recruited staff
- MSF Belgium is operational, but has a lower proportion of nationally recruited staff
- ITDG is a development agency and has no expatriate staff, all positions being filled nationally
- Norwegian Refugee Council is a smaller agency with both international and nationally recruited staff
- Caritas Germany has no local staff - expatriates work within local partner organisations

The implications of this are that no broad conclusions can be made about whether more or less international or nationally recruited staff is better or worse. It depends on the nature of the organisation, and the nature of the work it carries out, and the way it is done.

A study in 1998 for International Health Exchange (now merged with RedR UK) sought to make an analysis of the issues affecting locally recruited staff and the trends likely in relation to their employment and development⁴¹.

The paper highlighted some of the constraints which negatively affected agencies capacities to expand their involvement with nationally recruited staff and to maximise their potential, and some of these will still apply - not least the problems which smaller agencies face without the resources, permanent presence, detailed systems and procedures etc. which the larger agencies are able to afford and maintain. The paper proposed that there should be a protocol (rather than a code) to which agencies would be encouraged to sign up committing them to engage with other agencies in the field and at HQ on issues of mutual concern in relation to HR. Also proposed was a simple focal point, perhaps at regional level, in major

emergencies for nationally recruited staff issues and their coordination, and lastly the paper proposed a mechanism should be considered to try and assist the smaller agencies in accessing and sharing experience and best practice.

Since the preparation of the study in 1998 much has changed and hopefully for many nationally recruited staff the situation has improved. Unfortunately, as outlined in this paper some things have changed for the worse, and nationally recruited staff are particularly disadvantaged:

- The level of risk is even greater for nationally recruited staff than expatriate, in many countries
- Human resources management still appears to be weaker for nationally recruited staff and recruitment, retention and skills development are not maximising potential
- The level of welfare available to nationally recruited staff is inadequate, not least in relation to health care, insurance, HIV/AIDS and pensions

Experience suggests that in all aspects of HR, the situation for nationally recruited staff will be worse than for internationally recruited and expatriate staff, and that even where progress is made, there remains much to be done. At a time when funding is more difficult to obtain, and competition is increasing, the potential for future overall improvement is not promising.

A book entitled "Human Resource Management Guidelines for Locally Employed Staff in Emergency Operations" was written for IHE four years ago, but publication costs could not be funded - a rather sad reflection on the funding agencies which were approached, some of which have continued to bemoan the inadequate level of human resources management in operations.

The 6th Meeting of the Emergency Personnel Network will be held in Barcelona in June 2004, and will be dedicated to issues relating to nationally recruited staff and is entitled "Managing and Developing Nationally Recruited Staff - Aiming for Equity"⁴².

Nationally recruited staff – a diverse group?

Just as the way agencies recruit staff varies a great deal, the roles which staff fill are equally diverse, and cover every aspect of casual labour, manual workers, administrators and management.

- Larger agencies and the development agencies tend to have nationally recruited staff at higher levels of management
- Emergency relief agencies tend to have more expatriate managers in senior positions

Staff recruited nationally include nationals of the country, but also permanent residents from outside, expatriates recruited in-country and also staff recruited at regional level, as for example occurred where Kenyan staff were recruited for operations in Southern Sudan.

However, many agencies have found problems associated with recruitment of different categories of staff, and some of these are:

- Governments in countries where emergencies are happening are increasingly restricting the recruitment of international staff. They will even consider non-nationals, resident expatriates and even refugees to be 'international' and will restrict and sometimes prevent their recruitment
- Assumptions that people from the same country or region will necessarily have much in common or work well together are very dangerous and great care should be taken to avoid potential conflicts

In summary, the range of positions occupied by nationally recruited staff, and the levels of responsibility are just as diverse as international staff, and where in broad terms nationally recruited staff are filling more senior posts than might have been the case years ago, there is still great potential for their roles to be expanded and their capacity and potential realised.

An international market

Particularly where agencies have been present for a long time, and nationally recruited staff have experience of senior management positions, they are also free to move between organisations, and even internationally. They are also commanding competitive remuneration, and agencies have undoubtedly found that the costs of employing experienced national managers can be similar to that of international staff, reflecting that there is an international market for such people.

There is a cadre of experienced nationally recruited staff - for example, thousands of nationally recruited staff work, or have worked with international agencies in most of the countries where emergencies have occurred. Many of them also had extensive skills and experience prior to this.

Much of this however is not exploited because the agencies are only employing the staff as long as they need them and can fund them, and after a year or so, the funding dries up, and staff are made redundant. Because there is no follow up, or systematic evaluation or reference, the person is not known about when the next emergency arises. Likewise (applying both to national and international staff) people who were unsuitable reappear and are reemployed the next time, without references, only to fail once again.

The internal market

Agencies with several thousand nationally recruited staff are able, if the management systems exist, to access a huge skills base within their own agency, and are much less dependent on external recruitment in the early stages of a new emergency than a small agency without such resources. However, the will and the resources to develop and manage such skills databases are still needed, and there is more potential for such mechanisms.

One advantage of such systems is that the provision of mechanisms to move upwards, in management terms, or outwards in agency terms, is a huge incentive for nationally recruited staff, and a very important factor in encouraging retention and loyalty.

The problem is often that very skilled and experienced people are used in dead-end boring jobs for long periods on relatively low pay - no wonder they leave to another agency that pays better or provides better opportunities.

Investing in local capacities

Much of the increase in the use of nationally recruited staff will represent the real investment in developing local capacities, as has been repeatedly sought in analysis⁴³ and evaluation⁴⁴. Almost every agency would be trying to invest in such capacity building, but is restricted by the available funding, and the rigid structure of programme financing.

There is still much to do, and the impetus is to:

- Change agency priorities to include stressing capacity building and nationally recruited staff issues
- Advocate to donors and funders to support HR-related initiatives
- Improve management systems and training and support structures

An important factor in some countries for recruitment of nationally recruited staff is their perception of the organisation's commitment to training them⁴⁵.

Care and welfare

Reviews have shown that the level of support and welfare provision for nationally recruited staff is often considerably less than that provided for international staff, for example in terms of health care, insurance and security management systems.

The level of health and welfare provision in most countries where humanitarian agencies work is often poor, and obtaining treatment is often expensive. Many agencies make provision for nationally recruited staff, but it is still the case that they are sometimes not covered by insurance, and little or no provision is made for emergency health care.

An issue which is of increasing significance is that of HIV/AIDS which may affect the staff member, with very serious consequences for dependent families, or may affect other members of the family. Agencies are having to consider provision of benefits to people who become chronically sick, perhaps through a special fund, Provident fund, support for families including possible costs associated with a funeral, payment of pensions etc. This is a growing problem in a number of countries and cannot be ignored. The agencies' responses to this survey did not mention HIV/AIDS as an issue of concern, which is very surprising, and somewhat disappointing, as it affects many of the poorest countries, in which the agencies are working, and is having a significant effect on nationally recruited staff. For example, in Southern Africa the incidence of HIV/AIDS is very high and agency staff are clearly being affected. The implications for the management and welfare of staff and their families are very serious indeed.

Pension provision for nationally recruited staff will be an increasing priority for agencies which are working long term in a country, as will very often be the case. National pension arrangements are in most cases inadequate and additional provision is sometimes a legal requirement, but should always be considered.

Insurance is also potentially a problem, especially in areas of conflict, where adequate insurance may not be available locally, or for specific activities, such as mine removal. One agency has recently reported that governments often require higher levels of insurance for nationally recruited

staff, for mine removal activities, than is normally the agency's policy.

Administrative and manual workers

Not everybody is a manager or aspires to be one, and the bulk of nationally recruited staff will inevitably be in casual, manual and administrative grades. They also need care and support, and capacity building, and are often forgotten.

They are also often the people most at risk from violence - the drivers, guards and tally clerks and the finance officer or the warehouseman.

Section 3

The external environment and human resources

It is the external environment which dictates, enables, empowers and feeds the international humanitarian system and, combined with local political and economic structures and resources, provides the framework for humanitarian agencies to operate, and for staff and volunteers to work.

Donors have tended to refocus towards areas of their specific strategic interest, towards the North, away from development towards emergency input, and away from chronic areas of conflict and suffering.

The humanitarian system is a diverse mix of agencies of every different size and area of interest, and is being challenged in regard to its legitimacy and effectiveness.

The work of staff and volunteers is dependent on the external framework and the effectiveness of the interaction between actors. The framework and coordination mechanisms are weak and unpredictable, and the levels of collaboration between the parts of the humanitarian system are variable. The situation of staff and volunteers is compromised, their true potential is not achieved and the risks they are exposed to are substantially increased.

This NGOs need to understand more widely the system they are part of, and to engage more often and more effectively with the other elements, and also to use this understanding to take advantage of opportunities for inter-agency collaboration that exist at all levels, including day to day field operations.

While much of the analysis in recent years has concentrated on complex emergency situations, much of the following section is also applicable to natural disasters, and the changes which have taken place in the international aid system have affected responses to natural disasters as much as conflict. In fact, the situation in natural disasters is often more acute, as donor resources and interest have been focused away from countries affected by natural disasters.

What does the external environment have to do with my organisation and human resources?

It has everything to do with it - and the potential of your agency and your staff to undertake their work effectively, efficiently and in safety is entirely dependent on both the international and national political, security and administrative frameworks. The problem is that, in recent years, the frameworks have altered hugely, and implementation of them has not been consistent or predictable. The environment in which humanitarian agencies are working has fundamentally changed - and not for the better.

Host governments are primarily responsible for the care and welfare of their populations. When and if they are unable to carry out their responsibilities, external assistance is often requested - through the United Nations, via donor nations and from the public in other countries. It is only generally possible to provide humanitarian assistance if the other elements permit and enable it. Recovery is achieved firstly by the affected people's own capacity to recover and by the host government's capacity and willingness to support them. To this is added external support - political, economic and technical, provided by the UN and the other governments, and of this assistance, humanitarian assistance forms only a small part.

What has been seen in recent years is a substantial realignment of the international mechanisms for engagement between countries, an undermining of sovereignty, changes to the nature and conduct of conflict, and radical alteration to the international system for humanitarian response.

The changing international context

Inter-state relationships

Since the end of the Second World War, the basis for international relations has been the sovereignty of the State and the development of mechanisms for mutual support of States, primarily (but not exclusively) through the United Nations. This engendered a form of international stability, whereby countries were deterred from challenging others - by the threat of a unified political, or even military, reaction from the 'international community'.

During the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, this stability has been lost, sovereignty has been repeatedly undermined and the United Nations and other political structures sidelined.

The response of the major financial powers to emergencies in other countries has been unpredictable and inconsistent. The traditional international response to an emergency through the United Nations and its agencies, even if funded by a small group of donor States, was seen to represent the wider intention of the world community of nations. Military intervention was usually in the form of peacekeeping initiatives, rather than direct military intervention (which after the experience in Somalia was undertaken much more rarely, especially in Africa) - a clear example of this reluctance being the response to the genocide in Rwanda and Burundi. However in recent years, in Somalia, Kosovo, former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and most recently in Iraq there have been significant military interventions often linked with humanitarian objectives. Such interventions have been outside the UN political system, and have often involved ad hoc coalitions of States. The question arises though, whether in the long term such interventions lead to improved conditions for the poor and vulnerable - as might be exemplified in the case of Somalia, Afghanistan or even Iraq.

On other occasions, there has been no external intervention and little evidence of any significant external pressure for cessation of hostilities, resulting in conflicts (and the suffering associated with them) continuing for years, such as occurs in Sudan, Burundi, DRC, Aceh, Chechnya etc.

The inconsistency and unpredictability of these responses has created:

- A lack of clarity for humanitarian agencies
- Confusion about the respective roles of the State, the United Nations, UN political and humanitarian agencies and especially NGOs
- Confusion about the role of, and relationships between, the military and the humanitarian agencies
- A situation where the status of humanitarian agencies and staff is undermined by the linkage of military intervention to humanitarian goals

In addition, large parts of the world, and in particular countries in the South and people of non-Christian faiths, feel that where there is an international response or intervention, it represents the strategic, political, economic or religious interests of a small group of countries, rather than an impartial international will, and that the agencies which implement the emergency response also represent that partisan position.

The effects on humanitarian agencies and their staff include:

- Aid agencies and staff (international and national) are not seen as impartial and lose the protection their traditional impartiality afforded
- Aid agencies and staff are directly targeted by belligerents because their presence, role and activities are not distinct from combatant organisations and activities
- Aid agencies and their staff work not during periods of calm or ceasefire, but during and around conflict and fighting thereby exposing themselves to even greater risk
- Nationally recruited staff suffer from all the effects above but are particularly badly affected, as they are often also perceived as 'colluding' with foreigners, or as potential targets for extortion

The changing nature of conflict

Whereas the end of the Cold War was expected to lead to stability and greater peace, the reverse has been true, and conflict has continued in many parts of the world.

The nature of conflict has changed. It is increasingly:

- Intra-State rather than inter-State
- Involving non-State armed groups, irregular troops and militias

- Centred on complex clan, tribal, religious and ethnic disputes
- Linked with attempts to control valuable natural, mineral or petroleum resources
- Characterised by the way in which civilians are terrorised, victimised and targeted in programmes of pre-meditated violence

There is also often no obvious means by which conflicts would be resolved. There is little external political or economic pressure for cessation or termination of hostilities, and there is no internal pressure as long as resources are available to the belligerent groups. As a result, States enter a form of conflict-based anarchy from which there is no obvious escape, as in the case of DRC or Chechnya. Such anarchic States are also relatively stable in themselves. The effect on the civilian population is often horrific and humanitarian agencies and staff are often involved not in rehabilitation or development activities, but in long running humanitarian assistance programmes which occur while latent conflict ebbs and flows, in an atmosphere of violence where staff and resources are themselves targets, and often with little or no donor financial support or protection.

A key lesson then is that humanitarian action cannot serve as a substitute for political, diplomatic and, where necessary, military action. The onus of responsibility must, first and foremost, be upon the political and diplomatic domain to address complex emergencies⁴⁶.

At the same time, the host government is unable to carry out its obligations to its own population. There are no resources for infrastructure or salaries and welfare, education and administrative systems collapse. The vulnerable are left unprotected. Far from being an auxiliary to government, the humanitarian agencies are replacing government structures and not contributing to their capacity.

The effects on humanitarian agencies and staff include⁴⁷:

- The provision (or denial) of humanitarian assistance has become an element of the conflict itself, and the agencies and staff as contributory to the conflict. The presence or absence of aid agencies and staff, and the potential to distribute assistance are heavily controlled by the belligerents
- Agencies and staff work in highly complex political and social environments and need a much greater level of understanding and

analysis of the context of the conflict - not always available to them

- Indiscriminate acts of violence are responsible for deaths and injuries among humanitarian agency staff and volunteers
- Agencies are unable to negotiate or advocate for humanitarian space, or for the pre-conditions required to provide humanitarian assistance safely
- Successful negotiation of access and space requires much greater co-operation and coherence between the various agencies than is evident in most complex emergencies

The complexity of conflict

Wars have always been complex, but the humanitarian worker was often protected from the confusion and cultural intricacies of what was happening. However with conflict becoming more arbitrary, more anarchic and based more among and involving the local population and civilians, the humanitarian worker is no longer isolated from the cultural and social complexities, and much more is demanded of him/her.

As long ago as 1996, Hugo Slim was advocating for a much more substantial level of conflict analysis among NGOs and proposed nine key areas of analysis:

- The impact of the conflict on the population
- Causes
- Patterns and phases
- Human insecurity
- Power
- Change
- Conflict-related behaviour
- Ethical analysis
- NGO Organisational Analysis - which "involves an NGO looking inwards at itself and examining the attitudes and skills base of its staff, as well as how the organization cares for its staff. Working in conflict makes a number of demands on NGO staff which require a particular personal and organizational attitude to be developed for such operations"⁴⁸

Slim goes on to describe the elements of personal flexibility which are so important in staff, the measures necessary for staff protection and their emotional health, and also some of the transferable skills which are needed.

The changing humanitarian context

The same lack of clarity and predictability that applies to the international system also applies within the humanitarian sphere, and the basis on which aid is given and administered has also changed radically in the last decade. Whereas at the beginning of the 1990s, for all its failings, the humanitarian system functioned in a recognisable manner, the situation now is completely different.

The humanitarian sector itself has experienced explosive growth, in an uncontrolled and unaccountable fashion, and now includes thousands of agencies doing hundreds of tasks in dozens of different ways - tasks which are often also carried out by other entities with entirely different agendas.

The aid policies and interests of the major donors, on which the humanitarian agencies depend have also changed, with increasing pressure on budgets affecting many, and realignment of policy affecting others.

Humanitarian and development agencies have been the subject of increasing scrutiny and challenge, both for the quality and impact of their activities and also for their legitimacy, especially in regard to advocacy and lobbying.

How does this affect staff?

In many parts of the world, agency staff struggle in countries in permanent crisis, and resources which should be promoting development are being used for emergency and rehabilitation assistance, often with little external interest or support from donors. The agencies themselves are struggling to adequately fund their programmes and the core budgets which fund and support staff. The potential for investing in human resources management and development is not there because of inadequate funds. Staff and volunteers are overworked, under-resourced and overstretched, leading to stress and disillusionment.

Nationally recruited staff tend to be the most disadvantaged - laid off, or made redundant as funds become scarce, and those who remain tend to be supported less well than their international counterparts.

The humanitarian sector

This study concerns primarily the hundreds of international humanitarian organisations which work in relief and development situations, and many of which might be partners of ECHO. The number of such agencies has increased dramatically over recent years, and the scope and scale of the work which the agencies carry out has changed dramatically.

This analysis concentrates on the agencies which work internationally in emergency situations, without including the thousands of community-based organisations and local NGOs which exist throughout the world. However, the range of international organisations involved in emergency relief is wide.

- UN humanitarian agencies and organisations, including UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, OCHA, WFP, FAO, WHO, IOM
- International organisations, including the Red Cross movement - the ICRC, IFRC and almost 200 national societies
- Emergency relief organisations, representing some 260 of the 3-4,000 international northern international NGOs⁴⁹

The next section of the report describes the diversity of the humanitarian sector. How agencies manage the interface between the various elements of the sector plays a critically important part in determining how effectively staff and volunteers can carry out their work. It is therefore critically important for staff and managers to understand how the system works and play their part in supporting it.

Diversity and identity

In order to be effective with such a diverse group of agencies involved, there must be effective coordination and the record for coordination between the agencies listed above is not positive, especially between firstly the UN agencies, secondly the UN agencies and the NGOs and thirdly among the NGOs themselves. On specific occasions there has been remarkably successful co-operation and coordination, often depending on the considerable talents of the individuals involved.

“The simple reality is that within the diverse UN family, no element has adequate authority to command, coerce or compel any other element to do anything”⁵⁰.

The structures for coordination are not systemic and not universally applied or supported, and the relationships between the players have too often been based on suspicion, or competition.

To the group of agencies outlined above must be added the huge range of other agencies involved in emergencies, and especially in conflict situations:

- The military - including belligerent forces, UN peacekeepers, UN military and police, security organisations, private security agencies and guards
- Human rights organisations and monitoring groups
- Local community based organisations, NGOs and human rights organisations
- Commercial and business subcontractors

The degree of coordination with and between these actors has also been limited, and variable. Of particular significance, is the management of the interface between the humanitarian and the military, especially where recent direct military interventions have taken place, such as Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

To the above list should also be added the increasing number of commercial interests, mineral prospectors, adventurers and others with dubious interests in exploiting the crisis.

How does this affect my agency and people on the ground?

The diversity of the agencies involved in emergencies is not only a strength, but a major weakness. Emergencies are by definition confused situations, and if there is not clear definition of respective roles and responsibilities, and a coordinated strategic and operational framework within which to operate, then the risks which agencies and their staff face are increased substantially.

In conflict situations this is even more important, and where there is not clear 'space' between the humanitarian agencies and the political and military, then humanitarian staff are exposed unnecessarily to danger, with little protection. Nationally recruited staff and volunteers are even more exposed.

It also challenges agencies to ensure that staff understand the way that interactions should take place with the various other actors, and increases the pressure for better induction, briefing,

information exchange and for procedures and management systems to be effective.

Historically, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) has been the legal basis for intervention in humanitarian situations, and the provision of assistance to victims of conflict has been governed by the Geneva Conventions. The diversity of the sector, and the changes which have taken place in international relations have both undermined the basis for intervention, and the influence of the Geneva Conventions. International Humanitarian Law is not the sole preserve of the Red Cross or the military, and every humanitarian worker should have a basic understanding of humanitarian law, and should be taught a commitment to the basic principles of humanitarian intervention. IHL is still the primary means by which protection is afforded, and its provisions, definitions and meanings should be understood and defended by us all, whatever our role within an agency.

Changing aid policy

The overall level of aid has remained largely constant over the last 10 years, but has fallen as a proportion of gross national product (GNP). In 2000, EU countries gave Å20 billion in aid, or 0.32% of their GNP. A decade ago, EEC countries gave 0.45% of their GNP⁵⁴. However, the proportion which has been spent on humanitarian assistance has increased over the same period, and represents Å4.7 billion of the total Å47 billion spent on aid worldwide.

ECHO is a very substantial bilateral donor and whereas the proportion of funding provided through NGOs has varied for many donors, ECHO has steadily increased the proportion of humanitarian assistance channelled through European NGOs, reaching 67% of its budget in 2000⁵².

Donor policies

Much of the world's aid is provided by a very small number of donors, of which the United States is by far the largest, and as a result the donors are able to substantially influence aid policy - where the aid goes, for what and delivered by which agency.

Approximately one-third of all humanitarian assistance is provided by the United States and the top five donors provide two-thirds between them⁵³.

Bilateralism

Donors have tended in the last decade to transfer aid away from host governments and to channel assistance through NGOs. They have also tended to reduce the level of support channelled through major multilateral organisations (of the UN system). Indeed, the recent situations in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown the weakness of the UN system, not least because of its dependence on funding from the US Government.

Several countries channel a large proportion of their humanitarian assistance through the NGOs - e.g. USA 60%, and Denmark 36%. In addition, NGOs receive substantial funding via the UN agencies, particularly UNHCR which channels over 40% of its income through NGOs, and UNICEF.

ECHO has also been very supportive of European NGOs over a long period, and this has resulted in non-EU based agencies opening offices within Europe in order to access EU funding.

In 2002, ECHO total humanitarian expenditure was Å538 million, in 1,103 contracts.

62% (Å330 million) was granted to European NGOs, 27% to UN agencies, and 8% to international organisations.

Half the budget was received by 20 large agencies, and five partner agencies received a total of Å162 million between them.

Restricting funds - Donor assistance has been restricted for areas of specific strategic interest. For example, Eritrea in 1998 received less than Å1.5 for every person affected by the emergency, whereas Yugoslavia received Å130⁵⁴.

Humanitarian assistance figures include provision for the costs in the first year of refugees entering the donor countries, and is therefore spent 'internally'. This represented approximately 25% of total humanitarian assistance expenditure in 2001 (Å1 billion). Anecdotal evidence from agencies attending the seminars suggested that donors were increasingly focussing attention and expenditure on internal issues at the expense of international ones.

Where there is no external political interest, there is no pressure for resolution, for a ceasefire, or for a return to law and order.

"It is no coincidence that the killing of humanitarian aid workers occurs most often in places written off by the global economy or

dismissed as irrelevant to Western political concerns"⁵⁵.

Policy coherence

Donors have focussed aid and have channelled support to activities which fit with their government's foreign policy, or through agencies which work in technical areas of their specific interest. So, for example the British Government, through DFID, has moved away from supporting agencies involved in service delivery, towards organisations involved in human rights based approaches and advocacy. As a result the funds on which many agencies depended have now disappeared.

There are also a large number of forgotten emergencies with little funding and for which the agencies will struggle to provide the necessary resources.

In Angola, where more than four million people depended on aid, the IFRC, in September 2002, launched an emergency appeal for humanitarian assistance to 100,000 of the most vulnerable - four months later, the appeal was less than four per cent covered⁵⁶.

How does this affect staff and volunteers in the field?

- A very large proportion of the available funds are focused on a very small number of agencies, and the bulk of the agencies are competing for a smaller and smaller pot to be shared among a larger number of agencies
- Changing donor policy means that it is much more difficult for NGOs to maintain high levels of cash flow (as occurred when large service delivery projects were undertaken), and so funds are always under pressure, and less funds are available for people and their support and welfare
- Donors are less willing to fund capacity building of an international NGO, and it is only in recent months that donors have been encouraged to support this. Agencies need to maintain the pressure for donors to continue to support training, coordination and systems development
- Because funds are scarce, the unrestricted funds which could previously be invested in training or skills development are being used for operational costs which historically would have been funded by donors

This is why there is less money available for HR and HR development. If agencies want to improve the situation they must interact more closely with donors in advocating that funding HR and HR development is an operational investment.

They should also find innovative approaches to programme funding, for example seeking funding from non-traditional sources and budget lines. They must also encourage donors to support training and building capacity within funding budgets - even perhaps as a condition of funding.

The subcontracting culture

Aid agencies relationships with donors have also changed markedly in the last 10 years, notably towards a subcontracting relationship and agencies are required by donors to carry out programmes which fit with governments' foreign and aid policies, and are sub-contracted to perform certain tasks to achieve them.

Historically, the relationship was different. The aid agency was acting on behalf of the donor in channelling aid, but was not subject to contractual terms and conditions of performance and efficiency.

At first sight, the difference would not seem significant, but the consequence of the change is that agencies are seen as directly implementing on behalf of the donor, which may be a government directly involved politically and even militarily in the situation. The aid agency is also much less free to negotiate terms, and indeed is financially liable for the performance of the contract.

The NGOs have also, with a very few exceptions, increasingly been subject to rigid monitoring, reporting and financial restrictions placed on them in donor contracts, as well as rigid restriction on taxation, personnel and activities placed on them by host governments.

It is perfectly normal for an agency working in a given country to have five or more contracts controlling and placing conditions on programme activity e.g.

- ECHO FPA agreement
- DFID PPA agreement
- USAID funding agreement and partnership contract
- Host government NGO agreement
- Programme agreement

- Other donor agreements

A mixture of contracts, with different terms and conditions, is a very inflexible and rigid structure for most agencies with limited resources, especially if things go wrong - which is almost inevitable - and is one of the main reasons for weakness in preparation, training and support to personnel in the field.

Almost all official donors see staff and volunteers as an administrative cost and severely restrict funding for them, often to the point that agencies have to use unrestricted income of their own to meet basic costs for personnel - personnel without whom the programme could not be accomplished, and which should much more often be treated as direct programme costs.

Implications for staff and volunteers?

Because NGOs are often tied into tight contractual funding agreements and restrictive agreements with host governments, the time of staff and volunteers can be much more taken up with monitoring, reporting and ensuring compliance than should be necessary, and scarce financial resources are wasted.

Yet donors seem reluctant to fund the costs of the people necessary to manage the reporting and other requirements properly, or to invest in capacity building at local level.

For the agencies, it is important to lobby donors to change policy and approach, where necessary, to support initiatives such as Good Donorship⁵⁷, and to support agencies' efforts to improve practice and compliance.

One example would be where the donors make demands of agencies which they would not apply to their own staff, as in one case recently where a UN donor denied holidays to agency staff for a six months assignment - a condition which would certainly not have applied to its own staff. The agency refused to agree to the terms.

Increased competition

As can be seen from the changes in policy above, the major donors have sought much more direct influence over the way humanitarian assistance is deployed. In addition, they have focussed much of their support on the largest agencies, and have undertaken long term strategic contractual relationships with them. In consequence the smaller agencies are subject to even greater competition for the remaining unallocated funding.

For ECHO the advent of NGOs from the accession countries is likely, when they have their FPAs, to increase competition in the longer-term. DFID has also changed its funding relationships with NGOs in the last year or so, in changes which have favoured the larger multinational agencies at the expense of the smaller NGOs and has greatly increased the range of organisations which have access to funds, which will lead to considerably greater competition in the future.

Several European donors, especially since the events of 11th September 2001 have reduced their overseas aid budgets, further increasing competition, and the recent focus on Afghanistan and Iraq has concentrated available funding at the expense of programmes elsewhere, particularly in other countries in Africa.

In a speech to a conference on Forgotten Humanitarian Crises, EC Commissioner Poul Nielson said,

When did you last see a headline or hear a report featuring the crisis in Northern Uganda? You may not remember, because although the conflict has been ongoing since 1984, it has been largely ignored by both donors and the media.

A hostile environment for NGOs?

The aid agencies have been increasingly questioned by donors, evaluators, the academic institutions and the media in recent years - not least in terms of their effectiveness, independence and impartiality and their legitimacy.

Effectiveness and efficiency

Where donor governments once saw the NGOs as an effective, flexible and cost-efficient way of channelling aid to the vulnerable, at the expense of the host governments which were seen as corrupt and bureaucratic, they now challenge the effectiveness of the NGOs as a channel.

Quite rightly the NGOs are challenged to be efficient and effective, and indeed for the large part they are. However, at the same time the donors are placing conditions on their assistance, which often act against the effectiveness they are seeking.

- Humanitarian agencies should deploy trained and experienced staff and managers and yet

funding for training, skills development and capacity building are very difficult to obtain

- Humanitarian assistance is entirely dependent on the quality and skills of the personnel employed by agencies, and yet human resources are considered by donors to be administrative costs, for which funding is heavily restricted
- Agencies are encouraged to utilise and develop the capacities of staff locally, and yet funding for these activities is not readily available

The smaller agencies, which are often those that are most flexible, and which can reach the isolated and vulnerable most easily are least able to afford the costs of skilled personnel, and are also the least able to compete for donor funding.

Key implications for human resources management

- Donors should be encouraged to recognise that while the quest for professionalism is absolutely justified, achieving it will require a positive commitment to reprioritise funding for skilled personnel, and to provide more support for development of skills and capacities among staff and volunteers



While the NGOs have never been completely independent either of the donors or the host governments, they were able to negotiate their access, their assistance programmes, and their programme methodologies. However, in the last ten years this has been much less often the case. The United Nations agencies have often taken overall responsibility for coordination, but do not have a mandate to coordinate the NGO sector, and often resist direct involvement with it - perhaps because the NGO sector is often competing for the same limited funding for activities.

This loss of independence of action has serious consequences for the agencies and inevitably for their staff, as the agencies are not recognised as 'non-governmental', but seen as agents of one political entity or another. As will be seen below, in the special circumstance of recent conflicts where the major aid donors are also the belligerent parties in conflict, this loss of independence has been exemplified in the extreme.

A great deal of debate has taken place concerning the potential threats to humanitarian principles⁵⁸, not least because of the confusion which has accompanied recent military interventions. From the humanitarian perspective the most important principles for which there should be clarity are

those of impartiality and neutrality, which together have historically been the basis for humanitarian action. Impartiality requiring that assistance be provided to non-combatants solely on the basis of need, and neutrality requiring external actors to abstain from activities that would afford a political or military advantage to one side over another⁵⁹. The problem for aid agencies is that they are often not free to abide by the principles, and on occasion have been selective about their implementation. The protection which the principles should afford agencies and staff has therefore been undermined.

It is critically important that agencies and staff understand the principles on which their intervention is based, including its basis in international humanitarian law and principle, that this is made clear to the necessary parties, and defended in external negotiations on a collaborative basis. Otherwise there is no protection for agencies and staff in the field.

The legitimacy of NGOs

As mentioned above, questions are being asked to what extent NGOs are truly non-governmental or are independent or impartial, and all these issues impinge on the legitimacy of the voice of NGOs in debate, negotiations and in activities on the ground. All these challenges undermine the perception by other groups of the humanitarian sector.

However, the legitimacy of NGOs⁶⁰ is further brought into question by the fact that it is almost entirely unregulated, and because the mechanisms that do exist for accountability of the agencies are voluntary, self-regulating and are not policed or enforced. This is exemplified in an overview of the 1998 crisis in Southern Sudan produced by Concern Worldwide.

‘The scale and complexity of the programme has placed understandable pressure on its overall co-ordination function and has contributed to perceptions that Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) co-ordination lacks sufficient technical authority to be able to conduct comprehensive assessments, effectively direct NGOs to areas of greatest need, monitor and evaluate NGO programmes, and advise them on how to improve if necessary.

The result is that despite a lot of time and resources spent on co-ordination, many NGOs still guard their autonomy jealously and go largely unregulated.

This introduces another dominant and controversial theme raised by the 1998 crisis: the issue of minimum standards. Most agencies currently working in southern Sudan have expressed a commitment to minimum standards in emergency intervention by either publishing technical guidelines and recommendations or subscribing to initiatives. Without an independent technical body of authoritative expertise with a mandate to monitor and evaluate NGO performance, as well as mechanisms to enforce standards, these initiatives may not have the desired effect of fixing shared norms in emergency responses⁶¹.

The question of operational legitimacy, as outlined above certainly affects agencies and staff:

- If the agency is not seen as a legitimate actor, and is not felt to be accountable, or regulated, its activities are open to question
- If there is no mechanism to influence or police accountability then the efforts of good organisations are undermined by others’ poor practice

The safety and welfare of staff who are placed in dangerous work situations and in areas of conflict or violence depends on it.

Implications of recent conflicts - Afghanistan and Iraq

Although the crises are still continuing, there are important lessons for the humanitarian community, and for staff and volunteers from the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Some of these are further examples of issues highlighted already in other situations, but others are new.

The debate about humanitarian principles

As stated above in this report there has been a blurring of the distinctiveness of the humanitarian agencies and their activities, and confusion, especially where there is international military intervention in a conflict, particularly where a humanitarian motive is claimed for the intervention.

The circumstances of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts have caused further challenges to the humanitarian agencies, both UN agencies and also NGOs.

“Most humanitarian actors seem to agree that the Iraq crisis has resulted in a dangerous blurring of the lines between humanitarian and political action and in a consequent erosion of the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality”.

“It is also clear that the humanitarian enterprise is unmistakably identified with the West and that aid agencies are perceived within the Islamic world as the ‘mendicant orders of Empire’”⁶².

The report also observes that:

- The traditional mechanisms by which humanitarian agencies negotiate access had broken down in Iraq and Afghanistan, and agencies could no longer talk to both sides of the conflict
- Aid workers were being deliberately and systematically targeted as part of military and political agendas... “people targeting aid workers cared little about the neutrality of humanitarian organisations”
- There is a need to understand much more the dynamics of conflicts

Relationship with the military

There have long been tensions between the humanitarian actors and the military, whether local military forces, or where international intervention has taken place. In Iraq and Afghanistan the situation is further complicated because the intervention was by ad hoc coalition of States, essentially the United States plus support from allies.

In both cases, a US dominated alliance invaded a sovereign Islamic State - an invasion by the same countries which are the major donors for humanitarian assistance.

Many humanitarian agencies, particularly outside the US, challenged the basis for the war and raised concerns about the potential catastrophe which might result for the civilian population. However, after the conflict the catastrophe predicted did not materialise, and the humanitarian agencies were, in many cases, subcontracting their services to the US and other alliance governments in repairing some of the damage done in Iraq as a consequence of the war.

The overlap between roles of the military and humanitarian agencies is highlighted by the fact that complaints by the aid agencies in Afghanistan about the aid activities of US soldiers in civilian

clothes were met with rejection, despite the clear breach of Geneva Conventions.

“When the bad guys start wearing uniforms so that they can be shot at 300 metres”, a US commander in Kabul states “my guys will do so too”⁶³.

While this may seem incidental, the presence of soldiers out of uniform is of huge potential significance to agency staff. It completely changes the level of differentiation between the military and the humanitarian spheres, and undermines humanitarian principles and identity, which are essential components in protecting staff.

Creation of a stable secure environment

A primary responsibility of the military is to create and ensure the security environment necessary for the safety of the civilian population. This is especially the case where the military is an occupying force, as is the case in Iraq, where the obligation is a legal responsibility.

In neither case (Iraq and Afghanistan) has a secure environment been established, and the civilian population is far from able to resume normal life in safety. Neither are the humanitarian agencies able to carry out their tasks. In large parts of rural Afghanistan the Afghan authorities are unable to exercise control and militias and warlords dominate the regions. In Iraq, despite claims to the contrary, the situation is far from secure and lawlessness is rife.

In both countries humanitarian agencies and staff have been deliberately targeted, and the protection which the military could provide has been insufficient to protect agencies from numerous deaths and injuries. In August 2003, tragically the bombing attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad caused 24 deaths and a lot of very serious injuries. In October, 12 people, including two Iraqi ICRC employees, were killed when the ICRC offices were bombed.

In consequence, the international humanitarian organisations and NGOs, with a few exceptions, have simply not been present in Iraq, because the safety of staff and resources could not be guaranteed.

It is always going to be difficult to prevent suicide bombing, for example. However, numerous reports of lack of debate prior to the conflict, and lack of subsequent dialogue between military and humanitarian agencies together with blurring of respective roles and responsibilities are not acceptable.

A UN review of security after the Baghdad bombing strongly criticised the failings of the UN security management system⁶⁴:

“The main conclusion... is that the current security management system is dysfunctional. It provides little guarantee of security to UN staff in Iraq or other high-risk environments and needs to be reformed.

A new security approach is needed in order to ensure staff security in such a high-risk environment. The key objective for the UN system in these circumstances is to reach and maintain an acceptable balance between UN operational objectives in Iraq and the security and protection of its staff and assets, both national and international.”

In Afghanistan, observations from experienced aid managers included similar issues still affecting agencies and staff:

- No systems or if they did have any, “there were manuals stuck on a shelf somewhere and no-one ever looked at them”
- Pressure on staff has increased, and it seems that few agencies have reacted
- One of the most worrying things has been the willingness of some agencies to send out young and inexperienced staff
- Career planning and development often seems non-existent

Implications for agencies and staff and volunteers

- The security framework is not functional, and so the agencies either have to accept the increased risk, or not be present
- In the case of Afghanistan in the past and Iraq at the time of writing, it is the nationally recruited staff who remain, and on whose shoulders any operational responsibility lies, and who are seriously at risk as a result
- There appears to have been a lack of debate with the military and a breakdown of the UN security management system on which the security of all staff depends. Agencies have to engage with the other actors, and they have to listen
- Agencies and staff are being deliberately targeted, to prevent aid reaching the needy and to dissuade any form of international intervention

Minimum humanitarian standards

Recently, there has been much debate about standards of one sort or another, but there is an aspect which has been around for some time, and deserves much wider consideration, even if it is outside the parameters of this study.

Ten or more years ago, consideration was given, mostly within the ICRC to the establishment of minimum humanitarian standards - these being the basic conditions which would be required before humanitarian assistance could be provided.

The UN senior representative in Kabul, L. Brahimi said:

They seem to think our presence is important here. Well, if they do, they have got to make sure the conditions for us to be here are there. If not, we will go away⁶⁵.

Two important concepts are stated here - that minimum conditions should exist before humanitarian assistance is possible, and that if these conditions are not met, then the agencies should not be present.

Agencies should agree minimum standards in every new intervention in a complex emergency, and should also state their willingness to withdraw if the conditions fall below these levels. Withdrawal should be considered as a strategic option, and not a sign of failure.

The challenges to the humanitarian agencies in Iraq were debated in a meeting between UNHCR and partners in Beirut, and summarised by D. McNamara, Inspector General of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees⁶⁶:

- How do humanitarian agencies avoid being too closely identified with resisted political or military interventions, as in Iraq?
- What are the benchmarks or minimum conditions for humanitarian agencies to work in ongoing conflict areas?
- Is humanitarian action being used as an inadequate substitute for unclear or unsuccessful politico-military interventions?
- Does this new hostile environment, epitomised by Iraq but existing elsewhere, require us to go back to the drawing board in terms of what we can effectively and fairly do...?
- Why are we now facing such intense and sustained hostility?

Business as usual is not a sufficient response.

It is likely that staff and volunteers would be very much safer if agencies were able to set minimum humanitarian standards in each intervention, and then have the courage. At worst, agencies should not be able to put their staff at unacceptable risk, without some form of accountability.

Section 4

Global sectoral trends and HR issues

This section of the handbook seeks to draw together some of the evidence so far presented and to link the trends described into groups which will help identify ways to move forward - to consolidate progress which has been made, and to assist in addressing where gaps still exist.

In addition, an analysis will be made of the responses to the questionnaire circulated to agencies, and from which are identified the HR issues which will be discussed in detail in handbook 2.

Professionalism, challenge and accountability

The search for professionalism

There has been enormous progress in almost all aspects of human resources, staff and their management - in general, staff and volunteers are better selected, better prepared, better skilled and better managed. This is particularly true of the larger agencies, the development agencies and the agencies with substantial unrestricted funding.

For the sector as a whole, there are training possibilities that were never available previously, as well as psychological support organisations and networks for agencies and for staff and volunteers.

The Internet has radically altered the potential for accessing information and support, and for improving communications.

The implications for human resources

However, for the smaller agency with limited unrestricted funds, it is more of a struggle for a range of reasons - and the reason this is important is that nearly all agencies are smaller agencies!

- They do not have the financial resources to fund generous remuneration and welfare systems, or to access professional resources

- They have few (or no) HR support staff, and lack policy and systems
- They do not have the permanent presence, the global reach or the numbers of staff to adjust to rapidly changing field needs

However, there are also continuing examples in every situation where a lack of policy, system or bad practice can be identified, and there are rare examples of bad behaviour which adversely affect the sector's reputation.

At the sectoral level, the challenge is to maximise the level of interaction and collaboration between agencies, and especially to assist the smaller agencies in accessing and developing good policy and practice. For the smaller agencies especially it is essential to look strategically at the interface with other agencies, and make use of the available opportunities to engage with them.

Quality tools

There are a number of quality tools and mechanisms which agencies have access to, as well as interagency initiatives⁶⁷ and learning projects. For a detailed analysis of the available tools, and agencies' involvement with them, see "Analysis of "quality management" tools in the humanitarian sector and their application by the NGOs"⁶⁸. This document describes 18 quality-related tools which agencies use, (including the Codes referred to in 'Codes and Standards' on Page 61).

Implementation:

- Project Cycle Management
- Logical Framework Analysis
- Causal Pathway
- ZOPP
- People In Aid Code

Management tools:

- The Excellence Model (EFQM)
- ISO Standards

- The Balanced Scorecard Approach
- Investors in People
- Institute of Social and Ethical AccountAbility
- Social Auditing
- PQASSO

The level of knowledge about quality standards and systems was high but the report found that only 57% of the responding agencies used at least one quality management tool. The report recommended that ECHO implement a system of Minimum Standard Requirements for quality in ECHO partners.

An example of an agency which has incorporated a quality management system into its organisation, as a tool within its overall management structure is Medair with the ISO 9001 standard and certification, and its possible wider application is reviewed in a paper entitled 'The ISO 9001 Quality Approach: Useful for the Humanitarian Aid Sector?'⁶⁹.

An increasing number of agencies, in Europe and elsewhere, are also prioritising their HR activities specifically, by implementing the People In Aid Code. The Code offers agencies working in relief and development a framework for taking a good look at all essential areas of HR management and development. The process of implementation, using social audit, ensures that there is a verified improvement in HR management in the agency, transparent to all key stakeholders, including staff and donors.

A challenging environment

The external environment is challenging - not only in relation to the other actors - the political and military, but also the other multilateral organisations and the commercial sector. Engagement with them is increasingly complex, and recent experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq have challenged the basic principles and expectations of humanitarian action. There is a process of debate and negotiation about roles and responsibilities which needs to take place, reflecting the views of all elements of the sector - a process which is not assisted by the disparate nature of the humanitarian agencies, and their lack of cohesive action.

The role and effectiveness of the agencies is also being questioned in the media and elsewhere, and agencies are being challenged to show their added value and their cost-effectiveness. Many

are able to do so. But overall there are probably too many agencies fighting for too small a funding base.

The donors are changing, whether through change in strategic priorities or policy, and the NGOs are losing out - especially the smaller ones, for which the future (certainly in the UK, but probably also elsewhere) looks bleak. Unless the agencies present a cohesive and coherent face to the donors, future security of funding will be unlikely, and agencies will disappear.

Legitimacy and accountability

Becoming much more involved in advocacy and lobbying, and less likely to be funded for service delivery, agencies are also being questioned about their legitimacy and to whom they are accountable. In the last ten years there has been extensive development of codes of conduct, and accountability and standards projects. However the sector is still seen as unregulated and uncontrolled, and even opportunist.

The reverse might be said to be true. NGOs invest enormous amounts of time and energy in:

- Accountability to regulatory bodies, donors, contracting parties, and through financial, operational and organisational audits
- Proving to donors and co-funding agencies that they are capable of planning, implementing and accounting for funds
- Meeting stringent policy controls in terms of development goals, equity, gender awareness, accountability to beneficiaries etc.
- Proving to the media, the politicians and the public that they are legitimate and accountable
- Meeting the requirements of the codes and standards mechanisms to which they are party

Codes and standards⁷⁰

Several of the most widely known codes and standards mechanisms are briefly described here.

Interaction PVO Standards - Since 1994 all prospective members of the Interaction network are required to certify that they meet the Interaction PVO Standards, which cover all aspects of governance, organisational structure and management, including human resources. Interaction's membership comprises more than 160 US NGOs.

The PVO Standards Committee works with member organizations in promoting standards for Private Voluntary Organisations (PVOs) in the areas of governance, finance, communications with the U.S. public, management practice, human resources, programme and public policy. Compliance with the PVO Standards is a requirement for admission to InterAction. The Committee works within the InterAction network and disseminates their standard setting experience to other coalitions and audiences around the world.

www.interaction.org/disaster/pvostandards.html

Red Cross Code of Conduct - Six of the world's oldest and largest networks of NGOs came together in 1994 with the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to draw up a professional Code of Conduct to set, for the first time, universal basic standards to govern the way they should work in disaster assistance.

The Code of Conduct, like most professional codes, is a voluntary one. It is applicable to any NGO, be it national or international, small or large. It lays down ten points of principle which all NGOs should adhere to in their disaster response work, and goes on to describe the relationships agencies working in disasters should seek with donor governments, host governments and the UN system.

The Code is self-policing. No one NGO is going to force another to act in a certain way and there is as yet no international association for disaster-response NGOs which possesses any authority to sanction its members.

The Code expects that NGOs around the world find it useful and want to commit themselves publicly to abiding by it, advocates that Governments and donor bodies use it as a yardstick against which to judge the conduct of those agencies with which they work, and disaster-affected communities have a right to expect those who seek to assist them to measure up to the standards.

The ten principles of conduct under the Code are the following:

- 1 The humanitarian imperative comes first
- 2 Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipient and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone
- 3 Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint

- 4 We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy
- 5 We shall respect culture and custom
- 6 We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities
- 7 Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid
- 8 Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs
- 9 We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources
- 10 In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified human beings, not objects of pity.

www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/index.asp

ALNAP - An international interagency active-learning membership network, ALNAP is dedicated to improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian action, by sharing lessons; identifying common problems; and building, where appropriate, consensus on approaches.

Principle outputs - Annual Review Series, Guidance Gap-filling Series, online training modules, Biannual Meeting Records, Evaluative Reports Database (ERD), useful resources database, background papers and synthesis

www.alnap.org

HAP International - The launch of HAP International is the culmination of several years of work within the humanitarian relief community to strengthen the quality and performance of its activities. HAP International is offering a collective framework that insists on learning, monitoring and compliance procedures.

The objectives of HAP International are:

- To develop and maintain principles of accountability to beneficiaries through research, consultation, and collaboration
- To support members and potential members of HAP International in adhering to the principles of accountability to beneficiaries by providing training and advice
- To communicate, advocate, promote, and report on principles of accountability
- To monitor and report on implementation of HAP International's principles of accountability

to beneficiaries and to accredit its members accordingly

- To assist members in finding solutions where concerns or complaints are raised about them

www.hapinternational.org

People In Aid - An international network of development and humanitarian assistance agencies, People In Aid helps organisations whose goal is the relief of poverty and suffering to enhance the impact they make through better human resources management and support. In addition to a wide range of services, People In Aid is well known for its Code of Good Practice in the management and support of aid personnel, which includes the following principles:

Guiding Principle

People are central to the achievement of our mission

Principle 1: Human Resources Strategy

Human resources are an integral part of our strategic and operational plans

Principle 2: Staff Policies and Practices

Our human resources policies aim to be effective, fair and transparent

Principle 3: Managing People

Good support, management and leadership of our staff is key to our effectiveness

Principle 4: Consultation and Communication

Dialogue with staff on matters likely to affect their employment enhances the quality and effectiveness of our policies and practices

Principle 5: Recruitment and Selection

Our policies and practices aim to attract and select a diverse workforce with the skills and capabilities to fulfil our requirements

Principle 6: Learning, Training and Development

Learning, training and staff development are promoted throughout the organisation

Principle 7: Health, Safety and Security

The security, good health and safety of our staff are a prime responsibility of our organisation.

www.peopleinaid.org

The Sphere Project - The project mandate is to improve the quality and accountability of disaster response through the understanding and use of the Humanitarian Charter, Minimum Standards and Key Indicators.

The Sphere Project was launched in 1997 by a group of humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

Sphere is based on two core beliefs: first, that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of calamity and conflict, and second, that those affected by disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance.

Sphere is three things: a handbook, a broad process of collaboration and an expression of commitment to quality and accountability. The project has developed several tools, the key one being the handbook.

www.sphereproject.org

Groupe URD/The Quality Project

Groupe URD brings together the major French relief and development agencies (ASI) together with a small number of observer agencies. The group carries out operational research, training, evaluations and acts as a lobby group.

Groupe URD also operates the Quality Project which mobilises those agencies which did not agree with the way in which quality and accountability standards were being addressed through standardisation (notably the Sphere Project and the Ombudsman project).

The objectives of the project are to:

- develop improved assessment tools and methods, as well as tools to assist in decision-making, for humanitarian interventions, in particular in unstable contexts
- develop improved monitoring and evaluation tools / methods for humanitarian actions and interventions in unstable contexts, which would also help build the institutional memory and make our structures real "learning organisations"
- promote and disseminate these tools through training sessions, both in academic programmes and in NGOs' internal training programmes, upon demand

www.urd.org / www.projetqualite.org

The evidence suggests that hundreds of agencies are involved to a greater or lesser degree with a confusing array of quality and accountability mechanisms. All of these codes and systems have a part to play but they represent an uncoordinated mix of codes and self-regulatory mechanisms which are confusing and lack sectoral coherence. They also increase the workload of agencies and

staff and require expensive training if they are to be implemented well. They also require buy-in by agencies and managers.

The problem for the sector's overall accountability is that few are policed and enforced, and the humanitarian sector is viewed as unregulated and unaccountable. Where there is cohesiveness and coherence among the agencies, and coordination works, the system functions well. Where these elements do not exist, failures occur.

More codes are not the answer, and the humanitarian sector will have to demonstrate that it is able to police itself, or to guarantee principles and practice. If it does not do so as a sector, then groups of agencies will do it alone, to the detriment of the diversity of the sector, and also to the disadvantage of the many agencies which are excluded.

Much has been achieved, and improvements have been made across the board, but much is still to be done. The external environment is not supportive, and agencies often have limited resources.

To compete agencies must:

- maximise potential through interaction and collaboration
- maximise professionalism through continued institutional learning and development and through support of adherence to principles and standards
- maximise effectiveness through accessing tools and resources which lead towards good practice.

Human resources management

Human resources - an asset or a liability?

A basic problem within the humanitarian sector and agencies is that human resources are often treated as a liability (or an administration cost) and not as an asset.

- HR management is usually an additional responsibility of field and HQ operational managers, rarely carried out by specialists or people with previous human resources management experience

- Operational budgets are drawn up without taking the need to staff the programme as a starting point

Donor policy - All donors restrict overheads costs, often to a point which is unmanageable for agencies. For example some donors have even excluded all overhead costs from their funding, others restrict their contribution to 7%-10% of budgets. The consequence is that agencies have to use scarce unrestricted funds to subsidise the costs of people, or cut corners and under-fund HR-related costs.

Rather than excluding personnel and HR development costs, it could be argued that donors should be insisting that appropriate investment in skills and personnel is demonstrated in every programme and is properly financed, as a precondition to their co-funding programmes. Donors might also be encouraged to state in agreements that there should be a minimum proportion of programme costs involved in developing personnel capacity - a condition which should specifically favour the nationally-recruited staff.

HR administration - Very few agencies have specialists working in recruitment and management of staff, whether in the field or at HQ. International HR is often something operational department desk officers do, and in the field is another responsibility for the Country Director. Yet the commitments which are being made in employment contracts, and the potential problems associated with accidents or security incidents, or even litigation, all represent huge organisational risks.

Replies to the survey suggested some of these difficulties:

- Allocating resources to HR is expensive and hard to fund
- Very little funding available to pay HR staff (at HQ) a decent wage
- Due to the funding situation, career planning is not really a possibility⁷¹

In the circumstances, people dealing with HR management do a fantastic job, but many feel overburdened, undervalued and under-resourced.

Stretched resources are particularly dangerous where there are additional security and safety risks associated with complex emergencies and conflict. Operational managers are being asked to make life and death decisions on the basis of

limited information, further adding to the dangers for international and nationally recruited staff.

"Usually the Director had responsibility for security along with everything else instead of a dedicated staff member, and rarely were there systems for briefing and de-briefing and recording/analysing incidents"⁷².

The risk also applies to policy and administration matters, especially where litigation is increasingly likely. International NGOs are international employers and not normally treated as exceptions in law. Where staff members consider they have been mistreated they will increasingly turn to legal redress, and unless the NGO can show they have fulfilled their responsibility of care to the staff member, it will suffer the financial consequences. Lack of funding or knowledge will be no defence.

Doing HR on the cheap is simply not an option - the organisational risk associated with poorly administered systems, or inadequate remuneration and welfare systems is enormous. It is not simply a risk associated with international staff either. An accident or a mistake resulting in responsibility being assigned to the agency for an accident or death would bankrupt most NGOs. The fact that it has not been more common is not reassuring. Agencies simply cannot ignore their obligations, and have to invest in, improve and develop their systems - there is no alternative.

Operational issues - If HR is not always seen as a strategic priority for agencies, it is also a liability for operational managers (both in the field and at HQ) who are overburdened with all the other aspects of their work, and then also have HR responsibilities for which they are unskilled and ill-equipped.

Programmes are planned not on the basis of available personnel resources, but the needs of the ground, or even the need to respond. It is the available personnel resources which dictate what degree of outstanding needs can be met through a programme - and so must be a controlling factor in planning.

*Budgets are upside down. We should put human resources at the top, and then work out what we can do with the available resources, not the other way round*⁷³.

The perception of HR as a cost centre is not limited to operational managers, evaluators often reflect the same limited view. The Disasters Emergency Committee evaluation of the Indian Cyclone relief programme in 2000 stated:

...Oxfam spent more than other DEC agencies in bringing in expatriate staff, and many of these staff brought with them useful experience from other emergencies.

...DEC agencies should invest more in long-term training of their local staff.

...SCF UK's approach in relation to human resources was almost the opposite of Oxfam's in that it relied much more on its major (local) partner.

...It was also an efficient response in the sense that less than 5% of SCF UK's expenditure of DEC funds was spent on personnel.

This reflects a simplistic perception by evaluators of the use of human resources in humanitarian action and reflects the way human resources are generally perceived.

- Is Oxfam wrong for using expatriates from other programmes to assist in relief in India?
- Is SCF UK right because it works through a local partner NGO?
- Is spending 5% on personnel good or bad?

For both operational managers and evaluators, human resources should be the starting point from which should be calculated the capacity to respond to needs.

An agency such as ActionAid is able to invest hugely in developing capacity of partner agencies, local civil society groups and also its own staff. Indeed, ActionAid has, in the past, considered such activities specifically an investment - both in wider civil society and also in its own internal resources. Such an approach is rare, and unfortunately is not available to agencies with different structures and more restricted funding base.

Capacity building should be included in every programme, whether short or long term, and all NGOs should be seeking to leave behind people who are better skilled, and better trained and better able to return to the job market. The costs should be included as direct programme costs, and donors should be requiring such inputs as a condition of funding.

There are also practical steps that can be taken - and an area of potential improvement is through identifying new sources of personnel, of capacity development and also the better application of technologies such as the Internet. All are potential means to improve policy and practice, and will be dealt with in detail in handbook 2 of this study.

In summary, for many agencies within the sector, human resources are seen as a liability - externally, strategically and even in relation to other departments and agency functions. For larger international networks with substantial funding, much greater prioritisation of HR is possible, and more investment made, both in the field and at HQ. But for most agencies, funding and institutionalising HR policies and issues is difficult and demoralising.

Agencies need to encourage donors to recognise the value of HR skills and capacity development. They also need to change the priority which HR is given within the agencies, and to be stronger in defending the values of good HR practice - for example, making programming subject to available HR resources, and not the reverse.

Sharing experience and good practice

Many HQ level HR managers interact with their counterparts in other agencies, both informally and formally, whether in sharing personnel needs and accessing each others' personnel registers, or through consultations and reviews of remuneration and benefits. There is also a great deal of interaction in the field along similar lines.

In addition, many HR managers are part of formal and informal networking groups specifically focussing on HR:

For example:

- **People In Aid** is a UK-based international network working with member agencies to help them improve the quality of their HR management quality and practice. www.peopleinaid.org
- **RedR** is an international network (UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and also East Africa and India) which provides and prepares people for overseas assignments. Registers include technical engineering personnel and other specialists. RedR also provides training for relief workers, both technical and managerial (including human resources management). www.redr.org
- **Emergency Personnel Network** which runs a series of seminars aiming to assist participating agencies both individually and as a community to find, select, prepare and retain personnel for emergency operations. www.redr.org/ePN/index.htm

- **Bioforce (France)**, created in 1983 is a centre for education, training and briefing and of expertise on international solidarity providing specialist long and short term training adapted to the needs of professionals in the field and to individual agencies' needs, as well as a briefing programme for expatriates. Bioforce is also able to provide experts for consultancy and to carry out field studies. 300 people receive training per year. www.bioforce.asso.fr
- **CINFO (Switzerland)** informs people who are interested in a position in international co-operation and supports institutions seeking personnel for International Co-operation assignments in Switzerland and abroad and offers counselling, support and training to institutional staff and those accompanying them while they are planning to go abroad, during their mission and prior to, as well as after their return. www.cinfo.ch/index.html
- **The Nordic Red Cross HR Group** which coordinates policy development, as well as providing a forum for debate and exchange on HR issues.

Additionally, there are other NGO networks which deal with a wide range of interagency matters, including HR issues and training, and these include:

- **BOND (UK)** is a network of 280 development NGOs promoting the exchange of ideas and information amongst BOND members, between networks of NGOs within the UK and beyond, with the UK government and with other UK agencies with an interest in international development. Through a number of working groups and learning circles, members are able to share experience. About 30 training events are held per year for members, and NGO Futures is a forum for discussion of issues affecting the sector. www.bond.org.uk
- **Coordination Sud (France)** is a network of 100 NGOs working in emergency and development, and promote public awareness in France. Five collectives coordinate the network's activities in co-operation concerning volunteers and expatriates, a forum for members exchange, a research centre, a focus for education and youth associations and an exchange forum on development methods and practice. www.coordinationsud.org
- **ACODEV (Belgium)** is a federation of 90 member NGOs which represents, defends and

promotes the interests of members with the public authorities, facilitates NGO work, encourages synergy with and between members and promotes information exchange. www.acodev.be

- **VENRO (Germany)**, the association of German development NGOs is the umbrella organisation of independent and church related NGOs working in the fields of development co-operation, emergency assistance, development education and advocacy. www.venro.org
- **AGEH (Germany)**, the Association for Development Co-operation is the specialist agency of the German Catholics for international co-operation and reinforces the work of its project partners overseas and in the reformed countries of central and eastern Europe wherever personnel are needed for development co-operation. It offers German agencies a qualified personnel recruitment service and provides people with an opportunity to work in development projects. www.ageh.de
- **Aid Workers Net** is a web-based network and discussion forum linking relief and development field staff to share support, ideas and best practice. www.aidworkers.net

There will be many more examples not included here.

But much more could also be done specifically regarding human resources management issues, in developing formal and informal networking opportunities between agencies, countries and even regions of the world.

The problem is that, as well as providing an important resource for exchange, interactions with other agencies can be very demanding, not least the numerous demands for information or statistics which take time and effort to complete, and compete with other more urgent tasks. The learning organisation requires a considerable investment - strategically, in terms of time commitment and also financially.

There are already some shared initiatives in terms of registers and training, and for example in the UK, Merlin, RedR and IHE (now RedR/IHE) have worked together on training initiatives for their own needs and the sector as a whole, as have RedR and Bioforce. In addition, the possibility of combining registers has been studied, but so far this has not taken place.

People In Aid acts as a central resource for its members, and the wider sector, offering access to a variety of solutions or examples from the network.

There is the potential to do a great deal more in sharing resources, and also sharing costs:

- Agencies all hold individual registers of personnel, which is expensive and time-consuming, and results in duplication of effort
- There could be a more systematic review of remuneration and benefits in the sector, made available to agencies through subscription to cover costs
- Basic training could be more systemically organised, particularly related to single subjects like security
- A large number of HR policies and procedures could be common, and the development of generic management handbooks is possible (to be amended as necessary for each agencies internal procedures)

It has to be added though, that sometimes agencies are guilty of looking inwards rather than seeking the benefits of greater external interaction. Not committing sufficient time to reflection and engagement with other agencies for debate is a weakness which needs to be redressed.

The structures and networks which exist to coordinate and represent the views must also change, and more radically promote and encourage good practice among members, and also develop policy agendas which meet the needs of their members much more strongly, and then promote them to external actors with vigour.

Strategic collaboration and co-operation

There is a great deal of operational interaction between agencies, both formal and informal, and NGOs are being pressured by donors to develop coherence with other agencies working in the field through the establishment of strategic alliances and agreements. These can take the form either of agreements relating to a specific programme or programmes, or alliances which apply on every occasion. In many examples, this will also apply to the development of coherent policies and procedures and also the sharing of resources, registers and personnel.



Examples include:

Danish Peoples Aid works independently in six countries, but works in partnership with other agencies in six other countries. Agreements have been made with Danish Refugee Council, MS-Danish Association for International Co-operation, Caritas Denmark and UNICEF Denmark.

CORD (UK) has a strategic agreement with ZOA Refugee Care involving both joint operational activities in Albania and Afghanistan and also developing common systems and practices. In Iran, CORD, ZOA Refugee Care and Medair have a joint programme after the December 2002 earthquake. CORD is also member of EU-CORD a network of 12 Christian organisations involved in relief and development.

Islamic Relief and **CAFOD** have a strategic partnership each supporting the other in countries where field presence already exists.

ZOA Refugee Care have collaborated with two like-minded Netherlands-based organisations to share a Human Resources Manager. Appointed in 2004 he will give 60% of his time to ZOA, 20% to Tearfund Netherlands and 20% to WoordenDaad.

Concern Worldwide is a member of Alliance 2015, which comprises Concern Worldwide (Ireland), Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (Germany), CESVI (Italy), Hivos (Netherlands) and Ibis (Denmark). Alliance objectives are:

- Develop and implement joint projects and programmes, including larger-scale programmes that are beyond the capacity of any one partner
- Coordinate and cooperate on emergency response operations
- Share best practice in programming and develop higher standards
- Implement joint advocacy campaigns
- Initiate joint investment in areas such as technology and new administrative/financial systems
- Share assets, resources and personnel
- Avoid duplication and ensure optimum use of resources by working in the most flexible and practical manner possible.

There are many more examples, and it will become more common in future, and, as with Alliance 2015, will cover close collaboration in a wide range of field, HQ, strategic and managerial issues.

Coherence at the sectoral, HQ and field levels

This report has highlighted the factors associated with the external environment and the structure and nature of the agencies as they affect human resources and staffing issues. The question now is to consider how the sector can move forward.

In HR terms, the report has identified a lack of clarity in relation to the deployment of staff - for example, why are expatriates necessary? What is their added value?

There is a lack of information about the sector, and studies such as this have struggled to provide a snapshot of the sector which does justice to its diversity and scale.

There is even less information concerning nationally recruited staff, and agencies have shown themselves seriously lacking information at HQ level about their staff in the field, even basic statistical information - data which is essential for developing management strategy, systems, and policies.

There is a need to define the sector much more accurately, and not only in human resource terms, but to identify added value, then to represent it to external actors and to defend it vigorously when challenged.

The sector also needs to maximise the interaction with other agencies, both in the field and at HQ - to reduce the failures associated with competition for resources or staff, and to maximise the operational coherence between agencies. There are practical ways that this can be achieved through coordinating structures which already exist, and through regional and national NGO networks at field level, as well as the coordination mechanism at home.

There is also potential for greater collaboration between these networks.

A case for a trade association?

In 1994, Room for Improvement⁷⁴ recommended the establishment of a professional body or 'trade association', which would represent the people, (and not the agencies or the sector), and theoretically provide much greater opportunity for individuals to network and share practice than currently exists.

Today, discussions around the form such an association could take continue, and important

issues remain unresolved: if it were a guardian of standards how could it avoid handing out sanctions; how could it offer aid workers accreditation; is it for aidworkers themselves or agencies to represent the principles of their profession to external audiences; could such a body avoid becoming an aid workers' 'trade union'?

Notwithstanding the debate around this topic, aidworkers do have a voice and are increasingly being heard. This is exemplified by the success of the mutual information and advice website for aid workers, www.aidworkers.net.

Qualitative analysis of the survey responses

The quantitative data gleaned from the survey has been presented earlier in the report. We pointed out then that there were a disappointing number of responses to the survey, for which we compensated by a large number of contacts afterwards. However there are lessons to be learnt. These we present below along with the agencies' responses to the qualitative questions which were aimed at informing the content of handbook 2.

The nature of the information requested

The relatively low response is worthy of some further analysis, because it does highlight some of the wider questions being discussed in this handbook. For example, was the information requested available and should it have been?

In summary, what was being asked of the agencies?

- General information about the agency and its activities
- Statistics on numbers and categories of staff
- Details of employment conditions and the principles on which the systems were based
- Views about the issues which affect HR effectiveness

This is important information, and should be available in every HR department. It should be readily accessible both for day-to-day management and administration and for HR planning and policy monitoring and review. It should also be available for both international staff and also for nationally recruited staff.

The fact that many agencies did not reply might be due to them simply not having the basic information necessary for effective HR management and administration. If statistics of who works where, in what jobs, and on what contracts and terms are not readily available, then forward planning in HR terms becomes extremely difficult, and developing policies for career planning and dealing with retention is equally problematic.

Further, if this is the case for international staff, then the situation appears to be considerably worse for nationally recruited staff. The vast majority of the 280 agencies contacted in this study were unable to provide detailed statistical information about their nationally recruited staff, and in almost all cases, no information was provided at all, except to say that the matter was dealt with at country level.

Although a contract of employment may be administered and issued locally, organisations that work internationally have a liability towards their nationally recruited staff, and in such cases, there is a strong argument for basic contractual information and staff data to be available in a head office environment. HR policy development, and strategic HR issues such as career planning and staff development initiatives are also informed by such data and often undertaken centrally.

Clearly, basic information must always be held at a local level, but for organisational consistency and coherence, the onus is on agencies to continue developing effective information management systems.

Too many questions, too often asked?

Every HR department, and especially the less senior members of staff, are keenly aware of the number of questions regularly asked by outside agencies and consultants - often very similar questions about remuneration and terms and conditions. Operational departments are also keenly aware of the numerous obligations to report to donors in detail about programming and management.

There is also a more general question about the provision of information, and that is that it would be helpful for all NGOs if there was a more co-ordinated sharing of basic information - policies, terms and conditions etc, and that regular benchmarking exercises were carried out to which a large proportion of agencies contribute. The continual requests for information are time-

consuming and onerous. People In Aid's role in this respect is growing and as its network grows throughout Europe, it will increasingly be able to assume this role for the sector.

Where this project is intended to assist, is through a better understanding of the background and structure to the sector (to which this handbook is intended to contribute), so that it will be easier for HR professionals to understand the differences between agencies' policies and practice.

Is the information sensitive?

Historically, NGOs have been much better at sharing information in the field than at HQ level, and indeed the pressures for funding, profile and presence are much more influential at HQ level in propagating an atmosphere of competition rather than collaboration.

But not only should each agency have the information to-hand, and be able to share it, the agency must be willing to share it, and the evidence suggests that this is not always the case.

International influences

At a time when the NGOs are under pressure and should be collaborating, and many agencies are themselves under threat of survival in a competitive and hostile external environment, the agencies should be working much more closely with their counterparts in other parts of Europe. This means understanding them better as well, and it is hoped that the contributions to this handbook will enhance that understanding. Agencies have an obligation to their stakeholders to collaborate not only among peers, but also with counterparts elsewhere.

Agency-identified human resource issues

The responses to the survey, and the discussions which have taken place with agencies since, have stressed the importance of some of the sectoral level issues, particularly in the light of recent experience in regard to Afghanistan and Iraq, and these views have been reflected in the text of the report.

Three issues at the sectoral level have been highlighted:

- Challenges to the sector
- Prioritising human resources
- The implications of recent conflicts

These issues have been discussed in detail in this handbook, and their implications at the technical level will be considered in handbook 2.

Professionalism in field management

It has consistently been the case, in debates about human resource issues for the last eight years at least, that the problems associated with recruiting and retaining qualified and experienced field managers has been a paramount concern for HR managers. This became the theme of the Emergency Personnel Network Seminar No. 4.⁷⁵

Previously, at EPS 3, Simon Lawry-White presented a background paper identifying current human resource issues of concern to agencies, and his findings showed the same priority given to experienced staff recruitment⁷⁶.

An increasing level of risk

The issue of staff security had not been included in the original list of issues suggested to agencies. The list suggested was not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to indicate examples of the type of issues with which agencies might be concerned. A few agencies referred to security and risk as an issue in their replies and more referred to them as an issue in correspondence after the survey was completed.

Agencies are very conscious of the security risks which international and nationally recruited staff are facing, but it is surprising that more of the agencies responses did not reflect the concern.

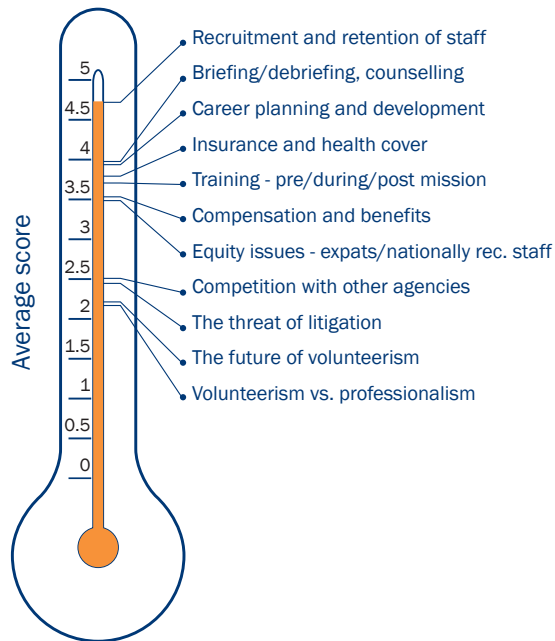
It may be that agencies are relatively confident that the security of staff is well catered for, or perhaps that they are not considering that much of the risk is associated with the wide issues being discussed in this report - breakdowns in the legal, political and military mechanisms which are there to protect civilians and humanitarian workers alike.

Technical issues

The survey document suggested some of the issues which have previously been of concern to HR managers and asked agencies to consider their relative importance to them now, and also to add any other issues which were affecting HR performance or potential.

The survey asked for the issues to be ranked in order of significance and to give the issues a score of between 1 and 5 (with 5 being the most significant), and the results of this are as follows:

Figure 17 - Barometer of issues



In addition, agencies suggested the following issues to be particularly important:

Figure 18 - Identified issues

	Number of agencies
Security and health/safety	3
Reintegration to employment	3
Effects of internationalising	2
Institutional learning	2
Emergency preparedness	1
Programme quality	1
Legitimacy of NGOs	1

One agency provided the following additional concerns, which were also reflected in some of the other agencies' responses⁷⁷:

- Difficulties in allocating resources to HR - expensive and hard to fund
- Lack of start-up positions to train those new to the field
- Lack of affordable pension schemes which fit the sector and job profile
- Difficulties with providing HQ staff with a decent wage
- Lack of qualified aid personnel

Two subsequent People In Aid workshops with Irish NGOs in November 2003 further confirmed the range of HR issues affecting agencies and staff. Examples of the issues identified are:

- Recruitment, selection and training
- Security, health, stress and 'burn-out'
- Attracting new people and talent
- Competition for staff
- HR management - performance review/grievance and discipline
- Career planning and development

HR management information systems - Several agencies highlighted the importance of HR management systems and databases, and Islamic Relief and Medair are currently implementing new systems. Other agencies commented on the high cost of such systems, and suggested that the large agencies might be able to afford professional systems, but small agencies less so.

Conclusion

In summary, the key sectoral level issues can be grouped as follows:

- Challenges to the sector
- Prioritising human resources
- The implications of recent conflicts

In addition, the issues identified by agencies can be grouped as follows:

1 Recruitment and pre-selection

- Getting the right people in the right place at the right time
- Skills and competencies
- Recruiting in a global marketplace

2 Employment and management

- Remuneration and benefits
- Equity
- Taxation, social security and pensions
- Performance
- Support and welfare
- Security, safety and the management of risk
- Insurance

3 Retention and career development

- Career planning and career development
- Training
- Developing new talent

In handbook 2 these issues will be described in detail, showing how the issues affect agencies

and staff, together with analysis of the causes and potential solutions. The handbook also provides examples and case studies of agencies' responses to them. The handbook will also point to sources and documents and tools which might assist HR managers in improving practice.

Section 1 notes

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Appendix 1 – People in Aid HR survey 2003

This survey is being carried out to provide the basis for description and analysis of current HR practice and trends among agencies active in the humanitarian field. However, rather than circulate a detailed Questionnaire, which would be time-consuming for agencies to complete, we are approaching the question differently.

Please feel free to forward documents in languages other than English, if necessary.

If you would like clarification or to discuss the study, please contact us.

In order to move the project forward and to have the Handbooks produced by the end of 2003, we are setting a deadline for the inclusion of information in the project.

Please respond to the questions in the two sections below before 25th July, sending the information, preferably by email, to Jim Henry at jvs@henry.evesham.net. If email is not appropriate, other contact details are provided at the end of this document.

A - Information Collection and Collation -

We are asking you to provide information which, we hope, is available within your agency, and which we will then analyse and collate - in our ECHO funded survey undertaken last year it was very encouraging that around two thirds of respondents expressed a willingness to share some documentation with others, and we hope to build on this. Following the information collection, we will subsequently contact a number of agencies for further clarification, and may undertake a number of visits to agencies should this be appropriate.

B - Issues Affecting HR Effectiveness

We are asking you to give your opinions on the issues which affect your agency, and your staff and volunteers in the field (and at HQ) and which either positively or negatively affect HR effectiveness.

A Information requested

The questions below are divided into 3 sections :

- your agency and activities in the field, and the involvement of international and locally recruited staff and volunteers
- the basis on which staff and/or volunteers are employed, and details of the principles on which remuneration, support and welfare packages are based
- management and policy - resources which your agency has, or has access to on areas of management and policy

NOTE - Questions refer both to international (expatriate) staff and volunteers and also to nationally recruited staff and volunteers working overseas.

Questions

1. Your agency and Activities in the Field

Please provide us with the following information or documents :

- **Information about your agency, its mission and operational activities**
The information might be in the form of an Annual Report, in which case please send it to us, or advise us where the report can be obtained (e.g. website URL).
- **Statistics over the last 2 or 3 years of the numbers and categories of staff and volunteers working overseas (showing numbers of expatriate and national staff separately), including technical speciality**
Statistics are not always available - if so, please provide whatever information is easily available. If not possible, please tell us rather than waste a lot of time

2. Employment Conditions of Staff and Volunteers

- **Handbooks or Notes for staff and volunteers describing principles and terms and conditions of employment/volunteering**
Most agencies prepare written documents describing the principles of employment, and the terms and conditions for staff and volunteers in booklets or induction packs.

NOTE - If the relevant information is available in a handbook or briefing note, the questions below need not necessarily be answered.

- **Conditions of Employment**
Please provide an example of the types of contract or agreement applicable to staff and volunteers
- **Principles of Remuneration**
Please provide details of the principles behind remuneration policy for staff and/or volunteers - including salary levels and volunteer stipends, (including mechanisms for increases/pay awards), payment of subsistence allowances, income tax payment etc.
- **Social Benefits and Welfare**
Please provide details of the principles on which social benefits and welfare provision is made - including National Insurance, State health care, pension provision, end of mission/reintegration allowances etc. Please give details of employers and employees contributions, where applicable
- **Insurance**
Please provide details of insurance cover provided for staff and volunteers for emergency/permanent health cover/disability/evacuation/kidnap/baggage etc. (This section refers to any additional health cover not included within State-funded provision of basic health care)

NOTE - Because of differences in the way health care is covered in different countries, it may be difficult to separate health care costs into Social Benefits/Insurance categories. Don't worry.

- **Other Financial Benefits** - including family benefits (such as travel, insurance and subsistence), and car and accommodation provision

3. Other Support - Management and Policy

Within this section, we are seeking details of the other benefits and resources that are provided for staff and volunteers, but which are not financial in nature.

Please provide information, if it is easily available in a handbook or briefing notes about the following :

- **Briefing and Debriefing provision** - including access to specialist counselling
- **Training and skills development before during and between Assignments** - both general training and specialist technical training
- **Career Planning and career development systems, including whether you have appraisal/performance management systems in place**

B Issues affecting HR effectiveness

The issues which affect different agencies are not the same, although there are some which are common to many of us. The purpose of this study is to identify the issues of major concern, and to collate agencies' views and opinions, together with sources of information, expertise and best practice in dealing with them. Below are suggested some of the issues which affect agencies - please feel free to add your responses to this electronic document or attach them separately together with any other relevant information :

- Please provide us with details of your concerns about the issues which affect HR management in your agency, including any documentation you have concerning the issues
- Please give details of any initiatives your agency has taken to address the issues, especially if they might be of relevance to other agencies, or might also be accessed by them
- Does your agency have resources which would be available to other agencies in addressing these issues - such as specific policies/guidelines, or training courses, for example

Suggestions are given below of some headings which include issues which affect many agencies and staff - this may help you. (It would be useful if you could also rate the issues below in their importance for your agency, in the box provided, on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being very important).

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 The Future of Volunteerism | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Volunteerism versus Professionalism | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Recruitment and Retention of Experienced Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Career Planning and Development | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 Briefing and Debriefing, Counselling and Psychological welfare | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 Training - pre-mission, during and between assignments
(general training and preparation and also specialist technical training) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 Compensation and Benefits | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 Insurance and Health Cover, including War Risk | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 Competition with other agencies | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 Expatriates and Nationally recruited staff - ensuring equity | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 The threat of litigation | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please provide details of any other issues of major concern, not included in the list above

Appendix 2 – ECHO FPA agencies

Agencies with Framework Partnership Agreements at December 2003

Agency	Country	Agency	Country
ACF Action Contre La Faim	France	Caritas (Secours Catholique)	France
ACP Asambla de Cooperacion por la paz	Spain	Caritas	Germany
ACSUR Asociacion Para La Cooperacion Con El Sur Las Segovias	Spain	Caritas	Italy
ACTED Agence D'aide A La Cooperation Technique Et Au Developpement	France	Caritas	Luxembourg
Action Against Hunger	UK	Caritas	Spain
Action Aid	UK	CCM Comitato Collaborazione Medica	Italy
Action Contre el Hambre	Spain	CEFA Comitato Europeo Per La Formazione E L'agricoltura	Italy
ADRA Adventist Development And Relief Agency	Denmark	CESVI Cooperazione E Sviluppo	Italy
ADRA Adventist Development And Relief Agency	Germany	Christian Aid	UK
Aga Khan Foundation UK	UK	Church of Sweden Aid	Sweden
Aide Medicale Internationale	France	CIC Asociado para a cooperacao international	Portugal
AIFO Associazione Italiana Amici Di Raoul Follereau	Italy	CINS Cooperazione Italiana Nord Sud	Italy
AISPO Associazione Italiana Per La Solidarieta Tra I Popoli	Italy	CIR Comite Internacional de rescate	Spain
Alisei (Ex NUOVA FRONTIERA)	Italy	CISP Comitato Internazionale Per Lo Sviluppo Dei Popoli	Italy
AMAR Charitable Foundation	UK	CISV Una comunita per il mondo	Italy
AMI Assistenza Medica	Portugal	Concern Universal	UK
ANNF Asociacion navarra nuevo futuro	Spain	Concern Worldwide	Ireland
Arbeiter Samariter Bund	Germany	COOPI Cooperazione Internazionale	Italy
ASF Dansk Folkehjaelp	Denmark	CORD Christian Outreach Relief And Development	UK
Asia onlus	Italy	Cordaid	Netherlands
Atlas logistique	France	COSPE Cooperazione Per Lo Sviluppo Dei Paesi Emergenti	Italy
AVSI - Associazione volontari	Italy	COSV Comitato Di Coordinamento Delle Organizzazioni Per Il Servizio Volontario	Italy
CAFOD Catholic Agency For Overseas Development	UK	CRIC Centro Regionale d'Intervento per la cooperazione	Italy
CAM Comite d'aide medicale	France	CUAMM	Italy
CARE	Austria	DanChurchAid	Denmark
CARE	France	Danish Refugee Council	Denmark
CARE	Germany	DIA	France
CARE	Netherlands	Diakonie Der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland	Germany
CARE International	UK	DIMITRA Centre of strategic planning for development	Greece
Caritas	Austria	Emergency	Italy
Caritas	Czech Republic	Enfants du monde	France
Caritas	Denmark	Entreculturas	Spain

Appendix 2

Agency	Country	Agency	Country
Erikshjalpen	Sweden	Medicus del mundo	Spain
European Perspective	Greece	Medicus mundi	Spain
Finn Church Aid	Finland	Memisa	Belgium
Fonds Medical Tropical	Belgium	Merlin	UK
Food for the Hungry UK	UK	Mission East	Denmark
France libertes	France	Movimondo	Italy
German Agro Action	Germany	MPDL Movimento por la paz el desarme y la libertad	Spain
Greek committee for intern. Democratic solidarity	Greece	MSF Medecins Sans Frontieres	Belgium
GVC Gruppo Di Volontariato Civile	Italy	MSF Medecins Sans Frontieres	France
Handicap International	Belgium	MSF Medecins Sans Frontieres	Luxembourg
Handicap International	France	MSF Medecins Sans Frontieres	Netherlands
Help Hilfe Zur Selbsthufe	Germany	MSF Medecins Sans Frontieres	Spain
HelpAge International	UK	MSP Movimento sviluppo e pace	Italy
Hilfswerk Austria	Austria	Norwegian Church Aid	Norway
ICCO Interchurch organisation for development cooperation	Netherlands	Norwegian People's Aid	Norway
ICU Istituto Per La Cooperazione Universitaria	Italy	Norwegian Refugee Council	Norway
Initiative developpement	France	Nouscamins	Spain
Inter aide	France	Novib (Oxfam Netherlands)	Netherlands
Intermon Oxfam	Spain	Ockenden International	UK
International Orthodox Christian Charities	Greece	OIKOS Cooperacao E Desenvolvimento	Portugal
Intersos	Italy	Oxfam	UK
IRC	UK	Oxfam Solidarite	Belgium
ISCOS Istituto Sindacale Per La Cooperazione Allo Sviluppo	Italy	People In Need	Czech Republic
Islamic Relief	UK	Pharmaciens Sans frontieres	France
Johanniter Unfallhilfe	Germany	Plan UK	UK
LVIA Associazione Internazionale Volontari Laici	Italy	PMU Interlife / Swedish Pentecostal Mission	Sweden
Madera Mission d'aide au developpement des economies rurale	France	Polish Humanitarian Organisation	Poland
MAG Mines Advisory Group	UK	Premiere Urgence	France
Magyar Okomenikus Szeretetzsol	Hungary	Project Hope	UK
Malteser Hilfsdienst	Germany	PTM Paz y tercer mundo	Spain
Marie Stopes International	UK	Save the Children	Netherlands
Medair	UK	Save the Children	UK
Medicins du monde	France	Secours Populaire Francais	France
Medicins du monde	Greece	Solidaridad Internacional	Spain
Medico International	Germany	Solidarites aide humanitaire d'urgence	France
Medicos do mundo	Portugal	SOS Kinderdorf	Austria
		Tearfund	UK
		Terre des hommes	Italy

Agency	Country
The Halo Trust	UK
Triangle	France
Trócaire	Ireland
Un ponte per	Italy
Veterinaires sans frontieres	Belgium
VISPE Volontari Italiani Solidarieta Paesi Emergenti	Italy
World Vision	Germany
World Vision	UK
World Vision	Ireland
ZOA Refugee Care	Netherland

Glossary and abbreviations

ACF	Action contre la Faim
ACODEV	Belgian Federation of Development Co-operation Associations
ACORD	Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development
ACSUR	La Asociacion para la Cooperacion con el Sur - Las Segovias
ACT	Action by Churches Together
ACTED	L'Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement
AGEH	Association for Development Co-operation
ALISEI	Associazione per la Cooperazione Internazionale a l'Aiuto Umanitario
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
APSO	renamed (2004) DCI Training and Research Centre
ASI	Agences de Solidarité Internationale
BESO	British Executive Service Overseas
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic organisations
BOND	British Overseas NGOs for Development
BRCS	British Red Cross Society
CAFOD	Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CESVI	Cooperazione e Sviluppo onlus
CIIR	Catholic Institute for International Relations
CINFO	Centre d'information, de conseil et de formation
CMS	Church Mission Society
CORD	Christian Outreach - Relief and Development
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CUAMM	Collegio Universitario Aspiranti e Medici Missionari
DanChurchAid	Folkekirkens Nodhjaelp
DANIDA	Danish Government - Danish International Development Assistance
Danish People's Aid	Dansk Folkehjhelp
DCI	Development Cooperation Ireland
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DFID	UK Government - Department for International Development
DRC	Danish Refugee Council

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
EPER	Entraide Protestante Suisse
EPN	Emergency Personnel Network
EU	European Union
EU-CORD	Christian Organisations in Relief and Development
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement (ECHO)
Groupe URD	Groupe Urgence-Réhabilitation-Développement
HAP International	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International
HPN	Humanitarian Practice Network (ODI)
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
IAS	International Aid Sweden
ICD	International Co-operation for Development
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IHE	International Health Exchange (merged with RedR, 2003)
INGO	International NGO
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IS	International Service (UNAIS)
ISO	International Standards Organisation
ITDG	International Technology Development Group
JEEAR	Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda
LWF	Lutheran World Relief
LWR	Lutheran World Federation
MAF Europe	Mission Aviation Fellowship Europe
MduM	Médecins du Monde
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	UN - Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Glossary and abbreviations cont'd

ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PQASSO	Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation
RedR	Register for Engineers in Disaster Relief
SAC (or SAK)	Swedish Afghanistan Committee
SC UK / SCF UK	Save the Children UK
SPHERE	SPHERE Project. The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
USPG	United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
VENRO	Association of German development NGOs
VSF Belgium	Vétérinaires sans Frontières Belgium
VSI	Volontaire de Solidarite Internationale
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZOPP	Zielorientierte Projektplanung (objectives-oriented project planning)