



# Code of good practice

*in the management  
and support of  
aid personnel*

The People In Aid Code of Good Practice, 2003, is a revision of the People In Aid Code of Best Practice, 1997



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

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The original edition of this Code was published in 1997 by the Relief and Rehabilitation Network, now called the Humanitarian Practice Network, at the Overseas Development Institute, London.

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# Contents

Foreword .....	2
Introduction .....	3
The Principles.....	6
Guiding Principle.....	7
Principle One – Human resources strategy .....	8
Principle Two – Staff policies and practices .....	10
Principle Three – Managing people.....	12
Principle Four – Consultation and communication .....	14
Principle Five – Recruitment and selection .....	16
Principle Six – Learning, training and development .....	18
Principle Seven – Health, safety and security .....	20
Implementing the People In Aid Code .....	23
About People In Aid .....	26
Quality and accountability .....	27
Acknowledgements .....	28

# Foreword

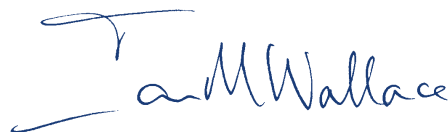
The People In Aid Code is an important resource for the aid community around the world. It grew from the collaborative effort of relief and development agencies committed to improving the quality of the assistance provided to communities affected by poverty and disaster. The intention of the Code is to improve agencies' support and management of their staff and volunteers.

Every day the staff and volunteers from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), UN bodies, charities and community groups in the South, and many other agencies place themselves in the frontline in the service of others. Some face living and security conditions only the most committed of people would accept; others may be based in a regional, country or head office. Wherever they are based and whatever their employment status, their working approach is typified by an unstinting commitment to work for the interests of other people. Employers owe these people much more than the minimum.

All agencies operating in relief, development or advocacy have learned the hard way that proper support and management of staff is a critical success factor in delivering their mission. Any initiative, which can enable employers to become clearer about their responsibilities and accountabilities, will ultimately help them become better managers of people, and therefore better providers of quality assistance.

The People In Aid Code is such an initiative, a quality tool that deserves to be adopted widely by the global relief and development community. By endorsing the Code, an agency is recognising that those who work for it, both international and national staff, are central to the achievement of its mission. It is also demonstrating its willingness to accept the assistance and support of People In Aid, its Code, its network and its other services, in setting out to prove this. Employers owe it to their staff, volunteers, consultants, beneficiaries, trustees and donors. Every stakeholder can benefit from the Code's implementation, but the ultimate winners will be those with whom we work in order to alleviate poverty and suffering.

Over the last six years I have increasingly recognised the importance and value of the Code to agencies and the people who work for them. My own experience of having been a fieldworker and a manager is that the Code is addressing an area that is critical to effectiveness. As Chair of the Board of People In Aid's Trustees, I am privileged to be able to endorse this revised Code and commend it to the sector.



Ian Wallace  
Chair of the Board of Trustees

# Introduction

## Background

The mission of most relief and development agencies is to work with those who are poor, distressed, affected by conflict, vulnerable, displaced, disadvantaged and worried about their future. In 1994, worried that these descriptions also applied to their own staff, a group of agencies commissioned a survey. Concentrating on aidworkers as employees, “Room for Improvement” (Rebecca McNair, Relief and Rehabilitation Network Paper 10, Overseas Development Institute) found that they felt poorly managed and unsupported. This led the sector to ask how human resources among relief and development agencies could be improved. The answer was the “People In Aid Code of Best Practice in the management and support of aid personnel”.

*“One of the central factors in the success of humanitarian action has been the dedication of staff – ordinary people doing extraordinary things, despite working in disempowering bureaucracies.”*

In our sector, we rely a great deal on the expertise and experience of people. Evaluations of the sector’s work consistently show that it is staff and volunteers that make the difference between effective humanitarian aid or development assistance and inadequate fulfilment of an NGO’s mission. As stated in the 2003 annual review of ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action): “One of the central factors in the success of humanitarian action has been the dedication of staff – ordinary people doing extraordinary things, despite working in disempowering bureaucracies.”

NGOs openly and often acknowledge their accountability to two main stakeholders: donors and beneficiaries. People In Aid maintains that to truly satisfy their accountability to these two groups they must also be accountable to those who deliver their missions: their staff and volunteers.

## People In Aid and the Code

People In Aid was created by the sector with a single remit: to encourage improvements in the way that staff

are managed and supported. We were also created as a network of members, so that NGOs committed to improving their human resource management could do so together and had a central resource to assist them.

Initially, best practice was identified and disseminated through the “People In Aid Code of Best Practice in the management and support of aid personnel”. The Code itself was drawn up between 1995 and 1997 through extensive consultation. Although originally driven by agencies in the UK and Ireland, with funding from the UK government’s then Overseas Development Administration, the input on best practice also came from the UN family, from the USA, from Continental Europe and from the human resources and field experience of a large number of individuals.

This revised edition of the People In Aid Code reflects the changes in internal priorities and external influences that agencies now face.

**Who is the Code for?** The revised Code’s target audience is now explicitly broader. Any perception that the Code was only for emergency relief agencies employing Northerners as expatriates was always incorrect. The Working Group on the Code revision brought together a huge amount of experience, and a deliberately wide variety of perspectives to ensure that this revised Code will benefit every agency involved in humanitarian relief, development assistance or advocacy. It matters not where an agency is based in the world. Size is not important. It applies to agencies employing any combination of international staff (those working outside their own country), host country staff or volunteers. Indeed, growing concern over the status of host country staff means that there is now only one Code indicator where a distinction between international and host country staff can even be implied (7.8) - though it is understood that different cultural and legal backgrounds will affect groups of staff in different ways.

*“This revised Code will benefit every agency involved in humanitarian relief, development assistance or advocacy.”*

**How can the Code help you?** The Code is an important part of People In Aid’s contribution to improving human resource management in the relief and development sector. The Code addresses the

people-related components of your agency's risk management strategy. The Code is a quality tool which sits alongside others (see page 27) as your agency aims to improve its accountability to various key stakeholders, in People In Aid's case primarily to staff and volunteers. The Code offers your agency a framework which will help it assess, and if necessary improve, its performance in human resource management. The process of using the Code, which offers the chance of recognition by peers, staff, applicants, donors, in-country stakeholders and more, is outlined on page 23.

### **The revised Code**

For those who have used the original Code, this revised version will be familiar enough. It draws extensively on the experiences and comments of the agencies which first implemented the Code (see People In Aid's booklet "Ahead of the Field") as well as others who have incorporated the Code in their working practices in one way or another. It has also benefited from the knowledge of current issues acquired by People In Aid from its members and the wider relief and development community. It is, however, worth highlighting some of the main changes in emphasis.

*"The revised Code offers the sector additional opportunities to test itself against current good practice and lead the way to further improvements."*

**"Best" to "Good"** Most obviously we have changed the title from Best Practice to Good Practice. "Best practice" fitted well with the Code as a tool which encouraged an agency to aspire to improvements. Best practice is perceived, however, as desirable but unattainable. Realities in the sector now, such as donor demands for quality, require something more measurable. "Good practice" responds to these realities.

**What's new?** A major factor behind the revisions is a recognition that good practice has moved on since 1997. Health and safety procedures, training, monitoring of diversity or equal opportunities and other areas were not standard concerns for most agencies until the Code helped place them on the agenda. The

revised Code offers the sector additional opportunities to test itself against current good practice and lead the way to further improvements.

The revisions have been, in part, based on textual and content changes suggested by the NGOs that have implemented the Code and are informed by their practical experiences during the implementation process. Recruitment and selection, for example, was felt to be inadequately addressed in the original Code and now has a principle of its own.

*"We hope that the Guiding Principle will influence or enter all organisational strategies or values statements."*

There is now a Guiding Principle. This is consistent with the vision of the wide variety of agencies, whether People In Aid members or not, which have used the original principles as the basis of their staff handbooks. We hope that the Guiding Principle will influence or enter all organisational strategies or values statements.

We have increased the number of case studies which illustrate the indicators. We found that readers of the Code liked to learn about the activities of their peers so we have included examples of good practice from a wide variety of agencies.

We have added some new elements. In these days of increasing litigiousness we emphasise duty of care, and mutual responsibility. Equally, we recognise that motivation should not come exclusively from an employee's dedication: both hard rewards (pay and benefits) and soft (leave and development opportunities) are more strongly emphasised.

**What remains the same?** Much of the Code remains the same. It retains its exclusive interest in human resources; its specific concentration on issues affecting our sector; its insistence on written policies which are fair, effective and transparent; its emphasis on the organisational efforts necessary to ensure staff are capable of fulfilling a mission; and it avoids fixing rigid parameters and setting quantitative targets. The Code affirms an overall standard of Good Practice, without setting specific standards which NGOs might be unable to fulfil.

The principles remain in the same logical order. The health, safety and security (Principle Seven) of staff is ensured by the training (Principle Six) which follows effective recruitment (Principle Five). None of these processes will be effective without mechanisms to communicate with staff (Principle Four) about their role

*“The Code affirms an overall standard of Good Practice, without setting specific standards which NGOs might be unable to fulfil.”*

in the organisation (Principle Three) and without the policies to support them (Principle Two). All of this requires a budget and a plan which derive from a central strategy (Principle One).

### **Implementing the Code**

The implementation process, a major appeal of the Code to the sector, has not changed. The Code always benefited from having an accountability mechanism of its own. Over the last few years some stakeholders, particularly donors and staff, have found this to be very useful in gauging the organisational capacity of an agency. People In Aid has ensured the use of the accountability mechanism chosen, social audit, is simple and has produced an easy-to-use manual which guides implementing agencies. At the request of our members there is now a kitemark process, and our website lists the agencies involved in the implementation process. You can read more about this on page 23.

### **The support we offer**

We have always recognised that some agencies do not prioritise time or money for human resources. These agencies have a particular need to, at least, join People In Aid and benefit from the network and its output. We have also taken steps to address the perception that using the Code, productive as it is, is too time-consuming. There is a process underway to ensure that, for every indicator in the Code, People In Aid will be able to give specific information which will help an agency fulfil it quickly and efficiently. Every indicator will be “deepened” with, for example, policy guidance, a template form, a handbook, a reference to another agency’s work or a training provider. An agency can take

this information and assimilate it with its own material. People In Aid will give the support agencies require.

Of course, People In Aid is more than the Code. Over the years its members, and the wider sector, have determined its priorities. On page 26 you can see the range of activities People In Aid undertakes. Each one of these activities is designed to raise awareness of human resources issues, facilitate the exchange of good practice and provide practical support to agencies implementing the Code.

### **Next steps for the People In Aid Code**

In conjunction with this revised Code further steps are being taken to develop the support and assistance provided.

- First is to ensure that “indicator-deepening” materials are ready for use by implementing agencies. Research is already underway to expand the existing documentation available.
- Second is to use this revision and the enhanced support capacity to increase the number of agencies around the world which are implementing the Code. At the time of writing we are collaborating on this aspect of our work with agencies headquartered in six countries.
- Third, we will be working with Southern NGOs, whether partners of Northern NGOs or not, to look at their human resource management needs. There will be further translations of the Code (a pre-requisite for concerted activity in a country) and efforts to ensure any cultural translation is smooth. Some concepts in the Code will require further amplification before they can be fully adopted and work has already been commissioned that will inform our future activities in the South. We would urge our partners in the South to contact us at any stage to check on progress.
- Finally we will respond to your comments on the Code and your suggestions for future work on human resources related issues which we, as the central resource for the sector, can address.

Jonathan Potter  
Executive Director  
September 2003.

# People In Aid Code of Good Practice

**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*



# Guiding Principle

## ***People are central to the achievement of our mission***

Our approach to the people who work for us is fundamental to the achievement of our mission. We recognise that the people who work for us merit respect and proper management, and that the effectiveness and success of our operations depend on the contributions of all salaried and contract staff, and volunteers.

## ***Why a “guiding principle”?***

It is no secret that evaluation after evaluation of relief and development work concludes by emphasising the centrality of people in delivering organisational and programme objectives. This is something People In Aid has been championing since its beginnings in 1995. It is therefore appropriate that, with this revision of the Code, a guiding principle reflects the importance of staff and volunteers in achieving the organisational mission.

The guiding principle makes explicit what is generally accepted; and each of the seven principles that follow assumes the centrality of people to the organisational mission. The principles of the Code of Good Practice provide a sound framework for responding to the challenge of delivering effective human resource management. Those that implement the Code demonstrate their belief in this guiding principle and their commitment to staff and volunteers.

We would hope that those agencies which do not have a corporate value related to their people might consider adopting this guiding principle. We would also hope that when writing in their annual reports, Chief Executives, Presidents or Chairs might reaffirm the guiding principle and recognise the contribution of their colleagues. For those who choose to implement the Code of Good Practice, the guiding principle will become a reality in plans, budgets, training programmes, consultation mechanisms and the other processes which the Code’s principles enlarge upon. The benefits will be felt by your agency, your beneficiaries, your donors – and your colleagues.

# Principle One

## Human resources strategy

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

Our human resources strategy is central to our organisational strategy. Our human resources strategy is long-term and encompasses every part of the organisation.

#### ***Indicators***

- 1** Our organisational strategy or business plan explicitly values staff for their contribution to organisational and operational objectives.
- 2** The organisational strategy allocates sufficient human and financial resources to achieve the objectives of the human resources strategy.
- 3** Operational plans and budgets aim to reflect fully our responsibilities for staff management, support, development and well-being. The monitoring of these plans and budgets feeds into any necessary improvements.
- 4** Our human resources strategy reflects our commitment to promote inclusiveness and diversity.

#### ***Why is this important?***

Most agencies have a written business plan or strategy and this should make reference to human resources. An organisation's success depends on the fact that all staff, whether international or host country, are included within the human resources strategy, and understand the part they play in achieving the organisation's objectives. At Concern Worldwide the commitment to staff is evident through

the way the Code has been integrated with the overall organisational strategy and is a part of budgets, plans and discussions. The implementation process is sustainable because it is supported at the highest level through the Board Directors' "buy-in".

Agencies can benefit hugely from the positive contribution staff can make to the planning process, as the example from the Leprosy Mission International shows. In their transition towards a more participatory working culture, they have found that by encouraging and enabling all staff to participate, people issues were given the priority they deserved.

The Code is more than merely making staff better at their jobs or happier in their role; it is about organisational effectiveness, valuing the staff contribution and encouraging an inclusive working environment. Sometimes external factors prompt action towards effectiveness; host governments, partners and the wider community all need the reassurance that the agencies with which they work will demonstrate professionalism in all their activities. Donors require that their funds be committed to agencies that can demonstrate effective human resource management. For example, the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), which raises substantial funds from the British public in times of crisis internationally, states that its member agencies need to have "a demonstrable commitment to achieving People In Aid standards and a willingness to be evaluated against them". So the DEC independently reviews programmes and in addition to raising questions about appropriate staffing, staff turnover and management issues, its evaluations have also raised critical questions about health and safety procedures. The DEC now requires that members show how they have integrated previous lessons relating to human resources into their existing and future programmes.

Other external factors improving organisational effectiveness may include employment legislation: for example in the European Union and the US, laws in the area of diversity and equal opportunities have influenced the British Council and the World Bank.

But sometimes an organisation's drive for effectiveness requires that it review and perhaps re-prioritise its human resource management strategies or practice from within, and for that to be successfully undertaken, commitment and support to staff must be evident in decisions taken at the highest level.

### **Concern Worldwide - Valuing staff in the strategic plan**

Concern Worldwide's Strategic Plan recognises the key role played by people in its operations. "Having the necessary quantity and quality of human resources", it states in the Executive Summary, is "fundamental to the attainment of all the objectives in the strategic plan".

One of the 10 objectives in the Strategic Plan itself is dedicated to human resources. It states that Concern aims "to recruit, retain and develop staff, and to promote the organisation's ethos with them through appropriate human resources policies in line with the People In Aid Code of Best Practice" in order that it might "carry out its mission as effectively as possible".

For Concern, growth is "not just about the number of countries we work in or the number of people which the organisation works with. It is also about the quality of the work we do." The growth will be determined by "the development of organisational capacity and human resources". From this derive a number of priorities, such as becoming an employer of choice, quality of recruits, investment in training, giving career opportunities and creating the right working environment.

Of course, such objectives do not just happen. There are many specific resources identified in the Strategic Plan as being necessary to the achievement of the objectives in the human resources strategy. For example, 4% of each country or department's payroll is allocated to training and development and an HR post can be established for every country employing over 75 staff.

### **The Leprosy Mission International - Involving staff**

The Leprosy Mission International currently works in 24 countries, and to ensure the organisation continues to

reflect the overall vision and strategy, recent moves towards a more participatory and community-based approach were accompanied by structural change.

Changes were led by a "structure review action group" which received input from the entire organisation and key stakeholders via focus groups and a survey. As a result, regional field forums were established and incorporated within the new structure, with the aim of improving working relationships between donors, beneficiaries and staff. Each forum comprises between 12 and 15 members, and includes a Board representative, the relevant field director (or regional manager), together with a number of international and local field staff and also beneficiaries.

Regional field forums meet once a year and, in addition to acting as advisors to the field director for new programmes and budgets, they also influence the overall operational strategy. They are ultimately accountable to the Board of Directors, which reviews their activities on a regular basis.

### **The British Council - Promoting diversity**

As an international organisation the British Council enjoys enormous diversity among its staff. Of the 7,300 staff around the world, some 6,000 are employed in-country. Such diversity is to be celebrated, but it brings many challenges and these are being overcome by the organisation's diversity strategy.

A programme of organisational culture change is helping the British Council become a better place to work, and providing the impetus for harmonisation of terms and conditions, the creation of consistent job families and the clarification of staff development and progression opportunities. Workshops and an interactive CD Rom have helped communicate the revised equal opportunities and diversity strategy

throughout the whole organisation.

Senior level targets to increase the numbers of women and minority ethnic staff at senior management over a five to ten year period have been supported by a programme of positive action, and progress to date is tangible.

Diversity working groups are forming the basis for a global network of staff committed to the diversity agenda, and a global staff survey provided helpful insights into potential problem areas. The results were discussed on a country-by-country basis and supporting action plans established to address the issues raised.

### **The World Bank - Encouraging inclusivity**

The World Bank workforce comprises 147 nationalities spread over 106 country offices. To better reflect their clients' diversity and priorities, as well as to model employment best practice worldwide, the Bank has an established Diversity Programme.

The Programme is aimed at engendering a diversity of thought and voice and its ultimate objective is that of inclusion. It covers nationality, race, gender, educational background, academic discipline and previous work experience. Many initiatives put this into practice. For example, in recruitment, skills are prioritised and then candidates are sought further afield than has been traditionally the case; and in the workplace itself, staff have been trained to embrace the richness of the Bank's cultural diversity through the "Working with Respect" campaign.

In the words of the World Bank: "As decentralisation and devolution locates more and more expertise in the field we are more conscious than ever that the legitimate aspirations of a globally-located and diverse workforce will require working with respect and full inclusion for optimal development effectiveness and poverty eradication."

# Principle Two

## Staff policies and practices

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

We recognise that our policies must enable us to achieve both effectiveness in our work and good quality of working life for our staff. We do not aim to respond solely to minimum legal, professional or donor requirements.

### **Indicators**

- 1 Policies and practices that relate to staff employment are set out in writing and are monitored and reviewed, particularly when significant changes in the legal or working environment take place.
- 2 The policies and practices we implement are consistent in their application to all staff except while taking into account relevant legal provisions and cultural norms.
- 3 Staff are familiarised with policies and practices that affect them.
- 4 Appropriate guidance is provided to managers so that they are equipped to implement policies effectively.
- 5 The rewards and benefits for each role are clearly identified and applied in a fair and consistent manner.
- 6 Policies and practices are monitored according to how well they meet:
  - organisational and programme aims
  - reasonable considerations of effectiveness, fairness and transparency.

### **Why is this important?**

The importance of an agency having its own written policies cannot be underestimated. Care must be taken to ensure human resources policies appropriate for the organisation are disseminated to all stakeholders and

clearly understood by those responsible for implementation or monitoring, since they act as the framework within which the agency and its staff work. Ambiguous, inconsistent, or non-existent policies run the risk of antagonising staff and damaging the organisation. The case study of Oxfam GB demonstrates the importance of effective consultation (see Principle Four) and shows how it is vital to successful policy implementation. The case study also highlights the importance of equipping managers to take the lead on policy implementation and reminds us that policies must be updated regularly to reflect current trends and needs. Developing managers' guidelines to support them in policy implementation can be invaluable to delivering a consistent approach to staff.

At least a basic set of core policies are required for effective staff management. For organisations that require guidance in developing policies, People In Aid is able to offer members an extensive resource, and a growing network of contacts whose expertise is available to members, something from which agencies such as Health Unlimited have benefited.

For organisations working in more than one country, it is important to have a global philosophy for human resource management and consistency in the application of policies. It is vital to ensure that policies take into account the local legal and cultural context; the ideal approach is "think globally, act locally". Islamic Relief invested time and effort in the harmonisation of their benefits policy and consider it money well spent. ITDG succeeded in adapting their policies to reflect the local legal norms, and to remain sympathetic to the organisation's local structures. Thus local staff are empowered to develop and implement policies that remain consistent with the rest of the organisation.

The Code suggests the main areas in which agencies might require policies, and Principle Two provides a useful and pragmatic guide for those responsible for policy development. Clearly policy development is informed by the outcome of monitoring and evaluation activity. It is important that both operational and human resources managers are involved in gathering the information that will help define future policies and procedures.

People In Aid would encourage agencies to adopt an approach to policy development which will result in staff benefiting from the best policies an organisation can offer, and not necessarily merely being covered by the legal minimum, or where that does not exist, nothing at all.

### **Oxfam GB - Effective policy development**

Oxfam GB has developed an HIV/AIDS Workplace policy and programme to respond to the impact of HIV/AIDS on the organisation. In developing the policy, Oxfam GB assessed the scale of the problem, identified ways in which the organisation was vulnerable to the impacts of HIV/AIDS, and then assessed the cost/benefit of investing in a workplace programme. This involved widespread consultation with a range of internal stakeholders, as well as researching the approaches of other agencies and commercial multinational companies. Local input and buy-in was achieved partly through a series of workshops and one-to-one interviews with key staff in the areas most affected.

Staff awareness of the policy and practice is being increased through the provision of a central resource pack, which includes a staff handbook, a general staff leaflet and induction materials for adaptation and use locally. The organisation is also identifying HIV Champions in local offices to support the education and prevention programme.

Clear guidance on the scope of the policy and the implementation process now exists for managers. The challenge of implementation is being eased through the provision of training and support, and by the establishment of modified information systems that are able to track key indicators in the field (such as sickness absence and medical costs). In addition dedicated Implementation Managers have been appointed to ensure success in the two African regions assessed as priorities.

### **ITDG - Developing local policies**

ITDG (Intermediate Technology Development Group) is a global organisation and with its overseas offices and programmes being managed exclusively by local staff, the role of the HR team in the head office is to provide support and guidance on policy

formulation, adaptation and implementation to overseas offices when required.

ITDG has seven country offices and each has a dedicated human resources representative, who is also responsible for Finance and Administration, in its main office. S/he manages the HR processes locally and, with the country director, will have final responsibility for ensuring that HR policies remain consistent with equivalent policies throughout the organisation across the world, yet also reflect the local needs and legal or cultural norms.

The process is effective and the benefits of such local empowerment are quite tangible. A virtual network between ITDG's staff responsible for HR around the world has helped improve the rate of information sharing between offices, and the plans to strengthen this further will enhance the capacity of local staff.

### **Islamic Relief - Consistency in policy development**

Islamic Relief is committed to maintaining a level of pay and benefits that is fair to all employees and competitive in the local market. Changes in the local market are monitored by senior management who assess the impact they might have on existing policies. This research informs a regular review process and any changes are introduced following consultation with staff.

Islamic Relief recently addressed the issue of fairness in its benefits policy by harmonising it across the organisation, bringing consistency between countries while retaining a degree of flexibility to ensure local requirements were addressed. For example, per diem allowances are now based on the same principles and eligibility criteria throughout the organisation and applied uniformly to all staff irrespective of position, status, nationality or country of origin, but the actual rates are defined locally according to currency

fluctuations and cost of living. Similarly, staff working in recognised "hardship" postings receive a hardship allowance calculated as a fixed percentage of basic salary. All staff in the hardship programme or location (whether international or local) have the same percentage added to their normal pay.

As well as incorporating issues of fairness and consistency, Islamic Relief also endeavours to ensure the benefits policy remains in keeping with employees' expectations. For example, rather than impose life assurance cover, all staff receive a health insurance allowance which gives them the option of making their own personal arrangements in line with their own wishes.

### **Health Unlimited - Helping managers implement policy**

Health Unlimited's (HU) Managers' Handbook addresses most aspects of human resource management. It responds to staff and management requests for policy consistency, and for guidelines on human resources issues for managers in the field. It aims to "ensure that HU has consistent management practice by having global policies and procedures; ensure that the management practice is of a good standard by writing appropriate policies informed by best practice; save management time and effort in the field and in HQ by having clearly worded policies, procedures and practical tools by reducing managers' need to refer back to HQ; and allow flexibility by providing clear principles and minimum standards with room for interpretation locally".

The introduction stresses the importance of the input provided by managers themselves and the "best practice collected from other British NGOs, especially through the People In Aid group". Input from staff and managers was collected at regional meetings, where human resources is always an agenda item. Regional meetings also provide the forum for adapting policies to the local context. Updates are circulated regularly.

# Principle Three

## Managing people

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

Our staff have a right to expect management which prepares them to do their job so we can, together, achieve our mission. Our management policies, procedures and training equip our managers to prepare and support staff in carrying out their role effectively, to develop their potential and to encourage and recognise good performance.

#### ***Indicators***

- 1** Relevant training, support and resources are provided to managers to fulfil their responsibilities. Leadership is a part of this training.
- 2** Staff have clear work objectives and performance standards, know whom they report to and what management support they will receive. A mechanism for reviewing staff performance exists and is clearly understood by all staff.
- 3** In assessing performance, managers will adhere to the organisation's procedures and values.
- 4** All staff are aware of grievance and disciplinary procedures.

#### ***Why is this important?***

Sound people management is a major contributor to programme success. This Principle suggests areas that an agency can address in order to reduce the likelihood of a programme not meeting its objectives.

Although they are often recruited on the basis of competence in a particular discipline, most managers have people management responsibilities. Therefore ensuring they are adequately supported in their role and able to manage effectively is vital. This will usually entail providing them with viable management development and training opportunities, something which Tearfund has successfully offered at grassroots level. Where appropriate, leadership qualities should be nurtured and developed, and World Vision's leadership programme shows how the calibre of programme staff and the quality of the organisation's output can be improved.

For an organisation's mission to be realised effectively, clear objectives and standards, consistent with organisational objectives, are important for both managers and those they manage. The process of monitoring performance helps ensure that staff remain on course to achieve their aims. An effective appraisal or review system by which performance can be assessed assists managers in carrying out their role, and as VSO shows, although they can be complicated to implement, the benefits are obvious.

Objectives and standards are vital, but staff are also entitled to a mechanism for airing grievances. In some countries this "right" is enshrined in law, but even where this is not the case, discipline and grievance procedures are to be welcomed for sound operational reasons as well for the fact that they are a sign of organisational responsiveness and transparency. There may also be rare occasions when a member of staff feels it is in the public's interest to make a complaint about malpractice in the workplace (and this could fall outside the normal scope of a grievance procedure). Developing an organisational "whistleblowing" policy provides an opportunity to help create an atmosphere of openness and trust, in which staff are encouraged to play their part in improving the overall effectiveness of the organisation.

Ultimately, it is the manager's responsibility to manage but their success depends on them being adequately supported. It is human resources specialists who are often best placed to offer them the support to enable them to succeed.

**Tearfund -  
Developing managers**

Tearfund works through local partners in around 80 countries. In recent years Tearfund has broadened its disaster management work and so introduced a Disaster Management Development Programme. This aims to strengthen the knowledge, experience and capabilities of existing field managers, equipping them for disaster management work in operational programmes and partner support work. The programme is open to all managers and so far almost half the delegates have been national staff. It was designed by Tearfund’s own learning and development specialists around a “cascade” model in which individual participants are encouraged to transfer their learning to others and to their programme.

Tearfund aims to use the programme to develop current and emerging leaders and the first course module - “programme design and planning” - has been validated by the UK’s Institute of Leadership and Management. External validation forms part of a formal accreditation process and such recognition assures participants that the content is of a high quality. The remainder of the programme covers aspects of disaster management, generic people and project management together with skills for personal development and developing others.

The first module has been extremely well received. Staff are eager to learn and having had numerous opportunities to apply their enhanced skills they are, in the words of one field co-ordinator based in Sierra Leone, feeling very “fulfilled” and much more confident in their ability to do their jobs.

**World Vision -  
Pathways to leadership**

World Vision developed its global leadership development initiative “Pathways to leadership” in recognition of the fact that competent management of the NGO non-profit sector is an extremely important issue. The initiative is driven by

an acute awareness of the strategic importance of effective leadership at multiple levels, and the scarcity of competent leaders to meet these needs in the developing world.

All World Vision’s managers receive a wide range of relevant training and support, but the “Pathways to leadership” programme seeks to develop high-potential leaders in their work with the poor and oppressed and there is a particular focus on cultivating national staff.

The uptake is almost equally split between male and female staff, and the benefits to individuals have been quite tangible, with many remarking on the increased effectiveness of their work as a result of improved skills.

The benefits to the organisation have also been significant. World Vision’s recent evaluations suggest that programmes are having a much greater impact on communities. Moreover, the ability to source high calibre leaders from within the organisation is paying dividends, with a large number of course participants promoted to leadership positions.

**VSO -  
Managing performance**

A new appraisal scheme at Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) means that all UK-based staff have an annual appraisal between March and May, after budgets and organisational objectives have been set for the coming year. The new scheme links these corporate objectives to key objectives set for each employee, each with SMART performance indicators - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely - as well as including discussions around personal and team development plans. Employee progress during the previous year is assessed against the key objectives and also against VSO’s brand characteristics. These are, in essence, behavioural competencies linked to VSO values and include “professional”, “passionate”, “empowering”, “collaborative” and “openness to learning”.

The benefits of the new scheme include improved individual and organisational performance, improved dialogue and support between staff and their managers and better individual and organisational staff development.

For both appraising managers and staff being appraised, VSO provides annual workshops on the skills of appraisal, including feedback skills, and how to get the most out of the process.

VSO’s intention is to extend the core principles of the scheme to all staff working in their programme offices. These will be considered carefully to ensure that there is a good cross-cultural “fit” and where necessary they will be adapted to meet different cultural needs.

**Norwegian Refugee Council -  
Code of Conduct**

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has revised its Code of Conduct. This provides managers and staff with clear guidelines on behaviour during their employment.

The Code of Conduct ensures that staff are aware of their professional responsibilities when on an international posting. It covers general points, such as “upholding the highest standards of competence, efficiency and integrity” through to more specific issues, such as complying with local safety directions and a responsibility to update oneself when changes are made. It acts as a reference during the selection process and during briefing/induction, as well as serving as a guide for managers during regular performance review meetings with staff.

The themes covered in the Code of Conduct result from in-depth discussion inside the agency, and NRC’s emphasis now is on training managers in how to deal with difficult and sensitive issues or allegations appropriately.

# Principle Four

## Consultation and communication

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

We recognise that effective development, implementation and monitoring of human resources policies and practices rely on appropriate consultation and communication with the people who work for us. We aim to include all staff, whether salaried or contract, and volunteers in these processes.

### ***Indicators***

- 1** Staff are informed and adequately consulted when we develop or review human resources policies or practices that affect them.
- 2** Managers and staff understand the scope of consultation and how to participate, individually or collectively.

### ***Why is this important?***

With staff and volunteers often spread over a wide geographic area, participation can sometimes cause something of a headache. Yet staff perform best when they are involved in decisions that affect them, and therefore any mechanism that encourages communication and consultation is to be welcomed.

Communication involves the interchange of ideas, and consultation is the process by which managers and staff (or their representatives) jointly examine issues before decisions are agreed.

When any changes are being made or actions taken that affect staff, then staff should be consulted appropriately and have an opportunity of individually or collectively making their views known to management. Indeed, in many countries this is their legal right. However, it makes good sense irrespective of location, and the fact that staff are being asked their views can, in itself, be motivational. It is also in keeping with participatory and accountable working practices which are common place in the sector.

Mechanisms such as the social audit process used by the People In Aid Code can act as a useful tool for engaging staff and improving communication, but there are a variety of other methods and techniques for consultation, ranging from direct dialogue through to full staff representation in the form of a recognised trade union.

The case study on the IHE and RedR merger demonstrates the importance of effective and ongoing dialogue and shows what it can achieve. The example from Amnesty International shows the benefits of involving staff in the process of organisational change.

Human resources policies informed by a process of consultation with staff stand more chance of being understood and effectively adopted.



### **INF - Meaningful dialogue**

The International Nepal Fellowship (INF) has around 60 expatriates and more than 450 local staff working on a number of projects spread throughout west and mid-west Nepal.

The size of the organisation, and the physical distances that separate staff (up to 600km) pose particular difficulties when dealing with issues that require comprehensive consultation and communication. Yet INF is committed to effective and meaningful employee participation, as demonstrated by the way it reviews the terms and conditions for national staff each year (part of the employee procedures manual revision process).

The annual review starts in January with an invitation for proposals for change going out to staff and their union, and ends with the beginning of the Nepali financial year in July. Over the consultation period, all staff are able to give their views, and the dialogue involves managers, the union and human resources staff. Virtual meetings and exchanges of information are successfully combined with face-to-face meetings, and the final recommendations from nominated staff representatives are presented to board directors for approval prior to implementation. Completing the process with the Board's sign off underlines a commitment to open communication at all levels of the organisation. Ensuring all staff and volunteers have a voice is not only in keeping with the organisation's values but also contributes to employee satisfaction.

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### **IHE & RedR - Consultation – an ongoing process**

After a year of discussions, IHE (the International Health Exchange) and RedR entered into a full and successful merger.

From the outset both agencies agreed that the process had to be as transparent as possible. Information was shared openly

which made it easier for staff to cope with the inevitable uncertainty; drafts of communications to internal and external stakeholders were also shared for comment prior to formal release to ensure consistency and clarity. Both parties worked through a staff representative and regular meetings were held to ensure open and transparent communication. Fortunately no staff posts were placed at risk by the merger and discussions therefore focused around staff's current position and their future prospects within the merged organisation.

Both parties agreed that involving an HR professional would ensure that legal obligations towards staff were met throughout the consultation and merger process and a member of the RedR board was selected for this role. IHE's well developed and comprehensive employment procedures manual also helped provide a sound framework for the change process and as a result is being incorporated within the new entity's management system.

A "staff merger working group" is charged with managing the ongoing integration of the two organisational cultures, systems and business processes, and their work is monitored by the "joint trustees merger monitoring group", which comprises three trustees from each board.

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### **Amnesty International - A consultative approach**

Amnesty International grew in a fairly unplanned way from a small informal network of dedicated people into a much larger and more complex organisation with all the associated implications in terms of planning, management and hierarchies.

Stakeholder dissatisfaction with the fact that the management infrastructure had not kept pace with global growth and decentralisation prompted a worldwide review of staff management.

Senior staff initiated a consultative approach, enabling any member of staff to share concerns and to offer practical

solutions via the intranet. Three months were spent simply listening to as many people as possible at headquarters and around the world. Then came diagnostic presentations offering an evolving process of consultation and debate to key stakeholders. The whole review process endeavoured to create space and opportunity for staff to try new ways of problem solving and to contribute ideas.

There was an immediate improvement of morale in the short term and a new and positive framework was set with the main trade union. Confidence and enthusiasm for change is apparent. This led to increased expectations, which Amnesty is meeting with a significant investment in human resources and in the application of innovative approaches to strategic and operational planning.

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### **People In Aid - Encouraging dialogue**

When the People In Aid Code was first launched the sector agreed that as a part of its accountability to staff, a process for verifying implementation was necessary. Social audit, an accountability tool (see page 23), was judged to be closest to values commonly found in the sector in that it is a participatory and transparent process.

Social audit allows organisations to gain a clearer picture of how their stakeholders view them and build more beneficial relationships with them. It helps them to anticipate concerns the stakeholders have, manage consequential risks and let stakeholders know how they are performing.

With the People In Aid Code, the main stakeholders are staff and volunteers. All agencies which have used social audit to implement the Code have used surveys or focus groups to work with their staff and benefit from their input. One agency piloting the process summed up the views of many: "The greater level of consultation which resulted from engaging in the [implementation] process was welcomed by staff."

# Principle Five

## Recruitment and selection

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

Our recruitment and selection process tells candidates about our agency. How we recruit and select our staff significantly influences how effective they are in fulfilling our objectives.

### ***Indicators***

- 1** Written policies and procedures outline how staff are recruited and selected to positions in our organisation.
- 2** Recruitment methods aim to attract the widest pool of suitably qualified candidates.
- 3** Our selection process is fair, transparent and consistent to ensure the most appropriate person is appointed.
- 4** Appropriate documentation is maintained and responses are given to candidates regarding their selection/non-selection to posts. We will provide feedback if necessary.
- 5** The effectiveness and fairness of our recruitment and selection procedures are monitored.

### ***Why is this important?***

Getting the right person in the right place at the right time remains the key objective in any recruitment process. Every aidworker can recount the untold consequences of getting it wrong, and mistakes in recruitment are often expensive as well as potentially damaging both to the individuals and to the reputation and activities of the organisations themselves.

The importance of sound recruitment is such that it now appears in its own right as a Principle within this revised Code. The existence of a recruitment policy outlining a process which is both legally compliant and also in keeping with good practice regarding transparency and fairness is essential; further, it moves away from the traditional reliance on “word-of-mouth” recommendations and closed networks, which is to be welcomed. Together with an appropriate monitoring mechanism, this approach will help ensure that there is no unfair discrimination. ACORD’s approach may not suit every agency, but it clearly responds to a need it has identified and is helping the organisation make effective recruitment decisions. Providing reasonable feedback to applicants is important. It is not only a matter of good etiquette but is crucial in the drive to eliminate unfair discrimination and, needless to say, the legal consequences of unfair discrimination are costly and likely to severely damage an agency’s reputation.

The indicators outline the areas in which agencies can take steps to mitigate identified risks. Specific responses to consider might include reviewing processes related to job design, job descriptions, advertising methods, selection methods and the training of interview panel members. Human resources practitioners have a key role to play in ensuring recruitment policies and procedures remain effective and up to date, and they have a large responsibility in ensuring recruiting managers are adequately equipped and trained to fulfil their responsibilities. From the case studies below it is evident that these responsibilities are taken very seriously indeed, and they suggest that recruitment should figure prominently in any organisation’s risk management strategy.

### **Save the Children UK - Effective recruitment and selection procedures**

Save the Children UK recruits hundreds of people each year through its London office, many of whom will go on to have contact with children and young people. Incorporating robust and successful child protection measures in its recruitment procedures is given absolute priority.

One particular challenge is vetting applicants who have lived or worked in countries where reliable criminal record or police checks are unobtainable. In such cases, alternative means of checking suitability are required.

Some of the steps introduced include rigorously checking the employment history of short-listed candidates, ensuring they have submitted signed application and disclosure of conviction forms and that their identity is checked at interview.

Interview panels always include at least one interviewer trained to screen for child protection concerns, and candidates must answer specific questions relating to child protection, which are drawn up with guidance from the organisation's child protection manager.

Before confirming any offer of employment, at least two (usually three) satisfactory references must be received with a reference from the previous line manager a pre-requisite. All references are verified, a process which involves telephoning the referee and confirming the authenticity of the reference.

Save the Children publicly declares its commitment to protecting children and young people from abuse and emphasises that appropriate checks will be carried out on all applicants. Where this does not deter those deemed "unsuited to work with children and young people" from applying for jobs, the robust procedures provide a comprehensive safeguard.

### **Terre des Hommes - Consistency in recruitment**

Terre des Hommes developed a comprehensive recruitment and selection policy and procedures following consultation with managers in a range of Terre des Hommes country programmes. The result is a framework for recruitment and selection which is consistent with best practice and allows for adaptation to the local legal and cultural contexts.

Training to support local managers implementing the policy was piloted in Egypt and is now being rolled out to the rest of the organisation. The impact on programmes in Egypt, Ethiopia and Afghanistan has already been reported as positive and this can be attributed to empowered local managers with enhanced skills making fair and effective recruitment decisions based on written policies and procedures.

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### **ACORD - Monitoring recruitment**

The Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development (ACORD) has around 500 staff working for social justice and development alongside some of the poorest and most disadvantaged people in 17 countries throughout Africa.

A period of intense organisational change (culminating with the re-location of the headquarters to Nairobi during 2003) encouraged a review of organisation-wide policies and initiatives. Among these was the successful introduction of measures to meet the agency's commitment to fair, transparent and consistent recruitment, which was a challenge for an organisation whose individual country programmes have developed quite autonomously over many years.

Recruitment of all senior-level programme staff is monitored closely. Vacant posts are carefully reviewed in consultation with the head office and interview panels always include an independent and objective interviewer. Short-listing is undertaken on the basis of competencies alone (personal data is removed beforehand) and the interview is also primarily competency-based. The organisational development director reviews all supporting notes and interview documentation to ratify the whole selection process for fairness and consistency prior to an offer of employment being confirmed. A member of the panel then communicates the panel's decision to all interviewed candidates and feedback is given where requested.

# Principle Six

## Learning, training and development

### ***Learning, training and staff development are promoted throughout the organisation.***

We recognise the importance of relevant training, development and learning opportunities, both personal and professional, to help staff work effectively and professionally. We aim to instil a culture of learning in the organisation so that we and the staff can share our learning and develop together.

#### ***Indicators***

- 1 Adequate induction, and briefing specific to each role, is given to all staff.
- 2 Written policies outline the training, development and learning opportunities staff can expect from the organisation.
- 3 Plans and budgets are explicit about training provision. Relevant training is provided to all staff.
- 4 Managers know how to assess the learning needs of staff so they can facilitate individual development. Where appropriate training and development will be linked to external qualifications.
- 5 The methods we have in place to monitor learning and training ensure that the organisation also learns. They also monitor the effectiveness of learning and training in meeting organisational and programme aims as well as staff expectations of fairness and transparency.

#### ***Why is this important?***

An agency's ability to meet its goals and objectives is significantly enhanced by an investment in learning. For success to be sustained, learning must be a part of the

agency's culture and firmly rooted in management systems.

People In Aid's research has shown that learning, training and development often receive a low priority, most commonly due to either limited or restricted financial resources or lack of time.

Learning relates to the continuous process of acquiring knowledge, skills, abilities or attitudes. Oxfam Australia uses this approach to learning from its staff. Learning can include both formal and informal approaches to developing knowledge, skills and behaviours and it can be individual, team or project-based. Training and development are both part of the learning process.

In organisations where international staff have benefited from learning and training opportunities, the same has not always been the case for host country staff. Yet as the UNHCR example testifies, learning benefits the organisation as a whole and not only increases individual contributions but can have a positive impact on morale, too.

The British Red Cross confirms that staff development is about realising potential, both for the agency and for the individual concerned. It equips both parties to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing working environment. And in a sector where career paths are not always clear, an appropriate link to an external qualification can form a vital component of an individual's personal development plan.

Training and development has to be integrated with effective management systems and procedures. The process of identifying and analysing training needs is crucial and influences an organisation's training and development strategy. Equally important is to ensure that all staff can and do allocate time for training. TransAid, an agency tackling poverty through practical transport and logistics solutions, realised this at an early stage in the organisation's life. In addition to ensuring training and development is integral to their appraisal system, they also took steps to incorporate the planning and scheduling of learning and development within workplans.

Providing individuals with appropriate training or support is wholly consistent with the need to make the maximum use of the expertise and resources they bring to the organisation. Now, and increasingly in the future, an organisation's effectiveness will depend on its capacity to develop its staff, and its own ability to learn.

**UNHCR -  
A strategic approach  
to learning**

For the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with 6,000 staff based across 280 offices in 120 countries, staff access to learning opportunities is a major challenge. A realisation that conventional training workshops were neither effective nor sustainable in encouraging learning, resulted in a strategic shift that brought learning to the workplace and the learners.

UNHCR has supported this strategic shift in a number of ways. Since 1999, 20% of its staff development budget has been allocated to the field offices who are empowered to identify their specific learning needs and identify local solutions. On-the-job learning (for example, coaching, shadowing, action learning, guided missions) is encouraged. From its headquarters in Geneva, training providers in the various subject areas are converting or redesigning training workshops into distance learning modules or blending self-study elements and workplace application with the face-to-face events to create 9-month learning programmes. E-learning was introduced in early 2003 with on-line courses in management, personal effectiveness and communications skills. Where the subject matter warrants (staff safety, induction and supply chain), UNHCR has developed interactive learning CD-Roms in-house. There remains a need to develop more tools for self-directed learning (self-study guides, coaching guides, job aids) in a number of UNHCR-specific subject areas and to reinforce the important role of all supervisors to more proactively facilitate the learning of their staff.

The adjustment has been surprisingly well accepted, particularly in the field offices where lack of access to learning opportunities was a source of

frustration. Skills development is all the more important as offices expand and contract with refugee influxes. While learning activities must match organisational needs we should not ignore the fact that capacity building of locally recruited staff is also an organisational obligation.

**Oxfam Australia -  
Organisational learning**

At Oxfam Community Aid Abroad (Oxfam Australia) the debriefing process assists organisational learning and is helping increase the impact of programmes and improve conditions for future employees.

While debriefing is beneficial to the individual staff member, it also enables Oxfam Australia to address any issues that require action from an organisational perspective.

In particular, the learning from the assessment and analysis of debriefing returned staff from Oxfam Australia's East Timor emergency response has been substantial. Feedback has led to recommendations made at field, head office and policy level, resulting in a number of changes being made, for example in recruitment processes and the housing and accommodation policy.

A two-stage debriefing process (in-country, and with a representative from international human resources) ensures a focus on work-related and management issues as well as general human resources topics, such as recruitment, health-related issues and the individual's personal development. Matters relating to the individual are followed through, relevant feedback on organisational issues is collated and the trends or key points are regularly shared with management at appropriate intervals.

**British Red Cross -  
Induction and training**

Ensuring that all delegates are fully prepared before a Red Cross mission is critical to enabling them to be effective in their roles. At British Red Cross (BRCS) this starts with a compulsory eight-day induction course, held annually and covering the Red Cross context together with the basics of International Humanitarian Law, cultural sensitivity, stress management and security awareness.

Written documentation is then issued as part of the pre-mission briefing process, followed by face-to-face briefings with the desk officer responsible for the country of posting, technical advisors, the international personnel team plus a medical review. These comprehensive briefings are normally supplemented by further briefings in Geneva (by the International Committee of the Red Cross or the Federation) and in the field.

Preparation does not stop once someone is on mission. BRCS has a written training and development policy that outlines opportunities delegates can expect to receive. Delegates are encouraged to review their training and development requirements through their appraisal, post-mission debriefs, and professional development plans. A training panel is responsible for approving individual requests or management recommendations for both internal and external training. Where appropriate, external courses or academic study, with recognised qualifications, are encouraged. BRCS also runs specific courses, such as security or project management, which are planned and budgeted a year in advance.

BRCS also acknowledges alternative ways of learning by developing possible traineeships and mentoring schemes, for example.

# Principle Seven

## Health, safety and security

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

We recognise that the work of relief and development agencies often places great demands on staff in conditions of complexity and risk. We have a duty of care to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of our staff before, during and on completion of their period of work with us.

### ***Why is this important?***

In both relief and development work, stressful and risky situations are inevitable. Yet there is much that can be done to mitigate the risks of illness, injury, stress, burnout or worse to staff and dependants. Employing organisations should ensure that the security, health and safety of all staff is appropriately protected as much as possible and that measures are in place for their ongoing well-being. This will require significant thought and planning on the part of managers, with the recognition that improving security for staff may come at additional project costs. Maintaining the safety of staff is paramount. Cost must be considered, but the primary objective is ensuring staff are able to deliver the services agencies require in the most challenging environments.

As the case studies from CARE, Mission East, Malteser and CARITAS highlight, ways of addressing security, stress management and work-life balance include developing specific initiatives or employee assistance programmes, introducing effective rest and relaxation policies, or improving briefings and enhancing the overall level of communication.

Principle Seven is often considered the most important in the Code. While there is no hierarchy of importance among the principles, it is nonetheless true that

### ***Indicators***

- 1** Written policies are available to staff on security, individual health, care and support, health and safety.
- 2** Programme plans include written assessment of security, travel and health risks specific to the country or region, reviewed at appropriate intervals.
- 3** Before an international assignment all staff receive health clearance. In addition they and accompanying dependents receive verbal and written briefing on all risks relevant to the role to be undertaken, and the measures in place to mitigate those risks, including insurance. Agency obligations and individual responsibilities in relation to possible risks are clearly communicated. Briefings are updated when new equipment, procedures or risks are identified.
- 4** Security plans, with evacuation procedures, are reviewed regularly.
- 5** Records are maintained of work-related injuries, sickness, accidents and fatalities, and are monitored to help assess and reduce future risk to staff.
- 6** Workplans do not require more hours work than are set out in individual contracts. Time off and leave periods, based on written policies, are mandatory.
- 7** All staff have a debriefing or exit interview at the end of any contract or assignment. Health checks, personal counselling and careers advice are available. Managers are trained to ensure these services are provided.
- 8** In the case of staff on emergency rosters, managers should ensure that health clearance, immunisations and procedures for obtaining the correct prophylaxes and other essential supplies are arranged well in advance.

implementing this one will make a significant contribution towards satisfying the rigours of your agency's risk management strategy. This is because it explicitly addresses the impact of agency activity on the daily lives and working environment of each and every worker, highlighting the duty of care agencies have

as employers. In addition staff must be aware of their individual responsibility to manage their own safety and well-being by following security guidelines and procedures or protocols. Compliance is necessary in order to protect themselves and colleagues but also to maintain the integrity and reputation of their programme.

Aside from any external impetus, the fact remains that agencies in this sector share an ethic that emphasises universal health, wealth and humanitarian values. Endorsing the Code demonstrates that an agency includes its staff within those institutional values too.

### **CARITAS Europa - Planning for emergencies**

CARITAS Europa (CE) is part of the international confederation of Catholic relief, development and social service organisations, which work in 198 countries to alleviate poverty and suffering.

In a major crisis, CE's Emergency Response and Support Teams are often among the first to arrive on the scene, and this is to a large extent due to the careful attention paid to emergency planning.

When news of a crisis reaches the head office, available staff are identified and selected from a regularly-updated database, and are then comprehensively briefed before mobilisation and in more detail upon arrival in the country of posting.

To speed up the mobilisation of emergency staff, CE ensures those on the database receive regular emergency response training. This includes International Humanitarian Law, security procedures, team-building, trauma counselling, minimum standards in emergency response, as well as financial and project management.

Staff that travel, or are likely to travel, internationally are kept up to date with their inoculations and have a compulsory annual or biannual medical check-up, according to the policy of the individual CE member organisation. This does not preclude the need for an appropriate health check and briefing prior to mobilisation but it does reduce the time

spent on activities that could have been undertaken previously.

### **Centre for Humanitarian Psychology - Dealing with stress**

Some of the stress experienced by field staff comes from isolation, such as for geographical reasons, the type of mission, conflicts in the team or curfew restrictions. The personal make-up of the humanitarian worker can lead to a feeling of loneliness, even if working in a huge refugee camp in a large team of co-workers. To compound the situation, individuals may feel unable to share their difficulties with the team or the managers, perhaps for personal reasons or perhaps because the mechanism for them to do so is somehow lacking, and they thus "soldier on" as "walking wounded".

The Center for Humanitarian Psychology (CHP) addressed the problem through a free and confidential support service with a team of three psychologists who have field experience. More than 400 people made contact via email or phone last year, although half were callers primarily seeking reassurance in their situations. A small number actually presented with signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and were advised that they should seek professional support immediately.

The CHP says the cases it has dealt with "clearly demonstrate that organisations

have a huge responsibility towards staff well-being, especially as staff near the end of their contracts when effective debriefing is essential".

### **Mission East - Managing security**

In Afghanistan, Mission East's Country Director found that a constant dialogue with both national and international staff was essential for effectively managing security. In late 2001 and during 2002, the working context was characterised by instability and insecurity. Situations changed extremely rapidly and agencies had to be able to respond appropriately.

Mission East worked in the north east of Afghanistan, some distance from the capital Kabul. The organisation's security policy and guidelines were adapted to the local context at the outset. To mainstream a security awareness within the whole team, all staff received comprehensive and participatory training on security and staff safety. Decision trees, scenario planning and role-playing helped individuals to think and plan laterally. Great efforts were made to embed this security awareness within routine operations and every individual was required to participate in security discussions. To overcome an initial reluctance in sharing information, the country director would make a point of meeting with all staff at the end of each day and these informal team meetings provided an extremely valuable forum for

sharing a wide range of information that impacted on security management. Staff quickly realised that even what appeared to be basic information or what might be considered a trivial or one-off incident was relevant and needed to be shared with colleagues, management and even other NGOs working in the area.

### **CARE Canada - Psycho-social counselling**

C3 is a CARE-Canada initiated project, triggered by experiences in Rwanda, now run for the agency by a human resources consultancy. It is a psycho-social counselling program offered to staff being deployed into high-risk areas, as well as for critical incidents. A small roster of psycho-social counsellors from across the world, with different specialities and language skills, offer staff pre-deployment briefings, in-country support and debriefings. The programme also offers training sessions to country directors and HR professionals to help them detect warning signs for burnout and depression.

During critical incidents, counsellors are made available to staff. For mission-critical or multi-victim incidents counsellors are deployed to the scene. Otherwise, and for longer-term support, individuals are referred to local service providers. Families are also given appropriate personal support when required.

### **International Committee of the Red Cross - Preparing staff for stress**

“The Missing” project is an extremely important piece of work for the International Committee of the Red Cross and one of the outcomes has been the development of guidelines for all those working with families of those who have

disappeared during conflict or for another reason.

The guidelines highlight the fundamental responsibility agencies have in training and supporting their staff (who are working with such families), and recognise that staff and volunteers may themselves also become victims as a result of the stress they suffer during the course of their work.

The guidelines insist that all fieldwork be preceded by comprehensive briefings by experts with local knowledge and experience of local culture and traditions. In addition to specific training required for the job they perform, all staff will be trained in the psychological reactions trauma victims may suffer, and on the ways in which they themselves can avoid secondary traumatising. Teams will be regularly debriefed, and while in the field, continuous supervision together with ongoing support will help staff deal with particular problems. It is intended that these guidelines will go a significant way towards minimising the risk of staff becoming traumatised or suffering burnout.

### **Malteser Hilfsdienst - Debriefings and exit interviews**

At Malteser Hilfsdienst, a German relief agency, debriefing is part of a continuous process of communication rather than an activity confined solely to the end of the contract, although in keeping with good practice all international staff are required to pass through the head office for debriefing and an exit interview when their contract has ended. While the agency is concerned that this process be perceived less as “supervision”, the principle of regular and open communication throughout the employment contract helps the organisation identify and deal with issues affecting the security, health and safety of this category of staff in a timely manner.

Regular contact between field staff and desk officers in the head office is supplemented by regular visits by the desk officer to the field. A process of regular and open communication, together with a strict enforcement of regular leave (and rest and relaxation periods where appropriate), helps the organisation to identify stress or health issues affecting international staff before the debriefing stage and take action before unmanageable problems develop. When it becomes evident that an individual requires medical attention or additional support, a medical professional at head office assumes the responsibility of co-ordinating further assistance. Local staff benefit from the open and transparent communications and in many of Malteser’s country programmes also receive exit interviews and debriefings.

#### **Prioritising Principle Seven**

InterHealth says: “In our work as health advisor to many international aid agencies, we daily see the dire consequences to individuals and agencies when health related issues and work-life balance are not given top priority. We strongly encourage all agencies to adhere robustly to Principle Seven. This will help to avoid preventable problems and should they occur, will minimise their impact.”



# Implementing the People In Aid Code

The People In Aid Code is a unique tool able to assist your agency in improving its human resource management and enhance its capacity to fulfil its mission. The Code was developed in specific response to the human resources issues affecting agencies working in relief and development.

“Implementing the Code” is a process through which agencies working in relief and development can thoroughly review their human resource management, decide on any necessary improvements and be recognised for their efforts in doing so.

*"The process encourages an agency to fulfil its own aspirations rather than reach established standards."*

Implementing the Code is a highly productive process. Because the process encourages an agency to fulfil its own aspirations rather than reach established standards, the pressure to improve human resource management is dictated solely by the commitment to effective delivery of the mission and by the commitment of the people who work to help the agency achieve it.

These notes outline the process, highlighting the benefits of implementation to your agency, the process itself and also the support available.

## **Recognition brings benefits**

Implementing the Code gives evidence to internal and external stakeholders of the quality of your human resource management and the improvements your agency is committing to making.

- Staff and volunteers will recognise the efforts the agency is making to improve the support and management provided to them, irrespective of their position, status or location.
- Potential staff and volunteers will recognise your agency as an employer of choice.
- Donors will see evidence of a commitment to strengthening internal capacity and systems to improve quality of aid delivery.
- Peers will recognise your agency has taken care over its support and management structures, leading to more effective programming work.

- Partners will be able to draw on enhanced expertise and raise the quality of their own systems and procedures. Your engagement with partners through the social accounting and auditing process also demonstrates your willingness to co-operate and learn.
- Beneficiaries will have the assurance that you are monitoring the impact and delivery of your programme and that their needs are being met by competent and supported staff.

**Kitemarks** Recognition comes, in part, through kitemarks (in the form of two straplines) awarded by People In Aid. The kitemarks recognise your agency's achievements and are awarded at the beginning and end of the implementation process. Kitemarked agencies are listed on People In Aid's website for everyone in the sector to see, and the kitemarks can be used in your internal and external communications.

*"Kitemarks recognise your agency's achievements and are awarded at the beginning and end of the implementation process."*

**“Committed to the People In Aid Code”** The first kitemark is awarded at the beginning of the implementation process when an agency demonstrates that:

- The Chief Executive or Chair has made a written and public commitment to the People In Aid Code of Good Practice.
- The agency has given responsibility and appropriate authority for implementing the People In Aid Code to a named project manager and team.
- The agency has informed staff that the agency is committed to the People In Aid Code.

**“Verified Compliant with the People In Aid Code”** At an agreed point and once implementation is well underway, an external social auditor will visit and look at the report on the process of implementation and on the agency's reported performance in relation to the People In Aid Code. The verifier's job is not to make judgements about the agency's performance but to assess, and report back, on the adequacy of the monitoring and stakeholder consultation systems in

place and the completeness and accuracy of the information in the report.

Implementation will be ongoing so the audit cycle (an updated progress report and social audit) should be repeated once every three years.

### **The process of implementation has benefits too...**

Apart from the recognition by stakeholders, described above, the process itself will be of benefit. It will benefit your agency at whatever stage it is at in addressing human resources issues.

- Framework for analysis: the Code provides a comprehensive overview of the human resources issues affecting agencies in relief and development.
- Identifying gaps: during the implementation process your implementation team may identify gaps in policies, practice, training or monitoring.
- Prioritisation: by focusing on seven principles, the Code assists in categorising issues under key areas of human resource management and in prioritising workplans accordingly.
- Stakeholder participation: your staff will be involved in the process and will feel that their voice is being heard.

*“Our staff are the eyes and ears of our organisation; they communicate needs, propose responses, monitor results and ultimately determine the quality of our service. During implementation of the People In Aid Code the social audit process helped us to capture our staff’s contribution, while we found the Principles and Indicators to be the best way for us to monitor our policies against our organisational objectives.”*

*Paddy Maguinness,  
Deputy Chief Executive,  
Concern Worldwide, Ireland.*

- Collaboration: implementation requires that human resources and operational staff work together; and more widely, your agency will benefit from the experiences of other implementing agencies.

### **Explaining the implementation process...**

**Principles and standards** Each of the seven principles has several indicators. These provide guidance on what your agency needs to look at in order to quote the Principle with confidence. The Indicators are not standards that an agency is expected to reach for each area of human resource management; it is for your agency to identify the standards to which it can aspire. In time, benchmarking data from implementing agencies may assist in defining sector-specific standards.

**Using the Code** Many of the indicators may prompt your implementation team to ask whether you need to introduce a policy, update a policy, do more training in policy implementation or simply strengthen the monitoring of policies and practices. The social audit process encourages stakeholder feedback on these areas so your work will be seen to be based on the genuine need of the organisation and its staff.

**The verification process – a “social audit”** In the open process which gave rise to the Code it was widely agreed by participating agencies that a verification process should be introduced to the Code to distinguish it from other Codes to which NGOs could sign up. It was decided that this would be in the form of a social audit, since the values at its heart (participation, accountability and transparency) are closest to the values of our sector.

A major objective of social audit is to work with selected stakeholders on the concerns they raise. The major stakeholder in the People In Aid Code process is staff. Staff are consulted during the process to ensure that decision-makers and policy-writers both in HR and operational departments have data and opinion on which to base their work.

Some agencies have chosen to work with all staff during the process. It is perfectly acceptable to select a region or group of country programmes and work with them as pilot areas for the agency.

### **Access to support**

People In Aid member agencies which are implementing the Code receive support from a wide variety of sources. People In Aid makes available people qualified in social audit to advise on the process, and we are engaged on in-depth and continuous “indicator-deepening” work to ensure that any assistance an agency requires with any indicator has been researched and documented in advance.

Other People In Aid resources (see page 26) also help implementing agencies. We are always available when a query arises and can tailor our support to your specific needs. Our wide connections to the NGO community worldwide bring many examples of good practice to the table and in addition, implementing agencies have traditionally helped each other. The exchange of ideas through the People In Aid network is a major benefit to members and we will continue to facilitate this worthwhile interaction.

*“At the British Red Cross we believe we must be accountable to our staff and volunteers. Thus we continue to prioritise People In Aid in our international human resources strategies, using the People In Aid Code to test the complete range of our policies and practices. We fully support the role People In Aid plays in facilitating the exchange of good practice between agencies in our sector and in offering us, in the Code, a standard to which we can all aspire.”*

*Sir Nicholas Young,  
Chief Executive,  
British Red Cross.*

# About People In Aid

The People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the management and support of aid personnel is just one of many tools available from People In Aid to relief and development agencies concerned with improving their human resource management. As an international network, People In Aid seeks to raise the profile of human resources for agencies, donors and others. As a central resource for human resources for the sector we respond to the needs of our members around the world tailoring our output to support them in their efforts to improve the way they manage and support their personnel.

## What does People In Aid do?

Currently our most popular resources are:

- Handbooks on essential 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.
- Training on topical HR issues for the sector such as distance management, mentoring and people development.
- A quarterly newsletter addressing key issues affecting the sector.
- Research on topics such as insurance and salaries.
- Group meetings on immediate priorities. Examples have included HIV/AIDS in the workplace, supervision of staff in refugee camps, development of national staff.
- Support for members implementing the Code.
- A resource centre and information network.

We are continually adding to our range of available resources. For an up-to-date summary please contact us or visit our website.

## People In Aid Membership

People In Aid's full members are organisations that are involved in emergency relief, development and/or advocacy for the purpose of alleviating poverty or suffering. They provide assistance on the basis of need, regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind.

Supporter and individual membership categories also exist for those who are not operational agencies, and who share our aims and wish to benefit from our output.

An agency must be a full member in order to benefit from our support in implementing the Code and to qualify for the kitemarks. Members also receive other benefits such as discounts, information and support on HR topics of concern to them. If your agency would like to join our network, please log on to the Join Us page of our website or contact us directly.

**People In Aid** is an international network of relief and development agencies. We provide support to agencies committed to improving their human resource management, by providing tools such as the People In Aid Code of Good Practice.

[www.peopleinaid.org](http://www.peopleinaid.org)

# Quality and accountability

People In Aid is one of a number of inter-agency initiatives which came into being in the 1990s as humanitarian relief agencies, particularly, sought to enhance quality and accountability in the sector.

Collectively and individually, these initiatives provide the sector with tools to improve quality, accountability, performance, and active learning. The following is a summary of an overview first prepared in response to questions about the commonalities and differences between us, and our respective contributions to humanitarian work.

The initiatives presented are not the only ones within the development and humanitarian sector. We are a group which meets regularly to ensure that issues of importance are being fully addressed and no duplications of effort occur.

## **The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)**

[www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

ALNAP, as a unique sector-wide active-learning membership network, is dedicated to improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian action by sharing lessons; identifying common problems; and building consensus on approaches.

The ALNAP Annual Review Series provides a comprehensive, independent assessment of the performance of the humanitarian sector based on an annual evaluation synthesis of over 50 evaluative reports. It also provides a meta-evaluation of the quality of evaluations. It also offers the Evaluative Reports Database (ERD), ALNAP Guidance Booklets, ALNAP Training Modules, Global Study on Participation by Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action and the development and testing of the Learning Support Office Concept.

## **Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP International)**

[www.hapgeneva.org](http://www.hapgeneva.org)

HAP International was set up in March 2003 to develop, implement and monitor accountability

principles, and ensure compliance through collective self-regulation. It functions as an international professional association whose members are agencies. Its launch is based on the findings and recommendations of the Humanitarian Accountability Project.

HAP International works with a member agency to produce an accountability work plan with timescales and benchmarks, monitors its implementation, reports back on progress to the Board, and reviews and responds to complaints. HAP International Secretariat provides strategic and technical services, monitors the implementation of the accountability work plans, and assists agencies in responding to complaints.

## **People In Aid**

[www.peopleinaid.org](http://www.peopleinaid.org)

People In Aid promotes good practice in human resource management in the sector.

People In Aid's work is outlined on page 26 of this document

## **The Sphere Project**

[www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)

Sphere works to improve the quality, effectiveness and accountability of disaster response through the understanding and use of the Humanitarian Charter, Minimum Standards and Key Indicators.

Sphere produces a handbook, the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (available in eight languages); training modules on how to apply the Sphere handbook in practice; a Lessons Learned document on how to institutionalise the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards; a 45-minute induction/orientation film, and a website that contains most of the above items in three languages.

# Acknowledgements

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The Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD) .....	<a href="http://www.acord.org.uk">www.acord.org.uk</a>	The Leprosy Mission International .....	<a href="http://www.leprosymission.org">www.leprosymission.org</a>
Amnesty International .....	<a href="http://www.amnesty.org.uk">www.amnesty.org.uk</a>	Malteser Hilfsdienst .....	<a href="http://www.malteser-ald.de">www.malteser-ald.de</a>
The British Council .....	<a href="http://www.britishcouncil.org">www.britishcouncil.org</a>	Minority Rights Group International .....	<a href="http://www.minorityrights.org">www.minorityrights.org</a>
British Red Cross Society .....	<a href="http://www.redcross.org.uk">www.redcross.org.uk</a>	Mission East .....	<a href="http://www.miseast.org">www.miseast.org</a>
CARE .....	<a href="http://www.care.ca">www.care.ca</a>	Norwegian Refugee Council .....	<a href="http://www.nrc.no">www.nrc.no</a>
Caritas Europa .....	<a href="http://www.caritas-europa.be">www.caritas-europa.be</a>	Oxfam GB .....	<a href="http://www.oxfam.org.uk">www.oxfam.org.uk</a>
Centre for Humanitarian Psychology .....	<a href="http://www.humanitarian-psy.org">www.humanitarian-psy.org</a>	Oxfam Australia .....	<a href="http://www.caa.org.au">www.caa.org.au</a>
Concern Worldwide .....	<a href="http://www.concern.ie">www.concern.ie</a>	RedR .....	<a href="http://www.redr.org">www.redr.org</a>
The Disasters Emergency Committee .....	<a href="http://www.dec.org.uk">www.dec.org.uk</a>	Save the Children UK .....	<a href="http://www.savethechildren.org.uk">www.savethechildren.org.uk</a>
ethics etc .....	<a href="mailto:ethics.etc@btopenworld.com">ethics.etc@btopenworld.com</a>	Tearfund .....	<a href="http://www.tearfund.org">www.tearfund.org</a>
Global Development Group .....	<a href="http://www.globaldev.org">www.globaldev.org</a>	Terre des Hommes .....	<a href="http://www.tdh.ch">www.tdh.ch</a>
Groupe URD .....	<a href="http://www.urd.org">www.urd.org</a>	TransAid .....	<a href="http://www.transaid.org">www.transaid.org</a>
Health Unlimited .....	<a href="http://www.healthunlimited.org">www.healthunlimited.org</a>	UNHCR .....	<a href="http://www.unhcr.ch">www.unhcr.ch</a>
International Committee of the Red Cross .....	<a href="http://www.icrc.org">www.icrc.org</a>	VSO .....	<a href="http://www.vso.org.uk">www.vso.org.uk</a>
International Health Exchange .....	<a href="http://www.ihe.org.uk">www.ihe.org.uk</a>	The World Bank .....	<a href="http://www.worldbank.org">www.worldbank.org</a>
InterHealth .....	<a href="http://www.interhealth.org.uk">www.interhealth.org.uk</a>	World Vision .....	<a href="http://www.wvi.org">www.wvi.org</a>
International Nepal Fellowship .....	<a href="http://www.inf.org.np">www.inf.org.np</a>		
Islamic Relief .....	<a href="http://www.islamic-relief.com">www.islamic-relief.com</a>		
Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) .....	<a href="http://www.itdg.org">www.itdg.org</a>		

# **PEOPLE AID**

***Promoting good practice***

*in the management and  
support of aid personnel*

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