

*Security (n.) Freedom from risk or injury, in this instance, either psychologically or physically*

# Twenty years on

## Are we making progress on staff support?

Earlier this year in Haiti, an anguished aid worker asked us this question: “Why does my agency not care about my health?” And, truthfully, there was no concrete evidence that the employing NGO cared at all. In the midst of the chaos and grief of Haiti, it is easy to ask if we have made any progress at all in providing aid workers with staff support of appropriate quality.

### So, what progress have we made?

The good news is that there is now a respectable body of knowledge about staff support processes in humanitarian work. This body of knowledge is based on multiple factors:

- Sound research undertaken by a wide range of academic and professional institutions;
- Evidence-based reporting from a wide range of humanitarian actions such as the Asian Tsunami, Cyclone Nargis, Hurricane Katrina, Darfur/Sudan, West Bank/Gaza, and Haiti;
- Increasing expertise in applied staff support processes;
- Improved organisational practices at field locations.

This body of knowledge has led to a number of positive outcomes:

- Specialist resources (by e.g. People In Aid, the Headington Institute, Antares Foundation,

Mandala Foundation, Helpers Fire, Psychosocial.org, and RedR);

- An increased network of specialist, expert providers;
- Increased demand for staff support services from front-line aid workers;
- Increased acceptance by donors and government agencies of integrated staff support in programs (e.g. AUSAID, ECHO, OFDA/USAID, DFID, ECB);
- Incorporation of staff care principles into some INGO policies and practices (e.g. UNHCR, UNICEF, CARE, WVI, OXFAM);
- Development of industry standards (e.g. IASC Guidelines on Mental Health, InterActions solicitation of bids for a program to further develop industry standards).

While applauding all of the above, it is important to recognise that the staff support field still faces challenges. Knowledge, previously a significant



Image: Christine Williamson, Haiti 2010

challenge, is now accessible and ample. What the industry lacks is an overall commitment at a senior management level for integrating our knowledge directly into NGO activities. Some INGOs have implemented staff support services with increasing levels of success. However, the overall industry commitment to staff support is less than satisfactory, despite increasing evidence that staff support processes improve programme outcomes, and despite

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## Potterbox

**What is the single most important thing your organisation needs to address through its people and organisational development strategy to ensure you are more effective by 2015?**

(That's not rhetorical: please do email me your answer!) Collecting the answers to this question from as many people as possible is just one way in which we can respond to our membership with relevant services. So the single most important thing for me, as People In Aid's Director, is making sure we have the capacity and capability to provide what you need. That includes staff expertise; funding; a commitment to listening and learning, and to quality; means of providing and delivering services.

Member numbers (now over 170 in 32 countries) show our success in this, as does the great feedback we get on what we do for you (96% of you would recommend us to another agency), the contributions you willingly make to our common cause (to our research, HHR Online, the policy bank), and the large numbers benefiting from our output and the networking.

Are you fully benefitting? Have you told your colleagues to connect to and learn from their peers through the new interactive site [www.peopleinaid.net](http://www.peopleinaid.net)? Have you a specific need we can help you with? An increasing number of members are requesting us to deliver 'consultancy' (internal HR support, in-house workshops, specific research). Are you up-to-



**Jonathan Potter**  
Executive Director, People In Aid

date with our ongoing work on key topics: leadership, coaching, competencies, retention, certification, professionalising the sector, resilience, wellbeing – and much more? What else should we be focusing on? Let us know: we're responsive!

## Soapbox

### Accepting Mr Nice Guy

**Are nice and friendly people always accepted by their environment, in their context? This is one of the questions many NGOs face when working in hostile environments. Being the good guy does not always guarantee a safe working environment. Humanitarian organisations are being attacked by violent groups and see their staff being injured or even killed.**

"– But we are neutral! We are not a party in the conflict", many NGOs say. But is that the truth? Are you being attacked because the opposing party has no interest in attacking you? This is not very likely. Perhaps they see something you do not see. As was inscribed in the temple of the Oracle of Delphi: Know Thyself!

For example: Your sole funding comes from one of the armed parties in the conflict. The values you are promoting, like girls' education, might not be in line with local values. The behaviour of your staff does not respect a specific culture. All these examples can be a ground for armed groups to attack your organisation.

Does this mean that you have to abandon your project and leave the country? Not necessarily. Gaining acceptance from "the guys with the guns" is a matter of very hard work. You will have to talk to people before you start the project. Especially to the people you might not want to talk to. Show the benefits of your project; convince them of the importance of the project for their society. Mr Nice Guy has to be accepted by all parties, especially by those who see you as Mr Not So Nice Guy.

**Ebe Brons is Director of the Centre for Safety and Development (CSD)**, who are a non-profit foundation specialising in safety and security for humanitarian organisations worldwide.



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strong criticisms from such people as then OFDA Director Ky Luu that humanitarian workers and all staff working in Darfur did not receive adequate support. Additional evidence for the underutilisation of our body of knowledge – and expertise – can be seen in the generally deficient staff support programs provided by the INGO community in Haiti following the January 12th earthquake.

The challenge for the future is this: INGOs must make a commitment to adopt and implement *recognised staff support best practices*. The ongoing reluctance and, in some cases, refusal to provide such services to staff is regrettable, if not deplorable. Comparable organisations such as the military, law enforcement, emergency response personnel, and even corporate entities routinely ensure staff support processes are integrated into institutional structures. Yet many INGOs provide, in practice, virtually no organisational resources to protect staff from the ongoing, complex and dangerous challenges of international humanitarian work.



Image: Christine Williamson, Haiti 2010

Perhaps the biggest challenge for the future is this: to identify leadership committed to providing staff with the already well understood standards of staff support that the body of knowledge demonstrates is necessary, required, and non-negotiable.

*John Fawcett & Amber Gray,  
Independent Consultants*

For a fuller overview on staff care, download the free research report from 2009 written by People In Aid and Interhealth titled 'Approaches to Staff Care in International NGOs' at [www.peopleinaid.org/publications/StaffCareInternationalNGOs.aspx](http://www.peopleinaid.org/publications/StaffCareInternationalNGOs.aspx)

## Staff care at Médecins sans Frontières

**Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) has had a special unit assigned to provide staff care since 1994. Currently, the psychosocial care unit (PSCU) consists of several full-time staff and a team of external consultants. To ensure independence and to facilitate service usage, the PSCU works under strict confidentiality.**

Though being fully equipped for immediate emergency field interventions after critical incidents, the main focus of the PSCU is on proactive stress management. 'Although it is' rather than 'Though being'. In addition to the obvious dangerous working situations, the MSF staff are affected mostly by everyday occurrences such as high workload, lack of management support, emotional impact of the work and limitation of resources.

During their seven day induction period, all new staff receive training on self-identification of stress. Managers on all levels are trained on identification as well as the analysis and management of stress. All training is interactive, practical and focuses on the realities and experiences of the participants. Training has been instrumental in the normalisation

of stress (management) in the organisation.

The unit is further involved in the staff briefing and post-mission return talks. The latter are used to reflect with the expat on the mission and to prepare staff for returning home.

Support is offered to those experiencing difficulties in the field but also to those having returned home, and a referral network of specialists is available.

Special field support missions are organised for national staff working in very difficult circumstances. For instance, in Haiti national staff received immediate support after the earthquake. Follow-up support was organised through a specially assigned PSCU expat and ongoing support is available through a Haitian psychologist.

At MSF, the development of national staff care models will receive further attention in the coming years.

*Kaz de Jong, Psychosocial & Mental Health  
Staff Care, MSF Amsterdam*

### Debriefing Staff Workshop

Offer effective debriefing and support staff returning from Haiti and other short or long term assignments.

9th September 2010

Members £75

Non members £150

London, UK

## Dear HR:

### Burkhard Gnärig

Executive Director, Berlin Civil Society Center



**Biggest operational challenge your organisation faces** Scaling up without access to the required investment. Solution: we are “selling” our not-for-profit organisation. Six of ten shares have been transferred to some of the world’s leading civil society organisations (CSOs) allowing us to recruit for 2.5 new positions.

**How HR helps** HR does not “help” – for us Human Resources is all we have and all we are. Some CSOs have a valuable brand, a great donor database or long-term contracts as service providers but in the end all are dependent on the expertise engrained in their Human Resources.

**“Given the paramount importance of Human Resources for our sector, “HR” should not be delegated to a department which is – at best – at the same level as all the others.”**

#### What is Berlin Civil Society Center’s view on HR’s role

Given the paramount importance of Human Resources for our sector, “HR” should not be delegated to a department which is – at best – at the same level as all the others.

**One thing you would change about HR if you could** Leave HR *administration* at departmental level. Raise all the quality issues to the top strategic level – e.g. HR *culture and values, HR development, leadership, development, etc.*

**One HR success story** Ask me in a year’s time, when I’ve brought my Deputy on board...

**Bio:** Co-Founder and Executive Director of Berlin Civil Society Center – CEO of International Save the Children Alliance – CEO of Greenpeace Germany – CEO of Terre des Hommes Germany – Executive Assistant to the Directors of German Development Service – Field Director of German Development Service in Papua New Guinea and a few other exciting jobs.

**“Human Resources is all we have and all we are”**

## HR View

### Lynne Cripe

CARE USA



#### Your role

I am Director of Employee Engagement, Support and Communications.

#### What do you see as the biggest challenges for agencies in terms of staff care?

**“I see a number of challenges facing NGOs including limited financial and human resources especially in the current economic climate”**

I see a number of challenges facing NGOs including limited financial and human resources especially in the current economic climate, developing sustainable programmes/approaches in organisations who typically face significant turnover, the need for flexibility

and nimbleness in our interventions and support to ethnically, religiously and socially diverse staff communities, and an external operating environment in terms of security, donor demands, and workload that creates significant stress for staff making the need for staff support all the more urgent.

#### What initiatives do you have in place for staff care at CARE USA?

A new intervention that we are very excited about is our pre-deployment consultations for all staff going to high risk positions. High risk positions are those places characterised by security risk, isolation, or other significant deprivation. We are partnering with the Headington Institute in this effort. Upon an employment offer in CARE or an internal transfer, an employee will participate in an in-depth conversation about their new position, personal strengths and vulnerabilities, and coping strategies. We see this as an important tool to help our staff be resilient in challenging environments.

#### What has CARE USA learnt from the recent response in Haiti?

A few lessons that we are learning from the Haiti response include:

- the importance of meeting basic needs like food and shelter as the foundation for staff support
- the value of early intervention and support in the earliest days of the emergency response
- the need for sustained attention to evolving staff needs.

## Calendar of Events:

### Developing Human Resource Capacity

Wednesday 9th June 2010 – Melbourne, Australia  
Member price: AUD180, non-member price: AUD260

### Developing Human Resource Capacity

Thursday 10th June 2010 – Sydney, Australia  
Member price: AUD180, non-member price: AUD260

### Successful Distance Management Workshop

Wednesday 23rd June 2010 – London, UK  
Member price: GB£75, non-member price: GB£150

### Health, Safety and Security Special Interest Group

Wednesday 7th July 2010: London, UK. Free for members

### People Management for Line Managers Workshop

Tuesday 7th – Wednesday 8th September 2010:  
TBC, Kenya. Price TBC

### Successful Distance Management Workshop

Thursday 9th September 2010: TBC, Kenya. Price TBC

### Debriefing Staff Workshop

Thursday 9th September 2010: London, UK  
Member price: GB£75, Non-member price: GB£150

### International Management and Leadership Programme

Sunday 7th – Friday 12th November 2010 (6 days)  
– Nairobi, Kenya. Price for all: GB£1500

### Annual General Meeting 2010

Wednesday 24th November 2010: London, UK  
Free for members

To book any of the above events, please use the Events section of our website, or alternatively contact us on +44 (0)20 3095 3950 or at [info@peopleinaid.org](mailto:info@peopleinaid.org) for more information.

## People In Aid Interactive [www.peopleinaid.net](http://www.peopleinaid.net)

Get Online. Together we are building the network and encyclopaedia of people management

People In Aid Interactive is our new interactive platform which gives you and all your colleagues the opportunity to access, learn from and share information and resources with peers from around the world. Information is disseminated through online forums, wiki pages, a shared calendar and a blog.

- **Free** Register online now
- **Global** Promote your own good practice and learn from others around the world
- **Current** Keep abreast of current trends and what your peers are doing

By offering this platform to promote the exchange of information in this way, we aim to further improve organisational effectiveness within the humanitarian and development sector.

*Humanitarian HR Online (formerly EPN) is now being hosted at People In Aid Interactive. You can browse all past posts, start new discussions, respond to questions and more. Not already a member of HHR online? Aimed at those involved in HR and people management in emergency response organisations the network is free to join.*

## Security management and organisational culture

**The health, safety and security of staff must be a primary concern in any organisation and in particular with those in the relief and development sector. The risks staff now face in the field of operations have changed dramatically over the past ten years and organisations must adapt to this.**

In a world where most knowledge and information is readily and quickly accessible, a court of law is likely to take the view that most risks to staff safety are known. It is important therefore to use the same standards the courts use and, particularly for those working in remote and insecure environments, ensuring that these are enhanced (or taken as minimum standards) where possible.

Organisations can strengthen the safety management of their staff by ensuring their leaders make health, safety and security a priority. Integrating health, safety and security practice with the day-to-day policies and practices is critical. For example, risk assessments should be routinely conducted where accidents and near misses have occurred. Organisations can also better prepare their staff by giving up-to-date contextual security training before and during deployment and good guidance on personal behaviour and vulnerabilities whilst in the field.

*Security management should permeate throughout the organisation's culture, not just through the policies that are written, but the way decisions are taken, by whom and to whom, and how information is communicated.*

*Christine Williamson, HR Services Manager, People In Aid*

## Join People In Aid

**Membership of People In Aid is a cost effective way to access valuable people management information that can help organisations and their managers save time and work more effectively. For further information and to download an application form, please visit the Membership section of our website. Alternatively please complete and return the slip below to receive an application pack via post.**

|                                    |                                  |                                  |                                    |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Name                               |                                  |                                  |                                    |
| Address                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |
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| Postcode                           | + Country                        |                                  |                                    |
| Email                              |                                  |                                  |                                    |
| Telephone                          |                                  |                                  |                                    |
| Membership application type:       |                                  |                                  |                                    |
| Full <input type="checkbox"/>      | Partner <input type="checkbox"/> | Network <input type="checkbox"/> | Associate <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other information (Please specify) |                                  |                                  |                                    |
|                                    |                                  |                                  |                                    |

Return to: **People In Aid**, The Resource Centre,  
356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA, UK



# News and info

## New members

A warm welcome to our new People In Aid members

## Full members

Action Against Hunger UK  
 Christian Outreach Justice Mission  
 Sierra Leone  
 Fred Hollows Foundation  
 Grameen Foundation Australia  
 Human Relief Foundation  
 Médecins sans Frontières Belgium  
 Penal Reform International  
 SOS Kinderdorf International

The HALO Trust  
 UnitingWorld

## Partner members

The Brooke Pakistan  
 Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology (Nepal)

## Certified members

Congratulations to **HIJRA Somalia** and **HAP International** on achieving People In Aid's Quality Mark 1, being certified *Committed to the People In Aid Code*.



## Tearfund

has been successful in achieving Quality Mark 2 and is now *Verified Compliant with the People In Aid Code*. This quality mark is awarded to agencies in the humanitarian and development sector which have proved to us and demonstrated to their key stakeholders that they are complying with the People In Aid Code and improving, where necessary, the management and support of their staff and volunteers. Achieving Quality Mark 2 is a significant achievement and we congratulate Tearfund on this.



## Humanitarian HR Conferences



Participants at HHR Paris 2010

Our Humanitarian HR conferences on *Talent Management: Effective strategies for managing and developing your workforce* took place just outside Paris, France and in Mombasa, Kenya in May, with just under one hundred participants in total between the two.

Discussions focussed on the need for organisations to continue to attract, develop and retain good talent in order to remain successful.

The responsibility for talent management sits with the leadership of the organisation and not just with

HR. It would be as well for all staff in organisations to fully understand the nuances of talent management and how the different management systems influence its success – for instance ensuring good systems in recruitment, performance management, staff development, staff structures, succession planning and staff engagement as well as understanding the competences required to achieve talent growth should be high on an organisation's to-do-list if it wants to successfully navigate through the next challenge of economic rebound.

## People In Aid in East Africa

People In Aid, in association with the IAWG (Inter-Agency Working Group), presents a number of events in East Africa this year.

These include a 2-day People Management for Line Managers Workshop in Kenya on 7th – 8th September.

Plans are also underway to host this later in the year in Uganda (Kampala) and Sudan (Juba), dates tbc.

A Successful Distance Management Workshop will also be hosted in Kenya on the 9th September.

## Humanitarian Capacity Building Programme begins...

People In Aid is working with the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA) on an exciting Humanitarian Capacity Building Programme to develop shared standards, competency and leadership behaviour frameworks and training resources for humanitarian response, to apply to new and existing staff at the national and international level.

## Deployment checklist for aid workers, volunteers and development organisations

### Pre-departure

- Research your destination
- Ensure you receive a health and safety briefing
- Ensure that you have travel insurance and that your passport is valid with any relevant visas
- Review the indicators outlined in Principle 7, Health, safety and

security, of the People In Aid Code of Good Practice

### While in the field

- Notify your agencies of any reportable incidents
- Carry details of local healthcare facilities and your insurance medical support contact details
- Know your organisation's

contingency plans and evacuation procedures

### Post-deployment

- Ensure you receive a debriefing with your employer
- If you are sick or injured while abroad, you may need an appointment with the Travel Doctor upon return, as e.g. malaria can appear several months after exposure.

Taken from *The Travel Doctor. Clinics Australia Wide*. For more information or to contact your nearest clinic call (+61) 300 658 844 or visit [www.traveldoctor.com.au](http://www.traveldoctor.com.au).

## Staff retention and engagement

Free research: Working with the Emergency Capacity Building Project ([www.ecbproject.org](http://www.ecbproject.org)), People In Aid has launched new research on staff retention and engagement. Drawing from examples and experience in the Horn of Africa region, the report offers insights, case studies and solutions for those tackling issues relating to staff turnover, motivation and employee engagement. Download the research for free at [www.peopleinaid.org/publications/retentionafrica.aspx](http://www.peopleinaid.org/publications/retentionafrica.aspx)