

The importance of HR management in supporting staff working in hazardous environments

Christine Williamson and Dr. Roger Darby
2011

People In Aid
Email: info@peopleinaid.org
Web: www.peopleinaid.org
Interactive: www.peopleinaid.net

© People In Aid 2011

Contents

Introduction	4
Background & context	4
What we did	5
Risk management and the responsibility of organisations:	5
The Role of HRM and how to improve the role in risk management	7
Duty of care and the legal responsibilities of organisations	12
Transfer of knowledge involving lessons learnt	13
Future trends and implications	15
Conclusions	17
Recommendations	18
Influencing strategy, policy & practice	18
Duty of care	18
Planning for critical incidents	18
Staffing structures	19
The HR function's portfolio	19
Effective resourcing	19
Pre deployment briefings and training	20
Performance management	21
Knowledge management	21
References	25
Appendix	26

Foreword

This report is part of People In Aid's ongoing commitment to staff care in the humanitarian and development sector. As the People In Aid Code of Good Practice stresses, the work of organisations in this sector often places huge demands on staff in situations of complexity and risk. Ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of staff before, during and on completion of their assignment is of the utmost importance. It is also a legal requirement for organisations to provide, as practicably as possible, a safe working environment for their staff. Therefore, the question of how to ensure staff safety is in the minds of many in the the sector, with organisations producing policies and undertaking risk assessments in response to this.

This strongly evidenced report makes an important contribution to mitigating the damages - human, psychological, legal and financial – to which NGOs and their staff are routinely exposed. The report also offers recommendations and models for NGOs to consider in order to fully strengthen their HRM support in security management. Building on existing research, it analyses and addresses the critical issues facing organisations deploying staff into hazardous contexts, such as adhering to employment law and integrating complex and rapidly evolving information into policy and practice. This brings to the fore the critical role HR must play in emphasising the importance of duty of care and in markedly improving security management in those organisations that deploy staff in hazardous environments. The evidence in the report strongly suggests that HRM could help strengthen the support in these areas and highlights the need for in-depth cross-organisational and internal knowledge transfer with regards to staff care to develop .

People In Aid is grateful for the experience and commitment of Christine Williamson and Dr. Roger Darby in producing this important piece of work written for our members and the wider humanitarian and development sector. People In Aid would also like to express thanks to CARE, Oxfam and Victoria Houghton from the Ministry of Defence UK for their time and commitment to this work.



Jonathan Potter
Executive Director
People In Aid

Introduction

A more severe focus on the ever changing political and security global landscape highlights the safety and protection of staff working in the humanitarian aid and security sector. Furthermore, statistics show that nearly one third of deaths of humanitarian aid workers occur in the first three months of duty implying that those working in these environments are more at risk than ever before (Sjeik, 2000).

In almost every jurisdiction the organisation has a statutory duty to provide a safe place for staff to work and is expected to mitigate the risks staff may reasonably face. However, the clear message from government, non-government organisations and security specialists alike is that they should be doing more. In many ways, the human resources management (HRM) function in organisations is an area where security management and legislation ultimately converge. The extent to which organisations see staff as central to their mission is often reflected in the policies and practices that relate to staff welfare (O'Sullivan, 2010; Fenwick, 2005). It could be argued that the duty of care towards staff is the HRM department's reason for being. If the safety of a staff member has been compromised, employment legislation can provide a robust framework for investigation and tough sanctions if culpability is proven. For this reason, it is vital that human resource professionals in the humanitarian aid and security sector work environments are involved in the design and implementation of risk management strategies and practices.

Background & context

This report summarises the research which was undertaken in order to examine the role of human resource management (HRM) practices and processes in the organisational support of the management of risk to staff deployed to hazardous environments by organisations in the humanitarian aid and security sectors. A further aim of the research was to identify current and emerging key issues with organisational support as well as the barriers to the success of the support for staff deployed in dangerous regions of the world.

The key issues in this report are addressed from an organisational perspective, with a focus on the role of HRM and the crucial part the function should play in the identification, development and implementation of risk management strategies, policies and practices to support organisations from being found negligent in managing staff and exposed to potential litigation.

Additional to this report, the research enabled the authors to produce a journal article with a view to contributing to existing theory and providing useful models for HRM practitioners to utilise. This article will be made available through People In Aid once published in 2012.

What we did

Our methodology was straightforward and involved identifying three case study organisations; interviewing appropriate personnel to highlight key issues and provide more information. We also reviewed extensive research and literature.

The case study organisations were chosen to provide a mix from the public and voluntary sectors, different corporate governance, all with HR departments and security units; all working within international and multicultural environments and operating in many dangerous regions in the world for over 10 years. See Appendix 1 for the profile of each case study organisation.

A number of key issues are identified and used to act as a framework to develop a more thorough analysis. These include the:

- Risk management and the responsibility of organisations
- The role of HRM and how to improve the role in risk management
- Duty of care and the legal responsibilities of organisations
- Transfer of knowledge involving lessons learnt
- Future trends and implications

We complete this report by looking at conclusions and recommendations or next steps.

Risk management and the responsibility of organisations

The analysis revealed that the main risks faced by the case organisations fell into three main categories. First, crime which accounted for about 50% of incidents, involving robbery, burglary, armed robbery, theft, muggings and random attacks with examples cited in Afghanistan and Nepal involving suicide attacks. Second, more political incidents were cited which included working in conflict situations, and having to manage ongoing conflicts. Thirdly, a smaller portion around what was termed, management issues, generated from within the organisations involving disgruntled staff, sacked staff, those facing disciplinary procedures and fraud investigations which were all deemed to generate a security risk. In

support of the literature (Stoddard, Harmer & DiDomencio, 2009), evidence from organisations suggested local staff were the largest number of victims whilst although expatriate staff were vulnerable to shocks, kidnapping, and car jacking, national staff are in far greater danger than expatriates.

The two NGOs followed a policy of non-engagement with the military as closer relationships ran the danger of blurring humanitarian aid and military activities and potentially compromising neutrality but exceptions were identified where this policy was overlooked for example in Somalia, Pakistan, and Kenya. In reality it appears that information exchange in the humanitarian aid and military arena does take place and is often formally done through the UN. This was supported by the following quote:

“Yes, there is information exchange and formal stuff through the UN. Because I think on one hand it needs to happen and it's good. On the other hand, it's narrowing the humanitarian space and the aid workers become associated with the Army; it's quite difficult anyway and I'm thinking of Yemen were we were targeted as a [country] NGO.”

On a more ethical note, it was suggested that there had been an erosion of the Humanitarian Principles as a result of the proliferation of many additional NGOs and:

“Winning hearts and minds make it difficult to differentiate aid workers from belligerents who have other motivations. Maybe it's the erosion of Humanitarian Principles as a result of the proliferation of many additional NGOs that maybe haven't embraced such principles and are less principled than some NGOs.”

In terms of mitigating risks, the issue of *security* was professed to be on the top of the agenda in all the organisations researched. Structurally, at both the senior management level and in operations at regional levels, all organisations had security advisors supported by policies and practices. These involved an approach covering a security management framework including context analysis, risk and threat analysis, linked with strategies including the common three of *acceptance, protection and deterrence*, linking up with the work on the 'tri-partite model' by Van Brabant (2000). From the government case study organisation, 18 roles to mitigate risk were identified, across a range including, a dedicated safety team, policy advisors, defence advisors, civil secretaries, financial and commercial officers and military defence police. Of course, the nature of operations wherever the organisation is working creates different challenging problems, reflected in the following quote:

“We are having to develop military as a whole including civil servants to deal with the complex operations and not knowing what the next one looks like. And I think the biggest challenge that we face is making sure that we understand exactly what we are asking of our people to go out and do.”

Understanding what is required from an organisational perspective and what performance is essential of staff highlights the question of measurement and its link with the mitigation of risk. There does seem to be some confusion as to the use of clear metrics for the measurement and assessment of risks.

“I think the key management judgement we need to make is whether these people are like the ‘frogs in boiling water’, not aware of the risks of people are panicking or whether they have a very conscious and a high awareness of the risk entailed and can be trusted to understand what is the risk of pulling people out versus the benefit of keeping them in the country and doing our programmes.”

Indeed, when health and safety and security were discussed, there seemed to be a formal split between the two functions.

“We deny it’s both Health & Safety and Security Management. We have different staff managing the two. There’s not actually a business partner on Security Managements’ side of HR.”

Further analysis showed that much emphasis was placed on the responsibility of line managers to ensure that their staff are abiding by health and safety a rules and security management policies.

The Role of HRM and how to improve the role in risk management

The analysis revealed that in two out of the three case studies organisations structural relationships supported HRM integration. Specifically, this included HRM representation at senior level and often a direct reporting relationship with the CEO and senior directors whilst also seeing devolution of HR responsibility to line management. In one NGO this was evidenced by a structure that included HRM managers in all of the 7 regions it operated in with support from the centre to translate strategy into operational plans. This finding was supported by comments from senior personnel including:

“HR is the glue that holds all the pieces together.”

“It’s a strategic role. I think an administrative role is when you evacuate people; they sign the contract and do the logistics. I think in this particular case like in Yemen or in Pakistan or in Palestine in Gaza they (HR) play the strategic role in asking the right questions and challenging managers who are trying to do more sort of ‘yes lets go’. So they are sort of checks and balance managers.”

“I see HR is an important and strategic function. It’s a business partner function. It’s not sort of personnel management and for example, the HR manager is in my team and is an important regional management team member.”

However, in the government organisation, what has transpired over a relatively short time is a split between the Safety and Security Team still in central military headquarters positioned away from the main city, whilst the rest of HR side run from the in main government building in the capital.

The importance is given by organisations to the integration of the key functions in the HRM role. However, fragmentation still seemed to occur and operationally there were mixed reactions to overall management of the HRM cycle:

“I think it is integrated but I think it could be integrated more effectively and it comes down to the fact we are an anomaly, but it doesn’t excuse the fact that we could improve in some areas, but it involves buy-in from everybody.”

“Where does it break down? On selection – because if we are having to bring people back from theatre because they are not happy or not settled, we are putting everybody under pressure, creating extra tension and leaving gaps in theatre.”

The comments on recruitment and selection in the research further highlight some potential weaknesses in organisational support:

“Most of the recruitment that we do is remotely done and probably 70%-80% of our overseas staff are foreigners and hired from Europe, Western Europe, Easter Europe and Africa. So most of the recruitment will be done by phone. We’ve moved to the newest technology but it does have some constraints in terms of identification of candidates and questions about risk management and personal security.”

“In selection, I think making sure that we are getting the right people and educating the role holders and role managers to do exactly what we should be looking for. Too many of them are focussed on the traditional civil service way of interviewing for candidates who are mainly competence based. However, we are asking people to go and do this in a very different environment and their needs to be flexibility to be able to ask the questions, ‘How are they going to cope without you?’ ‘How do you think you will cope with working 24 hours a day?’ ‘And at the moment a lot of these questions aren’t being asked in some areas and I think that’s something we need to make sure is across the board.”

Observations on training and development and its relationship with security were noted with one NGO clearly identifying the necessity of synergy between the two:

“This strategy is looking more at how do we keep security current in other ways, so for example we have looked across the organisation at what other training opportunities there are so we can piggy-back security onto them. So the strategy we are working on at the moment is rather than saying all people at this level have to have done a 2 day Security Training course, its trying to get security embedded into other existing opportunities.”

In terms of performance management, the government organisation had by far the most structured and deeply grained performance management system. Even when staff were deployed they were appraised. Although one NGO also reported it had a thorough performance management system but was open to the vagaries of facing different emergencies in different countries which challenged the notion of ‘one size fits all’ approach to performance management in this sector:

“Yes, they all have their individual Performance Annual Reports. So they all have their normal civil service reviews and it’s filled in by their in-theatre line managers whether that’s civilian or military and we generally have very few problems with people getting that filled in.”

“We have sophisticated long and thorough performance management processes and procedures. It’s the implementation of the processes that is a challenge but it does work in some of the country offices. Given the world now has more challenges again in countries that experience more emergencies per year – more precisely I think of Chad but overall I think it’s an area we have significantly improved over the last few years.”

The following data offered interesting insights into managing the whole cycle of deployment of staff:

Pre-departure:

“In terms of briefings and induction, I can’t say yes blankly. It’s yes and no....If you ask me about every international staff going to Somalia – do they get a briefing, yes. If you ask me about any national staff newly on board in Zambia – I would say not necessarily.”

“The briefing package is sent to all staff prior to the deployment, along with a security guideline for any destination and if there are any specific security instructions, those are sent as well. All staff are required to complete an on-line security academy website test. Although I could safely say that the on-line security training is probably not provided systematically nor monitored systematically.”

Post-arrival:

“In-country briefings – yes, as soon as they arrive. So there is a corporate health and safety policy and then that’s obviously adapted for local law and context. Every member of staff has a performance appraisal whilst in-county.”

However, the government case study appears to have adopted a more thorough approach to this stage:

“Yes, post-arrival briefings. And they also have a reception staging and onward integration which is something the military do and it’s a 2 or 4 day course depending whether they are armed or not and it gives you all the up to date briefings in theatre and what’s going on and the latest happenings. Also there is a reminder of getting on and off a helicopter and things like that.”

Repatriation:

Again, the government organisation appears to have the more thorough repatriation processes in place, for example, as noted in the evidence:

“Yes we have a debriefing session for the support operation organisation every 6 months and one of the things we do is to go through questions about the HR Cycle, ‘How was your selection?’ Did you have your performance appraisal filled in?’ Did

you have any dramas getting home for your leave? And they all get medals and recognition return as well. So we do that every 6 months.”

Yet the following extract from an interview with staff from an NGO highlights the complexity of managing the ‘cycle’:

“People in this organisation stay for quite a long time, but not always and quite often we have senior staff at country level and regional level that is national staff, so there isn’t that sense of repatriation at the end.”

However, there were evident contradictions at the operational level and the evidence on the importance of the role HRM played in security management was mixed. The data portrayed a picture where HRM was seen as more of an administrative rather than a strategic role (Legge, 2005) in two out of the three case studies. This was supported by the following comments:

“I think generally in an international organisation, HR is considered a support service and you know what it’s like when organisations take decisions about budget, often the last item on the list is training for staff...but in fact the single most important resource, and everybody says it but nobody acts on it, is the quality of people you get in the organisation.”

“Our HR function is very much more dominantly looking at things that are more traditional, contract-related, hiring, detaining and administration of HR.”

Further, in relation to security:

“Around safety and security, risk management is wholly supported by the Security Unit and there isn’t a connection between the two.... I think it’s something that would benefit from having a much closer tie between safety and security side of things and risk management associated with HR.”

More tellingly, senior managers said:

“I find particularly that we still seem to be a little reactive. We remember about risk management when serious incidents happen. We then tend to forget how important the strategy and methods are and how important it is to maintain and keep the mentality of staff and managers thinking about risk management. I think if HR was

involved in this as a group or in a working group on risk management that would probably help and try to be seen as strategic in this part of the area.”

“I think HR should actually be clear about what it means and what risk management means. Risk management is typically set within the security field and actually we need to start thinking more about how risk management is taken much more seriously across the organisation. Risk management needs to become very much more an integral part of the way that we work especially in insecure environments because it’s very much connected.”

Duty of care and the legal responsibilities of organisations

The notion of ‘duty of care’ in research and the literature was shown to be an elemental issue in this discussion. It fundamentally impacts in general, on the employment relationship and more particularly, on the psychological contract between employer and employee (Guest and Conway, 2001). It also raises questions not only about the rights of individuals but also the responsibilities of organisations in statute and natural law. Increasingly employment law permeates through all the inter-sections between employer and employee. Mistakes whether by design, bad management or by accident, can be financially costly and has the potential to badly damage the worldwide reputation of an organisation found culpable. In this research, all the case study organisations were shown to have strict systems of legal support and control structurally in place.

“This organisation is a confederation and each of the members who deploy staff has an ultimate legal responsibility for the safety and security of the staff and at the organisation-wide level we have a Safety and Security Unit that is responsible for policy, standards and has an ultimate appeal process if it feels a particular member isn’t noticing certain security threats.”

“We have 2 full-time lawyers in our legal team. As the Security Advisor I personally work closely with them on a number of things that come up. We have talked recently about corporate manslaughter, for example.”

“In August last year we had some staff killed in an ID incident and I know all the trustees got a briefing on duty of care because they are the ones who may be imprisoned.”

From the government organisation case study, duty of care was closely linked to thorough risk assessments:

“Duty of care comes in risk assessment and individual risk assessment. The individual go through assessment and sign to say that they are happy with the risk. There is also an agreement that if there are any dramas we will get them home. The employed civilians will be treated exactly like the military when it comes to medical support etc.”

However, one constant theme was how do organisations manage the complexity of different laws from different countries:

“Being a Confederation we have an issue around the law in the US the law in Australia, the law in France or Canada so in some circumstances we are facing quite a bit of a challenge.”

All the researched organisations have Codes of Conduct which are signed by every new starter.

Transfer of knowledge involving lessons learnt

The effective transfer of knowledge was shown to provide the necessary ‘life blood’ in supporting growth and development of an institution (Gilbert, Morabio, & Stohr, 2010; Evans, Pucik & Barsoux, 2002). In reality, what was found in this research was somewhat contradictory. Given the acknowledgement of the importance of recognising and managing the cycle of deployment with its short and long-term benefits to both organisations and individual employees (Darby, 2000), in practice what was seen was a very fragmented picture. Further analysis of the results revealed the transfer of knowledge from pre-departure through to repatriation was often disjointed and lacking integration. The corollary being that there was a danger that organisations lost a great deal of valuable knowledge from deployments as well as ending up ‘re-inventing the wheel’ for future projects, thus potentially wasting a great deal of time, effort and resources.

NGO case study organisations highlighted a number of key issues:

“In terms of debriefing, it does happen in most cases at the country officer level. At the HQ level they require that all staff complete a survey upon completion of the assignment and again I would say probably 50% are completed and the other 50% often are not.”

“There is debriefing but there’s purely a more mechanical debriefing from an HR perspective in terms of finding out a bit more of the reasons why someone is leaving the organisation. There isn’t a thorough detailed sort of re-integration process with debriefing.”

“There is generally a handover briefing. I think we are not particular good and I think this is true of most NGOs and actually government aid agencies as well. We are not very good at collecting knowledge and using informal systems to do so.”

“We set up on-line communities of practice. We’ve got cross-divisional sharing which has grown and gained recognition. However, you still find yourself scratching your head thinking, ‘I’m sure we talked about this months ago’.”

From the Government Department, it was suggested they had little formal transfer of knowledge:

“However, in the role of training manager for deployment we are looking at picking this up because some areas are good at doing it and they use their people well particularly Policy Advisors, Defence Advisors who are good at using the knowledge of people returning to train the people going out and that is why some of it takes up to a year to train.”

Although it was suggested that a ‘cross-government approach’ was being looked at involving all the pre-deployment courses including the Foreign Service’s Hostile Environment Training, the Stabilisation Unit’s Hostile Environment Awareness Training course, however, all of which seem to be teaching more or less basically the same topics.

“We are just going through the process now of looking at the training we do which is very military and that’s the reason the SU don’t particularly want to use our training for their people. But if you are working with provisional reconstruction teams, a lot of those are actually working out at the military bases, so it makes sense that they (NGOs) have an understanding of the military and it’s roles.”

Future trends and implications

When looking at future trends and their implications in this area of research, the analysis revealed all organisations professed a desire to learn from mistakes and support the development of improved strategies, practices and processes, when risk-managing staff sent to hazardous regions. From the organisational perspective, there was a discernable call for a more systematic approach lead through learning and development. Although contradictions were voiced suggesting organisations were not really prepared enough for the changing world, were still reactive and too often remembered about risk management when accidents and serious incidents had happened.

Issues were raised about the ‘professionalism’ of HR staff and the need for more professional HR training particularly for staff based in country. This issue also highlighted the apparent ‘double-standard’ applied in organisations when dealing with national and expatriate staff.

More strikingly, comments raised more fundamental questions about the HR role in risk management:

“I think HR should actually be clear about what risk management means. Risk management would need to be thought through from an HR perspective so people in HR actually understand it.”

“That was the thing I was struggling with when I was trying to organise a Health and Safety network. HR people were named because nobody else would do it. And actually they didn’t really know what they were doing talking about risk assessments about measuring risk, talking about work safety assessments. Sometimes quite junior people were given the task of health and safety.”

The issue of the transference of knowledge involving raising awareness of how different people manage risk in different places, and how improving organisational knowledge capture and transfer, would be helpful, was emphasised in all the organisations researched.

“We don’t very often talk about security incidents and lessons learned, especially when people are kidnapped until they come back; one of the areas that could improve is lessons learned shared with other managers.”

One of the interesting suggestions was to improve cross multi-stakeholder learning from organisations not necessarily closely associated. For example:

“Useful to see how people in the Army do that and what can NGOs learn. Because they have the scale and they have the logistics. They have a proper command and control structure.”

“On lessons learned, I think we had a case of abduction, after that there were several simulation exercises to make sure that we learnt lessons from that, and as far as I know, I think we used external agencies to help us with that.”

For government run organisations a significant future organisational challenge identified in this research centred on structure and process. For the government case study, the organisational split between the Safety and Security Team in PGHQ located away from the capital and the Policy Team in the main building in the capital city, created apparent tensions in both operational and strategic management.

Of course the sheer magnitude of various crises as a result of population growth, climate change and human conflict it was suggested, continued to create major risk factors. This was aligned to the key issue of change fatigue and the more effective management of risk involving the need for increased inter-agency working. This prompted a final issue to be highlighted in this section which could play a major role in future trends namely the one of Humanitarian Aid and Civil-Military relations. Undoubtedly, this is timely, given the apparent need for additional inter-agency co-operation in, amongst other issues, the duty of care process in a burgeoning number of disaster and conflict regions throughout the world.

“I think there should be definite discussions at all levels where the information can flow (between agencies). But from the military side there is frustration. They (NGOs) say we are nothing to do with the military but as you know when there is a problem, the first people they ring is the military. There needs to be a structure in place that we know who’s where, who’s doing what, not keep an eye on them but just so if there are dramas we can deal with them. And I think the biggest thing is the understanding even within government departments. If you look at the word ‘engage’, if that’s in the military it means destroy something. If you look at that from within DIFD it’s go and say ‘hello’ and see what you think.”

Conclusions

In conclusion, we believe much of the research and extant literature in this area has highlighted many relevant points and a good foundation from which to build a case for HRM involvement in strategic security management decisions. It is this foundation that has informed the following conclusions about what is missing in, rather than what is wrong with, the work already done in this important area. To summarise:

- Are organisations placing the responsibility of security management with their executives and at the top of the agenda?
- There is a lack of comprehensive information shared in organisations on how legislation impacts on security management and not acknowledging or integrating this could expose organisations to huge amounts of risk and cost.
- Are managers supported and equipped to provide for the health, safety and security of their staff?
- Managers who make decisions on security management do not always recognise HRM as playing a key role within the strategic landscape of security management.
- There are inadequate or no audit and evaluation tools to assess appropriate security management systems.
- Is recruitment of staff effective enough?
- Is the briefing for a new role happening in a systematic, timely and contextual manner?
- How well are security management training interventions monitored?
- Are organisations learning in a systematic way? Are they taking time to learn from their leaving national staff? Are we learning from the different parts of the HR cycle e.g. do exiting staff, at the end of the HR cycle, inform how recruitment, at the start of the cycle, should be done in the future? What role should KM play in inter-agency working given its increasing importance (which is often overlooked) in humanitarian aid, security sector and civil-military relations?
- The language used in most security management literature is aimed at the operational audience and should be written to include all the key stakeholders involved including HRM professionals.
- HRM practitioners need to understand the nuances of security management and ensure they have the right competences themselves to influence security management strategy. Does HR know what strategic HR looks like? Could HR be more proactive, plan further ahead and better understand risk management and duty of care?

Recommendations

As a result of the conclusions drawn from the research, several recommendations have been put forward:

Influencing strategy, policy & practice

Security management is a combination of many policies and practices that function together to provide a healthy, safe and secure environment for staff to operate in. In order to create this culture of safety, the executive management (including HR) must make safety a priority and identify the different policies that impact health, safety and security and ensure they are both involved from the early stages of development or review. Organisations must regularly assess or audit the quality of their security management and take swift steps to improve the standard of support and meet legal requirements.

Duty of care

In many ways, the HR function is where security management and legislation ultimately converge. In almost every jurisdiction the organisation has a duty of care towards its staff and is expected to mitigate the risks staff face. The duty of care towards staff is HR's reason for being. If the safety of a staff member has been compromised, employment legislation provides a robust framework for investigation and tough sanctions if culpability is proven. For this reason, it is vital that information on the importance of duty of care is shared with management and staff, and that HR professionals are involved in the design and implementation of risk management strategies, policies and practices, to prevent exposure to risk and costs.

Duty of care should also extend to all categories of staff including national staff. Organisations must develop support systems that have considered the risk national staff face when working for organisations in hazardous environments.

Planning for critical incidents

The extent to which organisations see staff as central to their mission is often reflected in the policies and practices that focus on staff care. Pre deployment preparation including security training and top tips on how to take care of oneself in a humanitarian context go a long way towards keeping staff fit and healthy. However, the nature of the disaster environment means that serious incidents do happen. Staff can find themselves in very difficult situations

or critical incidents such as a robbery, violent attacks, kidnap, serious sickness or injury. Organisations must therefore have policies and practices that clearly state what happens during and after these critical incidents. HR can play a vital role with the development of these policies - they bring the duty of care aspect to the early stages of development and the after-care element directly after a critical incident.

Staffing structures

According to the research, HR should be more involved with the key communication and decision-making processes which impact the management of staff, and particularly with formation of staffing structures and the use of remote management. HR must help management understand the risks associated with poor staffing structures and unqualified staff running projects.

The HR function's portfolio

The human resources department is seen to be in need of going beyond strategic alignment into transforming itself into a fully integrated organisational function. However, the gap perceived between the status quo of a fairly administrative function concentrating on resourcing and a becoming a core part of the organisation was extensive. The recommendation here is that the HR function moves towards becoming a strategic partner of the leadership team, works towards understanding, facilitating and communicating the need for and the aims of major change initiatives, refining their capabilities as people management experts and acting as coaches and facilitators in their organisations. In practical terms, this will mean gaining more knowledge and experience of the overseas context, understanding the complex area of security management and its language and being able to assess (evaluate) and monitor risk management from an HR perspective.

Effective resourcing

Recruiting the right people at the right time in the right way is a goal that the HR function must strive for in a hazardous environment to ensure there are no gaps in the field. The recruitment process must be able to determine whether a prospective candidate is appropriate for the role.

A more professional approach is required through the use of a competency-based framework, where both HR and management have identified essential competences for each role. A recent study called the Humanitarian Capacity Building Programme produced by the

Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA) has defined what is required by a leader in an INGO in terms of competencies and recently agreed that core humanitarian leadership behaviours can be helpfully articulated through three dimensions: exceptional self-awareness, ability to motivate and influence others, and critical judgement. INGOs should therefore identify and develop critical competencies for their staff with an emphasis on the core behaviours required over the short and long-term.

The job description, interviewers, recruitment assessments and references all play a part in helping managers decide whether the person before them has the essential requirements. In our view, the whole area of resourcing could be done using more sophisticated approaches. Here it is recommended that better training of interviewers, clearer decision structures and criteria in the selection process, and the use of more sophisticated selection instruments would be beneficial. For instance, where competences like self-awareness, critical judgement, raising funds and being able to collaborate are important for the future, this could be assessed using competency-based interviewing techniques and psychometric tests.

Pre deployment briefings and training

According to the research, preparing staff as much as possible for an assignment is one of the single most important things an organisation can do. Having the appropriate knowledge of personal security awareness and the job was considered very important. The recommendation for HR here is; they must be a stronger voice with the design of contextual and role briefings. HR could influence this process by highlighting to management the risks associated with the lack of duty of care where staff are not fully prepared, and the importance of HR's role with employment liability matters should the organisation find itself in an employment tribunal. Giving responsibilities to ill-equipped staff may jeopardise their personal security (and the security of others) and could be considered an abdication of responsibility that lacks a duty of care. This is an unacceptable situation for staff. Organisations must fully prepare their staff for the local context and their role.

As much of the responsibility for the safety of staff is given to managers, it is essential for organisations to equip and continually support their managers with the health, safety and security of their staff.

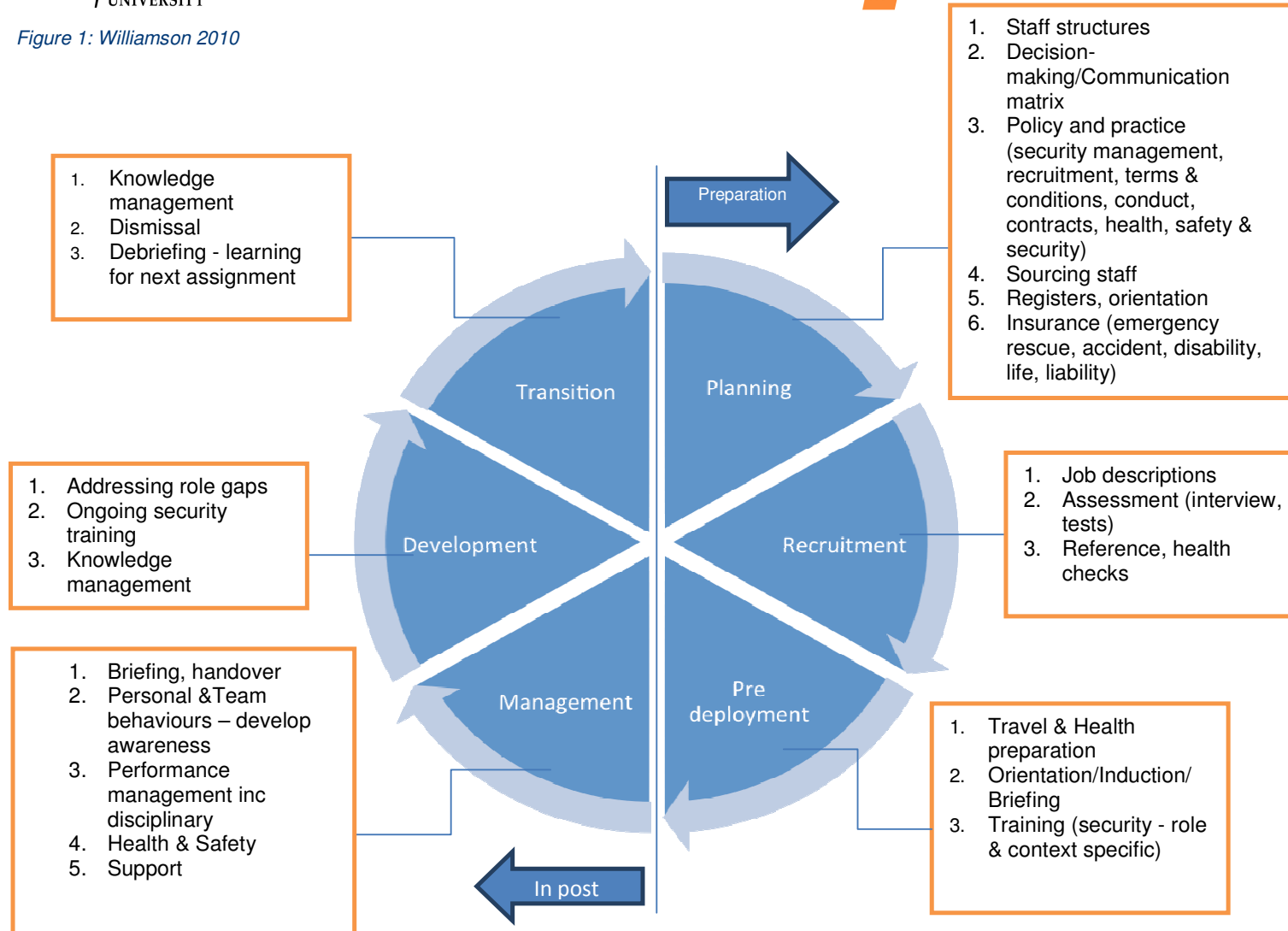
Performance management

Good performance management is essential for ensuring humanitarian organisations have effective leaders and staff. However this is seen as ad-hoc in nature. Organisations therefore need to examine their performance management processes and install structured appraisal processes, personal development plans and disciplinary procedures in order to manage performance well and bring the best out in staff. Managers need to be trained in order for these to be implemented at all levels – international and local. HR can influence such training programmes by ensuring that people management is seen as a day-to-day activity with a focus on development, engagement and motivation of staff with links to recognition and rewards (not necessarily monetary) in the approaches.

Knowledge management

The interview data also provided support for the need for organisations to understand the employment cycle of a staff member to provide a more integrated approach towards more effective people and security risk management. Management professionals are encouraged to consider them heuristically when managing the organisational support of the whole employee work cycle from pre-departure through to repatriation of aid and security sector projects. One example of an employment cycle in figure 1 is shown:

Figure 1: Williamson 2010



The model in figure 2 indicates the relationship between a number of key factors drawn from the literature and supported by the primary data analysis for consideration by management practitioners to develop for the future:

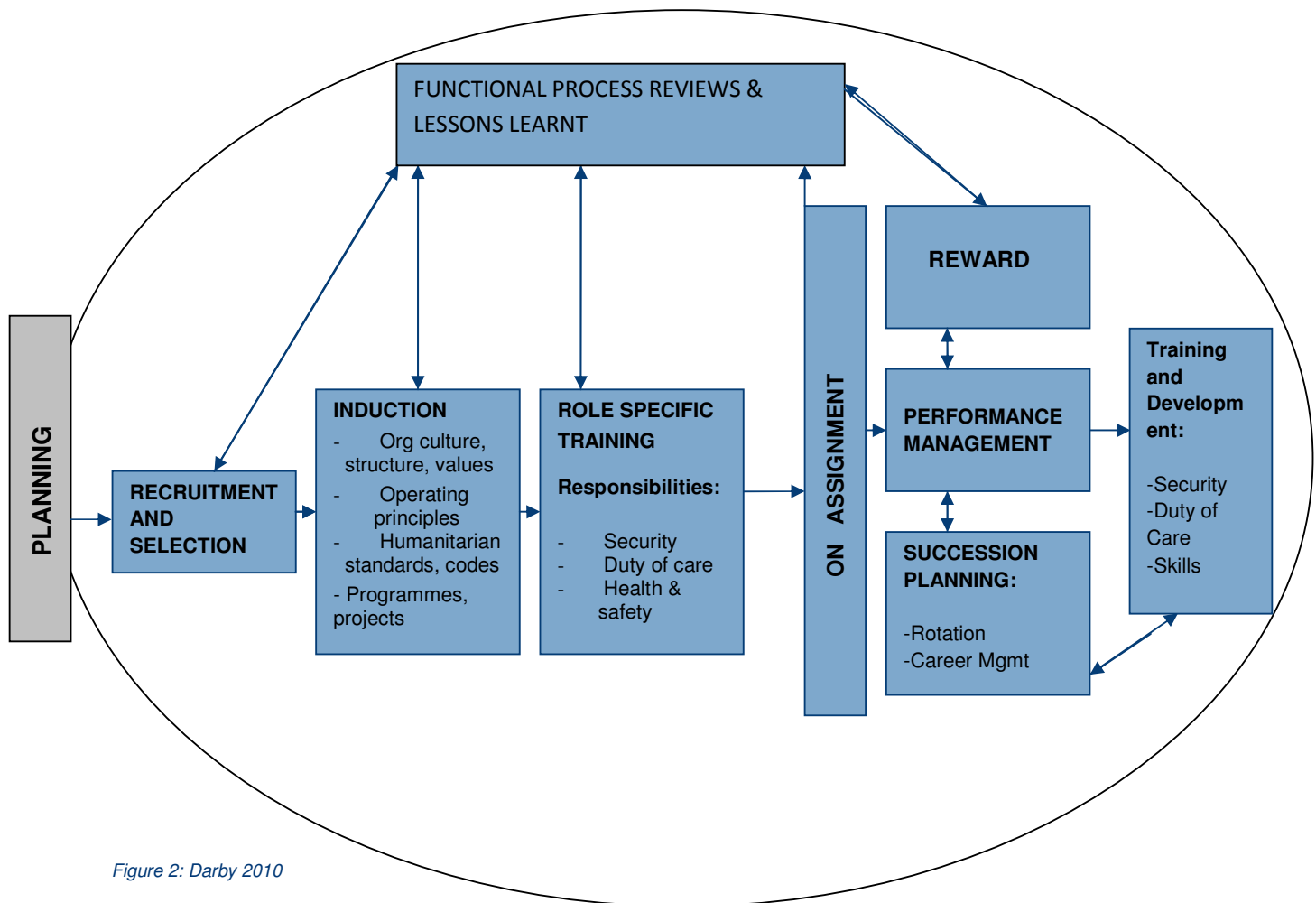


Figure 2: Darby 2010

The literature and research results highlight the key role played by HRM in the cyclical nature of the deployment of a staff member on a humanitarian aid or security sector project. The central theme is the necessity for the integration of all the key functions managed by the HR function to provide necessary support in the overall practice of staff deployment in hazardous regions. For the *duty of care* process begins for the individual, right from the recruitment and selection stage through to the return from an assignment, and beyond. From an organisational perspective, the crucial initial stage of recruitment and selection of a staff

member with appropriate skills and competencies aligned with overall organisational objectives is imperative to the overall long-term success of the assignment. Staff then go through a number of key stages for example, general and role specific training before being deployed where performance is appraised and rewards allocated. On completion of the assignment staff return to HQ to be either re-assigned or allowed to leave the organisation. A critical factor here for organisations is to identify the process as a cyclical rather than as a linear practice. Furthermore, organisations need to acknowledge the role of the management of knowledge (including essential knowledge on security and risk management issues in various regions around the world) and the necessity for knowledge transfer through a lessons learnt process of the whole staff experience for the benefit of the organisation in the future.

References

- Darby, R. (2000) *International Human Resource Management: A study of the role of organizational support systems in determining the subsequent performance of expatriate managers.*, PhD dissertation, University of Sussex, UK.
- Evans, P., Pucik, V. & Barsoux (2002) *The Global Challenge: Frameworks for International Human Resource Management.* London. McGraw-Hill.
- Fenwick, M. (2005) 'Extending strategic international human resource management research and pedagogy to the non-profit multinational,' *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16. 4, 497-512.
- Gilbert, E., Morabio, J. & Stohr, E. (2010) Knowledge Sharing and Decision Making in the Peace Corps. *Knowledge and Process Management.* Vol 17. Issue 3, pp133-144.
- Guest, D., and Conway, N. (2001) *Public and Private Perceptions of the Psychological Contract.* London. CIPD.
- Legge, K. (2005) *Human Resource Management: Rhetorics and Realities.* (Anniversary edition) Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Sullivan, S. (2010) International human resource management challenges in Canadian development INGOs, *European Management Journal*, 28, 412-440.
- People In Aid. (2003). *People In Aid Code of Good Practice.*
- Sjeik, M. (2000) 'Deaths Among Humanitarian Workers', *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 321, pp. 166–68.
- Stoddard, A., Harmer, A., & DiDomenico, V. (2009). *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments, 2009 Update: Trends in Violence Against Aid Workers and the Operational Response.* London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Williamson, C. (2010) *Personnel Management and Security.* Issue 47. Humanitarian Practice Network. ODI.

Appendix

Table 1: Profile of Case Study Organisations

	Org A	Org B	Org C
Vision & Mission	People together can create a fair world, free of poverty and injustice.	A world of hope, tolerance, and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. The mission is to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world. Drawing strength from global diversity, resources and experience, to promote innovative solutions and are advocates for global responsibility.	Defending the country and its interests. Strengthening international peace and stability.
Org Structure & Human Resources	Confederation of 12 Org. offices around the world	Federation of 12 members	Government Minister of Defence responsible for the formulation and conduct of Defence Policy.
No. of Employees	4634	12000	160,000
Mode of Entry (Primarily Autonomous Implementers or Primarily Partnership Oriented)	<i>Partnership-Oriented.</i> As part of a federation they approach their development projects by partnering with organisations including INGOs worldwide.	<i>Autonomous implementers.</i> Part of a federation. They place expats in leadership positions in country offices. Sometimes work with partners	<i>Autonomous implementers.</i> Linked with other government departments and overall govt. strategy. Sometimes work with in partnership with other govt. agencies and INGOs.
Program Orientation	<i>Mix of service delivery and advocacy-based.</i>	<i>Service delivery.</i> Development projects	<i>Mix of service delivery and advocacy-based.</i>

	Org A	Org B	Org C
(Primarily Service-delivery or Primarily Advocacy – based)	Supervise development projects many of which involve component of empowerment and advocacy.	provide services and commodities.	
Type of Projects	Humanitarian development Realignment of People, deliverable skills, managing change Aid & Earthquake response, Long-term development programmes	Regional role overseas in the management of 6 countries in Asia high risk environments	Post-conflict reconstruction Education Support Team Civil Servants deploying in support of military support operations programme for civilians working in defence and security Recruitment, preparing for deployment, return, support for civilian subject-matter experts being deployed.
Countries of Operation – (relevant examples)	Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Haiti, Niger	Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, Somalia, Nepal	Afghanistan, Iraq, Ethiopia,



People In Aid
356 Holloway Road
London
N7 6PA
UK
T +44 (0) 20 3095 3950
F +44 (0) 20 7697 9580
W www.peopleinaid.org
E info@peopleinaid.org