TPO Uganda’s Staff Reward Programme improves performance and builds relationships

**TPO Uganda (TPO) is an NGO working in five regions of Uganda and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. TPO envisions a society where vulnerable and marginalised people enjoy mental health, social and economic well-being and lead harmonious, mutually supportive and productive lives. TPO’s strategic objectives are:**

1. To strengthen national and community systems and structures for effective protection and promotion of children’s and women’s rights
2. To increase access to psychosocial and mental health services to vulnerable communities
3. To enhance vulnerable communities’ capacity to manage and respond to disaster and socioeconomic shock

**TPO Uganda delivers interventions in seven thematic core areas, and has a unique human resource portfolio comprising clinical psychiatrists and social workers trained in mental health therapy and other experts, which ensures that TPO can target services to meet very specific community needs.**

**Introduction to TPO’s Staff Reward Programme**

TPO values the importance of appreciation and recognition and sees these as integral components of a winning strategic reward system. It combines benefits and appreciation in public gatherings, thanking employees by citing specific examples of what they have done that has positively impacted the organisation.

TPO, with the HR team initiating and leading, rolled out a new staff reward programme in 2013. This aimed to improve project performance and inspire staff to work towards achieving TPO strategic goals, increase staff satisfaction and motivation, and reduce attrition.

Additionally, the HR department organised a skill-building activity programme that enabled staff to reduce stress through structured exercises, including the following:

- Personality types (to build interpersonal capabilities and inform stress management strategies)
- Building effective teams (e.g. “Conveyor belt exercise” focusing on speed and accuracy)
- Zumba dance and ‘move the ball’ to encourage exercise and team coordination Word search challenge (brain teaser)
- Christmas tree challenge (to support shared vision and collaboration)
- Relay exercises (to build team work, collaboration, awareness of strengths and weaknesses)
- Swimming and football
- Health talks by inviting health experts to talk to staff on health and nutrition.

In all of these activities there has been learning and supportive interventions to build teams and motivate staff.
The skill-building programme has been particularly important, as it has brought the staff together as one family. During the activities, job titles and staff hierarchy are not important, so for example, social workers engage in activities with the Country Director. This programme contributes to both an appropriate reward and wellbeing package.

The Staff Reward Programme is funded through a rewards budget. This is made up of gifts in kind that the HR department organises to award staff for outstanding quality of work during the year. This includes shopping coupons, a percentage of salary, a bull, chickens or cakes, and certificates of recognition. The HR reward performance budget ensures that resources were in place to be able to both deliver and effectively monitor the reward scheme.

**Selection of winning projects**

The reward programme focuses on project level based achievements. Projects are selected by a committee comprising representatives from the HR, programmes, knowledge and development, monitoring and evaluation, finance and logistics departments, based on performance against a previously established set of criteria:

- No. of stories of change and best case managed
- Best quality reports submitted, and in time
- Best performing project (exceeded targets)
- Best innovation, to be emulated
- Best presentation

The HR department shares the list of criteria with all project field offices explaining how projects are to be selected. As well as performance against the set criteria, verbal feedback is included in the assessment process. A scoring system is used to analyse project performance and identify which staff members are responsible for that performance. This information is then used to determine who is eligible to receive rewards, and the level of reward to be given. 2013 was the first year of tracking the data in this way and provides a baseline. 2014 results will soon be published and Retrak aim to track year on year performance.

As the reward system is still new, TPO rewards project performance with the contribution of all members within a specific project and not the individual. However the HR manager will be rolling out an individual reward system soon.

During the reward ceremony, three projects are rewarded, i.e. the best one, the first runner up and the 2nd runner up. Key individuals who have made notable contribution within specific projects are publicly recognised at this ceremony. This is a strong motivation for project field staff to work hard.

**Challenges in adopting a performance related rewards system**

One of the key challenges the organisation had to overcome was that some field stations had advantage over other fields: for example, two project teams, SCORE and SUNRISE were able to perform very well in data collection and management because they have personnel directly responsible for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The organisation has recognised this challenge and it is now directly working towards strengthening the M&E systems at field level.
Impact of the Staff Reward Programme

The main impact of the staff reward programme is that positive, healthy relationships have been fostered between staff in TPO head office and field staff at all levels. This has lead to an increased motivation and increased staff performance across all projects. Communications have improved among these groups of staff and managers, and as a result, information sharing and reporting on projects has increased.

It will take longer to measure lasting impact and as the need to improve data tracking was identified, increased support supervision has been provided to support the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process. This will benefit all M&E processes throughout TPO. Staff have been empowered to examine and take ownership of their own areas of work that need improvement. Stories of change as a result of this improvement will be reported in the 2014 annual report (due 2015).

Lessons Learned:

• Participation of all field staff in the process of collecting information for the purpose of scoring projects is necessary to allow employees to input and create dialogue with senior management.
• By acting transparently, the management team carried out the analysis without bias which helps increase the level of professional respect and understanding.
• The criteria for reward management should be sent in the first quarter of every year to allow project staff to collect adequate data to support the reward process.
• Scoring project performance helps with designing strategies for improving projects in relation to specific criteria: data collection, management and documentation can be improved. When good performance is rewarded, it generally leads to good outputs.
• Rewarding performance helps to share learning and best practice on project performance. Depending on the HR reward budget, it is also important to recognise and appreciate individuals who have excelled within specific projects, through public recognition, providing certificates of merit for excellent performance or other type of reward.
• Maintaining staff motivation requires effective communication, building and supporting teams: projects that performed very well factored in these aspects of teamwork.
## Table 1: TPO Record of achievement of annual team targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Finance &amp; logistics</th>
<th>Data collection, management &amp; reporting</th>
<th>Project performance</th>
<th>Innovations</th>
<th>Stories of change</th>
<th>Average project % score</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Traffic lights indicators</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SCORE - Mbarara</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>59%</td>
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<td>68%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SUN RISE - Arua</td>
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<td>86%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>25%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>54%</td>
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<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>84%</td>
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<td>49%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Average component score</strong></td>
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<td><strong>36%</strong></td>
<td><strong>82%</strong></td>
<td><strong>24%</strong></td>
<td><strong>79%</strong></td>
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