

TRANSFORMING
**SURGE
CAPACITY**



Ethical Recruitment Guidelines

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on behalf of the CHS Alliance



INTRODUCTION

During a rapid humanitarian surge response, particularly large scale, there is often significant pressure to recruit large numbers of staff as quickly as possible. However, the need to fill posts urgently should not compromise ethical considerations in our recruitment processes. These guidelines are intended to provide staff involved in recruitment during a surge response with a brief guideline on how to ensure that all recruitment practices are undertaken in the most ethical way possible.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS DURING SURGE RECRUITMENT

Standard ethical recruitment practices usually focus on ensuring that all candidates for roles are treated in a fair, equal, respectful and confidential manner. These are obviously essential in any recruitment process, including those undertaken during surge responses, but in the humanitarian sector there are also other ethical considerations that need to be considered.

It is very easy for short cuts in recruitment practices during times of great pressure. This can result in the wrong people being recruited and may not only be people who do not have the capacity to deliver or be developed in order to perform, but also people whose approaches, attitudes, behaviours are not in line with the requirements of the various humanitarian codes and principles of humanitarianism. This is an ethical issue – how we undertake recruitment during a surge response can have a potentially serious negative impact on what we are able to achieve, how we work with beneficiaries and other stakeholders and how we ensure that limited resources are used in the most effective and accountable way.

In addition, there also needs to be consideration of the impact of our own recruitment practices on others involved in the surge response, whether these be other INGOs, National NGOs, national government departments or other local organisations. For example, an international NGO recruiting staff from an existing national NGO can undermine the organisation's ability to be effective in the surge response.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

> **Widen the recruitment pool**

A post should be made open to as large a pool of people as possible both internally and externally. Whilst traditional ‘advertising’ may not always be possible, just relying on word of mouth should be avoided.

> **Be transparent about recruitment decisions**

When recruiting new staff to an agency, an interview process should be conducted, (preferably by more than one person) even when a potential candidate is known by the recruiter. This ensures transparency in recruitment decisions. Whilst there may be less time available for interviews, a short structured interview process can ensure all candidates are treated fairly as well as enabling the agency to select suitable candidates. The interview process and decision should be documented.

> **Do not rely on one method of selection**

Interviews should look at the approaches, behaviours and attitudes of candidates as well as technical skills and ability to deliver. Many agencies have competency based interview question templates that are developed for such a reason. Additional recruitment methodologies could also be considered – for example a short practical exercise relating to the role to be undertaken, written tests, presentations etc.

> **Clearance checking is essential for any new member of staff**

For employment references – the normal practice is to obtain 2 references (one work related and from the most recent employer) but in a surge response just one work related reference may be enough. Not obtaining any reference is unacceptable and puts an organisation at high risk. Depending on the nature of the work of your organisation, other checks might be necessary – such as a police check or anti-terrorism checks.

> **Be mindful of legal requirements and the obligations of INGOs**

Any legal requirements in country, including registration as an employer, should be adhered to with regard to recruitment practices, but there may also be obligations that INGOs should follow as set out by the relevant ministry. For example, a government representative being required to be on an interview panel.

> Respect notice periods of other organisations

Putting pressure on the successful candidate to start as soon as possible and not to honour any notice period in their current role is unethical and should be avoided.

> Avoid ‘poaching’ from other organisations and support national organisations in filling gaps

- Whilst candidates from national organisations and other INGO’s may apply for a post and should be treated the same as all other candidates, ‘poaching’ national NGO, International NGO and other partner staff, by encouraging them to apply could be considered unethical, and a recruiter should carefully consider the impact this may have on the other organisation.
- Where a staff member from a national organisation is selected as the most suitable candidate for a role, it may be appropriate for the recruiter to consider and then discuss whether it would be possible for the person to be seconded to the new post rather than having to resign and leave the national organisation permanently. This is particularly relevant when only very short term posts are being recruited to. The legal implications of this would need to be understood.
- If recruiting a staff member from a national organisation which is also involved in the surge response, it may be appropriate for the recruiting agency to consider if there is additional support they can provide to the national organisation in light of the gap created by recruiting the person concerned. An example might be, supporting the capacity building of remaining staff at the national organisation.
- If there are unsuccessful candidates for a role with the recruiting agency, but who are assessed to have suitable skills for a humanitarian response, the recruiting agency could consider passing the CVs of these candidates (with the candidates permission) to national organisations or other INGO’s who are also looking for staff.

> Develop an ethical recruitment policy for the organisation

Having a publicly available statement that confirms the organisations stance on ethical recruitment practices will guide humanitarian response recruiters and ensure candidates are also aware of the recruitment practices that will be followed by the organisation. An example of this can be found below from CAFOD.

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CAFOD ETHICAL RECRUITMENT STATEMENT

Prompted by the research “**Time to Move On: National perspectives on transforming surge capacity**” undertaken by Andy Featherstone (which was commissioned by CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tearfund and Islamic Relief*) and in light of our mutual commitments to the **Charter4Change**, CAFOD summarises our position on ethical recruitment in the following set of principles:

- > We will uphold good recruitment practices by openly advertising our vacancies.
- > We will never directly approach individual local NGO staff to work for CAFOD on a permanent or fixed term contract basis.
- > If we need rapid (or urgent) extra capacity during an emergency response, we will first deploy our own staff. Thereafter, we will assess the situation and then undertake an open recruitment if necessary.
- > If we do need to recruit locally, we will:
 - Advertise roles openly and transparently;
 - Interview and take references in line with our standard HR policy;
 - Offer salaries that are benchmarked to local salary scales;
 - Respect the notice periods of those we appoint.
- > If additional local capacity is required, we will also explore the use of temporary transfer mechanisms which enable the individual to remain within the long-term employment of the local NGO. Such mechanisms will not be implemented without the specific agreement of the local NGO.

Based on the interviews and research conducted for *Time to Move On* it is apparent that national organisations wish to see INGOs adopt practices which effectively end the unethical recruitment of their trained staff during the response period of an emergency. CAFOD considers that by recruiting to the above set of principles we will end the likelihood of us engaging in this practice. As a result, we do not envisage a situation where we would need to make a ‘compensation’ payment.



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