



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

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Guidelines For The Aid Sector

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Disclaimer

People In Aid has taken considerable care in the production of the Handbook and its contents. However, People In Aid is unable to provide any warranty concerning the accuracy, completeness or relevance to your organisation relating to any information contained herein.

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Foreword

“Responsibility for Work-Life Balance in an organisation is everywhere. It’s a strategic responsibility at the top and yet also it’s for everyone. There has to be total commitment to achieving Work-Life Balance and that comes from effective communication: from a strong positive message from the top, through to achieving operational buy-in at ground level.”

Peter Ellwood CEO of Lloyds TSB

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK?

1. To help raise awareness of Work-Life Balance in the aid sector
2. To outline issues of special relevance to those working internationally
3. To act as a resource to help agencies draw up Work-Life Balance policies

WHO IS THIS HANDBOOK WRITTEN FOR?

It is written primarily for aid and development agencies, and in particular for those responsible for creating policies, implementing and monitoring them. This includes all those with managerial responsibility, including chief executives, members of Human Resource Departments and all line managers. It includes country and field directors as well as project managers and team leaders.

This paper will also be useful for aid workers themselves. We hope it will help to create awareness, raise issues and foster a constructive debate within agencies for everyone’s mutual benefit.

What Is Work-Life Balance? (WLB)

This has been defined as follows:

“Work-life Balance is about developing practices to create a culture where people are happy about being able to meet both the demands of work, and responsibilities or interests outside work”.¹

Or put more simply

It helps us to have a life and still to accomplish the reasonable demands of work.

In countries of the north, including the European Union, WLB is largely seen in terms of introducing more flexible and employee-friendly working practices. These include issues such as maternity and paternity leave, career breaks, swapping salary for leave, and the use of flexible working arrangements including home working and flexible hours.

In the cross-cultural aid world with its diversity and internationalism WLB is much more complex and far wider-ranging.

A development worker when recently asked about his work-life balance in South Asia replied: “yes it is balanced well except that I have 100% on both sides of the scale. A 60-hour week with one week in four in regional travel on one side of the balance; looking after 2 young children in the context of family ill health on the other side of the balance.”

¹ Rob Shorrocks, voluntary sector development manager, Parents at Work (2001)

Why Is Work-Life Balance Important?

There are two main reasons:

1. Following good WLB leads to greater productivity by reducing stress and improving staff morale

In the context of Work-Life Balance, Rita Donaghy, Chair of UK employment advisory service ACAS wrote: “the commitment of employees can make the difference between those companies which can compete in the marketplace and those which cannot. Employers who best combine requirements of their business with the needs of employees will be well placed to succeed”.²

Referring specifically to the voluntary sector, a report by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations stated that “Evidence of the benefits of introducing work-life practices can be seen in organisations across the country. Benefits include fewer and shorter-stress-related absences, increased motivation, energy and productivity and reduced staff turnover”.³

2. It leads to happier and more contented staff and their families

A study by DFEE showed 72% of workplaces reported that work-life balance fostered good employment relations.⁴

This is a valid reason itself in a sector which is based on humanitarian values.

² R Taylor The Future of Work-Life Balance. Economic and Social Research Council (undated)

³ Get a Life: developing work-life balance in the voluntary sector 2001 SCVO/STUC

⁴ Work-life balance 2000: results from a baseline survey DFEE Research report No 249 2000

Work-Life Balance In The Aid Sector

Little research has been done on this and comparatively little has been written about it. There is however growing pressure from both agencies and staff that Work-Life Balance should be given the priority it deserves.

Here are some reasons why WLB is an important - and complex - subject in this sector.

1. The huge range of international assignments

Both in terms of the nature of such assignments and also the geographic location. Aid workers may work on intensive 6-week contracts in war zones or be seconded for 10 years or more on long-term development projects. Within that spectrum there are the endless variations of location, task, urgency, security and approach. This means there will never be a one-suit fits all solution. Furthermore, the country of posting itself can often present individuals with major challenges in terms of their political and cultural expectations.

2. The great variety of nationalities and personalities in the aid world

Aid workers increasingly come from any country and go to any country, bringing with them their cultural background, expectations and needs. Many aid workers are self-motivated and determined, often causing a reluctance to follow rules and regulations unless there is a transparently obvious value.

3. Blurred boundaries between work, life and leisure

When individuals are posted internationally, they invariably become an ambassador for their agency, on show and under scrutiny from partners, beneficiaries and onlookers alike 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, they often find themselves living in the same building as colleagues or at least in close proximity, and often sharing meals and leisure time. In such circumstances it is difficult to 'switch off' and work can easily become a constant pressure. For those who are working in their country of domicile, the pressures are similar and the distinction between one's working life and private life can again become blurred. These tensions need to be dealt with sensitively.

"Many people gain meaning to their lives through work whether they are being paid for doing so or not. The attempt to differentiate work from life in policy-making threatens to establish a false divide".⁵

⁵ The Guide to Work-Life Balance 2002 Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

4. The frequency of short-term contracts, with excessive working hours

In the report Room for Improvement,⁶ which gave rise to People In Aid, half of all relief and development workers were found to routinely work for more than 60 hours a week and a quarter more than 70.

5. The changing nature of international employment law

Employment legislation affects organisations in the aid sector in different ways, according to where they are based and where staff originate. For example, European organisations that fail to comply with laws that are designed to limit the number of working hours, or to protect individuals on temporary or fixed term contracts, or to protect working parents, risk lawsuits (and large claims for damages) from European staff.

Furthermore, where working arrangements or practices appear to result in staff being excessively overburdened or 'stressed', then increasingly, organisations are finding themselves being held responsible by employees for the consequent damage to health or personal life. Issues such as 'work related stress' (that may have been ignored or misunderstood in the past) have come to the fore and in the UK there are examples of large damages being awarded to individuals who have successfully sued their employer - the landmark case being *Walker v Northumberland CC* [1995] in which the employer's failure to give adequate support to an overworked social service officer resulted in his nervous breakdown and claim for damages – Walker won GBP 175,000 in damages.

Below are some case histories which further illustrate the context.

Anne's workload is so heavy she has no time for lunch and little time for any breaks. She works a 10 to 12 hour day in an emergency situation, on a 6-week contract. She has managed to take 2 days off half way through the assignment, as originally planned. She is exhausted but still coping, knowing she will be home in 2 weeks time. But she also realizes she will need weeks to recover, reflect and reintegrate before she is ready for another mission.

Bob was expecting his assignment as an agriculturalist to last at least 4 years. He prioritised time off at weekends, restricting his working hours to 8 per day and realised that taking annual leave is essential. He has outside sporting and wildlife interests which helped him to keep his life balanced and which he could share with his wife and children. Thus far he had kept to the patterns he discussed with his agency and he remained healthy and enthusiastic about the job. However, then his deputy had to be medically evacuated and HQ unexpectedly asked him to write the funding proposal for the second two years of the programme. Bob then found his working day averaging 12 hours. He became increasingly exhausted and had no time for leisure apart from sleep. He completed the proposal but then heard that his deputy was not

⁶ Room for Improvement: the Management and Support of Relief and Development Workers, Rebecca Macnair, 1995

being replaced. In order to save his sanity and family life he returned early after just 2 years into his contract.

Ahmed is a Kenyan seconded to a neighbouring country. He works in a multi-ethnic office where work-life balance and leisure are given high priority. His manager is flexible, and realizes that for Ahmed time he takes off for family funerals, weddings and festivals are both obligations and ways in which he can detach himself from the pressures of work. He is normally able to arrange his work-life balance to suit his particular needs, even though this is a very different interpretation of the guidelines from those followed by his European colleagues.

Consequences Of Ignoring Work-Life Balance

By constantly ignoring work-life balance a wide range of people become affected. A People In Aid Work-Life Balance seminar helped to raise and define many of the issues raised below. Many of these are both symptoms and results of ignoring work-life balance

1. The aid worker

Working excessively long (or short) hours. Arriving late. Excessive sick-leave, poor performance and unexplained errors. A poor attitude leading to irritability, cynicism and arguments. Becoming increasingly difficult to work with. Losing a sense of humour or developing an inappropriate one. Becoming obsessive and rigid or alternatively apathetic and lackadaisical. A sudden breakdown in physical or mental health after a period of trying to keep up a brave face.

In addition an unbalanced life often leads to health problems: use of excessive alcohol, chain smoking, drug abuse. Overeating at the expense of exercise. In the short term a skewed WLB can lead to greater risks from infectious diseases such as malaria, and in the longer term to higher risks of heart attacks, strokes, diabetes and raised blood pressure.

Anne was a long-term health and development worker in Angola working in an area where there were virtually no other experienced health care workers for the local population. She had a conscientious personality and was sent by an agency with no guidelines on time off and with a limited remit to recruit new staff. As a result Anne's time away from her job was increasingly dictated by a breakdown in her own health. Usually this was because of recurrent malaria, associated anaemia and an increasingly high blood pressure. A medical assessment at the time concluded her health problems were largely due to excessive working hours in a demanding placement and that more proactive management by the agency could have reduced the health problems she faced.

Recent research from Finland has shown that high job strain and effort-reward imbalance was associated with an increase in cholesterol and body weight and doubled the risk of dying from a heart attack.⁷

2. Colleagues

Working relationships start to break down, arguments occur, local staff become affected and sometimes offended. Project performance falls off, deadlines are not reached. Premature resignations occur, so worsening the problem.

⁷ M. Kivimaki et al Work stress and risk of cardiovascular mortality. British Medical Journal Oct 2002 Vol 325 Pages 857-860

At the People In Aid seminar, an aid worker mentioned the serious consequences of a field manager with no life of her own outside work. This had adverse consequences on herself and more seriously, her unreasonable expectations of her staff, led to multiple resignations and cases of burn out in the field office.

3. The agency (NGO or INGO) and its reputation

Although there will always be some individuals and projects that perform less well than others, when a pattern starts to emerge, an agency can lose its reputation, in turn making it less easy to attract and retain good quality staff

This case history shows how both the local partner agency and the INGO are affected when WLB is impossible because of a faulty placement.

A family goes out to a country in South Asia. Chris and Sue are posted to a city too far away from the boarding school in the hills where they send their three children. Over a period of time the parents become overwhelmed by a job they were not prepared for and their children start showing signs of distress at long periods of separation. Although as a family they have one long summer holiday together, Chris and Sue spend the rest of the year working with little break apart from exhausting overland journeys to visit their children three times a year. The family were compelled to return home early as a result of burn out and stress. The UK based NGO had its local reputation severely affected and was asked not to send any further staff to work in this project.

4. Beneficiaries and local partner agencies

All these groups will be less well served by a dysfunctional office. In this context financial irregularities are more likely to occur, so compounding the problem.

Moreover the agency becomes guilty of exporting an unhealthy work-life balance - a set of values humanitarian agencies would not wish to endorse.

Factors That Obstruct Good Work-Life Balance Practices

Many factors contribute to work and leisure getting out of balance. Any Work-Life Balance Guidelines have to take into account these day-to-day realities in the field. Here are some examples.

1. Individual factors

➤ Individual personality & working style

I have always worked hard. I am here to do a job.

My religious or humanitarian principles compel me to work as hard as I can.

I get bored when I am not working and tend to smoke and drink too much.

I don't have many outside interests and have nothing else to do here apart from work.

My network of friends are scattered all over the world, and in this new placement I hardly know anyone I can relax with.

➤ A 'macho' attitude

I'm OK. I can handle this. In fact I enjoy taking risks and being at the front line. I tell you one thing, this job is far easier than the last one I did. Why are people in this organisation forever whingeing about not having time off and always referring to the security guidelines?

A culture where danger and long hours are implicitly admired needs to be consistently changed into one in which macho personalities are still welcome, but are not permitted to allow their lifestyle and attitude to influence the well-being of others. A combination of diplomacy and robust management is often needed to ensure this culture change takes place.

Case history

A couple were seen recently for a debriefing. Tom, the visa holder and employee explained how the demands of the job meant it was impossible for him to take weekends away or to relax in the evening. When his wife Shirley was debriefed later the same afternoon she said: "of course the trouble with Tom is that he always takes on more than he should. He just has to say yes. I think it's because he needs to feel wanted. Its always been the same. Even if there was nothing to do he would invent something".

2. Organisational culture

➤ No agency guidelines

I know that time off, taking a holiday and getting a right balance is essential. I am already beginning to feel burnt-out. But there are no guidelines, everyone follows their own rules and you feel guilty walking out of the office before your colleagues, especially when you know they are just as busy and stressed as you are.

➤ Management examples (poor modelling)

I also have a problem with the director of our partner agency to whom I am partly accountable. She has no understanding of the need for leisure, nor of my own needs for personal space and the time to read and reflect.

We have guidelines but my line manager is a workaholic. What hope do any of us junior members of the team have, especially when we depend on him for our end-of-project appraisal and reference?

3. Local culture

➤ Cultural expectations

None of the local people understand the idea of leisure and days off. When I insist on taking a weekend off or a week away they look astonished. They don't understand why us foreigners are forever talking about leisure and insisting on our holidays when they keep working all the time.

4. Circumstances

➤ Nature of posting

The circumstances of a deployment and the impact the posting will have on the individual needs to be taken into consideration, as the way an individual responds to a particular posting can lead to an unsatisfactory work-life balance. Factors such as a rapid deployment, culture shock, a heavy and stressful workload and isolation may have a knock-on effect.

An engineer was recently involved in mine clearance in Asia. Although it was clear he had a busy job with few colleagues to support him, his own workaholic tendencies led him to believe he was almost indispensable and that he had to work long hours and stay late in the office. Deadlines for work became exaggerated and with little opportunity for leisure and few colleagues he took to eating solitary meals and over drinking.

➤ **Unavoidable or unexpected situations**

My colleague has just gone off with a long-term illness and no funding has come through for a replacement. I have no problem with taking time off - but right now it's impossible - and likely to be for several more weeks.

What Can Individuals Do To Contribute To A Healthy WLB?

Answer: a great deal if encouraged and guided by their agency, in particular by the HR department or their personnel manager. Alternatively a personal coach or mentor can prove useful. The objective is to help aid workers in their self-awareness and self-understanding.

Appendix 1 on page 21 gives a suggested questionnaire as a tool to help individuals monitor their own work-life balance

Aid workers can be helped to:

- Evaluate their own strengths, skills and enthusiasm for the job being offered
- Understand their own personal and professional limits and be up-front in making these known
- Understand if they function better when working on their own or on a long leash, or if they are more effective in a closely-knit team with plenty of personal support and interaction
- Become aware of personal needs and in particular the need for personal space. This includes understanding the significant differences in the needs and functioning of introverts (energy gained from reflection) and extroverts (energy gained from personal interaction)
- Manage stress and to draw on lessons learnt from previous stressful situations
- Be realistic about their state of health including physical and mental resilience. This is sometimes helped by a medical or psychological assessment before a long or high-intensity assignment, in accordance with Principle 7 of the People In Aid code.

How can an aid worker recognise burn-out?

One described the symptoms to us:

- a disassociation from what is happening around you
- a loss of memory
- every task appearing like a mountain to climb
- personal relationships suffering

How Can Agencies Help To Set Up Healthy WLB Practices?

Case Study

“After the end of the team leader’s contract, my colleague and I suggested to my NGO that the 2 project managers could run the programme in Liberia and that there was no need for a 3rd person. Although it was a fairly large programme we felt we could just about cope. The NGO wanted to send out a third person as they felt it would relieve the pressure on us, allowing us to take some time off at the weekends. They also felt it was important to have a third person to cover for R and R (every 6 weeks at the time), any sickness etc. In discussions it was clear that the NGO felt it was important for the team not just to cope, but also have time to live and enjoy the experience and interact meaningfully with the national team etc. They took a long-term view and were very keen to ensure the two of us didn’t burn out. In the end a third person did join the team.

The result was two project managers that were better focussed, more relaxed and more productive, and clearly, positive benefits for the programme and the beneficiaries.

I have had a conversation recently with one of the same NGO’s national staff working in South Sudan: I asked how often she gets out of Sudan to see her family in Nairobi and she said, 'well you know this NGO, they always prioritise our family life'. So she got to see them quite regularly.”

Aid worker

In drawing up guidelines agencies can follow this step-wise progression, which conforms to the pattern recommended in the People In Aid code of good practice:

1. Raise awareness amongst all employees, including senior staff

One person will need to take the lead such as an HR manager. Away days and seminars, role-play, face-to-face or virtual discussion groups are all ways to consider. Help staff members to grow in their own self-awareness. Introduce the idea that they themselves may need to make behavioural changes in their own ways of working in order to avoid burnout. An annual appraisal can be a convenient time to raise these issues.

Senior managers including the CEO and Finance Director will need to be persuaded that WLB can lead to greater productivity.

Individual employees will need to know that this exercise is not simply cosmetic, on the one hand, nor too controlling on the other.

2. Set up written guidelines

These can be drafted by anyone with a special interest or understanding, ideally trained in HR. At an early stage they need to be owned and shared amongst senior staff and later by all staff. They should then be incorporated into the staff/personnel handbook in a readable form.

Make sure your guidelines take into account the great diversity of tasks, situations, locations and personalities, which need to be accommodated. A lot of flexibility will be necessary in the diverse, cross-cultural environment in which most agencies operate.

3. Implement the guidelines

One way to do this is to set up team meetings or introduce it through staff councils or any equivalent your agency has. Line managers including all those working internationally are the key players. Once they are persuaded, those in their team are likely to benefit. So make sure that WLB is included as a topic for an international staff-training day or conference.

“Any business strategy is only as good as its line manager.”⁸

4. Include WLB as an integral part of the induction package

Work-Life Balance should also be included in the pre-departure briefing of all those working internationally, and where appropriate backed up by the offer of attending a stress prevention seminar.

5. Clearly communicate all policies

Make sure everyone is aware of any Work-Life Balance guidelines and that they are clearly and unambiguously written down. All staff including recent recruits and all line managers should have copies.

6. Train line managers to implement the guidelines appropriately

This will include anyone with a line managerial responsibility including field leaders, country directors, project managers and team leaders. Help them to understand the purpose of the guidelines, to model them in their own working practice and to ensure they are used flexibly, fairly and imaginatively in their particular situation.

7. Empower line managers so that guidelines can be followed

Work-life balance will require sufficient resources and personnel, otherwise it becomes nothing more than an attractive but unattainable idea. This means

⁸ The Guide to Work-Life Balance 2002 Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

thinking about recreational opportunities, sufficient staffing levels, and realistic budgets.

“Many organisations show concern about the cost of introducing work-life balance practices, but the costs of not introducing them are often higher. Replacing an international staff member will prove very costly.”⁹

8. Monitor the effectiveness of the guidelines

This can be relatively simple to do. Several indicators will give useful pointers, such as staff morale and sick leave. Another way is to devise a questionnaire which aid workers can voluntarily complete at regular intervals. A sample questionnaire is given in Appendix 1 on page 21. We can call these Personal Sustainability Indicators or a Well-Being Index.

9. Review the policy on a regular basis

But allow flexibility, discussion and change in practice to occur when needed. Successfully maintaining a good work-life balance can owe more to good modelling and openness within the organisational culture, rather than to rigid adherence to guidelines.

10. Develop an open and transparent working office culture

Help to foster an environment where staff can bring up these and other related issues in a constructive way. Set up transparent channels for negotiation and grievance. This may include a system of outside referral that retains the employees' dignity and confidentiality.

11. Be open to special arrangements

We are thinking here of those whose intensity or pressure of work puts their lifestyle at particular risk. Important examples are those working on short-term contracts such as in emergency relief, or media teams making short but high intensity trips to war or famine zones. For such people debriefing, and sufficient time to reflect and re-establish social contacts will be important.

Often working patterns established in a situation where long hours are necessary, become ingrained even after the emergency is over. Long hours should be worked only when long hours are operationally essential.

One other special group are locally recruited staff. They need arrangements which work within their personal culture and allow for their social obligations.

⁹ Get a Life: developing work-life balance in the voluntary sector 2001 SCVO/STUC

12. Special situations for smaller agencies

Although larger agencies have usually developed work life policies, this is rarely the situation with the large number of smaller agencies, which often have neither the time, financial resources nor expertise to develop policies.

As a result their staff frequently suffer seriously, and the need for the agency to take action only strikes home when staff have suffered severe and often long-term consequences of overwork or unfavourable working arrangements.

We suggest that smaller or more recently established agencies should utilise resources such as People In Aid, which offers access to their Policy Pot of sample policies or can facilitate putting agencies in touch with members known to have developed policies which could be adopted or adapted. InterHealth is also available to offer help on the medical, psychological and stress related aspects of such policies.

Case Study

What can drive an aid worker to despair? Working for a small Continental European agency one aid worker identified 5 factors which contributed to his burn-out.

1. Cumulative fatigue from 5 years working at a furious pace: the agency had no R&R policies at the time
2. The particular circumstances of one assignment:
 - poor living conditions - sharing a bedroom, with the working space doubling up as a kitchen and study
3. Management systems not functioning so it was hard to work effectively
4. Poor coordination by the UN lead agencies so programme impact was lessened
5. Seeing fellow agencies' scramble for work and funds supersede the humanitarian imperative, an existential dilemma

His employer recognised the symptoms. They paid for three weeks counselling and 3 months off work. They have instituted procedures to support and understand staff - and they rigorously enforce their R&R policy.

What Guidelines Could Include

This will vary depending on the values and resources of an organisation and the culture-specific variables in HQ and field offices.

The content of guidelines and a mechanism for monitoring them is the key to making work-life balance more reality than rhetoric. It is equally important for HQ staff, field staff and all local employees. Entitlements need to be clear and transparent. There will be legitimate differences both between organisations and sometimes within different operational areas of the same organisation.

Annual Leave

A recent survey shows this varies between 20 and 42 days in the aid sector. 25 days are commonly allowed excluding Bank or Public Holidays. Some agencies increase annual leave in proportion to length of service, but this is rarely relevant to those on short-term contracts.

Any policy should make clear how many days could be carried over from the previous year and the date by which such days should be taken.

Line managers should be responsible for an appropriate way of monitoring annual leave taken, using an approach that is sensitive and flexible given operational needs. Those who take less than their leave allowance should be encouraged, but not forced, to use the leave they are entitled to.

In addition to annual leave there should be guidelines, resources and time made available for continuing professional development.

Working week

Recent European legislation states that this should not exceed an average of 48 hours. However, there are many field situations where this is impossible and senior managers usually work longer hours. Therefore, there should be a simple mechanism for monitoring the number of hours worked: together with guidelines or incentives which discourage a pattern of excessive work. Most agencies allow two days off per week, some a day and a half and a few one day only. The European working time regulations provide a useful framework for reviewing working hours, and indeed, some agencies will be obliged to comply with them.

Flexible working practices

Examples of this include flexi-time (i.e. allowing staff flexibility in the time they start and finish work); home working (e.g. for 1 day or part of a day per week); compressed hours (e.g. where a normal 5 day working week is compressed into 4 days); part time working arrangements or allowing unpaid leave. This can be especially important where staff have family responsibilities which in many cultures they will see as an equal or greater priority than work.

Other leave (paid or unpaid)

Maternity leave, and in most cultures paternity, adoption and parental leave, must also be included in the policy. In developed countries legislation increasingly determines minimum allowances for such leave.

Provision should be made for staff to take special or other planned leave as required. For example, special leave arrangements should allow staff to take time off in the case of an emergency or for the funerals or weddings of close family members or important family celebrations. In some cultures the head of a family has frequent obligations which need to be understood and talked through.

Criteria and arrangements for taking paid or unpaid leave should be made clear to all staff.

Time off in lieu (TOIL)

There is great variation across the sector. Some agencies have no policy, others have policies on paper, but which are poorly known or followed.

Commonly used arrangements for staff in any country who travel away from home are one extra day off for each weekend worked or travelled, and one extra day for each 7 or 14 working days spent away from home.

Time for preparation before trips and report writing on return should be built into normal working hours and not be allowed to invade TOIL. In practice this rarely happens and becomes a major source of cumulative stress for those who travel frequently.

The period during which TOIL can be taken needs to be made clear but also allow some flexibility. TOIL is not designed as a means of increasing annual leave but to give much needed time for rest and leisure following periods of intense work or travel. Ideally it should be taken within one week, and always within 28 days of the date the staff member returns from travelling away from home.

Rest and Relaxation (R and R)

Posts which qualify for R and R need to be clearly defined and regularly updated. There will be large variations depending on factors such as security, nature of the emergency, and access to a safe location. One week off in 5 or 6 is used for some acute situations, with less intense assignments being graded for lower levels of R and R, such as one long weekend away in 6. Again line managers need to be both sensitive and flexible, but aid workers should be encouraged to take the R and R they are entitled to. In some situations this should be compulsory.

SUMMARY

A healthy Work-Life Balance has value both for agencies and for aid workers. It can increase effectiveness and lead to a more contented workforce. In order for this to come about the whole organisation needs to be committed: individuals need to be willing to change their working practices and agencies need to draw up policies which are shared with their staff and owned by their workforce. Line managers and field directors have a key role in implementing and modelling healthy balances. The key to organisational success is to make sustainable changes to the culture and working environment backed up by realistic budgets.

References And Further Resources

R Taylor The Future of Work-Life Balance. Economic and Social Research Council (undated)

Get a Life: developing work-life balance in the voluntary sector 2001
SCVO/STUC

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No 249 2000

The Guide to Work-Life Balance 2002 Chartered Institute of Personnel and
Development (CIPD)

Supporting staff and boosting the bottom line. Wendy Tabuteau, People in
Aid Newsletter July 2002. Other articles in this issue also relevant

The Guide to Work-Life Balance 2002 Chartered Institute of Personnel and
Development (CIPD)

Policy Pot: Rest and Relaxation, People In Aid

Useful websites

www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/work-life - The Chartered Institute of
Personnel and Development

www.dti.gov.uk/work-lifebalance. - The Department of Trade and Industry

www.hse.gov.uk/stress - The Health & Safety Executive

www.esrc.ac.uk -Economic and Social Research Council

www.acas.org.uk - ACAS. For legal issues contact ACAS on 0845 600 3444

www.scvo.org.uk - Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk - National Council of Voluntary Organisations

www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk

<http://labour.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/worklife> - Human Resources Development
Canada

<http://www.worklifebalance.com>

<http://www.worklifebalancecentre.org>

<http://www.flexibility.co.uk/issues/WLB>

Appendix 1

A PERSONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

This is a simple questionnaire designed to help you see the impact of the pattern of Work-Life Balance on your life and well-being.

We suggest you complete the relevant parts of this each month and compare it to the month before. The questionnaire is designed for individuals to use for their own self-awareness, not necessarily for discussion with line managers etc. However when partners each complete one, consider sharing with each other and discussing any WLB related issues between yourselves.

How much do I work?

In the past week how long have I worked each day?

In the past month how many days off have I taken?

In the past year how many days annual leave have I been entitled to?

How many have I taken?

What is the difference?

Do I normally have sufficient time to e.g. "Have a life"/ sufficient leisure time for myself, with my partner or with my family?
(Range: 1 = none, 10 = plenty)

How is my physical health?

How many days off have I taken owing to a physical health problem or accident in the last month?

Has this been clearly related to a work related incident or situation?

If so what and how?

Personal Questionnaire continued

How am I feeling?

In general how do I feel in terms of:

1. Stress
(Range: 1 = severely stressed, 10 = unstressed)
2. Sleep pattern
(Range: 1 = poor, 10 = excellent)
3. Enthusiasm for the job
(Range: 1 = low, 10 = high)
4. Sense of general well-being
(Range: 1 = poor, 10 = good)
5. Mood
(Range: 1 = poor, 10 = good)

How do I get on with my colleagues?

(Range: 1 = poorly, 10 = well)

What action can I take?

What actions(s) can I take to improve my work-life balance over the coming month? Mention ways you can do this within the existing circumstances you are in.

Where relevant include any action which could help to change circumstances which are adversely affecting your work life balance.

Have any actions you have taken since last completing this questionnaire helped?

If so make a brief note of them
