



Regional Human Resource Good Practice Conference, Under the Transforming Surge Capacity Project Bangkok - 25th to 26th January 2016

REPORT FROM THE CONFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

As part of the START Transforming Surge Capacity project, a Regional Human Resources Good practice Conference was held in Bangkok on 25th and 26th January 2016.

The agenda for the conference can be found in Appendix 1.

The conference was attended by representatives from the following agencies – Action Aid, CHS Alliance, Oxfam GB, Save the Children, International Federation of the Red Cross, World Vision, Action Against Hunger, Plan International, CAFOD, Care International, International Medical Corps, VSO, The Border Consortium, British Red Cross, Christian Aid and Islamic Relief.

There were also presentations and representatives from outside the Humanitarian Sector including DHL, Birches Group, Human Surge online and Relief Applications.

Representatives came from Thailand, UK, Philippines, Pakistan, Canada, Malaysia and Singapore.

KEY NOTES

Lessons from past surge responses

- *Plan*: Shared experiences from recent responses in Nepal and Philippines. Having systems and strategies in place to respond to a large-scale disaster and to manage a large response fund is key for successful emergency response – this includes being aware of what response budget is manageable for the size of the organisation. Especially the senior management in the organisation needs to be clear on roles and responsibilities; infighting during a response costs a lot of energy and jeopardises the response. Plan still relies on personal relationships for roster deployments, and if people on the roster are not known to the surge managers, deploying them is a risk for the agency mission. Communicating that the agency is on the ground for the long term and not just for a response is very important, as is the strong support of local staff. Not only does this raise acceptance among the affected communities, it also makes it much easier to hire additional staff on the ground.
- *Red Cross*: When the established roster and response system does not work (e.g. in the case of Ebola), a high degree of flexibility is needed to manage a response. Close collaboration with key actors (such as other agencies or government bodies) is extremely helpful in this case. While many strategic decisions need to be made very quickly in an unexpected type of disaster, investing time and effort in the right HR policies should not be neglected to give staff the best possible support.
- *Islamic Relief*: After the Nepal earthquake, Islamic Relief ran its first regionally led response. This political shift within the organisation raised some initial suspicion from the international HQ but was in the end considered successful. Advantages of the regional response included the ability to deploy





people much more quickly from neighbouring countries, lower cultural barriers and cost savings (e.g. on visas). It is also a welcome alternative to the top-heavy surge systems pursued by many agencies today. One of the next steps is going to be the capacity development for internal staff to ensure they are prepared for responses across different countries. A three-tier roster (national, regional, international) in order of international experience of staff is a helpful tool here.

Compensation

- **How can NGOs reimburse staff for their work in difficult conditions when they have limited budgets?** *Birches Group*: Shared their experience of working with a wide range of agencies over a number of years. To the degree to which it is possible, NGOs should attempt to be more consistent in the way they use market data as benchmarks for pay scales. This makes it very hard for them then to calculate how much should be added to that for surge personnel. If the pay which is appropriate to the role cannot be paid by the NGO due to budget restrictions, NGOs will need to find other forms of compensation (e.g. possibility of promotion in the future, public recognition, ...).
- **Future challenges:** Some agencies have limited capacity at the country office level to develop pay scales, and limited funding to support their staff. In Asian developing countries, the skill set required for staff in country offices (English language skills, etc.) is increasingly in demand from private sector companies, and NGOs risk losing their staff to these companies unless they manage to pay more competitive salaries.

Capacity building

- **How can we address funding gaps for local organisations and ensure that our work with local organisations is sustained over a longer time?** *IMC*: . Shared their programme where Investment in local partners is crucial to support their activities in a sustainable way and to prevent staff poaching. IMC in Myanmar has seconded some of their staff to their local partners for 12 months. This really helped support their local partners over a longer time and fostered collaboration and an equal relationship.
- **Ensuring individuals at the local level have the right skills to work in surge is critical –** *CAFOD* shared the work they are undertaking as part of the Transforming Surge Capacity Project on developing a training programme focused on the skills required in surge which will be piloted in the Philippines and Pakistan in the next year.

Staff Welfare

- **Moving from a focus on treatment to prevention in managing stress and well being of personnel involved in surge responses –** *Action Against Hunger*: Shared the findings of a detailed report recently published looking at trends in staff stress within the humanitarian sector and ways in which different agencies are trying to manage this. They also shared information on the project they are undertaking as part of the Transforming Surge Capacity Project on piloting a new Mindfulness training programme for surge staff, to provide them with tools and approaches to deal with stress during a response.

Rosters

- **New approaches to developing shared rosters across agencies are being piloted in Pakistan, Philippines and the Regional level –** Representatives from the Transforming Surge Capacity Project in Philippines and Pakistan shared information on the two very different pilot





projects they will be undertaking to develop shared rosters to help surge responses in country. The learning from these pilots will then be reviewed and shared with the possibility of these approaches being replicated elsewhere.

Available tools and systems

HumanSurge – A presentation was made on a new online platform which is being developed to provide a large roster with many surge specialists that can be used by NGOs during a response. Through the capability of the software they should be able to guarantee up to date information on exactly who is available. However, there will be no assessing of skills, competencies of names that are on the register.

Emalsys – A presentation was made by Relief Applications, who are developing a new software that allows agencies to manage their rosters on line and to shape it to match their own needs, along with an online emergency alert system that allows roster managers to raise alerts to their entire roster and see the location and availability of their roster staff right away.

Birches Group – The survey software Indigo contains information about salaries and benefits for around 140 countries. NGOs can subscribe to this software and keep up to date with market information of the software. An Asia regional workshop on indigo will be held in August 2016.

START Transforming Surge on line HR interactive platform– A new online interactive HR platform is being developed as part of the START Transforming Surge project that will allow HR and other staff to share and access good practices to support their surge responses as well as have real time conversations with others on common issues.

The Surge project – initiatives and available resources

Philippines Roster – a shared roster software giving local, national and (in large-scale disasters) international NGOs access to surge staff will be set up in the following months.

Contact mpura@christian-aid.org for more information.

Pakistan Roster – a joint roster for 9 INGOs (ActionAid, ACF, CARE, IMC, Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid, Plan, Save the Children, Tearfund), enabling them to share their staff members in emergency response, will be set up in the following months. Contact Fatima.zafar@actonaid.org

Regional Roster – discussions are currently under way for a shared regional surge roster to be set up in the Asia region. Please get in touch with lisa.joerke@plan-international.org

Training– Representatives from CAFOD are developing a 5 day surge-specific training which will be rolled out in Pakistan, the Philippines and the Asia region in 2016. Contact lpurves@cafod.org.uk for the training package

Staff Welfare – Representatives from Action Against Hunger are developing a Mindfulness Training Package for Surge staff that is being piloted across the region in 2015 and 2016. Contact h.solanki@actionagainsthunger.org.uk for information

Online HR interactive platform – This will be launched in the first quarter of 2016 and further information can be obtained from justinetordoff@hotmail.com



KEY LEARNINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONFERENCE

- Having pre surge HR strategies and systems in place is critical. Time should be invested on this.
- A key aspect to ensure successful response is to ensure that the right support is available to local staff – this includes psychosocial support, correct terms and conditions, support as they come towards end of contract
- Whilst having pre surge systems in place is essential, there also needs to be recognition that there also may be the need for more flexibility in new types of responses (eg Ebola crisis). Working with different types of partners, employing new technical skills.
- More devolvement to regional responses can help to ensure quicker deployments, less costly, staff who are more familiar with similar cultures, ease of visas etc
- More investment in pay and benefits research and reviews. Also, need to be aware of new competition from private sector in emerging economies.
- More focus on prevention than cure when it comes to staff welfare.
- Many new on line systems and apps are being developed that can really assist HR in surge responses

APPENDIX 1

Regional Human Resource Good Practice Conference, *Under the Transforming Surge Capacity Project* **Bangkok - 25th to 26th January 2016**

Background

During times of disaster, even the well-prepared and resilient communities require additional resources, beyond what the affected community can cope with alone. Deploying additional





roles as part of enhanced Surge capacity is, and will remain vital to fulfilling the humanitarian mandate, meeting the urgent needs of crisis affected people when disasters strike. With increasing disasters globally, Human Resource (HR) practitioners will continue to play a crucial role in mobilising and deploying staff in Surge.

Purpose

The purpose of the Regional HR Conference is to bring together Humanitarian Human Resource (HR) Professionals and other relevant staff from the Asia Region and to engage with the START Transforming Surge project, to share and discuss good HR practice and to provide input in how we can work together to improve surge responses in a collaborative way.

Objectives

- ❖ To provide an overview of the Transforming Surge Capacity Project and more detailed information on key aspects of the project that are intended to support HR activities within organisations.
- ❖ To share good practice on HR response activities from outside the sector (UN or private sector) that may assist international and national NGO's future Surge responses.
- ❖ To discuss HR good practice and latest trends on Staff Welfare, including a new mindfulness training programme for surge response staff.
- ❖ To share HR good practice and learning from recent surge responses in the Asia Region eg in Nepal (Earthquake) and Philippines (Typhoon Haiyan)
- ❖ To share ideas on response rosters, the concept of shared rosters and how these may be developed, managed and used to support rapid deployments in emergencies
- ❖ To encourage and facilitate collaborative ways of working between agencies involved in humanitarian responses



Audience

The expected participants will be humanitarian staffs who have HR responsibility within international and national NGO's working in Pakistan, Philippines and at an Asia Regional level.

Agenda

The two day conference will be a way for people attending to learn about new resources available to them, learn lessons from recent emergency responses, and share/develop knowledge about good practice from inside and outside the humanitarian sector. It will be highly interactive in nature and allow for sharing of good practice and collaborative ways of working.

Venue

The conference will be held at the Column Hotel, Bangkok.
<http://www.columnbangkok.com>



Programme

Day 1

9.00 – 9.40 Introductions/Practicalities - Justine Tordoff, HR Consultant, CHS/START

9.40-10.00 Context setting – Julius Kabere, International Programme Manager, START

An overview of the START Transforming Surge Project and the purpose of the HR Conference

10.00- 10.30- The Surge practices of TSC Consortium members with focus on mobilisation and deployment - Maduri Moutou, CHS Alliance

Presentation of the findings from the recent detailed research on Surge practices in the humanitarian sector and elsewhere.

10.30 – 10.45 Break

10.45-12.00 Context setting 2 – Clare Condillac, Plan International and Adnan Khan, Islamic Relief International

Sharing of learning on good HR Practice from 2 recent humanitarian responses and Q&A/interactive discussion/activity

12.00 – 12.35 Surge Systems from the Private Sector - Cheryl Chen, DHL

Presentations from Private sector and UN representatives and Q&A/interactive discussion

12.35-13.30 LUNCH

13.30 – 16.45 (with break) Roster management

13.30-14.45 Discussion on pilot rosters being developed in Pakistan, Philippines and the Region as part of the Transforming Surge Project and ways in which these can be set up, managed and used to support responses in the future. – **Alexandra Pura, START**

14.45-15.00 BREAK

15.00 – 16.00 Presentation by skype by two private sector company developing software for the creation and management of rosters

15.00-15.25 **Loek Peeters, Human Surge**

15.30- 15.55 **Colin Delmore and Raphael Bonnaud, Relief Applications**





16.00-16.45 Discussion on good HR Practice in Roster management and sharing of experience of managing rosters - **Tanaji Sen, RedR India**

16.45 – 17.00 Summary of day – **Justine Tordoff**

Day 2 - 26th January, 2016

9.00- 9.30 Review of previous day – **Justine Tordoff**

9.30 – 10.30 Reward and Pay in volatile circumstances - **Birches Group**

Discussion on pay challenges, legal considerations and terms and conditions when deploying staff in surge responses.

10.30 – 10.50 Tea/Coffee Break

10.50 –11.30 Staff Welfare and Psychosocial support - **Hitendra Solanki, Action Against Hunger**

Discussion on latest trends in Staff Welfare and new resources that are available to support agencies

11.30- 1.00 Training for Surge Staff – **Vicky Shearer, CAFOD, Tanaji Sen, RedR India and Hitendra Solanki, Action Against Hunger**

Results from START Network Training Needs analysis, planned training initiatives and experience of training from recent responses in Nepal and Philippines (RedR India). Chance to try Mindfulness training that has been developed to support Staff Welfare

1.00-2.00 Lunch Break

2.00-2.30 on line HR Interactive platform under the TSC project - **Justine Tordoff, Maduri Moutou**

Launch of the new online HR Interactive Platform and discussion on ways in which it will enable collaborative ways of working

2.30-3.30 learning from a shared INGO, Private sector and government response in West Africa – **Cathy Fitzgibbon, British Red Cross and Dina Prior, International Medical Corps**

Presentations on the shared response to the recent Ebola crisis in West Africa

3.30-3.50 Break





3.50-4.45 working together collaboratively (Panel discussion), Chair Alex Brans, Save the Children UK and Chair of the TSC Steering Committee

Discussion on how HR professionals can work together more collaboratively to improve surge responses.

4.45-5.15 bringing it together and review - Justine