



INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES GOOD PRACTICE CONFERENCE

Under the Start Network: Transforming Surge Capacity Project

‘Are Current HR Practices for Emergency Response Fit for Purpose?’

London – 26th to 27th January 2017

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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INTRODUCTION

As part of the start [Transforming Surge Capacity](#) project, an International Human Resources Good Practice Conference under the heading ‘Are Current HR Practices for Emergency Response Fit for Purpose?’ was organised by the [CHS Alliance](#) and held in London on 26th January and 27th January 2017. 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, Save the Children, British Red Cross, Action Against Hunger, Plan International, CAFOD, Care International, International Medical Corps, Tearfund, Christian Aid, Interhealth, The Brooke and Islamic Relief. Representatives came from UK, USA, Philippines, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Canada.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As outlined in the attached agenda, the conference covered three main areas as follows:

- Staff Welfare
- Time to move on? National perspectives on surge
- What more do we need to be doing? A framework for the future of HR in surge

A summary of the discussions and recommendations from each session are outlined below.

Staff welfare

Staff welfare survey – Action Against Hunger, as part of the Transforming Surge Capacity project, have recently undertaken a comprehensive staff welfare survey of Start Network agencies and personnel in order to get a comprehensive picture of the situation with regard to current staff welfare practices. Agency surveys were completed by 19 organisations, and 192 staff from 24 agencies across 36 countries responded to a separate staff survey.

A full report of the findings is available on the CHS Alliance surge online HR platform (see below) and on the [Start Network](#) but some notable points include:

- 73% of agencies reported that less than 10% of their total training budgets are allocated to staff welfare, with many focusing on security and first aid training rather than broader staff welfare concerns
- 63% of agency staff are unaware, or have not received any training on self-care and stress management
- 48.5% of staff indicated that they have experienced a distressing or highly challenging environment and 48% of deployed staff indicated they had experienced a threat to their life
- 42% of staff felt that organisation support after a critical incident was ‘bare minimum’ to ‘non-existent or very poor’
- Only 27% of emergency staff consistently received formal debriefings post deployment
- Only 27% of agencies felt that they had it ‘about right’ when it comes to delivering staff care and support and 60% indicated ‘we could be doing more’



The findings from the survey raised some very important issues for the conference participants to consider and the recommendations made by the group are as follows.

Recommendations

- Organisations should develop a clear set of staff welfare guidelines that can be contextualised to the local situation (similar to security guidelines and protocols). The guidelines should include preventative support and information as well as ‘treatment’ /support after an incident.
- The importance of staff welfare needs to be owned and led by senior management, should include the running of internal ‘campaigns’ to promote staff welfare as a key management issue and to encourage a culture that allows surge staff to feel able to raise welfare issues.
- Managers of staff working in difficult environments should receive specific staff welfare training to allow them to better introduce preventative measures with their teams as well as being better equipped to deal with staff welfare problems when they arise.
- The introduction of a dedicated wellbeing staff team or a peer support system should be considered so that assistance can be provided during surge responses and to those working in challenging environments.
- The introduction of systems to monitor and report on wellbeing should also be established.
- Establishing an ongoing Staff Wellbeing working group, led by Hitendra Solanki, ACF. If people are interested in joining the group they can contact [Hitendra](#).

Staff welfare resources – Action Against Hunger have also recently undertaken a comprehensive mapping of resources that are available to support staff wellbeing, and the overview information was shared with participants at the conference. This includes information on 29 different organisations and their resources, tools, services and initiatives. Full details can be found on the CHS Alliance HR Surge online platform (see below) and on the [Start Network](#).

Action Against Hunger also shared their learning from a recent internal process where they mapped out the staff welfare considerations at all stages of the employee lifecycle – e.g. this included asking appropriate questions at interview stage; providing information at briefings, induction and training; considering what benefits are provided to support wellbeing; covering wellbeing during learning and development events; and asking about support provided during the exit processes.

Monitoring and evaluation of wellbeing – As indicated in the earlier session, the need for agencies to become better at monitoring wellbeing was recognized. Hitendra Solanki, Action Against Hunger and Alexia Deligne, the Brooke, introduced some ideas on how organisations could incorporate specific staff welfare results, indicators and means of verification as part of a programme log frame.

Conference participants were asked to discuss this and make any recommendations.

Recommendations

- Rather than incorporating into a programme log frame, organisations should set targets regarding staff welfare/wellbeing and undertake an annual survey that can break down the data to ensure it captures information specifically for surge and staff working in difficult environments.



- All incidents related to staff welfare/wellbeing should be recorded in a similar way to other incident reporting, reported on a monthly basis and collected at HQ level to understand trends and to shape ongoing policies and support.
- The data gathered through monitoring should be disaggregated by gender.
- It is important to recognise that lack of self-awareness of staff who are facing stress, illness, burnout, etc., could be a barrier to accurate reporting, and so using professional tools that allow more objective reporting should be considered.

Time to move on? – National perspectives on surge

As part of the Transforming Surge Capacity Project, a research had been commissioned by CAFOD that looked at the perspectives of national NGOs, on the recruitment practices of international NGOs during surge response and the impact it had on the national NGOs capacity to deliver.

The full report is available [here](#) and on CHS Alliance HR Surge online platform (see below) along with an executive [summary](#) and specific [recommendations](#) for HR but a summary of the key points presented at the conference are:

- Managerial and technical field staff are the category of staff that are most frequently recruited into INGO/UNs, because of the transferability of their skills and visibility.
- Movement from national NGOs to international NGOs are significant in the initial relief phase (0-6 months), however moves most often occurred in the rehabilitation phase (6-12 months) when INGOs and UN agencies were scaling up their operations most aggressively. Full details of the scale of the challenge can be found in the report.
- Beyond the loss of staff, there was considerable concern expressed by national NGOs about unethical recruitment practices often within established partnerships (no references requested, notice periods not being honoured etc.).

The report also put forward some proposals on actions for the international NGO community to consider. These included capacity building of NGOs to lead humanitarian responses including building HR capacity and developing HR systems; establishing prior agreements between international NGOs and national partners regarding the movement of staff; seconding staff from international NGOs to national NGOs to support when there are gaps; financial compensation to national NGOs if a staff member is recruited by an international organisation.

Participants at the conference were asked to discuss the findings and proposed actions.

Recommendations

- There is a role for HR in INGOs to support partners' capacity in HR activities. Agencies should understand more about the Start Network Shifting Power project and incorporate lessons from this project into their own practices, which is focussed on building national organisations' capacity in humanitarian responses.
- Establish an HR network at the beginning of a surge response which includes both international and national organisations, who harmonise salaries and benefits being offered across the whole sector so that the INGOs do not out 'price' local organisations.



- Brief all staff being deployed to a surge response and who represent an international NGO, on ethical recruitment practices, i.e. the need to honour notice periods for staff moving to the INGO, taking out references, not ‘poaching’ staff etc.
- Prior agreements between partner organisations should be considered regarding the movement of staff – for example, secondment arrangements between the two organisations, could agree a maximum number of staff that an INGO would ever recruit from the national organisation.

What more do we need to be doing? – A framework for the future of HR in surge

The final session of the conference focused on identifying what more needs to be done from a HR perspective that will help transform surge activities. Participants were asked to identify strengths that could be built upon, opportunities that need to be exploited and weaknesses and threats that could be addressed.

Recommendations

- HR to play a role in helping national organisations build their capacity (see above section also).
- Ensure greater collaboration on HR issues between all involved in surge responses. This could include setting up HR co-ordination systems at the beginning of a response, using shared platforms to communicate with each other (e.g. Surge online), consider lobbying for a HR Cluster.
- Standardise HR checks and screening across the sector that would allow for easy movement of staff – potentially this could also link to the Humanitarian Passport Initiative.
- Monitor and evaluate the role and impact of HR in surge responses in order to improve performance. HR data that could be monitored includes – time of deployments, cost of deployments, time of HR staff needed to support, cost of HR staff needed to support. This regular reporting could demonstrate the return on investment of direct HR support during a surge response.
- Using new technology could support roster and deployment management – greater investment could help to set up a robust and flexible system.
- Ensure surge HR issues are an integral part of an organisation’s overall HR strategy.
- Standardise training across the sector for surge staff – using new resources available to create consistency in knowledge and skills. The TSC project’s, *Surge Training curriculum*, led by CAFOD includes eight modules and accompanying materials, a participant handbook, and ToT materials. The revised version of this unique curriculum which is specifically focused on behavioural skills for surge can be accessed [here](#).
- Consider how to set up a mechanism so that organisations do not recruit and employ those who have been found guilty of child exploitation, sexual violence or fraud.



CONCLUSION

Many thanks to all the participants at the conference for sharing their experiences and insights and developing a set of recommendations to help shape the humanitarian sectors thinking around the role of HR and HR practices in the future.

The recommendations will be shared with all participants so that they can take them forward within their organisations as appropriate, be made available to a wider HR and surge audience as possible, shape ongoing HR work within the Transforming Surge Capacity Project and be presented at the high level start networks 'Future of Surge event' later in 2017.

Next steps

Following the conference the HR Working group supporting the Transforming Surge Capacity project considered the recommendations and have agreed the next steps in taking these forward:

- a. Linking with the Staff Wellbeing working group and based on experience in several organisations, develop a guideline on the role of HR in promoting staff wellbeing. Test this with ideally a national NGO or if international NGO ensure it is focused on national staff.
- b. Linking with the Staff Wellbeing group, and based on experience in other organisations, develop a tool to that monitors and reports on wellbeing within organisations. Test this with ideally a national NGO or if international NGO ensure it is focused on national staff.
- c. Based on current practice, develop a guideline on ethical recruitment practices that can recommend a change in practice across the sector and if possible within the time frame of the project, monitor its use.
- d. Research the reference practices of organisations and advice from experts that can support non-employment of potential staff who are not appropriate for the sector. This learning will be documented into a guidance note for agencies and its use monitored.
- e. Produce a case study on the experience of a national NGO staff member being seconded to an international NGO or vice versa or both, and capture lessons on the experience of the secondee and benefit to both organisations in a guidance note.
- f. Linking with the 'Shifting the power' project on capacity building of national NGOs on HR and if not already in existence, develop and test guidelines on how HR can help build HR capacity of national NGOs
- g. Produce a case study based on experience from setting up a previous HR forum during a response and by reflecting on the lessons learnt, develop a ToR for establishing a HR co-ordination group at the start of a surge response.
- h. Map key visa requirements for different countries across the Start Network countries in Asia that focuses on those staff currently on the rosters at national and regional level. The aim of this is to encourage the deployment of trained personnel across the region.
- i. Develop guidance on how to monitor the impact of the role of HR during a surge response and test with one organisation



CHS ALLIANCE/TRANSFORMING SURGE ONLINE HR PLATFORM

CHS Alliance, as part of The Transforming Surge Project has developed an online HR platform for use by HR and other staff supporting surge responses which allows access to good practice information and tools, as well as the opportunity to have discussion with others on common issues via forum pages. To access the platform please visit surgeonline.chsalliance.org. You can apply to become a member of the site by creating a login profile which will then provide full access to all content and discussion groups.

SURGE CAPACITY ONLINE PLATFORM

Welcome to the START Network Transforming Surge Capacity online platform

Through this platform, designed for use by HR and other professionals supporting humanitarian responses, we provide useful resources, templates and information as well as a space to share and learn from others working in the sector via online discussion forums.

[Read more](#)

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APPENDIX 1

Are Current HR Practices for Emergency Response Fit for Purpose?

An International HR Conference led by the CHS Alliance in conjunction with the Start Network

Transforming Surge Capacity Project

London, 26-27 January 2017

Background

During times of disaster, even the most well-prepared and resilient communities require additional resources beyond what they can cope with alone. The ability to scale up resources of staff, materials and funds, described as an organisation's 'surge capacity', remains critical to meeting the urgent needs of crisis affected people. Human Resources (HR) practitioners play a crucial role in sourcing, mobilising and deploying staff for surge. Yet, with increasing disasters globally, are our current HR practices for surge capacity fit for purpose?

Purpose

Senior representatives from across the Start Network and beyond will come together to share, discuss and develop good HR practice that will help transform the way surge is undertaken. The conference offers a unique opportunity for those with oversight or direct management of surge support from both HR and humanitarian teams to come together on this important topic. Interactive sessions will be used to challenge and encourage participants to consider new and innovative ways of supporting surge activities. Direct case studies from staff at international, regional and national levels on their experiences of surge will be shared.

Objectives

- To provoke critical thinking and new ideas on what more INGOs can be doing within our HR policies and procedures to transform and improve the way in which surge is undertaken, particularly looking at more localised and collaborative surge models.
- To discuss current trends and practices with regards to staff welfare and support of surge staff, and to develop recommendations on a set of shared and agreed minimum staff welfare standards in surge responses.
- To consider the impact INGOs' HR practices have on the ability for National NGOs to recruit and retain staff during surge responses, and to shape the sectors thinking on how to support national NGOs in such situations.



- To develop a framework for future suggested HR initiatives that will transform surge from a HR perspective.
- To provide a brief overview of the Transforming Surge Capacity Project and information on key aspects of the project that are intended to support HR activities within organisations.
- To encourage and facilitate collaborative ways of working between agencies involved in humanitarian responses.

Venue

Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management
106-109 Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8QS

Additional Information

Find out more about the Transforming Surge Capacity project at:

<https://startnetwork.org/start-engage/transforming-surge-capacity>

AGENDA

Day 1, 26 January 2017

| Time | Sessions |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11:00 - 11:30 | Participants arrive and register |
| 11:30 - 12:00 | Introductions/Practicalities Justine Tordoff, HR Consultant, CHS Alliance/Start |
| 12:00 - 12:15 | Introductory remarks Judith Greenwood, Executive Director, CHS Alliance |
| 12:15 - 12:30 | Context setting Cat Kenyon, International Programme Manager, Action Aid/ Start <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overview of the START Transforming Surge Project, how the various elements support HR in surge and the purpose of the HR Conference |
| 12:30 - 13:30 | Lunch |
| 13:30 - 16:30 (with break) | Staff welfare, moving from treatment to prevention? Hitendra Solanki, Staff Welfare lead, ACF/Start and Alexia Deleligne, Head of Performance and Evaluation, The Brooke <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of recent research into Staff Welfare practices amongst agencies, and mapping of resources available Developing a Staff Welfare standard/policy How staff welfare can be monitored and used to support organisational performance Moving from treatment to prevention – Mindfulness for wellbeing pilot |
| 16:30 - 17:00 | Review of day/feedback Justine Tordoff, HR Consultant, CHS Alliance/Start |

AGENDA

Day 2, 27 January 2017

| Time | Sessions |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:00 – 9:30 | Recap/review of previous day Justine Tordoff, HR Consultant, CHS Alliance/Start |
| 9:30 - 12:30 (with break) | Time to move on? - National perspectives on transforming surge Ben Emmens, The Conscious Project and Anne Street, Head of Humanitarian Policy, CAFOD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview from report on HR Practices by INGOs and the impact they have on national organisations being able to undertake local responses and key recommendations on ways forward for discussion • What support should INGOs be offering national organisations? • Ethical surge recruitment • Compensation for loss of staff to national organisations? |
| 12:30 - 13:30 | Lunch |
| 13:30 - 16:30 (with break) | What more do we need to be doing? – A framework for the future of HR in surge Samantha Wakefield, People Management and HR Thematic Lead, CHS Alliance and Justine Tordoff, CHS Alliance/Start HR Consultant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for HR in surge responses • Develop recommended actions and a framework for future initiatives that build on strengths, overcome weaknesses and threats and exploit opportunities |
| 16:30 - 17:00 | Action points, review and feedback from the conference Justine Tordoff, CHS Alliance/Start Consultant |