

**Helper's Fire II:
Building Resilient Communities for
Humanitarian and Development
Assistance Field Staff**



**May 18 – 20, 2008
Denver, Colorado**

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For questions or comments on this report, please contact Sharon Forrence (sforrence@yahoo.com), trainer and staff care consultant.

Background:

In March 2004, humanitarian and international development professionals from more than 60 organizations gathered at the University of Notre Dame for a groundbreaking conference entitled "Tending the Helper's Fire: Mitigating Stress and Trauma in International Staff and Volunteers" organized by Idealist.org/Action Without Borders. Humanitarian aid is highly rewarding but demanding work, and aid workers and volunteers face a variety of threats to their physical health and mental health and emotional stability. Accidents and poor judgment on the part of aid workers, reduced commitment to their organizations, and lowered efficiency and effectiveness are a few results of unmanaged strains and stressors. Many of these are intrinsic to the situations in which they work; others appear to reflect team and organizational factors. However, attention to staff care and support before, during, and after their time in the field and the study of how to improve outcomes in this arena was still relatively new in 2004.

Today, the notion that effective self-care and management ultimately contributes to the ability of all humanitarian workers to work more effectively and more safely has gained considerable currency. In line with these advances, in May 2008 Helper's Fire II brought together participants from the non-governmental sector, donors, government organizations, consultants, researchers, graduate students and other experts in the field to focus on key staff care issues for humanitarian and development workers and the organizations for which they work. On average, participants had ten years of experience in the field.

Conference Overview:

Stressors in the field of humanitarian aid, from those indigenous to emergency situations to demanding and stressful management practices, are acknowledged to adversely affect the capacities of humanitarian workers to deliver services. While study of how to improve outcomes in this area is relatively new it has gained considerable traction in recent years. This international conference was designed to provide information on new staff care initiatives and organizational efforts to institutionalize support to aid workers. It further identified the difficulties with implementation of staff care initiatives and proposed strategies and actions that will contribute to the forward movement of this developing field.

Key Issues Addressed:

- Management and leadership in stress reduction
- Staff assessment, selection and retention
- Training and working with National Staff
- Responding to critical events including family support
- Building external and internal support
- Building in evaluation of policies and programs
- Re-entry and debriefing

Conference Goals:

By the end of the conference, participants will have discussed and developed:

1. Strategies for engaging agencies in staff care
2. Strategies for adapting current standards for good practice in staff support to specific agency, situation, and staff contexts
3. Strategies for agencies to use in monitoring the effectiveness of staff support programs

Conference Staff:

Chairperson - Judy Fox, International Disaster Psychology Program

Co-chair for working groups - Deanna Beech, Psychologists for Social Responsibility

Co-chairs for conference management - Sharon Forrence, Independent Consultant and Janet Shriberg, International Disaster Psychology Program

Keynote Speaker: Ky Luu, Director, Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance

Presenters:

Alastair Agar, Columbia University/Atares Foundation

Tom Barrett, International Disaster Psychology Program/WHO

Lynne Cripe, CARE

Penelope Curling, UNICEF

John Ehrenreich, SUNY/Atares Foundation

Ben Emmens, People In Aid

John Fawcett, Save the Children

Amber Gray, Restorative Resources

Bree Hulme, Headington Institute

Cate Johnson, USAID/DCHA/DG

Lisa McKay, Headington Institute

Michael O'Neill, Save the Children

Linda Poteat, InterAction

Leslie Snider, International Associate, Antares Foundation

Tineke Von Pietersom, Antares

Mykell Winterowd, Consultant

Working group facilitators:

Deanna Beech, Psychologists for Social Responsibility

Michelle Defayette, USAID/DCHA/OFDA

Sharon Forrence, Independent Consultant

Lynne Gilliland, Gilliland and Judd

Amber Grey, Restorative Resources

Mike McIntyre, Refugees International

Christina Moore, Médecins Sans Frontières

Michael O'Neill, Save the Children

Linda Poteat, InterAction

Donna Read, ARD

Working group observers and administration staff:

Graduate students of the University of Denver's International Disaster Psychology program

Thanks to Drew Mitchell and John Sokorai, www.fathomcreative.com for the Helper's Fire logo

Conference Schedule:

Sunday May 18th

12:00	<i>Registration Opens and Continues until 3:30 pm</i>
1:00 - 3:00	Pre Conference Institute: An Introduction to Stress in Humanitarian Workers – Leslie Snider (International Associate, Antares Foundation). This institute will include sources and consequences of stress, approaches to risk reduction and relevant resources
3:00 - 3:30	<i>Break</i>
3:30 - 4:30	Conference Opening – Dr Judith Fox, Director, International Disaster Psychology Program Keynote Speaker – Ky Luu (Director, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance)
4:30 - 5:00	<i>Break</i>
5:00 - 6:30	New staff care developments and initiatives Antares Guidelines - John Ehrenreich (SUNY/Antares Foundation) IASC Guidelines - Tom Barrett (International Disaster Psychology Program/WHO) People in Aid developments/initiatives - Ben Emmens (People in Aid) InterAction development/initiatives - Linda Poteat (InterAction)
6:30 -	<i>Dinner</i>

Monday May 19th

8:00 - 8:30	Breakfast buffet		
8:30 - 9:00	New staff care developments and initiatives Emergency Capacity Building Project – Ben Emmens (People in Aid)		
9:00 -10:30	Plenary Panel Discussion I Management and leadership issues in stress reduction – Lynne Cripe (CARE) Assessment, selection and assignment of staff – Lisa McKay (Headington Institute) Building-in evaluation of policies and programs – Alastair Ager (Columbia University/Antares Foundation)		
10:30 -11:00	<i>Break</i>		
11:00 -12:00	Working Group: Management and leadership issues in stress reduction	Working Group: Assessment, selection and assignment of staff	Working Group: Building-in evaluation of policies and programs
12:00 -1:00	<i>Lunch</i>		
1:00 - 2:30	Plenary Panel Discussion II National staff issues - John Fawcett (Save the Children) Building social support/team cohesion in the workplace - Ben Emmens (People in Aid) Building social support – Penelope Curling (UNICEF)		
2:30 - 3:00	<i>Break</i>		
3:00 - 4:00	Working Group: National staff issues	Working Group: Building social support/team cohesion in the workplace	Working Group: Building social support
4:00 - 4:30	<i>Break</i>		
4:30 -5:30	Plenary: Working group summaries & open group discussion		
6:30 –	<i>Cocktail/dinner party at the Opera House</i>		

Tuesday May 20th

8:00 - 8:30	Breakfast buffet		
8:30 - 9:00	New staff care developments and initiatives Headington Darfur/Chad report for InterAction - Bree Hulme (Headington Institute) USAID/DCHA's staff care initiative – Cate Johnson (USAID/DCHA's Democracy and Governance office)		
9:00 -10:30	Plenary Panel Discussion III Training and working with national staff: Tineke Von Pietersom (Antares Foundation) Responding to critical incidents: Amber Gray (Restorative Resources) and Michael O'Neill (Save the Children) Exiting, debriefing and follow-up/transition: Mykell Winterowd (Consultant)		
10:30 -11:00	<i>Break</i>		
11:00 -12:00	Working Group: Training and working with national staff	Working Group: Responding to critical incidents	Working Group: Exiting, debriefing and follow-up/transition
12:00 -1:00	<i>Lunch</i>		
1:00 - 2:30	Plenary discussion – where do we go from here?		

Description of conference events:

Pre-conference Institute: For those new to the field or experienced practitioners looking for a review, this session was designed to give a historical perspective as well as a review of key resources and guidelines. It included sources and consequences of stress, approaches to risk reduction and relevant resources and included a personal perspective (Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans? When Disaster Strikes Home).

Keynote speech: Mr. Ky Luu, Director of the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), spoke about the priority he places on staff care issues as they significantly affect OFDA personnel as well as the staff of OFDA's partners on the front lines of emergency relief. He provided a historic overview of the evolution of OFDA's role from responding exclusively to natural disasters to its current central role in complex emergencies.

In the same way that OFDA has successfully pressed partners to integrate minimum operating security standards into their operations, now the challenge is to encourage the humanitarian community to incorporate staff care / staff wellness as a routine operating standard. OFDA will continue to encourage NGO partners and challenge itself to develop protocols and procedures that protect the psychological and emotional well-being of relief workers.

In a global environment facing more natural disasters than ever recorded in a single year, tangible, practical resources are not the only things that are needed. So are the human resources – people to bring relief and work in development. Ky stated simply, “Staff care is one of our top priorities. The best thing we can provide our beneficiaries are our relief workers.”

New staff care developments and initiatives

Panel presentations provided an update on recent developments in the field including Antares and IASC guidelines as well as new initiatives undertaken by People In Aid, InterAction, Headington Institute and USAID.

Plenary panel discussions

Plenary presentations were focused on a specific topic. In their presentations, the speakers included key questions, a case study or dilemma that reflected the current difficulties in the field. Time was allocated at the end of each panel for discussion/question and answer.

Working groups

Working groups discussed the key questions, case study or dilemma with an aim towards identifying steps that will move the field forward in the given area.

Plenary discussions

In these full conference sessions, a summary of the working group findings were presented, followed by an open discussion of the material by the conference participants.

Summary of key findings:

First, staff care is everyone's business and needs to be integrated throughout the lifecycle of an employee or volunteer. As an organizational priority, staff care needs to be incorporated in management practices from headquarters down to the field office. Second, national staff may have very different needs for staff care. The best way to identify appropriate support for national staff is to consult with them. Third, it is important for organizations to develop critical incident protocols and include plans for working with staff members' families. This is an important component when dealing with critical incident stress. Another key theme is senior management buy-in for staff care. While the need seems obvious to those who have worked under difficult conditions and for those who provide services to aid workers, convincing senior management that investing in staff care initiatives is a cost-effective business practice continues to be a challenge for most organizations. Assessing staff care initiatives that are currently being undertaken by various organizations can help to further support efforts to push this issue with senior management.

Next steps:

Planning will begin next year for the Helper's Fire III conference which will be held in 2010. Information will be posted on the Denver University's web site <http://www.du.edu/helpersfire/>, on the Psychosocial.org web site (www.idealists.org/psychosocial) and on the InterAction staff care web site (www.interaction.org/staffcare).

A Helper's Fire II.5 meeting is being planned for Wednesday November 5th in Washington DC, prior to the PIA/Headington Symposium which will be held on November 6-7th. For further information, contact Sharon Forrence (sforrence@yahoo.com).

Management and Leadership Issues in Stress Reduction Working Group Summary (A)

Presenter/Resource: Lynn Cripe

Facilitator: Linda Poteat

Scribe: Jo Vendl

Key Questions:

- What organizations interventions can improve the quality of management?
- What are good practices that you have seen?
- What 2-3 things can realistically be done to improve leadership?
- What more do you need to be able to take action?
- What new/additional skills do you need to improve the profession?
- What are the next steps that conference participants can take to improve the profession?

Real life observations of management issues:

- promoting people at what they do best
- establish a management track
- emphasize social support systems
- good managers need to establish boundaries, may separate them from social support system
- technical experts may not make the best managers

What are positive examples of how to navigate those situations?

- Engaging on a very personal level with national/international staff
- Feedback: how a manger gives appropriate feedback
- Best examples are transparent, quarterly, to the staff directly

Discussion points:

- Managers need to communicate with staff when reports are going into their file
- Normal performance management often neglected due to demands in the field
- National staff never got evaluated
- Being promoted within an organization often leads to administrative role
 - What about hiring an MBA? Example - hired an MBA to be country director, he taught leadership and the local staff taught him about the program
 - Risk in hiring an MBA who has not been in the field
 - Management skills can be trained however management training at the field level is often not a priority
- Relying on volunteers and consultants raises some challenges
- It's a more courageous move to hire the behavioral fit and then train the skills that are needed, in order to look for retention
 - Look at match between individual and agency core values
 - Recruitment may be harder but will give good results
- European labor practices and US based NGOs labor practices are very different
- Systematic approach is key -- Are there good frameworks for this?

Diversity

- Not much ethnic diversity in the room. Why are there not more national staff leading organizations?
- The field is usually more diverse than HQ
- More NGOs are realizing the value of promoting/hiring national staff into management positions

- Important to provide national staff with the training they need, consider them for promotion

Is there knowledge/research around whether managers see themselves as their employees see them?

- Research suggests that managers who have a more accurate view of themselves are better managers. Key is to have feedback systems that go both ways
- Good objective measures regarding performance should be provided frequently
- Measures like this are highly objective, everyone rates “good manager” in many ways

What could your organization do? What would you change?

- Work on supporting people who have challenges (ie family issues) as they affect work and productivity
- Managing people requires flexibility and empowerment of staff
- Managers need to model good self care, set boundaries, be good example for others
- Create a reward system for good, balanced practices.
- People do not complain about having too much R&R!

What can we do on a headquarters level?

- What are the standards/guidelines that we want to encourage or mandate?
- Mentoring programs are difficult to do well
- 360 degree evaluations often fail because they are tied to assessment and not improvement
- HR people have a difficult job – supporting company policy while paying attention to the needs of the staff.

What can we do to develop and sustain leaders?

- Cross-pollination - leaders are often isolated & would benefit from support from other leaders across organizations. Group support and knowledge sharing leads to better leadership
- Recommendations from the Darfur Project on management
 - Management at all levels enforces R&R, down time, sick leave.
 - Including national staff in trainings on management skills and leadership issues
 - National staff need career development for a long term program and for afterwards
 - Challenge for humanitarian community that typically looks at short term capacity
 - More cost effective to invest in the staff on the ground rather than bring on someone new
 - Explain rationale for R&R policy

Cost of turnover

- In the US the average cost of turnover is twice the normal salary to train a new employee
- Turnover not always negative – need to find an equilibrium that works
- The people who leave often are the most skilled workers and have options for other employment
- Functional versus dysfunctional turnover.

Where do we go from here and what do we do next?

- More research is needed
 - Create a literature review so people don’t reinvent the wheel.
 - What can be borrowed within the private sector?
 - What and where is the cutting edge information?
- Develop reading list, update periodically
- What is the next cottage cheese?
- Which NGO has staff care/staff wellness in their personnel policy? What is included in a staff wellness section?
- Need for NGOs to begin mapping who has counselors where
 - Headington has a network of counselors in CARD directory

- UNICEF has a policy that offices have to list resources in their local areas
- Important to keep specific details of counseling usage confidential
- Looking at other non-western models of mental health, discuss appropriate use

Summary Themes:

- ✓ Management development - managers are often chosen by their ability to survive in the field, not always linked to managerial skills or staff well-being. Some of this can be taught but organizations need to place value on it.
- ✓ There is a gap between management and people working in the field – some is hierarchical, some is generational. How do you keep the creativity of energy of entry-level staff members through promotion to management?
- ✓ Value of self-care – “cowboy attitude” – if you can’t handle the work you shouldn’t be in the field vs self care. Older generation sometimes views attempts at self-care as entitlement and demanding.
- ✓ Use research and evidence-based arguments to create buy-in from management.
- ✓ Structural changes to consider– create staff roles and designate someone to manage staff care
- ✓ The more managers promote “thriving” and self-care within themselves, the better they will be at promoting “staff care” for their employees
- ✓ Number of critical incidents are few but receive more attention when chronic stress is more common
- ✓ The “how to implement staff care” is often avoided because it’s a difficult topic
 - Discuss the organization’s liability if staff are not cared for
 - Can prove the necessity of staff care through data presented to policy makers

Unanswered question: Is it the responsibility of the donors or the agencies to implement staff care?

Management and Leadership Issues in Stress Reduction Working Group Summary (B)

Presenter/Resource: Lynne Cripe

Facilitator: Michael McIntyre

Scribe: Linda Baker

1. Reflections about morning presenters
 - a. talk was excellent: many did not realize how much management can be a stressor
 - b. several group members want to improve own management
 - c. pleased that staff care is being recognized
2. Do management and leadership issues need to be incorporated into the HR process?
 - a. organizations need a policy that has to be reviewed by HR
 - b. HR is not present out in the field
 - c. HR has great value because it pushes “staff care” values – can provide valuable input
3. What is going to resonate with organization’s management?
 - a. lack of knowledge in management, specifically on stressors and the dangers of these stressors
 - b. code of conducts
 - c. emphasize that staff need to be briefed, given tools, and support systems
 - d. critical incidents are not happening that often, but we tend to focus on these when chronic stress is more likely to occur
 - e. clear policies for staff
4. How to be strategic in approaching management and implement change:
 - a. data given to policy makers may make a convincing case to management and may justify cost
 - b. approach staff-wellness through the potential decrease in liability (getting sued)
 - c. focus on the “well-being” of staff not always a persuasive argument
 - d. educate those in leadership positions, use understandable language
5. Other Concerns
 - a. some organizations do not have an HR department making it more difficult to raise the issue especially when management staff are directly affected.
 - b. need to have understanding of organization management to be strategic
 - c. PIA tend to shy away from vicarious trauma because it is such a difficult topic

Management and leadership issues in stress reduction Working Group Summary (C)

Presenter/Resource: Lynne Cripe

Facilitator:

Scribe:

Organizational, leadership, and management issues surrounding staff care:

- In this field, the practice of hiring managers is often based on surviving in the field and not on managerial skills or staff well being
- The issue of recruitment from the field needs to be coupled with staff or manager development and include leadership development programs.
- The process of development needs to be examined from an organizational perspective.
- There is a large body of evidence from other sectors about the kind of managers that produce greater staff wellness.
- Many of the necessary managerial skills can be developed.
 - The challenge is to encourage agencies to develop these skills in their managers.
 - There must be an investment in developing the skills associated with staff wellness.
- Some organizations already have existing programs.
 - The challenge is to get more relevant issues in.
 - Organizations may value technical training more than staff wellness training
 - Important to demonstrate the pay off from the investment
- What role does gender play?
 - Are these issues brushed off because they are “soft”?
 - There is a belief the field that says if you can’t take it, you shouldn’t be in the field.
- An additional challenge is when management believes staff care issues are being addressed.

An important dynamic that exists between management and field workers are generational issues:

- For the “cowboy/girls” challenge is in maintaining the energy and creativity throughout their careers which often includes a management role
- Staff care may be a new expectation of the incoming workforce and staff in the field may not see the value.
- Are younger workers viewed as feeling entitled and demanding things that in the past may have been a perk and not part of staff care?
- Working in the field requires a certain skill set and mind set and there is a self selection process that takes place. The mind set may be different from those working in an office. Can organizational structure be changed to minimize the hierarchy between field and office?

Cultural differences also create barriers.

- There is a difference in people’s desire to debate the issues versus moving directly to problem solving.
- How do we get to a decision?
- What are the differences between international and national staff?

Taking Action

Strategic directions:

- Develop a willingness of senior management to move in these directions.
- Create a role for someone on the team to specifically focus on staff care.
- Mental health advocates must work with policy, administrators, and procedures.

- Demonstrate the cost effectiveness of staff care.
- Use arguments that are meaningful to management.
- Focus on communication as well as stress management.
- Train both managers and entry level staff.
- Agencies should systematically think through practices and delineate between stress that can be mitigated and stress that needs to be counteracted.
- Evaluate data on the costs and benefits of various interventions.
- Policy should be established as opposed to practice depending on the current director.
- Address the challenge of structural issues and management as opposed to just managing the symptoms of stress.

Best Practices

- Reframe management issues to be more objective and less personal
- Have a rest and relaxation policy and enforce it.
 - Provide realistic options
 - Get manager to give permission for and model R&R

Resources

- First Helper's Fire conference notes
- Headington website

Assessment, Assignment and Selection of Staff Working Group Summary (A)

Presenter/Resource: Lisa McKay

Facilitator: Amber Gray

Scribe: Alyson Welch

Key ideas:

- Have continuity and consistency across the employment cycle and have all areas linked.
- Include screening for protective and risk factors as a continuum across the employment cycle.
- Consider observations by the individuals themselves.
- Ideally, at the end of an assignment staff would be aware of how he/she interfaced with the environment, what kept him/her strong, and who he/she is as person.
- Individual, personal feedback as well as performance appraisal would be useful

The science and art of the selection and assessment processes:

- The “science” part of the process may be easier to assess
 - reflects on a resume and the background of an individual.
- The “art” part more difficult to assess
 - not as measurable and quantifiable
 - how do you articulate an impression or gut feeling you have about an applicant
- Humanitarian work is difficult to recruit for, as it is not like recruiting for IT work
- A group interview or other types of stimulations may be a useful technique.
- Having an interactive interview process might be a way to gain further info about a person than a regular interview would provide.
- Behavioral interviewing is another option

What tools could a recruiter use when hiring from a remote location without access to the individual applicant?

How do you assess someone across the world?

- Reference checks become extremely important.
- When doing reference checks in the U.S, the employer follows the U.S. guidelines.
- It is necessary to follow local laws of the particular country when performing reference checks.
 - There seems to be no standard practice when using references
- Other possibilities include the use of web conferencing, video conferencing or holograph technology.

Assessing and selecting individuals for positions:

- What are we selecting for?
- Job descriptions are often unrealistic and unmanageable
- How does someone new to the field gain the required experience?
 - Sometimes the experience comes from working in dangerous environments for which they are unprepared leading to distressing consequences
 - What are some mechanisms for gaining relevant international work experience?
 - Apprenticeships are a useful way for individuals to gain real experience
 - The field is changing – where previously experience was often gained through “Baptism by Fire,” now there are degrees like IDP.
- What is the relevancy of the program? What is the connection between work in the field and course work?

- How can universities and international programs develop beneficial partnerships?
- A career fair may be useful
- Creativity is important and may lead to employment
- May be easier to be hired by applying for a job in country vs from the US
- Mentoring can be key to gaining relevant experience

Lynne's presentation and the 70/20/10 ratio she presented was discussed.

- Taking care of staff in the context of emergency situations
 - How do you preserve quality in this context?
 - How do you help national staff decide who would fit at this time in a given context?
- How to assess quickly and comprehensively?
- Important to find a balance and a learning style that matches the role of the organizations
- What are some good practices for hiring during emergencies when typically there is fast recruitment?

Staff are hired for their skill and competency, but it is also important to screen for resiliency (which leads back to the art of selection).

- Is it possible to educate people at the same time as interviewing them?
- How to assess for adaptability
- How can you assess learning skills?

Job descriptions are often very generic or too specific

- What is most important for short term engagements may be what is expected of me, what do I need to achieve and how will I know I achieved it?
- When job descriptions are too specific, no one can deliver everything.
- One option is to give the applicant the context of the potential job and ask the applicant to write a job description.

Recruitment –

- How do you match individual strengths with requirements from the field?
- What is the responsibility of the recruiter vs the applicant?
- How engaged is the recruiter and how well informed are they about the positions they are hiring for?
- Interactive learning styles, such as testing and presenting may be part of a multimodal hiring process
 - How to do this remotely?
- Narrative may be a useful and informative tool from both the employer and employee's perspective

Assessment, Selection and Assignment of Staff Working Group Summary (B)

Presenter/Resource: Lisa McKay

Facilitator: Deanna Beech

Scribe: Meadow Spisak

Staff Concerns

1. "Goodness-of-fit"
 - Psychological importance
 - Important for team dynamics and cohesion
 - The off-balance of the team leader affects the team
 - Discussion of the "goodness-of-fit" as a developmental psychology term particular to the "parent-child" relationship.
 - Importance of understanding personal characteristics change due to chronic stress (experiences of field staff and management)
 - Questions were raised of 'how to predict positive change in staff'
2. Behavioral Interviewing
 - Discussion of how to illicit reactions under specific situations during interviews
 - Asking practical questions during interviews
 - Use active listening
 - Ask about previous challenges and how they coped with specific examples
 - Ask how the individual imagines using support, and what that support would look like
 - Focus questions on their tools of resiliency
 - Ask about how they deal with stress and trauma
 - During interviews assess psychosocial skills used for teambuilding
3. Selection of staff
 - Issues regarding a lack of qualified candidates but that staffing of a position is necessary
 - Often an individual does not meet all criteria for a position but an emphasis is placed experience
 - How to resolve? → Make the person aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and provide training to give them the 'tools' for what they need
 - Work with supervisors to watch for signs of stress and then offer intervention
 - Headquarters should check on field personnel periodically (via email, etc.) and develop personal relationships
 - A mentoring program should be developed
 - Ensure that the organization follows through on any supportive commitments promised to the staff
 - While developing teams in the field place people with strengths and weaknesses that complement each other
 - Importance of reference checks (contact individuals in addition to those formally listed)
4. Issues of Management
 - Concerns regarding tolerance for managers that bring in a lot of money, but have high staff turnover
 - Conflict between client satisfaction and problems with staff
 - Possible solutions
 - Split-level management team = One face for management and one person to work with the team

- Management support = ongoing assessment and evaluation of teams

How do you do assessment?

1. Exit Survey
 - Address management issues
 - Do 360° assessment
 - Information gathered needs to make it back to those in the field and get integrated into a performance plan
 - Have team members take assessment to know where the team is out-of-balance
2. Assessment for recruitment and differences between National and International Staff
 - Changes in the composition of teams (decrease in the number of ex-patriots; increase in the number of nationals)
 - Discussion of team building and “Bait-and-switch” tactics
 - Emphasis on transparency

Action Items:

- ✓ Use behavioral interviewing techniques when screening for employment
- ✓ Complete assessments before, during and after assignments
- ✓ Ask for specific examples and experiences from individuals when conducting the recruiting process

Building In Evaluation of Policies and Programs Working Group Summary

Presenter/Resource: Alastair Ager

Facilitator: Michael O'Neill

Scribe: Amber Wolfe

Key points from Alastair's presentation:

1. What is evaluation for? Who is it for?
2. What are the issues of advocacy vs. competing demands?
3. How should tough aspects (like staff care) be measured?
4. How can we broaden organizational interventions?
5. What is the value of evaluating self care?
6. What are the pros and cons of evaluation?
7. What are we evaluating against?

Methods

1. Be practical
2. Mapping progress of action over time (action planning)
3. Where you think this is leading (goal attainment)

Impact of care for employees

1. What could or should be measured?
2. What do we need to learn about? How could we use the information?
3. What do we need to borrow from other areas of expertise?
4. For whom is the impact desirable? Important? Achievable? Measurable?

The group discussed using tools such as logical frameworks (log-frames):

- Not used in staff care, even though log-frames useful in other arenas
- Could be used as an action plan/planning tool

How is staff care different than psychosocial programs which involve evaluation?

Indicators of impact tend to be poor.

- Quarterly reports of stress questionnaires have limited validity due to lack of timeliness
- Need a blend of approaches so there are clear indicators, both timely and comprehensive
- Need for critical incident protocols
- Difficult to self assess need for care

Framework is needed for preventative and reactive measures regarding emergency turn-around

- What is the evidence base?
- Assumptions will be built into action plans

How can success be gauged?

- Management looks at the bottom-line costs and benefits - is this the only evidence base?
- Designs for high stress situations and strategies are missing, yet the principles remain the same as in other fields
- In order to show the value of staff care and evaluation, there is a need for:
 - Cost-benefit analysis vocabulary
 - Investment vs. expenditure

- Rating for funding would be \$ vs. ratings on an issue

What are the differences between international versus national staff concerns?

- There is a need for local EAP's (EAP's for field staff)
- There needs to be a connection between international and national staff
- There needs to be sourcing of local resources; be creative
- Evidence base could be created for items such as inter-agency change of staff, turn-over rates

What is a good indicator of wellness? Turnover rate? Chronic stress build-up? Is turnover rate always a negative indicator?

Why should we care about evaluation?

- Because it's the right thing to do?
- Because it helps staff carry out the organizations mission?
- Do healthier people actually do better work?

There are probable vs. provable concerns.

Responses:

- Look at exemplars (positive deviants)
- Look at what is valued
- Take a multi-level approach
- Look at background of persons applying, contact references

Antares Tracking Model is starting documentation at an organizational level (i.e.: policy making) and looking at organizational structures.

Conclusion:

1. Evaluation has a value and it serves many needs
2. Use transferable principles (such as log-frames) applicable in wellness program designs
3. How managers handle crisis events is connected to on-going staff support
4. There is a need for good policies regarding these issues
5. Point of entry – get in where you can
6. Identify and build on successes – utilizing positive deviants and good examples
7. Rate success by using timelines
8. Know why you are doing an evaluation and what you are going to do with the evaluation

Needs

- A framework (both preventative and reactive in regards to emergency turn-around)
- Designs for high stress situations and strategies are missing, yet the principles remain the same as in other fields
- Critical incident protocols and EAP's for field staff
- A connection between international and national staff
- Sourcing of local resources; be creative

National Staff Issues Working Group Summary (A)

Presenter/Resource: John Fawcett

Facilitator: Linda Poteat

Scribe: Meadow Spisak

In the field:

- Ex-pats are often viewed as the leader with national staff as followers
- National staff are sometimes perceived as having less rank than someone from another (Western) country
- There is often an imbalance in benefits (ie retirement/severance packages)
- National staff are not always familiar with management style and expectations of ex-pats, ex-pats not always familiar with cultural differences and cultural dynamics

Create a space to have a conversation with national staff - What do they need? What is appropriate? [Be patient]

Issues of turn-over in ex-pat staff – developing standardized policies and procedures helps with transitions

Evacuation Issues

- Move people to places of safety, not necessarily across borders
- Establish staff safety principles, written checklist for evacuation
- Most large NGOs protect the safety of everyone they employ
- Issues arise regarding the cost of moving the families of national staff (who is family?)

Training and Professional Development

- National staff do not have same professional opportunities as ex-pats
- What training will help national staff in their professional development and find employment if the NGO leaves?

After critical incident, how do you make sure national staff are getting what they need?

- What happens when an ex pat is brought in to provide support to national staff?
- Extra risk factors for national staff if ex-pats are evacuated
- Proactively include natural social supports for national staff

National Staff Issues

Working Group Summary (B)

Presenter/Resource: John Fawcett
Facilitators: Michael O'Neill
Scribe: Alyson Welch

Discussion began with a summary of John's presentation on the Western orientation to management and team management issues.

Equity issues for international and national staff (benefit packages, compensation).

- Are the same principles used in establishing both?
- It is not always about equality but underlying principles that guide decisions about benefits
- Given that there will probably always be differences in pay, the differences need to be reasonable, clear and out in the open.

What about trans-national staff? Who is considered a trans-national staff?

- Some organizations define as non-first world, ex-pat staff member
- Other organizations don't agree with differences – ex-pats are outside of their country of residence, regardless of how developed that country is.

Principle is equal pay for equal work, not based on other differences (even though this is not the case in the US as women are paid less than men).

Differences in staff care between ex-pats and national staff

- Expectation that ex-pat staff members need R&R but what about national staff?
- What about Myanmar and what is being done for the staff there?
- National staff are often also victims of disasters and part of the target population for relief efforts and benefits How are they being considered - as national staff, beneficiaries or both?
- In disaster, many think of ex pat staff first, then national staff and still not think of national staff as part of team.
- There is a challenge in establishing equity when there are differences in need.

Mental health/staff care resources

- What mental health resources are available for national staff?
- What can be done if accessing mental health resources carries a stigma?
- What other models for culturally appropriate support are available ?
- Are there any lessons to be learned from the AIDS crisis and efforts made to de-stigmatize getting tested? [How do you accommodate national staff going to several funerals every week in areas with high HIV prevalence?]
- How can existing local existing networks be utilized, including introducing mental health resources?
- Example - staff were receiving education on how to deal with stressors. One participant commented "we know what stresses us, we know it's good to talk about it, but right now we need transport to this funeral." Their emotional relief would come with available transportation to a funeral
- Organizations must investigate the needs of its staff which may not always be psychosocially based.

Sharing information and strategies between organizations benefits everyone.

Evacuation

- There are often clear procedures for the evacuation of ex-pats, not for national staff.
- The organization is responsible for returning the national staff to a safe environment – are they prepared to move the national staff if the area is dangerous? Will the organization move national staff if they are vulnerable because of an association with the organization. Must be discussed prior to an evacuation occurring!

Example of equal treatment regardless of status:

- After an abduction, the same procedures were used following the kidnapping of a national staff member as an ex-pat.
- This commitment sent a clear message to national staff about their value within the organization

Conclusion:

- An organization should ask its national staff members, “What do you need?”
- There will be differences – be sure they are based on principle, equally applied and transparent
- An organization has a duty of care to all and must operate with goodwill.
- Leadership/managers must demonstrate respect and create an environment where all staff know the organization cares about them.

Building Social Support and Team Cohesion in the Workplace

Working group summary (A)

Presenter – Ben Emmens

Facilitator – Christina Moore

Scribe – Linda Baker

The discussion began with general comments from the morning panel including the idea of humility and what role it has in staff care. Also discussed was the importance of knowing your own limits, developing authentic connections, intellectual honesty and not foisting western ideals on local staff

Emotionally aware managers:

- While threatening to some, promotes self awareness in others
- Social cohesion of the group is important
- Initial period (hours/days) after a disaster is key to setting the tone for working together – in particular how the local staff are included or alienated

What works in management?

- Leaders who are not afraid to directly face questions and issues
- Group support systems
- Paying attention to individual preferences and choices, cultural differences of what people want and need

Implementing staff care groups:

- Important to focus on coping skills, not just a gripe session
- Look at implications of people working in teams (sometimes the composition of the team is a stressor)

Overlap between home and work life:

- Important for staff to be able to let colleagues know when home life is impacting work
- Need team support/understanding between staff as well as trust in management (with the caveat that you can't make people support each other)
- Managers may be cautious about becoming involved due to liability or other legal issues

People at home are part of the team

- How do you get people at home to be/feel part of the team?
- Sometimes fear of repercussions prevents staff from seeking help
- Facilitate social supports with technology
- Be proactive about reintegration issues
- Peer support can make the process easier

Building Social Support/Team Cohesion in the Workplace Working Group Summary (B)

Presenter/Resource: Ben Emmens

Facilitator: Lynne Gilliland

Note Taker: Amber Wolfe

Opening questions:

What are the practical challenges?

In any organization are there a variety of personalities and styles?

How can these different skills and traits be developed?

In order to ensure receptivity:

- How do you intervene? At what level?
- How do you even raise the issue? What strategies do you use?

What strengths to use:

- Focus on positive aspects
- Dale Carnegie has a very successful and transformative management style courses

How to intervene:

- Focus on what will lead to a transition
- Emphasize the importance of “good” managerial skills
- Good fundraising vs. desire for “happy” managerial staff

Understanding what you’ve got:

- There’s no short-cut to having a good employee perspective on any given situation
 - Use focus-groups or questionnaires
- When light is shined on what is important, change can occur

People often assume that if a person is good at one job, s/he will make a good manager

- Many people are hired because they’re good at that point in time, then various stressors undermine their capacity
- Managers need psychosocial support so that they can demonstrate their full potential
- Look at areas where people are comfortable and those which could be improved upon (Mercy Corps cornerstones does this)

How did we arrive at this point? What caused this shift?

- One factor may be increase in women country directors in many NGO’s
 - At CARE around 40% of the country directors are women (up from 20%).
 - At OXFAM there are around 60% women country directors
 - Although some organizations (ie Mercy Corps) still have very few women country directors
- The balance between male and female management may have lead to a change in style.

The shift is probably caused by many things, including:

- Intercommunication and knowledge
- The field is becoming more professional (higher education, higher demand, conditions on the ground shifting from “cowboys” to “professionals”)

How do we build social support? How can managers show support?

- Recognition* is very important. People need to be noticed for specific accomplishments or positive attributes. (Note: external vs. internal motivators)
- Have a vision
- Community practice and learning amongst one another can bring validity
- Apply “knowledge management” - by using these tools managers would have specific implications
- Provide availability and feedback
- Be flexible* - much is based on personal work style – a great manager would be able to adapt to their crew and be aware of it. A manager should ask things like: “How do you work?” “How is the best way I can manage you?”
- Matching: qualitative nature of the fit
- Manager: see, encourage, and develop how people connect to build team cohesion
- Training key: interpersonal communication with other managers
- Remember: Every horse has its own nature – the rider needs to understand the nature of the horse, and the horse needs to be responsive to the rider.

How do we nurture and develop managers?

- Start with a commitment
- Time – stop and do lessons learned
- When people are hired, discuss:
 - How organizational tools look in practice
 - Discuss practicalities
- Have management skills training at the beginning
- Need to emphasize accountability
 - Specific goals and consequences
 - Positives and negatives
- Have regulation regarding competencies of managers (ex: accountants)
- Socialization can cause different management styles

This is not a straight-forward issue; it is a struggle and a process

We don't ask people to build houses who don't know how

Look at capacity building vs. performance

Take lessons from obstacles overcome by various management styles

What managers need?

- Cultural competence and creativity
- How do you “help” people from various cultures (ask them)
- Consider relationship issues (identity perception)
- How managers can “prove themselves”
- Sometimes it's more about “proving themselves”
 - Women are never leaders of men in some areas of the world
 - There are barriers that should not be crossed

What is the “Return on Investment” (ROI)? Educating upper management – there's more to it than “getting the job done”, which is where investments come in.

How do we capture this?

- ✓ It is not wrong to focus on applicants to improve management skills (before going to work there)
- ✓ Professionalism does matter
- ✓ Make sure country managers are going to “hardship posts”
- ✓ Need for technical experts, higher expectations, and more interest

Building (external) social support Working group summary

Presenter/Resource – Penelope Curling

Facilitator – Sharon Forrence

Scribe – Jo Vendl

The discussion began with a review of the case study questions:

- What strategies are needed to be able to support the family of the staff member?
- How would you go about putting these in place?
- What are some of the challenges you might face?

What are some strategies that are needed for external support?

- Mechanism for family and peer support networks to come together (virtual meetings, online resources, Skype)
- Activate existing social support network in the field
- Proactively informing family members when critical incidents occur

What systems are in place?

- Mission readiness and stress management <http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/stress.htm>
- Resources for family and children <http://www.headington-institute.org>
- Counselors Assisting Relief and Development (CARD) - international online directory of professional counselors interested in providing services for humanitarian relief and development workers <http://www.headington-institute.org>
- Organizational policy that every country office has to list local resources (domestic violence, alcohol, substance use, rape crisis, therapy, etc)

Why aren't these things in place for all agencies across the board? What are the challenges?

- Lack of funding
- Not knowing what services are available
- Putting into place regular systems of communication about support issues
- How to make services culturally relevant for multi cultural work force, strengthen existing in country resources

Need for a dedicated on line community/resource

[Who will take ownership of this and help to make it happen?]

Training and Working With National Staff Working Group Summary

Presenter: Tineke Von Pietersom

Facilitator: Lynne Gilliland

Scribe: Kristine Thimm

Considerations and ways to address staff well-being:

- Conduct an assessment including field input
- Evaluate possibilities being mindful of practical limitations as well as safety issues
- Focus on manageable tasks, prioritize, set limits
- Train managers in debriefing and active listening
- Facilitate open conversation, active listening, and problem solving
- Address engaging the broader system, included structural and access issues
- Create time and space to address issues
- Address group dynamics, increase group cohesion
- Address communication (external and internal)
- Create transparency
- Address safety and security, being clear about risks, increase security briefings, and have communication plan in place
- Create social connections outside of work.
- Take into consideration local culture
- Support ability of staff to follow their religious practices.

Challenges

- Including someone with the power to implement.
 - Pro – action can be taken
 - Con – brings the expectation that something will happen.
 - Don't want to create a “we complain, you solve” dynamic
- Workload
 - There is always too much to do.
 - People sometimes turn to work when there are limited or no leisure time activities.
- Vacations for national staff may only be to go home and sort out family and home life - is not really a break.
- Inequity in R&R policies
 - Despite universal policies, individual differences exist
 - Gender issues

Action Steps

- Dedicate staff to focus on wellness/identify someone within
- Train and support the manager about how to support; before and during
- Ask them what would work
- Put in database general principles on support with concrete scenarios
- Add group cohesion to regular agenda
- Open a space for team input, dialogue, problem solving, and trust building

Responding to Critical Incidents

Working Group Summary

Presenters- Amber Grey and Michael O'Neill

Facilitator – Mike McIntyre and Sharon Forrence

Scribe – Lisa Baker

The discussion began with a review of the case study involving an American and a national staff involved in disaster response who fail to arrive at their destination on time

Begin to strategize response including notification – family members, other field staff, HQ liaison
Communication – who to contact, how to deliver message

- stick to the facts, offer support, gauge expectations
- provide appropriate levels of information
- prepare for interviews (media), use media to the advantage of solving the problem

Family liaison

- leave room for reactions
- notification, room for dialogue, inquiry of needs for support
- too much information while in initial shock= overwhelming
- inform= phone vs. in-person
- family's level of knowledge about deployment: disposition, gauge response, history with family/org., history of field involvement

Who delivers the message?

- Choose the best fit including consideration of organizational structure, tribal/ community relations/ language. Consider:
 - people who normally communicate, community lines, empathy
 - cultural considerations, gender, age
- One person notify vs. team? Consider:
 - competence/rank
 - what to do if there is no family liaison
 - management may not be the best choice

Role Play- delivering news about missing husband to wife of national staff member

- Be careful when suggesting problem solutions or any financial assistance
- Reinforce support rather than offering suggestions
- Be mindful of shock, control, & coping mechanisms

Other Concerns

- How does org. prepare/ build internal capacity to respond?
- Questions from large organization: training for dealing with family liaisons

Exiting, Debriefing, and Transition Working Group Summary (A)

Presenter/Resource: Mykell Winterowd

Facilitator: Donna Read

Scribe:

The discussion began with a review of the case studies

What were the factors that contributed to these workers developing problems upon re-entry?

- Isolation
- Going directly home, versus going through DC
- Does not mention any kind of pre-deployment training
- Does not mention breaks during the deployment or length of deployment
- Context within the area - when countries change their government, borders, policies

What support could have been offered to this worker- both during and after their assignments- to prevent or minimize these problems? Or what does your organization/education provide/teach?

- Counseling in the field
- Not having a burnt out boss
- Have a team in the field, versus having people work individually or in pairs
- Looking at the different stages -re-entry is a difficult stage in a deployment
- Food in Aid has internal and external debriefing (using Missions Training International)
- How does the staff respond to this program? Most of their staff is national staff (90%); national staff work with their peers/families; international staff suffer because the national staff have their networks that are specific to their culture. “We know it is a weakness, and the training we do we tell workers they need to have their own support system in place”

How are you handling national staff debriefing?

Not very well. Critical incident events have counselors in place to help national staff, but in other situations the support is not in place yet. Counselors are culturally sensitive and work locally.

AMI- pastoral care is at the core of what they do.

For short term assignments, workers debrief every night during the deployment, constant maintenance of people on short term.

Long term-

- People are sent out in teams so isolation is not as much of an issue.
- Each team member also has a liaison who contacts the worker 1 or 2 times per month. Counseling debriefing and logistical debriefing is conducted upon return
- Every team is visited by a travel team every 16-18 weeks
 - on location for several days taking care of any issues
 - A counselor is part of team as well as pastors who are counselors.
- How does staff respond to this program?
 - They really enjoy the interaction.
 - Being faith based, it's not just a tangible need, many other factors come into play with religion.
 - Attrition rate is very low
- What do you do with national staff?
 - Use pastors from the host country
 - Looks like pastoral care in the local situation.

- The workers do not usually have the finances to get counseling in the field, since they finance their own deployment.

What do you think would have happened to these workers [in the case study] if they had not reached out for support?

What are the next steps, what is actionable, what can be done from here?

- Pull the information from the assessments for follow up when workers are coming home from the field
- Meyers-Briggs is used by AMI
- 5 Dynamics assessment- takes 5 minutes to take it, web-based, has your entire profile outlined (work habits, support needed, position in the team) takes 5 minutes to get the report back, which is catered to the personality of the test-taker
- Shifting the view of us coming as the expert, and listening to the local staff of what to do there in the area
- If you were to give people some form of personality assessment to determine their needs before deployment, do you suppose that upon re-entry would go better?
- Empower the local workers to have responsibility for restoring their affected community
- Continue conversations with workers long after their mission/deployment to ensure appreciation for their work
- Develop an alumni club that allows people to be in touch with each other, all done by email.
- Be intentional about your organization's willingness listening to the worker
- De-stigmatize worker's participations in counseling services (question 21)
- Agencies need to follow up with returned workers - debriefings need to be appropriate to the specific person; alumni gatherings that are led by the workers; continue to ask questions long term;

What is the cost to the agency that does not provide debriefing?

- Breach of relationship, bad blood, decline of relationships within the org

Minimum level of support that should be offered to returning workers

- At least, just asking the questions
- What did you do, how are you doing, letting them tell their story

Exiting, debriefing and follow-up/transition Working Group Summary (B)

Presenter/Resource: Mykell Winterowd

Facilitator: Lynne Gilliland

Scribe: Amber Wolfe

What is the difference between an exit interview and debriefing?

- Exit interview: should occur with management (information and feedback, closure, leaving with a sense of empowerment)
- Debriefing: occurs after someone is outside a situation, after they ‘return home’
- Purpose is to:
 - Get information about what it is like in the field
 - Support the individual being debriefed

During [HR] debriefing of staff returning from field:

- There is a need to be clear about what is confidential
- There may be a lack of confidence that anything will actually change
- Support in this regard could be shown through:
 - To talk to HR about their priority (Retention or Retraining? “Filling a spot?” or “Goodness of fit?”)
 - For HR to actually be clear about what information they will use
 - For HR to tell in the interview what his/her next steps will be with the information
 - For HR to keep the person informed of what changes would be made
 - Provide informal follow-up support

For those doing exit interviews, it is essential that the primary purpose should be to provide support through:

- Empowerment
- Validation
- Provide some sense of closure

The secondary purpose should be for Agency use

Conversely, HR needs support in the ability to suggest policy changes. They could be supported through:

- Training in how to recreate a business strategy and make a business proposal
- Understand how to use time with upper management effectively
- To help upper management understand staff needs on a personal level
 - Do a simple base-line survey of staff, then again one year later and measure differences to demonstrate needs
- Reintegration coaching
- Understanding of how to do follow-up support
- To use resources already available

How do we implement exit interviews and debriefing into policy in an organization which is not necessarily open to it?

- Need to get information
- Have information in a summery
- Make sure information goes to whoever the decision makers are
- HR needs to look at policies, initiate exit interviews, build trust

How can people be confident exit interviews will actually be used?

- Relationship and trust (individually based)
- Need: To be available
- Premises and discussion of practice and what to expect during the exit interview

General Ideas:

1. An “Staff Wellness Newsletter”, which would be:
 - Internal to the organization
 - Electronic
 - Quarterly (at least)
 - Include:
 - “Stress tip of the month”
 - Highlight stories from the field
 - Resources
2. Internal “Peer Support Network”:
 - Something informal and simple – we talk with our peers anyway
 - It would help just to have someone from the field who is interested in hearing your stories contact you, someone who understands the acronyms used
 - Would need to be some type of monitoring of and/or support for Peer Supporters
 - Important to be mindful of adding additional burdens to Peers
 - Need to create a training for peers and include learning how to listen without internalizing
3. Built-in system of accountability

National Staff Issues:

1. Need flexibility in hiring so staff can put their affairs in order before leaving on assignment
2. Provide same resources for national staff as are provided for other staff
 - Use a variety of people
 - Train: knowledge is power
 - Ask what could be supportive for themselves, for others
3. Grief and loss work with staff:
 - staff may be resistant at first
 - if you make it clear it is for them they are more likely to feel supported

Program closing (mission close out)

1. Have a transitional period to include
 - Preparation for a new job search
 - Help with resumes, role-playing interviews
 - Making recommendations
 - Help with career planning and skill building
 - Management training
 - USAID and Peace Corps do this when programs/missions are closing
 - Research is needed for this
2. Many staff have positive debriefing experience with a community of their peers who have had similar experiences (“A tribe you’re going thru life with”)
3. It is important to have resources for family and friends, which would include:
 - a. Explanations for people outside the field
 - b. Talking points (ex: “Five questions you and your spouse/significant other need to discuss”)
 - c. Headington is currently creating online modules and solid resources for families
 - d. Military has great examples for family support (the challenges we have in humanitarian work are very similar to that of the military)

Key discussion points and action items (from final discussions)

Management and Leadership Issues in Stress Reduction

- Give 360 feedback reports (staff have a method to provide feedback & manager listens)
- Hire and train an MBA for the field
- Management needs to model self care
- Create buy in from management through research and evidence based arguments
- Designate staff responsible for staff care
- Conduct more research – making a business case for staff care in the field
- Time to reflect
- Knowledge sharing and support with peers including outside industry/cross pollination
- Power of story to inspire, communicate vision
- Provide stress management training in all levels of management training modules, include teambuilding and communication
- Include people management/staff wellness objectives in managers annual work plans, performance reviews, job descriptions
- Convincing management that this is a priority
- Organizational management – fix the problems
- Performance management system
- Job description

Assessment, Selection and Assignment of Staff

- Ongoing assessment and evaluation of teams in the field
- Transparency of the organization
 - ✓ Needs of organization
 - ✓ Wants of organization
- Disuses goodness-of-fit
 - ✓ For the individual
 - ✓ For the team
 - ✓ For the leader
- Use behavioral interviewing
- Consistency in linking screening for protective and risk factors
- Collaboration between universities and NGO's
- Incorporating creativity
- Weighing science vs art in selection process
- Realistic job descriptions\
- Improve pre-assignment briefings and on-boarding – organizational knowledge, job specific information, country information and thriving skills
- Hiring managers being flexible with recent grads lack of experience
- Link university and NGO HR departments

Building in Evaluation of Policies and Programs

- Pay attention to methodology
- Pay attention to timeliness vs comprehension
- Look at assumptions regarding
- Questions used (what are you getting at)
- How data is analyzed
- Know what you want to measure and why
- Need: designs and strategies for program evaluation in high stress situations
- Need: employee assistance program (EAP) for national staff
- Look at exemplars/positive deviants for positive examples

- Don't just be reactive, be proactive
- Use resources that are already available and transferable (like: logframes)
- Apply principles of program design to the development of evaluation "program"
- Track best practices and lessons learned
- Define/refine key HR metrics that can be used across all/most organizations
- Refine employee survey/diagnostic tools (for baseline)
 - Actions:
 - PIA can share metrics with participants for review (Ben, June 08), subsequently share actions and preliminary reporting (PIA meeting, Nov 08)
 - Consider and review indicators
 - Antares pilots employee survey in Taz

National Staff Issues

- Have a conversation with senior management about differences in the treatment of national and expat staff
- Increase opportunities for national staff to participate/present in forums and conferences (ISTSS/ISHHR have scholarships for presenters from developing countries)
- Organize demonstrates respect and creates open and caring environment
- Trainings organized on topics specific to national staff (career planning, etc)
- Provide confidential individual and group ventilation and coping (support) opportunities
- Provide 24/7 confidential psychosocial contact
- Consider needs of/strategies for National NGOs

Actions:

- Dedicate a staff member to focus on wellness – ideal world
- Train and support the managers on how to support national staff before & during placement
- Ask the staff what would help- this allows interventions to be culturally ok
- Make a database with general principles on how to support and train local staff with scenarios (pick a database AidWorkers Network or Psychosocial networkers, put both proposed databases in the same place, connect to database w/family members)
- Add time to a regular meeting to get people talking about their difficulties
- Open space – for input/dialog/problem solving and trust building

Building social support/team cohesion in the workplace

- Challenge assumptions upfront
- Create trust and ensure confidentiality
- Conduct assessments through focus groups and questionnaires
- Provide psychosocial support so staff can demonstrate their potential
- Management –
 - ✓ Important to recognize specific assets individual staff have accomplished
 - ✓ Be supportive
 - ✓ Be flexible to personal work styles and needs
- Apply knowledge management, have skill training for managers

Building Social Support Externally

- Family and peer support networks
- Web based
- Used in headquarters and field
- Activate a network in the field to get people to relax and step away
- Inform families/peers about realities in the field so they don't exaggerate their knowledge of the situation

- Establish a web database (=>update/improve psychosocial.org) including
 - ✓ Resources for all field workers
 - ✓ Resources for all families/peers
 - ✓ Place to post information re crisis
- Have liaisons both in field and back home to check in on family/peers/workers

Web database (Action?)

- Blog (Antares) open forum (families and children) quasi-moderated so contributors are approved
- Web networking ideas (brainstorm)
 - Dialogue strings by “country” and “home country”
 - Or wiki?
 - Or rate agencies – comments and survey monkey (or agencies volunteer to be part of a register that annually surveys their staff)
- Headington- families and children (Sept) - AP
 - Call for resources on the topic

Family and Peer Support Network (Internal to Organization)

- Part of orientation – linking families together during orientation phase
- HR or a volunteer committee (central family members)
- Amanda – follow through on whether an organization (MSF?) is willing to look at trial to create family support network
- Psychosocial org website – who is updating?

Exiting, Debriefing, Transition

- Utilize pre-assessments for comparison post-deployment
- Post deployment support
 - Develop an alumni club for contact/support after return
 - Set up system to listen to workers telling their story = storyteller
 - Use peer support network (cohorts are untapped resource)
 - Reintegration coaching (great chapter in Humanitarian Companion)
 - Have appropriate resources for national staff
 - Create system of follow-up (psychosocial, confidential) 3 weeks, 3 months, 9 months, etc
- Debriefing
 - Across the board debriefing (standard operating procedure)
 - De-stigmatize counseling services
 - In exit interview, have discussion on how information will be used, what to expect, and confidentially
- Create a staff wellness newsletter (internet, electronic, provides resources)
- Should be a built in system of accountability (line items in reports that protocol followed, not ad hoc)
- Utilize career planning during office closure/transition/close out missions (for national staff)
- Research on reintegration issues and effectiveness of services

Management needs “buy in” and to viscerally “get” the effects of job, effects of trauma and need for re-entry follow up

Create peer support network

Content checklist - collect and disseminate good practices

Include in orientation, guidelines – create accountability, means to make sure protocol is followed

Take care of the boss

Develop strategy on how to approach and get management buy in

Resources

Web Sites:

Psychosocial.org (<http://www.idealists.org/psychosocial/>) connects people, organizations, and resources to help international aid, development, and human rights organizations provide psychosocial support to staff and volunteers. Includes resources for managers, field staff, headquarters staff and providers of psychosocial support to aid workers.

IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings
<http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/products/products.asp> (English, Spanish, French and Arabic versions available)

People In Aid (<http://www.peopleinaid.org/>) is a global network of development and humanitarian assistance agencies with an aim to help organizations enhance the impact they make through better management and support of staff and volunteers. PIA's Code of Good Practice (<http://www.peopleinaid.org/code/online.aspx>) is an internationally recognized management tool that helps agencies to enhance the quality of their human resources management

The Antares Foundation "Managing stress in Humanitarian workers – Guidelines for Good Practice" (<http://www.antaresfoundation.org/Guidelines.htm>) is designed to facilitate NGOs in defining their own needs in relation to stress management.

Headington Institute (<http://www.headington-institute.org/>) provides psychological and spiritual support to relief and development workers worldwide. Free online training modules on stress, trauma, vicarious trauma, coping with travel stress and more.

Aid Worker Network (<http://www.aidworkers.net/>) is a free service set up to enable aid workers to share practical advice and resources with each other. Managing stress response resources here: http://www.aidworkers.net/?q=advice/handling_stress

Emergency Personnel Network (<http://www.epn.peopleinaid.org/>) is an informal network of humanitarian organizations which exists to improve the ability of participating organizations, both individually and as a community, to find, select, prepare and retain personnel for emergency operations. Members of EPN can participate in an online network to discuss matters relating to people management in humanitarian organizations.

Road to Resilience <http://www.apahelpcenter.org/featuredtopics/feature.php?id=6>

Greenleaf Integrative Strategies (<http://greenleaf-is.com/info3.html>) mind-body audio recording "Relaxation and Stress Relief for Demanding Environments" (iTunes download and Amazon link)

Aid Worker Pocket Card <http://telida.isu.edu/telida/pocketcard.php>

Make time for play <http://www.deepfun.com/>

Books:

Danieli, Y. (2002). *Sharing the Front Line and the Back Hills: Peacekeepers, Humanitarian Aid Workers and the Media in the Midst of Crisis*. Amityville, New York: Baywood Publishing Company, Inc.

Davis, M., Eshelman, E. R., & McKay, M. (2000). *The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook (5th Ed.)*. Oakland, California: New Harbinger Publications. Inc.

Ehrenreich, J. (2006). Managing stress in humanitarian aid workers: The role of the humanitarian aid organization. In G. Reyes and G.A. Jacobs (eds). *Handbook of International Disaster Psychology, Vol. 4: Interventions with special needs populations*. Westport, CT: Praeger. pp. 99-112.

Ehrenreich, J. (2005). *The Humanitarian Companion: A Guide for International Aid, Development and Human Rights Workers*. Essex, UK: Practical Action Publishing

Fawcett, J. (2003) *Stress and Trauma Handbook: Strategies for Flourishing in Demanding Environments*. Federal Way, WA: World Vision International.

Mollica, R.F. (2006) *Healing Invisible Wounds: Paths to Hope and Recovery in a Violent World*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Press

Quick, J. C., Quick, J. D., Nelson, D. ., & Hurrell, Jr., J. J. (1997). *Preventative Stress Management in Organizations*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Helper's Fire Background

Helper's Fire - what does that mean?

In March of 2004, Action Without Borders and The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at Notre Dame University organized the conference "*Tending the Helper's Fire: Mitigating Trauma and Stress in International Staff and Volunteers.*" This was a ground-breaking initiative in the U.S. to bring together human resources professionals, researchers, program directors, and international humanitarian aid staff to examine how organizations provide psychosocial support to their expatriate and local staff and volunteers working overseas.

The name of the conference - "Tending the Helper's Fire" - comes from the Master's thesis title of Karen Brown.

After the Notre Dame conference, groups formed in DC and NY for on-going presentations and discussions on staff care issues. The name "Helper's Fire" is adapted from the Notre Dame conference.

What is the mission of Helper's Fire?

To promote wellness of staff working in chronic and acute stress environments by sharing resources, best practices, and training materials.

What are some current activities?

Representing government agencies, non-government organizations, and independent consultants, the Helper's Fire group is well-placed to serve as an advocate for staff wellness, as an advisory group, and as an information resource for organizations, agencies and groups engaged in development and relief efforts. The outcome of our efforts will serve expatriate, third-country, and host country staff.

How can I get involved?

Since September of 2004, the DC Helper's Fire group has been meeting on the first Wednesday of the month from 10:30 am to 12:00 pm. Since January 2008, the DC Helper's Fire group has been meeting in conjunction with the InterAction Staff Care Working Group at the InterAction office (1400 16th Street NW, Suite 210). You can join the DC Helper's Fire yahoo group here:

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/HelpersFire/>