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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN STATES AFFECTED BY FRAGILITY AND CONFLICT

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Human Resource Management in States Affected by Fragility and Conflict

Stock-taking current practices and challenges of members of the OECD-DAC's International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF)

Cécile de Calan[1]

Abstract

This study on Human Resource Management (HRM) in States Affected by Fragility and/or Conflict has been produced by the INCAF Secretariat in response to a request made by the INCAF Task Team on Implementation and Reform during its meetings of 25-26 March 2014. The purpose of this publication is to:

- provide a shared understanding of HRM issues to policy makers and practitioners involved in states affected by fragility and/or conflict (SFC)[2]
- outline a set of common challenges faced by INCAF members in relation to HRM in SFC
- serve as a peer-learning tool by sharing ideas and experiences on innovative practices and reforms among members of the OECD/DAC's International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), or from other organisations working in SFC

Terminology

The INCAF *States of Fragility Report* for 2015 proposed a new and more universal analytical framework for issues of conflict and fragility, in line with the emerging thinking of the process to agree Sustainable Development Goals. To reflect this work this paper refers wherever possible to States Affected by Fragility and/or Conflict, rather than Fragile States.

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[2] Such practitioners include senior managers, HR professionals, and project managers in the field as well as at headquarters.

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List of Acronyms

ACFID   – Australian Council for International Development

CIDA   – Canadian International Development Agency

DFID   – Department for International Development (United Kingdom)

FDFA   – Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (Switzerland)

GIZ   – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

HRM   – Human resource management

ICT   – Information and communication technology

INCAF   – International Network on Conflict and Fragility

KfW   – Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau

MSF   – Médecins Sans Frontières

NGO   – Non-gouvernemental organisation

RMO   – Risk management office

SDC   – Swiss Agency for Development and Co-Operation

SFC   – States and Situations affected by fragility and/or conflict

SIDA   – Swedish International Development Agency

UN   – United Nations

ZIF   – Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: KEY MESSAGES

- Effective engagement in states affected by fragility and/or conflict (SFC) requires different knowledge and skills than in other, more standard operating environments.

- Development partners face serious challenges in staffing their field offices with mid-level managers for a reasonable amount of time. Finding cost-effective family solutions for SFC posts is essential to reduce staff turnover.

- Development partners need to understand the full scope of their duty-of-care obligations not only for home-based employees, but also locally hired staff, project staff, and consultants who are working on their behalf in high-risk environments.

- High staff turnover drives up costs and undermines country knowledge, business continuity and corporate memory. Many development partners have sought to restructure the way headquarters and field staff work together to address this challenge.

- Many development partners are seeking to increase their reliance on locally hired staff as a way to mitigate the risk of high turnover. But development partners may need to invest more in building their capacities, while paying attention not to distort the local labour market.

- SFC engagement may involve many different teams, departments and ministries within a donor government. This bears risks such as blurring the division of roles and responsibilities, as well as lines of accountability.

- Human resource management professionals need to be involved at the outset of strategic engagement and operational planning. Such integrated business planning ensures that objectives and approaches are in line with available resources.

- Incentive packages have been designed to minimise turnover. To be effective, they should also create opportunities for professional growth and recognition instead of being limited only to cash.

- Improving opportunities for reintegration at headquarters or for cross-posting to a non-SFC may not only be an important incentive, but also a way to cross-fertilise knowledge and experience across the organisation.

- Development partners may want to consider more joint training initiatives as part of the pre-field assignment preparations for outgoing staff. This particularly makes sense for risk and security management.

1. PURPOSE

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- provide a shared understanding of HRM issues to policy makers and practitioners involved in states affected by fragility and/or conflict (SFC)[3]
- outline a set of common challenges faced by INCAF members in relation to HRM in SFC
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The presented publication does not aim at providing an exhaustive analysis of the HRM challenges faced by development partners in SFC. It is rather meant to be used by those currently considering or undertaking HRM reforms as a way of improving their ability to achieve results in SFC. Even if this exercise raises more questions than it provides answers to on the challenges of managing HRM in SFC, INCAF members felt it was best to start by taking stock of current practices and thoughts before producing some guidance.

2. CONTEXT

Development partners are operating in increasingly complex environments – both politically and institutionally – when engaging in SFC. As international experience in a range of countries from Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste to Afghanistan and Iraq suggests, development partners need to be able to do "different things" as well as "do things differently" in order to achieve lasting results in terms of peacebuilding and statebuilding. The lessons learnt from these experiences have been captured, summarised and reflected in the current global policy framework, namely the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. Through the OECD-DAC's International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), development partners are exploring ways to change the way they operate both on the ground and at headquarters level not only to meet their commitments under the New Deal, but also the challenges to global stability in the twenty-first century. So, what are some of these challenges?

First, development partners need to understand their engagement more explicitly in political terms. That is, they need to understand the power dynamics of the partner country in which they are involved, including its political economy, and how their engagement

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[3] Such practitioners include senior managers, HR professionals, and project managers in the field as well as at headquarters.

supports or risks doing harm to their expected results. This type of analysis is important for ensuring an appropriate design of donor-supported programmes or projects for achieving results where the local power dynamics may be fluid and development interventions may alter the balance of power and interests in the local political economy.

Second, development partners need to engage actively in a dialogue with the local authorities, national stakeholders, and other international partners (including non-traditional ones in the areas of *inter alia* security, diplomacy, and business / trade) as a core part of their engagement. Such dialogue is important for aligning donor-supported interventions with national priorities and developing common arrangements for delivering aid funding in an institutionally fragile or fragmented environment. The development of a harmonised financing architecture can help set the stage for strengthening and progressively using country systems over time and as part of a broader statebuilding agenda.

Third, development partners also need to sharpen their abilities to assess and mitigate risks in SFC. The combination of volatile politics, high insecurity, and weak institutions requires development partners to elaborate methodologies and strengthen approaches for assessing and mitigating risks at institution-specific and programme levels. Increasingly, there is a need for development partners to engage in joint approaches, especially where national programmes and pooled funds are involved. Again, dialogue, inter-agency coordination and forging new partnerships may be important aspects to managing shared risks in SFC, which may not be as relevant in more standard operating environments in developing countries.

Given the above challenges, many development partners have sought to reassess whether their current HRM policies and practices are fit for purpose when engaging in SFC. Many development partners have faced a number of challenges and constraints with respect to HRM. Many of them are outlined below, along with questions and issues to be addressed. That being said, many INCAF members have already sought to meet these HRM challenges in SFC and relevant "lessons learnt" and policy responses are outlined below.

3. METHODOLOGY

The HRM study draws from several sources. First, it incorporates the findings of a workshop organised by the INCAF Task Team on Implementation and Reform in February 2013 in Paris. Second, it draws from a number of reports and studies conducted by INCAF members on HRM policy and practice reforms which were shared with the Secretariat. Third, it reflects donor documents on HRM and outcomes of interviews conducted between April and July 2014. Interviewees (see Annex 1) consisted of HRM professionals from INCAF member agencies in Germany, Switzerland, the UK and the World Bank. Finally, it also reflects the outcomes of a desk-based research on the policies and practices of organisations beyond INCAF, such as non-governmental organisations and businesses

involved in SFC (see Annex 2). A number of INCAF members were invited to be part of an advisory group that supported work to produce this publication.

4. WHAT IS HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT?

This section seeks to define HRM and describe its various components. It then outlines the types of HRM challenges faced by development partners when engaging in SFC.

4.1 The scope

HRM can be loosely defined as the managing of people at work, covering a range of functional areas from hiring to firing, and issues related to how they contribute to organisational performance and strategy. It also addresses which actors are responsible for HRM, ranging from employees themselves to line managers, as well as specialist departments.

People In Aid, an international NGO specialising in HRM, puts forward seven principles (see box below) that outline the main HRM functional areas and provide a useful framework for defining the scope of HRM in SFC.

Cross-checking this framework with the most critical HRM areas for INCAF members in fragile contexts has led us to identify the key functions for stock-taking HRM practices in SFC, which are detailed in the next section:

- Responsibility and organisation, and Integrated HRM and business planning: Principle 1
- Sourcing: Principle 5
- Compensation and benefits: Principle 2
- Management: Principle 3
- Staff support and duty of care: Principle 7
- Training and development, reintegration and career management: Principle 6

INCAF members did not identify the area of Consultation and Communication as relevant for this study.

There is also value in clarifying which categories of human resources will be considered here. Each of the staff groups has its own legal status and scope of compensation and benefits, which can in turn affect how they are managed, and the different

Principle 1

Human Resources Strategy

Human resources are an integral part of our strategic and operational plans

Principle 2

Staff Policies and Practices

Our human resources policies aim to be effective, fair and transparent

Principle 3

Managing People

Good support, management and leadership of our staff is key to our effectiveness

Principle 4

Consultation and Communication

Dialogue with staff on matters likely to affect their employment enhances the quality and effectiveness of our policies and practices

Principle 5

Recruitment and Selection

Our policies and practices aim to attract and select a diverse workforce with the skills and capabilities to fulfil our requirements

Principle 6

Learning, Training and Development

Learning, training and staff development are promoted throughout the organisation

Principle 7

Health, Safety and Security

The security, good health and safety of our staff are a prime responsibility of our organisation

risks and opportunities that exist regarding the possible contribution of each staff group. In the context of states affected by fragility, there are several staff groups relevant to HRM:

- senior management in headquarters and in the field

Permanent staff: civil servants, employees on open-ended contract with the head office/agency;

- HR managers in headquarters or in the field

International staff: can be permanent staff on a fixed-term assignment, employees, volunteers, experts or consultants employed on a fixed-term contract or seconded from a different organisation or government body;

- locally employed staff: employed on fixed or open-ended contracts in the field offices.

NB: The study will not deal with statutory employment requirements which differ across countries and status, and focus on "universal" policy items, whose applicability however needs to be checked for each agency in relation to its legal obligations.

4.2 The main HRM challenges

Development partners face specific HRM challenges when engaging in SFC, which they experience at both the institutional as well as the individual level. With respect to the former, development partners may first need to redefine the roles and responsibilities to be fulfilled by their staff at both headquarters and in field offices, as well as how various teams and units work together along horizontal lines. Second, they need to develop a cadre of motivated, highly qualified personnel who are able and willing to undertake difficult field assignments for a "reasonable amount of time".[4] Development partners may need to provide training to existing staff, while also recruit new staff with different competency profiles. The structure of work relationships may need to be revamped, particularly the division of roles and responsibilities between headquarters and field offices. Managers may also need to take on new responsibilities, particularly the duty-of-care for staff operating in high-risk environments.[5]

However, development partners have a comparatively small pool of staff willing and able to take on such hardship posts for a reasonable period of time. This is despite the fact that overall there is an increasing proportion of staff who have actual experience in SFC. The staff shortage, however, becomes more acute when seeking to fill middle management

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[4] At the INCAF Workshop on HRM in Fragile Situations, held in Paris on 20 February 2013, members agreed that two or three years could be considered a reasonable amount of time for an assignment in a fragile situation.

[5] For an explanation of the duty-of-care principle, please visit the website of International SOS.

posts. While there may be a good number of well-qualified middle managers, there may not be sufficient incentives or means to assign them to SFC, given their family obligations, etc.

Furthermore, there is a high turnaround of those staff willing and able to take on assignments in SFC. This turnaround weakens the ability of development partners to build up country knowledge, which is essential to navigating the local politics and institutional dynamics, as well as to forge relationships and partnerships with local authorities and other international partners. External recruits face the additional challenge of having limited knowledge of their agency's procedures and of key contacts in the field. Contract duration should be scrutinised, factoring in leave and travel provisions which reduce actual presence in the field.

At the individual level, staff may also need special incentives, compensation and benefits, as well as other forms of support in order to take on assignments in SFC. The incentives for staff to take on assignments in SFC do not need to be limited to cash only. Rather, they may involve opportunities for greater professional development, mobility and recognition. In addition, staff may need to have opportunities for reconnecting with loved ones, particularly in non-family duty stations, as well as support for stress management, including counselling for dealing with traumatic events. Field staff may also require special training and resources (e.g. armoured vehicles, satellite communications, and personal protection) for ensuring their safety in high-risk contexts. The particular challenges faced by individual staff are further explored in section 4.6 below.

> *The World Bank is currently moving towards uncoupling their HRM policies from the institutional assessment of country fragility to better adapt to country-specific contexts, and introducing two sets of SFC, the non-Family posts (Extreme Hardship) and Family Posts (Hardship), with differentiated financial incentives.*
>
> *As part of a project to strengthen the attractiveness of posts in SFC, the Swiss FDFA/SDC is establishing a list of SFC contexts eligible to specific HR benefits that can be reviewed regularly. Locations can be added at short notice to meet the needs of a specific crisis, such as a natural disaster.*

Adapting HRM policies and practices to the needs of effective engagement in SFC needs to be flexible and differentiated. Each SFC will have its own political context, security situation, level of international attention, a different pace on the ground, e.g. sudden or slow-developing crises. All of these factors should be considered when adapting HRM. The cost of adapting HRM and thus equipping staff with the right training, incentives, and support packages may be quite high. Therefore, a differentiated approach for adapting HRM is important to ensure decisions taken by senior managers are cost effective with respect to recruiting, preparing, deploying and managing their staff, both at headquarters and in the field.

5. REFORMING HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

This section will look at the specific challenges of each HRM area faced by development partners engaged in SFC and their various responses to them. Fragile situations are complex operating environments as they often entail multifaceted challenges that cause overlapping roles and areas of responsibility for development actors. For these reasons, clear lines of responsibility and accountability are essential for any donor. In situations of fragility, it is even more important for development partners to undertake "integrated HRM business planning" and ensure that their strategic goals in a partner country are set against a clear understanding of the human and financial resources required to achieve them, as well as their availability.[6] Not only the right knowledge and skills are needed, but also the means and incentives to apply them effectively.

5.1 Lines of accountability / responsibility

At the outset of an SFC engagement (especially one involving an emergency response), the lines of accountability and responsibility can become unclear. Often, such contexts involve a wide range of international partners that may be launching new initiatives or quickly ramping up existing ones. They also may not have any previous experience in working together, yet now seek to cooperate on joint initiatives.[7] Bilateral development partners may also be part of a whole-of-government approach, and UN agencies part of an integrated peace support operation and / or the broader Country Team. In some cases, the blurring of lines of responsibility may happen between sector / programme managers at headquarters and operational managers at field offices; or even between generalist and specialist roles at either headquarters or the field. While clarity over the division of operational roles and responsibilities may emerge after a series of coordination meetings among partners, the lines of management accountability, particularly for HRM, should always be clear from the outset.

Where should HRM responsibilities optimally lie? It is particularly necessary to have a holistic and consistent approach to HRM. Yet each donor has its own specific institutional context, and so the answer to this question will also need to be specific. However, the HRM function across each context should seek to follow some common general principles. The function is commonly organised in head offices around dedicated international HRM business partners, covering a few countries or regions, complemented by specialist teams on health, staff support or compensation and benefits. On the programme side, staff is

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[6] In SFC, development partners may be engaging in new initiatives of which they have relatively little past experience in undertaking. They may not, therefore, have a clear understanding at the outset of what level of effort and resources (and amount of time) may be needed to implement them. This is why making "integrated HRM business planning" is especially important in SFC.

[7] The range of international partners may span across a number of sectors, e.g. security, political, humanitarian, development, civil society and business sectors).

managed by desks, with involvement of the country management. Managers need to define not only where best to place HRM functions, but also have to set the right ratio between headquarter and field staff considering cost and feasibility factors. This presupposes a clear understanding of the different roles and responsibilities that both headquarter and field staff need to play. It should also be noted that many INCAF members commented on the value, and often challenge, of bringing non-HR managers to engage in structured discussions with their HRM part*er*s.

5.2 The role of managers

The working conditions in SFC also require that managers (both HR and senior staff) acquire new experience, knowledge and skills. Managers need to have some level of familiarity with the operating context on the ground in order to not only respond to the needs of their field staff but also pre-empt them by ensuring that such needs are reflected in the early planning stages. Experience in SFC has, for several development partners, become an important prerequisite for promotion. Otherwise, managers can find themselves in a reactive mode when dealing with needs for effective engagement in SFC, undermining cooperation between headquarters and field offices over time (this is especially important with respect to issues of "duty of care", discussed below in section 5.3).

Some development partners have sought to bridge the gap between headquarters and field offices. GIZ and CIDA (Afghanistan) set up a system of regular rotations that helped to break down any divide between headquarter and field staff in terms of knowledge and experience. Adequate policy and analytical backstopping for younger or less-experienced field staff may help, as well as enhancing the "face time" of headquarter staff in the field. GIZ has started this practice, so that some staff are deployed for one year in its headquarters, and two years in Afghanistan. Frequent visits help to achieve proximity management, but presuppose adequate financial resources. In addition, visits can be overly focused on programmes and not on people. Distance management is thus becoming a pressing requirement. It is facilitated by the use of more ICT (e.g. Skype and other low-cost video conferencing) to keep headquarters and field offices well connected. [8] This communication strategy however is dependent from technological capabilities that might not always be available in partner countries.

Performance management systems need to be customised to the specific needs of engagements in SFC. They should recognise and reward managers for involving HRM professionals early in the process of strategic planning as well as for proactively ensuring that "duty-of-care" obligations are addressed for staff travelling to and / or working in SFC (this is discussed further in section 5.3). This includes, as mentioned above, the

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[8] To support good practice of performance management across all locations at an affordable cost, ACFID implemented a four-week e-workshop.

development of work structures that allow managers to stay in close contact with the field to ensure proper working conditions and a healthy work-life balance (see section 5.6). This includes checking that staff are psychologically fit for hardship assignments in SFC and do not stay beyond an agreed time horizon, beyond which it is considered to be "unhealthy" to continue an assignment.

Unlike programme managers, HRM professionals are unlikely to have field experience in SFC. Yet it is important for managers to help familiarise them with the needs and challenges of their field offices, so that they may assist in developing HRM solutions. Some development partners like the World Bank are putting more emphasis on the need for HRM professionals to increase their "face time" with field offices in order that they may be more sensitive to local working conditions and work with them on developing solutions to what may be unprecedented challenges faced by field staff. While increasing "face time" may require travel to the field, it might also be sufficient in some cases for HRM professionals to use video conferencing facilities to stay in more regular contact.

> *FDFA/SDC is very positive about the value of regular video-calls to maintain a strong interpersonal relationship between HRM in headquarters and field staff.*
>
> *International NGO Retrak has embedded a distance management policy that helps its staff select the most appropriate communication tools according to the various management needs: knowledge sharing, team/relationship building, managing conflict or building trust.*

For HRM practitioners, professional competency profiles need to be complemented by some knowledge of basic psychology to understand the actual and possible needs of field staff operating in high-risk FSC environments in order to ensure appropriate support. Some of this support may involve external counselling services.

> *In 2010, the NGO Action Contre la Faim engaged in a review of headquarter and field responsibilities to strengthen consistency in work organisation in the field and at headquarters level, to enhance mission empowerment and to refocus the head office on strategy definition, support and end control.*
>
> *This led to decentralising the HRM function to the field level, empowering in-country HRM coordinators to deal with all international and local staff and become more pro-actively involved in organisational change and mediations in case of conflict. This devolvement was realised by up-scaling HR manager's skills with a specific in-house training programme over two years. Country directors became final decision-makers on all mission recruitments.*

In the humanitarian community, there is also a growing demand for proficiency in metrics that can help to demonstrate HRM's contribution to business strategy, and that support the case for a better integration of HRM systems to the overall business process by showing evidence of its added value and return on investment. A few examples that could be usefully considered in SFC contexts are: a) the cost of security per employee; b) days spent on learning and development per employee (and its return on retention, performance, etc.);

and more c) conventional indicators such as diversity, turnover, and ratio of HRM staff to employees.

> *FDFA/SDC HR policy principles for staff working in SFC spells out what is required of managers in terms of availability, understanding of challenging work conditions, ability to lead diverse teams, support work, development and well-being, dealing responsibly with risk and security. To achieve their role, FDFA/SDC commits to providing them with relevant preparation, support, space for increased responsibilities and recognition in terms of career development.*

5.3 Integrated HRM business planning

HRM planning needs to be integrated into broader processes for setting strategic goals and managing corporate resources. Specific SFC contexts may require sets of competencies and experiences that may not be readily available within donor agencies. While HRM departments can and do make efforts to identify new talent pools, these efforts are best undertaken at the earliest stages of engagement, given the possible need to deploy staff quickly and scale up operations in-country, e.g. "surge deployments", or simply to provide technical assistance to national institutions in SFC. Consequently, strategic planners should involve HRM professionals at the outset of the priority-setting process. In turn, such integrated planning may also lead development partners to scale down their ambitions on the basis of a realistic assessment of HRM constraints. With the changing nature of engagement in SFC, this involves a continuous assessment and review of the mix of knowledge and skills required and of the processes for ensuring cost-effective human resourcing at the appropriate pace. For many agencies, the unprecedented demands of programming in Afghanistan both in terms of scope and volume tested the limits of their HRM systems. Yet, there was also an opportunity to test new ways of managing human resources and then to initiate more system-wide reforms based on lessons learnt.

> *CIDA overcame the challenge of unprecedented demands by developing innovative approaches and integrating them into the corporate culture: a dedicated country-specific Management Services Division with HRM advisors, aggressive recruiting campaigns, flexibility in classifications with emphasis placed on "best fit" for the task rather than the job category, and staff recruitment across and outside the government.*

Integrated HRM planning is also required to ensure business continuity and prevent corporate memory loss both by trying to minimise staff turnover, and by mitigating its effect with robust knowledge management strategies. Multi-year HRM planning is favoured to translate strategic goals, implementation approaches, and operational needs in HRM terms, and guide staff mobility, development when time allows, or external sourcing where new competencies are required. Integrated HRM planning not only spells out the types of profiles and skills that will be needed, but the best way to acquire them: employment type and duration *vs* outsourcing for strategic reasons (e.g. non-core missions, partnership) or security issues.

The downward trend of official development assistance to SFC[9] may be a constraint for some development partners given that HRM in such contexts may be more costly than in more standard country programmes. Senior staff deployed to a SFC may cost up to three times of what a similar post at headquarters costs. A clear assessment of strategic opportunities and risks (including the risk of non-engagement) should help to strike the right balance in headcounts and staff profiles deployed to the field and those at headquarters. A greater use of technology should be considered when assessing the division of roles and responsibilities, bearing in mind that internet access may not always be reliable in some countries. The high cost of decentralisation and high security has driven many development partners to take a harder look at getting this balance right.

> *DFID is rebalancing their work load between headquarters and field offices, and making greater use of technology to connect headquarters with the field.*
>
> *SIDA has also reviewed where to place critical competencies at country, regional or home level to support further delegation of decision-making authority to the field.*

5.4 Staffing

Development partners need to create staffing plans that reflect the operational demands for delivering programmes effectively in SFC. Such plans need to set the right ratio between headquarters and field staff, as well as match the "right" people to the "right" jobs. This presupposes a clear understanding of the different roles and responsibilities that both headquarters and field staff need to play, especially in relation to national counterparts and other international partners. Key competencies required for effective programme delivery in SFC thus need to be integrated from the outset of HRM planning. Processes for deploying staff to the field may need to be adapted, so as to provide a greater scope of support, given the lack of local services in many SFC. A "surge capacity" may also be needed to deploy staff and technical expertise rapidly in an *ad hoc* manner for a short period. Such systems need to be linked to the package of incentives as well as knowledge management systems.

What are important qualifications for effective engagement in SFC?

The table below lists the competencies that interviewees identified as essential to effective engagement in SFC. A major challenge for development agencies operating in SFC is to combine these skills by managing international and local staff adequately and creating teams that are tailor-made to the demands of the programme.

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[9] See OECD Fragile States 2014: Domestic Revenue Mobilisation, p. 24.

Expert knowledge	Operational skills	Behavioural traits/ Personal characteristics
• Specific regional, country, sector, theme • Environment and actors • Security/conflict awareness • Languages	• Political analysis • Understanding own institutional processes[10] • Work in partnership, incl. with non- DAC agencies and the private sector • Management, incl. remote • Specific leadership • Policy dialogue • Compact negotiation • Risk management • Donor coordination • Project management	• Resilience • Adaptability, flexibility, open mind • Stress management • Intercultural sensitiveness • Physical and mental health

The targeted competencies should be considered in the teams, striking the right balance across international and local staff. Thus selecting the most appropriate employment status is the next challenge, particularly when balancing the contract duration with the demands of the job and its "attractiveness", and when deciding to recruit internally or externally, and locally or internationally. Looking at different structures such as regional hubs may allow for international experts to be based at safer places in difficult regions and travel in and out of the field.

DFID's international competency framework was introduced for international posts to reflect the competencies both required and acquired in SFC. It spells out effective and ineffective behaviours at all position levels for engaging internationally and demonstrating resilience. This is appreciated as providing the right balance for defining staff profiles. DFID is also participating in research conducted by Ashridge University to develop innovative ways to better identify and develop resilience for managers working in SFC.

INCAF members are also recognising the growing need to "localise" the staffing of their field offices in SFC. Indeed, local staff may bring a better understanding of local backgrounds, languages and actors, as well as safeguard institutional memory as their turnover is often much lower than the expatriates. Local hires are also significantly less costly. On the downside, security clearance limits and risks of corruption may prohibit local hires for some key positions. Further, greater reliance on local staff may have the adverse effect of draining capacity in national institutions. Indeed, the effects of fragility – such as disruption to education systems – limit the pool of skilled personnel available and imply a

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[10]   A lack of familiarity with the institutional processes can lead to significant delays in delivering aid programmes, particularly with regards to procurement of goods and services.

tough competition for qualified applicants between government, NGOs, UN organisations and development partners.

In 2013 DFID developed an international assignments policy for staff appointed in-country, with comprehensive provisions including compensation, ensuring continuity with home employment, support for dependents and duty-of-care. Unless specific security clearance or visa restrictions exist, employees can apply for all expatriate positions. The policy aims to respond quickly to recruitment market shortages, to encourage the sharing of skills and knowledge across DFID and to support local staff to gain experience in other countries and contexts.

Why is recruiting for SFC positions particularly challenging for donors?

Positions can be hard-to-fill because of:

- **Hardship**: difficult working conditions, poor security, and long hours
- **Family status**: unaccompanied, non-family duty station
- **Skill shortage**: senior and middle management, rare expertise (e.g. engineers, specialised law, and economic experts) associated with project management.

Many donors are facing a shortage of mid-level managers who are willing and able to take on an assignment in SFC, due to the above-noted factors. Retention is also a problem for those who do accept to undertake such assignments. Consequently, many donor staff in states affected by fragility and/or conflict are young and relatively inexperienced, given the demands of the assignments. Creative ways are needed to fill this experience gap in the field. AusAID has sought to bridge the headquarter-field divide by appointing a senior staff to head its field missions. Those who are closer to retirement often have fewer family obligations and have financial incentives through their pension system. However, financial incentives alone are unlikely to be sufficient. Adequate policy and analytical backstopping for younger or less experienced field staff may help, as well as enhancing the "face time" of headquarter staff in the field. To minimise the selection challenges, there should be a mixed panel for undertaking recruitment, which includes staff with relevant field experience. Involving a mix of key staff (HR manager, psychologist, country expert and specific sector expert) in the recruitment process, as done at GIZ, is a critical success factor. In terms of suitable set-ups, rosters are often used to access a large pool of suitable professionals with reduced lead time.

The Berlin-based Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze (ZIF; Centre for International Peace Operations) is committed to putting forward applicants within two weeks who can be deployed within two months in response to a call for contributing to a peace operation. This, however, can be challenging as applicants on the roster are usually employed at the German Government, in the private sector or at NGOs.

ZIF captured the [lessons](#) of a range of European actors mobilising civilians for peace operations on what makes rosters effective, outlining success factors such as maintenance, pre-deployment training, secondment and duty-of-care provisions.

Development partners may use a variety of staffing mechanisms for identifying and recruiting qualified personnel to take on assignments in SFC. Recruitment can be devolved to a specialised agency or mechanism (such as ZIF), which will then deploy staff for other departments or international organisations. Rosters can be established at organisation-level (such as the World Bank who has SFC specific regional and sectorial talent pools), or shared across organisations (as is frequent across UN agencies) or externalised, such as RED R for disaster specialists. Rosters and "talent pools" can be established jointly by several development partners sharing common needs and objectives, and thus allow them to enlarge their access to candidates able and willing to take on hardship assignments in SFC. Assessment methods are comprehensive and often use a combination of competency-based interviews, pre-deployment training (which can still be used as a selection step), and assessments (e.g. New Frontier simulations used in Canada to test applicants' reactions and team work abilities under stress). For internal applicants, performance records can be used to the extent that they are available and reliable.

> *To enhance consistency in project work, GIZ further focuses on recruitment of internal experienced personnel and the onward assignment of national personnel also in senior positions. GIZ is also constantly developing diagnostic tools in a thoughtful way, focusing on identifying resilient personnel to meet the challenging environments in SFC.*
>
> *To acquire specific and rare skills, GIZ recruits risk-management advisers through a separate process to support development practice in SFC.*

How can donors improve the process of deploying their staff?

Donors need to have flexible HRM policies and systems in order to meet fast-changing circumstances on the ground. The latter may also undermine the ability of donors to deploy staff beyond short-term assignments. One year is generally considered to be a minimum duration for a posting. Interviewed agencies offer assignments up to three years, which is on the upper end of the range compared with NGOs, which tend to offer shorter contracts to their expatriates in hardship postings (such as three to six months in conflict environments). Regional (Afghanistan-Pakistan) assignments have been successfully piloted at DFID. The same is almost certainly true for donors with staff in Somalia.

In non-family postings, [job-sharing on a rotating basis](#) could ensure local and partner engagement in the medium-term, avoiding the loss of contextual knowledge. Staff would be able to maintain higher engagement with their headquarters and a more open circulation of ideas from headquarters to the field and back, while preserving a sustainable work-life balance. Procedures are needed to ensure a smooth handover from outgoing to incoming staff, and preserve information management and business continuity. This is particularly critical for maintaining good client/partner relations, programme effectiveness and institutional memory.

After deployment, thorough follow-up is needed that focuses on operational lesson learning, coaching and career management, and psychological counselling and other support. This support can be provided by involving different actors in headquarters, possibly in combination with external counsellors for the psychological debriefing. A number of agencies want to strengthen this practice, making it mandatory and on-going to overcome internal obstacles, including from returning staff themselves. Good post-deployment experiences contribute to staff being willing to reconsider an engagement in SFC, or at least to promote it to other prospective applicants.

5.5 Compensation and benefits

This section looks at the means and incentives provided to staff to undertake assignments in SFC. While the bulk of such incentives involve cash benefits, there are non-cash incentives and benefits that are highly valued by staff as well. Indeed, compensation and benefits packages will vary depending on the context, organisation and employment status.

How can international staff be incentivised best?

A good incentive package is needed to attract and retain talent to hardship posts, involving both cash and non-cash incentives. Cash benefits may include "premiums" to top-up base salaries, as well as allowances for "rest and recuperation" leave. Benefits are increasingly differentiated according to context: family or non-family duty stations, hardship / extreme hardship, danger pay (UN). Development partners are aware of the need to take a global approach to rewarding staff, with better recognition of engagement in SFC work and career opportunities likely to weigh more than just salary and benefits.

> *GIZ's package comprises interesting career possibilities, financial incentives and tailor-made pre-development training courses. Moreover, GIZ is offering accompanying measures as well as visits to SFC to minimise the cancellation of contracts after secondment. Specific risk and safety management on-site, regular homeward holidays and recovery phases are provided to meet the challenges in the field and to enable employees to cope better on-site.*

Generous incentive packages may not be sustainable or replicable across other similar country programmes, but rather specific to high-profile engagements such as Afghanistan and Iraq. They may set precedents and lead to perverse effects, such as discouraging some staff to take on other, less lucrative posts and thus contribute to "silos" in corporate knowledge and memory. The reverse, however, is also true: such packages may also attract staff with more pecuniary motivations than commitment to the strategic objectives of a particular SFC programme.

➤ **Why does compensation for local staff differ from international staff?**

The 2007 Fragile States Principle "Do no harm" has an important HRM dimension, implying that development partners should seek to minimise labour market distortions

when providing salary top-ups and other incentives to local staff that are not in line with local market rates. This can have adverse effects over the medium term.[11] The OECD's [2011 Report on International Engagement in Fragile States](#) highlighted the lack of such mitigation strategies. The g7+ issued a recommendation in 2013 that development partners should avoid creating drastic salary differentials between external advisors, locally hired staff and their local government counterparts. Development partners were encouraged to harmonise the salary scales of project-funded staff with one another as well as with those of the government. In practical terms, this involves establishing robust benchmarks, and reviewing them regularly. Finding comparable employers, particularly for niche players such as development banks, can be an issue. Internally, agencies can also struggle to manage drastic salary differentials between international and local staff. One interviewee noted there were increased expectations for compensation and development opportunities from locally employed staff, resulting in increased local staff turnover.

> *The World Bank is planning policy changes such as security per diem for staff working and travelling extensively in non-family locations; ensuring staff located in hardship locations are informed of their next confirmed assignment; making SFC experience a highly desirable selection criteria for senior operational positions; providing pre- and post- orientation and re-integration back into a non-SFC or headquarters; securing visas in the US and third countries for families of staff working in non-family locations to decrease disruption in family lives.*

5.6 Staff support / Duty-of-care

This section looks at the challenges faced by development partners in ensuring at least the minimum work conditions that allow their field representatives to perform their duties effectively and to stay at post for a reasonable amount of time. In SFC, this also implies a "duty of care" of the development partner for its staff traveling to or working in SFC environments. INCAF members need to support staff willingness and ability to undertake difficult field assignments for a longer period in order to build local knowledge, maintain good working relations, and reduce staff mobility costs. The goal of HRM should be to provide decent work and living conditions abroad for staff, consistent as much as possible with those at headquarters.

How do work conditions influence successful HR management in SFC?

In SFC contexts, it may be a challenge to meet even basic working conditions in line with normal institutional rules and regulations. Working conditions for donor employees are normally regulated by domestic labour laws as well as some government or agency-specific rules and regulations. For most country programmes, work conditions in field offices mirror those at headquarters. However, in many states affected by fragility and/or conflict, implementing agencies may struggle to replicate the same work conditions in their field

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[11]   Find the Fragile States Principles at http://www.oecd.org/development/incaf/38368714.pdf

offices, due to poor local infrastructure and services. This is especially the case where countries are emerging from violent conflict and / or natural disasters and basic infrastructure and services may not be available. In addition, field staff may need to have additional support services to those normally offered at headquarters. One example is overtime hours worked, which can be very difficult to monitor and therefore to compensate accurately.

A clear, consistent and sustainable overtime policy needs to be formulated at the early stages of an SFC engagement. This relates not only to the need to compensate staff working extra hours, but also to limit work expectations and manage stress in order to ensure some level of work-life balance. As a standard rule, GIZ staff are allowed one extra day off to compensate for overtime hours worked in field offices in SFC. FDFA/SDC has implemented a policy of trust on working hours. Development partners must retain the ability to call people back to headquarters when there is an agreement among managers that a field employee may have reached their limit for stress tolerance, beyond which their health and safety and that of his / her colleagues are put at risk.

> *When faced with a high turnover of its field staff and security issues in Afghanistan, CIDA had to develop common standards for health, safety and security, as part of a whole-of-government approach. Support packages included rest/recuperation leave, a roster of headquarter staff for rotational short-term field assignments to backfill the field office, and a "cohort" oriented approach to training and deployment in order to enhance team work in the field. More support was also provided to families and next of kin, for example by providing access to counselling before, during and after deployment.*

Headquarters involvement is critical for maintaining a strong link with field staff and monitoring the working environment in field offices. Regular discussions at headquarters with people working in field offices are required to share information about the status of staff in country offices. Turnover in headquarter teams, particularly in HRM, can affect the continuity and trustful relationships built with the field. At the World Bank, HRM personnel have increased their travel to country offices in SFC in order to remain updated on issues, listen to field staff, and keep moving the organisation's HRM reform agenda forward. Field staff experience many types of stress, e.g. mental, work, security, and family separation, which need to be addressed continuously with more adequate resources to help them to cope better on-site and to ensure a smooth re-integration.

> *FDFA/SDC have appointed four external psychologists: each staff member has a pre-departure meeting, and later can get support by telephone. In some critical instances, the psychologist can visit the field. They can also counsel dependents and local staff on a needs basis.*
>
> *ZIF secondees have access to an on-line psychological support, which they may contact anonymously. Intake in the first year has been good, though some have expressed they would prefer telephone support.*

Promoting work/life balance (also known as "life-domain" balance) is important for the health and professional capacity of both the individual staff and the team environment. The work environment itself can be stressful, due to heavy workload, high levels of uncertainty and insecurity, and at times severe constraints to physical mobility, and is not always mitigated by adequate management support. There are, as a result, few possibilities to balance work with leisure activities. This is especially the case for non-family duty stations where field staff may feel isolated with less recourse to emotional support and other such coping mechanisms.

The issue of life partners and families appears as one of the most critical success/failure factors for international assignments in SFC. For accompanied postings, agencies have to support partner employment and child schooling. Most SFC postings are un-accompanied, and the employer needs to mitigate the costs for their employees that result from maintaining a dual household. This can be done by relocating the family in a convenient but proximate third country, or by granting extra travel allowances. FDFA/SDC and the World Bank are providing support to dual household arrangements by covering extra costs and arranging resident visas.

> *When dealing with dual careers for spouses who are both employed by KfW, one spouse can go on unpaid leave for the duration of the other's secondment and reactivate their employment contract after return. Staff's spouses who are not employed by KfW are supported in their job search when returning from expatriation. KfW also fully covers costs of German or international schools.*

Where is the nexus between *safety, security and duty-of-care*?

In SFC, safety and security is a central consideration for development partners when deploying personnel for a field assignment or just a short field visit. The extensive engagement of development partners in Afghanistan since 2002 has encouraged senior policy makers – with the help of the HRM, budget, security and legal departments – to better understand the scope and nature of their duty-of-care obligations vis-à-vis home-based field employees, locally-hired employees, consultants, and project-based contractors.

[Duty-of-care](#) **is primarily a legal concept whose definition varies across countries.** There does not appear to be any agreed minimum standard across key actors in SFC. Within each organisation, it may apply differently according to categories of personnel and contract type. One commonly quoted dilemma is how duty-of-care applies to local staff compared to international staff, with a growing concern to include the former. Some non-staff individuals may fall out of the loop: secondees, independent consultants, subcontractors, etc. Whether and how it applies to staff's dependents is another open question. INCAF members need to develop tailored security and safety regulations to acknowledge "one size does not fit all situations". Policies are best designed in advance at headquarter level, rather than left to be

negotiated in the heat of a crisis. They also need rolling-out, maintaining and adjusting. A related issue is that of insurance provision, as illustrated below in the Canadian example.

> *At the beginning of CIDA's engagement in Afghanistan, duty of care was understood as a principle and an obligation, but no measures specific to Afghanistan were in place. In time CIDA developed a robust set of guidelines including physical protection, frequent rest and relaxation leave, additional life insurance and health care coverage, post-assignment decompression leave and access to counselling .Yet improvement was required for returning staff, notably specialised psychological and physical health services provided only to military personnel.*

Dealing with critical incidents such as physical threats is a pressing challenge, raising the issues of responsibilities in the field and at headquarter level and impacting the remaining teams and staff relatives, as well as business continuity and the organisational reputation. Incidents highlight the need to go beyond appropriate operating procedures and work on organisational awareness and preparedness for all staff in mission, regardless of their status. Managing evacuations, particularly of third-country nationals (staff members or dependents) is a challenge. Local staff policy can create a conflict of interest due to different evacuation instructions for international and local staff.

> *GIZ has a two-pillar duty-of-care strategy adapted to the organisation's decentralised structure. The system is staffed by professional advisers, and a Crisis Desk at headquarters is the focal point. Together with COPE, they are responsible for the Crisis Management pillar. COPE (Cooperation with personnel in stress, conflict and crisis) is a team of psychologists and advisers supporting staff in acute situations.*

Developing resilience is another pillar of security and safety management. Organisational resilience is about having a culture that values support, relationships, and has a positive approach. This culture must come from the top. Individual resilience can also be strengthened by preparedness and ensuring people have the right skills. Aftercare is equally important and can be the most neglected area. The questions of how the institution deals with those wounded or disabled in the field and whether they can be offered redeployment opportunities are key to tackle.

> *InterHealth supports humanitarian organisations in East Africa to "prepare for the worst", which involves putting in place clear procedures, clear communication lines and contact numbers, security policies, a focal point of contact and networks.*

How can training and development factor in physical and cost constraints?

The development of staff competency profiles provides a basis for training strategies in support of SFC engagements. Training programmes are needed to fill current skill gaps among existing staff, prepare them to take on a field assignment in SFC, build the capacity of local staff, and provide new staff with the knowledge and skills needed for managing institutional processes. The development of training programmes should be linked to an

overall knowledge-sharing plan for SFC in order to ensure they reflect the evolving thinking and needs for engagement on the ground. FDFA/SDC are striving to organise knowledge-sharing meetings when expatriates return to Switzerland.

Pre-deployment preparation can serve many purposes, as mentioned above, as a final selection step, as a preventive staff care measure, as well as to acquire contextual knowledge. Some organisations run comprehensive trainee programmes (from 18 to 36 months) with a succession of headquarters and field rotations to build organisational knowledge and future advisory capacity. FDFA/SDC conducts appreciated pre-departure stress management training. ZIF organises a two-week core programme covering the background of peace operations, security, cross-cultural awareness, programming, negotiation, mentoring and advising, stress management and health, and preparing participants for their deployment as well as their return (re-integration).

DFID's advisory cadres define the profiles and background in terms of academic background, experience and skills that are required for specialist staff in key areas. Amongst the 13 cadres, the most relevant to SFC work are Conflict and Humanitarian cadres. Each cadre is staffed by a pool of local and international staff recruited from the UK government or externally.

There are 40 to 50 members in the Conflict cadre, which is the most recently created. Heads of profession are in charge of sourcing, maintaining and developing staff skills in each pool. Combining expert and HRM skills, they provide advice on job design, support and mentoring. Networking within and transversally across cadres is encouraged.

During deployment, training can be conducted through specifically designed programmes to develop skills needed to do "different things and things differently", as well as part of a due-diligence effort to manage personal safety risks, e.g. hazardous environment training (HET**)**. It can also be supported by a broad range of activities such as buddying, mentoring schemes, or distance-learning that can be more flexibly adjusted to the constraints faced in the field. There again, ICT can help link field staff to training programmes and other professional development opportunities available at headquarters and field offices, as well as to network with colleagues and partners to exchange ideas and to share experience.

Development partners can make use of international staff expertise to build local staff capacities, and utilise local staff context knowledge to train expatriates and HQ visitors. This goal of capacity-building can be factored into the design of programmes and jobs. SIDA suggested more could be done to help local staff to leverage their country knowledge for program effectiveness, for example through greater investment in building their capacity to coach and mentor international staff. For NGOs such as Solidarités or MSF that provide short-term interventions, "skills transfer" can be part of an international staff's mandate while in the field, even in an emergency setting.

Save the Children in South Sudan *made the strategic decision to delegate responsibility and authority to its senior Sudanese staff to run the programme – while maintaining sufficient oversight. They were the main interlocutors between the NGO and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement and Southern Sudan Defence Force. Several stayed with the programme for many years and were then called back into the government of South Sudan. The training and grounding by these people helped the emerging government. However, when staff do not have adequate capacity, there are significant risks in delegating authority or distance management.*

5.7 Reintegration / Career management

SFC posts can be a valuable step in one's career development. The World Bank, for example, increasingly recognises SFC experience in recruitment procedures, which makes it a desired asset – and even a precondition – for promotion to certain management posts. But to optimise this value as a career incentive, such posts should be supported by a performance management framework and related career-planning resources. Ensuring that next assignments are planned and staff members secured as to their future positions removes a frequent cause of stress and disengagement during the assignment, and reduces the risk of losing talent. FDFA/SDC's HRM policy commits to offer staff returning from a SFC one of their preferred positions. Some development partners have made deployment to a SFC a condition for career advancement or at least for allocating promotions or new assignments to more coveted destinations (for example at SIDA). Interviewees from GIZ, the World Bank and FDFA/SDC explained that SFC experience is now seen as a requirement to access senior positions, which contributes to mainstreaming and promoting such assignments.

How can we better mainstream and value SFC assignments in career paths?

Nevertheless, staff who are particularly experienced in SFC run the risk of becoming type-cast as "fragile states experts", and thereafter considered only for other SFC posts. Typecasting can undermine the ability of such staff to diversify their knowledge and experience, as well as their career opportunities. For many, the risk of type-casting may discourage them from taking on more than one field assignment in SFC. Over time, this problem also becomes one of "silos" with respect to corporate knowledge management. This undermines the ability of the institution to cross-fertilise knowledge and experience across teams and sectors. It is therefore important to establish crosswalks for those working in SFC to rotate out to non-SFC programmes where they can diversify their career experience while also contribute some innovative thinking to other programmes. This may be particularly problematic for some specialist positions such as security advisers with restricted career options. KfW insists on staff returning to HQ after three to four years, and not taking two overseas assignments in a row. Some agencies have also integrated the new responsibilities associated with SFC work into their recruitment or appointment practices, as well as in their staff performance evaluations.

Reintegration may prove challenging for many reasons. Reintegrating expats in headquarter structures may be difficult after working in smaller country offices with a high degree of autonomy. Mentoring programmes can be set up to assist staff working in SFC, particularly younger expatriates with fewer networks at their headquarters, to benefit from career guidance upon their return.

A private international hospitality company has put in place a mentoring system for each expatriate with a senior manager in its headquarters, independent from line management. Contact is established before deployment and maintained through informal discussions during the overseas assignment to keep the expatriate abreast of the corporate agenda, and relevant job openings.

There is also a need to invest in career development for locally engaged staff, given their role in safeguarding corporate memory and their possible contribution to political analysis and risk management. The already-mentioned DFID international assignment scheme provides an interesting example. Caution in international mobility is needed to prevent a possible brain-drain from the home country.

GIZ provides regular training for national personnel both in situ as well as in Germany. Furthermore, they support exchange (in the form of short internships/secondments) between their offices in different countries in order to build up capacities.

In states affected by fragility, frequent rotation of international staff means that national staff play a particularly important role in keeping relations with partners alive and in sustaining knowledge and experience. Therefore, GIZ provides long-term perspectives for national staff, some of which have been employed over ten years by the institution. This is particularly important in SFC, where they may directly represent the institution in case of evacuation of international staff.

6. JOINING EFFORTS

INCAF is a forum for dialogue, knowledge-sharing and peer learning. Where possible, its members also seek out opportunities for collective action, which is necessary for dealing with a number of policy, institutional and programming challenges in SFC. In HRM, there is a shared willingness amongst members to take this approach.

6.1 Joint initiatives among INCAF members

Training and development stands out as the most obvious area of cooperation, with the added value of intra-organisation programmes to build relations at local level. This can

bring mutual benefits to the work and context knowledge of donor agencies. Joint pre-deployment training of staff from different organisations in the same country departing for the same location helps create useful links, though they require similar departing dates.

- DFID has set up on-line knowledge centers run by a partnership of research institutes, think tanks and consultancies which provide expertise on topical issues such as Governance, open to all actors.
- The World Bank successfully organised leadership and security management programmes in East Africa that were open to other central banks, UN agencies and private sector participants.
- ENTRi is a programme developed by ZIF for 12 European countries providing joint training and practical guidance to civilians working in crisis management worldwide.

Risk and security management is another area where joint initiatives make most sense. There is a need for due diligence procedures across government to ensure security and safety for all field staff. This has implications as to how development partners understand and manage operational risk.

In 2002, DFID Nepal and GTZ established a joint Risk Management Office (RMO) to provide specialised risk management support to their staff and programmes. Today the role of the RMO is to support DFID and GIZ to work safely and effectively in the context of Nepal's complicated post conflict transition. The RMO provides a range of specific services, which include collecting and analysing risk-related information, providing risk advice and security briefings as well a variety of specialized training measures. Risk management officers in the RMO in Kathmandu as well as in Nepal's five regions assist project staff in solving tense situations through direct interventions or telecommunicated advisory services.

The set-up and capacities of the RMO have changed over the years and been adjusted to Nepal's changed political and security context. For example, in 2006 regional dynamics became more complex and nuanced, leading the RMO to establish regional offices to cater to the specific needs of staff and programmes operating in the respective regions. The unique RMO cooperation between DFID and GIZ in Nepal has been fruitful for both partners and been highlighted as best practice. Key advantages of the cooperation include more capacities and resources, increased outreach and risk management coverage within Nepal, as well as the provision of a platform for mutual learning between the two institutions.

Some INCAF members expressed an interest for sharing contact databases within countries, and for exploring joint recruitment. Lessons from similar projects in the INGO community show that there is a need to tackle the issue of competition for applicants to make recruitment more efficient. One member suggests sharing staff information between agencies and creating linkages between HRM departments.

Whole-of-government approaches to HRM can help to coordinate policies and practices between ministries/ agencies while mutualising some costs and ensuring work standards and conditions are more coherent from one service to another. This is working effectively in areas such as staff security, where embassies have a legitimate leadership role, and in

some coordination at least between foreign affairs and development actors. It remains challenging because of different policies, structures and cultures. For example, deployment criteria, particularly in relation to security, can differ between departments, or between defence and civilian staff. A whole-of-government approach at field level requires sufficient staff capacity to manage relations with other partners and implement policies in an integrated manner, e.g. often a highly qualified staff member who can flexibly take strategic decisions without having to refer to headquarters.

Coordination has recently taken different forms. In some countries such as Canada or Australia, development agencies have been amalgamated with their respective Foreign Affairs and / or International Trade ministries. Cross-government secondments are also commonly used in the field, as well as joint training across different government departments and agencies. They can be catalysts for mutual learning on SFC work, promoting joined-up working and moving towards a shared culture.

6.2 Joint initiatives outside INCAF

Massive emergency scenes have created the impetus for international actors to get together and cooperate, including on staffing issues. The UN "clusters", for example, have dedicated working groups on staff security and training.

- The IAWG working group on HRM in Emergency Situations is aiming to help about 60 humanitarian agencies collaborate rather than compete in recruitment by sharing information and facilitating reference checks.

- *People in Aid* is facilitating the Humanitarian Human Resources forums, both on-line and international events that provide information-sharing to HRM professionals.

As with INCAF members, there is successful cooperation in the areas of security and training.

- Shared safety platforms for NGOs exist in many states affected by fragility (currently Afghanistan, CAR, Libya, Syria, Mali, Kenya and DRC) to provide real-time information and analysis of the local conditions.

- The OPEN initiative of South-South mentoring and coaching by 200 civil servants detached from East and Central Africa countries twinning with South Sudanese counterparts proved very successful due to its nimble and empowering design.

- The Emergency Capacity Building Project ran from 2005 to 2013 with 7 large INGOs. One of their work themes was staff capacity and joint training programmes were designed and delivered, with material capitalised for further dissemination in the sector.

- The Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies has developed a joint competencies framework.

Another area where coordination may be effective are reward benchmarks, which are being facilitated by specialist providers such as Birches Group and are available for

international staff and local staff in 89 countries (as of 2013). Many of these examples relate to NGOs who may be more inclined to share scarce resources and who are culturally more open to cooperation. Partnerships between NGOs and the corporate sector still remain limited, but can, for example, include facilitating corporate personnel for short-term volunteering in NGOs. Cooperation on the ground between civil and military organisations also remains limited because of differences in approaches and culture. The UN system has multiple co-operation mechanisms and many of its HR policies are ruled by the International Civil Service regulations.

7. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR – AND WHERE TO GO IN THE FUTURE?

7.1 Key HRM challenges faced by INCAF members

This study has revealed a number of HRM challenges for donors that often reappear during programme implementation in SFC countries. Among these challenges are high staff turnover and difficulties to get the right people to the right place, duty-of-care and family aspects, the communication between HR management in HQs and field offices and adequate career-management for SFC personnel.

Donors therefore need to make sure that their HR management undergoes continuous reform processes, and especially have to take the following aspects into consideration:

- Limiting staff turnover in the SFC to ensure continuity in business and local relations;
- Managing appropriately their duty-of-care and dealing with crises to limit disruptions to staff in-country and at headquarters, and the legal and reputational consequences for the organisation;
- Bridging the gaps between the head office and the field to ensure alignment, mutual learning and appropriate support to field staff;
- Finding cost-effective and practical ways to ensure suitable family solutions that will allow deployments to be sustainable over time;
- Improving reintegration to facilitate lesson learning, psychological well-being of staff and to mainstream SFC experience in the agency's culture.

7.2 Critical factors for undertaking successful HRM reform approaches

Donors need to ensure not only the ongoing improvement and adaption of their HRM policies and processes in the field, but also that the reform management itself is adequate for the operational environment. When designing reform policies, HR managers should be aware of the following factors:

- There is a need for innovation across the industry, creating potential for all actors to profit from synergies. Regular benchmarking of other international actor's practices

can help to achieve a comprehensive overview of necessary reform issues and can help actors to reflect on their own constraints.

- The donor industry needs to develop a holistic approach to staff attraction and retention, and donors need to focus specifically on systemic career management. This needs to be closely coordinated between HR managers and SFC line managers, taking all types of staff in SFC into account.

- Given the fast-changing dynamics on the ground, successful HRM in SFC depends heavily on flexible staff management. Donors need to prepare accordingly, by setting up rosters and offering continuous training. They also need to grant SFC managers a high level of autonomy, and need to sensitise HR managers in HQs to anticipate the specifics of SFC programming in their policy design.

- Especially important for successful reform management are frequent review mechanisms that gather input from field practitioners and feed this into HRM policy design. At the same time, donors should allow for local policy adjustment, on-going monitoring and support, and open communication channels with clear decision-making lines.

- Donors should also recognise that many opportunities to improve HR management require less technical reform, but are rather a cultural issue, especially regarding senior management engagement.

7.3 Opportunities for transferring lessons across contexts

Overall, the experiences of donor agencies' HRM departments in fragile contexts can provide considerable learning opportunities for effective and efficient HRM in these situations. However, there are some limitations.

Do all SFC offer similar challenges for HRM?

INCAF members see value in differentiating better across SFC contexts, particularly as regards evolving factors such as security, presence of other international actors, local situations, quality of the local labour market, and the nature and scope of their country's engagement.

Can we replicate good practices in Afghanistan to low-profile countries like CAR (Central African Republic) ?

Many comments have highlighted that the most critical situations provided a push for innovation and learning that benefitted their organisation more broadly. Mobility of staff across sectors/countries and even organisations also brings opportunities for cross-fertilisation.

Differences between humanitarian and development settings?

Examples shared in this review mainly originated in humanitarian settings, which might be explained both because they offer more challenges and attract more attention. The main difference seems to reside in available resources. However, many of the practices described

could be shared across organisations. From the NGO examples, we note that required skill sets and pace of activities vary most strongly in emergency/development settings.

8. EMERGING TRENDS

An increasing focus on locally employed staff:

Possibly due to the interview sample, we felt that current HRM thinking appears mainly focused on expatriates. Yet as is also happening in the INGO community or the Red Cross movement, HRM strategies are paying more attention to locally employed staff that form the largest share of headcounts, bring in valuable local knowledge, can ensure continuity on the ground, and reduce staffing costs.

To tap better into this potential requires strategies to mitigate some security and control issues and to avoid draining resources away from local institutions, while ensuring local staff have the capacity to lead the organisational agenda. For headquarters, it also involves increased competency in inter-cultural management, especially from a distance.

Gender-balance and diversity promotion:

The promotion of women and minorities is a key recent development in HRM, which for donor agencies can also be critical in order to tap into a larger pool of talent as a way to address its skills shortage, to bring more flexibility in the workforce by encouraging different profiles with different career and life aspirations, and to promote the values of inclusion and respect.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Recommendations for future work on HRM

- Organise **experience-sharing opportunities** (workshops, conferences, country surveys, on-line communities of practice) for HRM professionals and senior managers at headquarters level and in the field. Link with the Help Desk project.

- Organise **HRM working groups in the field** to share information and contacts and work together on reward benchmarks, training etc. Consider **sharing HR positions** where headcount of individual agencies is too limited for a dedicated HRM.

- Design a common **competency framework for HRM in SFC** and organise joint training for shared needs among donors deploying staff to specific SFC.

- Agree on key **HRM metrics** to monitor the effectiveness of HRM in SFC, and survey regularly INCAF members to provide a benchmarking baseline. Examples of relevant metrics could be the cost of security per employee; days spent on learning and development per employee (and its return on retention, performance, etc.) and more conventional indicators such as diversity, turnover, and ratio of HRM staff to employees.

9.2 Recommendations for HRM reform approaches

- Incentives for good performance and deployment to difficult environments must go beyond cash benefits, providing adequate career development opportunities after completion of the assignment. An HRM plan should seek to place good performers in strategic, challenging jobs upon their return.

- Incentives could be matched by ensuring minimum standards for comfort and safety, which should be common across donor government departments with staff in the field.

- Donor agencies could invest in their locally-engaged staff, provide them training, build their capacities, and give them opportunities for growth. Local staff may cost less than international staff, but there may be corruption risks and security-clearance issues.

- Senior leadership is needed to promote a change in the way field managers and staff work on the ground and with partners. Performance management agreements are limited in what they can achieve, and a change needs to be supported by organisational culture and values.

ANNEX 1

Key lessons on HRM´s impact on SFC engagement:

Fragile States Principle	Related HRM area	What can be done for greater impact?
Take context as a starting point	Skills profiling; Training	• *Whole-of-government pre-deployment contextual briefing and training* • *Handover processes to maintain institutional memory* • *Tapping more into local staff potential*
Do no harm	In-country recruitment and compensation policies; Duty-of-care	• *Benchmark compensation* • *Avoid labour market disruption* • *Caution on international mobility for local staff* • *Select on conflict-awareness competency* • *On-going managerial support and external expert assistance*
Promote non-discrimination	Equal opportunities and diversity policies	• *Actions to promote diverse workforce, women in senior local positions*
Align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts	HR system	• *Flexibility in policies and adjustment at local level* • *On-going review mechanisms*
Act fast… but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance	Resourcing; Assignment duration	• *Rosters* • *Staff support and management to ensure sustainable work conditions* • *Health and work-life balance, incl. leave*
Agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors	Joint HR initiatives	• *Training and development* • *Security management*
Focus on state building as the central objective	Local capacity building; Continuity in relationships	• *Cross-organisation coaching, secondments* • *Limiting turnover* • *Robust crisis management*
Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives		• *Whole of government HRM approach*

ANNEX 2

Interviews conducted in April-July 2014:

Advisory group meeting on 14th May 2014 with:

- Barbara Mueller, HR, from SDC replacing Martina Wuethrich
- Lukasz Kowalczyk, Peace and Security programme, GIZ,
- Yannick Hingorani, Peace and Conflict Advisor, OECD

Telephone interviews with:

- Birgit Liede, HR Director, KfW (German Development Bank)
- Kathrin Lorenz, Team Leader, Sector Programme Peace and Security, GIZ (German Enterprise for International Cooperation)
- Claire Moran, Deputy Director Professional Cadres, DFID (UK Department for International Development)
- Negar Rafikian, Manager Global HR team Africa, World Bank Group
- Maren Röessler, HR Project Manager, ZIF (German Center for International Peace Operations)
- Ashley Watson, Senior HR business partner, DFID (UK Department for International Development)
- Martina Wuethrich, Head of HR Consulting SDC, Directorate for Resources DR, FDFA (Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs)

Documents and resources reviewed:

Resource name (and hyperlink)	Author	Date	Language
Adapter les pratiques opérationnelles des bailleurs dans les États fragiles	AFD	2010	FR
Global and Local Pay surveys	Birches Group	n/a	EN
Organising HR for partnering success	CIPD	November 2013	EN
DisasterReady.org	Cornerstone OnDemand Foundation	n/a	EN/FR/ES
Civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict – a case study of OPEN	Danish Institute for International Studies	May 2013	EN
SAIC international assignments policy and guidance	DFID	2013	EN
International competencies framework	DFID	n/a	EN
DFID's Entry Scheme for Advisers	DFID	2013	EN
Évoluer pour développer. Les mutations du travail dans la coopération internationale pour le développement	Diaz-Pedregal/ Kamelgarn-Cerland	2013	FR
How can INGOs improve their work in fragile and conflict states?	Duncan Green	19 July 2012	EN
Matching virtual team tasks and Communication methods in RETRAK. In Team Building	Dyer et al	2007	EN

Enhance programme	ECB Project	2013	EN/FR/ES
Politique du personnel pour les collaborateurs en mission dans des contextes fragiles	EDA/SDC	2013	FR
The future of Humanitarian Security in Fragile Contexts	EISF	2014	EN
In Control: A practical guide for civilian experts working in crisis management missions	ENTRI	2013	EN
EU development cooperation in Fragile states: challenges and opportunities	European Parliament DG External Policies	2013	EN
International security sector advisory team Community of Practice	Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces	2014	EN
Security and Risk management at GIZ: guidelines for country directors	GIZ	2011	DE/EN
National personnel policy	GIZ	2011	EN
Policy on the safety and security of staff in foreign assignments	GIZ	2012	EN
Inter Agency Working Group in East and Central Africa	IAWG		EN
Stay safe: the IFRC guide for security managers	IFRC	2011	EN
Managing stress in the field	IFRC	2009	EN
Leadership for Fragile States Review	Impact for DFID	October 2006	EN
Documents from INCAF experience-sharing workshop on HRM	INCAF	February 2013	EN
Duty of Care white paper and benchmark study	International SOS	2011	EN/FR/ES/DE/NL/IT
LINGOS	LINGOS	since 2004	EN
Understanding and addressing staff turnover in humanitarian agencies	Loquercio/Hammersley/Emmens/ODI	2006	EN
International engagement in fragile states: can't we do better?	OECD	2011	EN
Improving incentives in donor agencies	OECD	2009	EN
Whole of government approach to fragile states	OECD	2006	EN
The State of HR	People In Aid	2013	EN
Are you prepared for the worst? Boosting your organisational resilience	People In Aid	2014	EN
People In Aid Code of Good Practice	People In Aid	2003	EN/DE/ES/FR
Decentralisation of HR at ACF	People In Aid	2011	EN/FR
What does it take to be a successful partner ?	People In Aid	2014	EN
Approaches to staff care in INGOs	People In Aid & InterHealth	September 2009	EN
Treading a delicate path: NGOs in Fragile states	Save the Children	2007	EN

[The interaction between humanitarian and military actors: where do we go from here?](#)	Svoboda E. ODI	2014	EN
[UN Salaries, Allowances, Benefits and Job Classification](#)	UN	2014 quarterly updates	EN
[Operationalizing the 2011 world development report: conflict, security and development](#)	World Bank	2011	EN
[Roster Management Handbook](#)	ZIF	2011	EN/DE