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INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAMME MANAGER

Generic job description: analysis of responsibilities
and person specification

Final version

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The volume and complexity of activity undertaken by humanitarian and development agencies has grown significantly over the past twenty years, and with it, the difficulty agencies find in recruiting and retaining field programme managers with the right skills. This difficulty has been expressed on a number of occasions, including at the Emergency Personnel Seminars (EPS 1, 2 & 3), and in a number of studies, including the 'Room for Improvement' study and research for the Humanitarian Personnel Register Network project. Bioforce is working alongside other agencies to seek ways to address this problem.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify the responsibilities, competencies, and personal qualities required by humanitarian and development field programme managers, as currently understood by a range of individuals and agencies in this domain, in order to understand better how training can help agencies recruit and retain people with these skills and qualities.

Conclusions

The results of the study suggest the following:

1. There is a broadly recognised set of competencies and personal skills required by senior managers of operational humanitarian and development programmes in the field.
2. Many humanitarian and development agencies continue to find it difficult to recruit and retain people with these competencies and skills.
3. A number of people with field experience could be helped to develop these competencies and skills by appropriate management development training, thereby increasing the availability of competent managers to agencies.

On the basis of these results, Bioforce has made a commitment in principle to launching a new training course or a set of related courses for field programme managers. The training activities are planned to start in 2003.

The main purpose of the training activities will be to enable staff with field experience at a technical, support or project level to develop management skills required to undertake senior field management roles competently, with a sound understanding of management and of humanitarian and development practice.

Options being considered include modules of several weeks on topics such as people management, financial management, and project management; a year-long masters-level course covering all of the areas listed in the competencies and personal skills sections of the job description below; distance learning; regional training; and a combination of the above.

Next steps

The next steps will be to work with partner agencies and potential students to design a training programme that meets agencies' and individuals' needs in terms of content, accessibility, cost, duration, academic accreditation, and links with other courses.

While this stage of the study is now finished, any further comments or advice from agencies and individuals will be gratefully received. The training activities developed by Bioforce should meet the needs of humanitarian and development agencies, and should reflect their collective experience and wisdom as far as possible.

The Field Programme Manager recruitment pool

The most common sources of field programme managers recruited by humanitarian and development agencies are:

- Sector specialists (health professionals, engineers, agronomists, logisticians, administrators, development project officers, etc.) who work long term for an organisation and who eventually become Programme Managers, having developed management skills through field experience, but without specific substantial management training.
- Development / humanitarian specialists with qualifications in development practice and related subjects, who have often spent time as generalist field workers before taking on more senior management roles
- Management professionals with substantial management training and experience in the private or public sectors, but with few or no skills specific to international humanitarian and development programmes.

The training activities being considered by Bioforce are aimed primarily at the first two groups, which are likely to remain the most important in terms of numbers, given the priority most agencies place on prior field experience when recruiting senior field staff. However, a number of agencies do recruit management professionals with no previous humanitarian or development experience, and a training course that helped trainees understand the application of mainstream management tools in humanitarian and development programmes would increase the availability of competent management personnel.

Scope of the study and definitions / terminology

This study essentially covers programmes that are significantly operational, whether in an emergency, a rehabilitation, or a development context. The operational nature of such programmes demands that managers require a particular set of qualities, whatever the focus and context of any particular programme.

The definition of **Field Programme Manager**, for the purpose of this study, is the person who is at the highest level of authority and responsibility for the programme in the field, or close to the operations of the programme. In other words, for a programme managed by an international organisation in a particular country or region,

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it is the Programme Manager who represents the agency and who usually has to solve most problems *in situ* because of the gaps in time and space between the field and the agency head office or regional office. The post may be based at local level, national level or regional level. The main focus of the study is on the Field Programme Manager, although many of the responsibilities and skills involved may be the same for staff exercising responsibility for programmes in the headquarters of international agencies. Another sub-set of the skills and activities involved may be relevant to people managing smaller projects within a broader programme, but without overall responsibility for an agency's activities in a country.

This definition strongly reflects the experience and concerns of organisations that are principally international. However, the manager or director of a national organisation implementing a programme locally would also be covered by this definition, given that they would have reporting obligations to - and access to support from - a board of trustees or other governing body not directly involved in operational issues.

Commonly the Field Programme Manager may also be called the following, depending on the organisation and the programme involved:

- Field / Country / Regional Manager / Director / Co-ordinator
- Programme Co-ordinator
- Head of Mission
- General Co-ordinator
- Programme Director / Co-ordinator

Programme is taken here to mean the activities planned and undertaken through or by an organisation, in a specific geographical area, over a specific time, with specific objectives and an overall coherence, within a general organisational strategy. The programme includes the staff, volunteers, and others working on or directly affected by the programme, programme activities (often organised in a set of related projects), the programme's material and financial resources, the programme's reputation, and its place in the local context.

Management is taken here to include the use of tools and techniques required to plan, organise, and monitor programme activities and resources, and the creation and maintenance of relationships, dynamics, personal motivation, and personal development required to ensure the programme succeeds in a challenging and changing environment.

METHODOLOGY

Development of a draft generic job description

The first part of the study was the analysis of large number of job descriptions, and/or programme manager job advertisements placed in the press and on the internet by humanitarian and development organisations. This first stage also involved meeting with a number of programme managers currently in post, or people who had previously occupied this post, in order to collect their views on the post and the person specification required.

Information was gathered from documents and verbal contributions from at least ten French organisations, three British organisations, and three Spanish organisations, as well as from a small number from outside Europe.

These exchanges and documents were used to draft a preliminary generic description of the typical duties and competencies required for this post.

Consultation on the draft generic job description

The draft job description produced at the end of the first stage was then discussed with a number of programme managers from humanitarian and development agencies for their critical comments on the responsibilities and competencies required. This was followed by a brainstorming session with a group of former programme managers, to exchange comments on the draft and to refine it.

A number of individuals from operational agencies, academic institutions, personnel organisations, and consultancies were also consulted on the job description and on questions related to the issue of Field Programme Manager recruitment, and training needs and opportunities.

The human resources and programme / operations departments of 18 humanitarian and development agencies based in Europe, North America and Australia were also contacted, and the advice and comments received have been incorporated into the current document.

Resource organisations :

This list of organisations includes those whose staff have contributed actively to the research, as well as those whose job descriptions and other public documents have been consulted without their active involvement. Inclusion on this list does not imply any agency's agreement with this document.

Action Contre la Faim France	INTERMON Spain
Africa 70 Italy	Islamic Relief UK
Africa Now UK	Just World Partners UK
Aide Médicale Internationale France	Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden Corporation Hong Kong
ARC UK	Médecins du Monde France
Atlas Logistique France	Médecins sans Frontières Belgium
Britain Nepal Medical Trust UK	Médecins sans Frontières France
Catholic Relief Services USA	Médecins sans Frontières Luxemburg
CCM Italy	Médecins sans Frontières Spain
CICDA France	Médecins sans Frontières Switzerland
Comité d'Aide Médicale France	Medicos del Mundo Spain
COOPI Italy	Oxfam Australia
COSV Italy	Oxfam Canada
Enfant du Monde Droits de l'Homme France	Pharmaciens Sans Frontières France
Enfants Réfugiés du Monde France	Save the Children Fund UK
FADO (Flemish Organization for Assistance in Development) Belgium	Solidarités France
Handicap International France	Tear Fund UK
HelpAge International UK	Triangle France
Inter SOS Italy	World Vision USA

HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT FIELD PROGRAMME MANAGER: GENERIC JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

This generic job description and person specification is very broad, as it is an amalgam of many documents and comments relating to specific agencies and programmes. No individual could be expected to manage all the responsibilities listed expertly; field managers are recruited, when possible, for the specific strengths they can provide particular programmes at particular times. However, some competence in all of the areas listed below is likely to be needed at some time by all field programme managers, whatever their individual strengths and preferences.

1. Management responsibilities

1.1 Programme co-ordination

1.1.1 Assessment / evaluation, analysis, and monitoring

- *Assess current and anticipated needs and resources, and propose an appropriate programme response*
- *Analyse the political, social, and security context of the programme, and identify key trends*
- *Analyse programme activities, and design and plan major evaluations (write terms of reference, recruit evaluators etc.)*

1.1.2 Programme strategy

- *Develop/ contribute to a programme strategy appropriate to organisational strategy and the programme context*
- *Set objectives and choose indicators*
- *Plan activities and resource use over time, as a function of objectives set (see sections on human resources, budget management etc.)*
- *Plan and construct programme budgets, in collaboration with financial staff in the field and headquarters*
- *Initiate new programme activities / projects, within the framework of an agreed organisational strategy and an understanding of the operating context*

1.1.3 Programme monitoring and review

- *Act as the guarantor of programme progress and quality on behalf of the organisation*
- *Monitor the progress of the programme for progress, relevance, and efficiency, and adjust activities and processes as needed (see sections on budget management and human resources management)*
- *Carry out periodic programme reviews and refocus programmes as needed*
- *Coordinate with the organisation's support services to ensure appropriate advice is received on setting indicators and monitoring programme activities*

1.2 Managing programme resources

1.2.1 Managing human resources / personnel management

- *Plan to meet human resources needs and design appropriate staffing structures for the programme*
- *Develop job descriptions and liaise with programme and headquarters staff to ensure the timely recruitment of appropriate national and international staff*
- *Establish, or supervise the establishment of human resources policies and procedures, particularly concerning recruitment, working and remuneration conditions, and arrangements for ending employment*
- *Interpret and ensure the application of labour law, economic law, and social law relating to international and national staff*
- *Establish a human resources management strategy that is appropriate to the programme context (provisions of national labour law, short- or long-term contracts, R & R policy, etc.)*
- *Use and ensure the application of management techniques and performance review*
- *Oversee human resources planning and the application of specific policies (career path management, non-discrimination and affirmative action in recruitment, training policy etc.)*
- *Ensure the provision of adequate stress management and staff counselling in the most appropriate way for the context, the people, and the organisation*
- *Promote the health and security of programme staff by ensuring the application of security guidelines, health and safety in the workplace, and healthy living conditions and practices*
- *Supervise or ensure the administrative management of human resources: contracts, terms and conditions etc.*
- *Be the final decision maker on human resources issues*

1.2.2 Managing programme staff / team management

- *Manage and ensure positive outcomes of group dynamics, for the aims of the programme and the well-being of the staff, through team meetings, field visits, etc.*
- *Arbitrate / help resolve conflicts in the programme team*
- *Motivate individuals and help them to contribute effectively to meeting the programme aims*
- *Transmit and promote the ethics and values of the organisation*

1.2.3 Managing finances and budgets oversee for some of these?

- *Design and write general budgets and budgets specific to particular funding sources or organisational requirements*
- *Supervise or carry out the search for funding*
- *Establish financial and budget monitoring systems*
- *Ensure the establishment, correct application, and periodic revision of administrative and financial procedures*
- *Promote ethical practice in the management of programme resources*
- *Establish and monitor budget planning and forecasting activities and anticipate budgetary problems*
- *Ensure the production of financial reports and their presentation to donors where necessary*

1.2.4 Managing communications

a) Internal communications

- *Provide regular written and verbal communication with headquarters – formal reporting, informal communication, and joint work on press releases, advocacy papers, etc.*
- *Establish and manage systems for the control of information flows in the field and between the field and headquarters*
- *Organise, facilitate, and manage meetings for information sharing, direction, co-ordination and collaboration within the programme team*

b) External communications

- *Ensure co-ordination with other organisations, including local authorities*
- *Manage public relations, networking, and external representation for the promotion and support for the programme and the organisation*

- *Organise opportunities for exchange between organisations*
- *Be the media spokesperson for the organisation and the programme*
- *Represent programmes and projects for funding*
- *Lobby other organisations and institutions on important issues for the programme and people affected by it*

1.2.5 Managing security

- *Assess and analyse the security context, and formulate security strategies and plans, together with colleagues from within and outside the organisation*
- *Review and adapt security strategies and plans as the changing situation demands*
- *Ensure the every day application of security strategies and plans, enforcing appropriate security behaviour when necessary*
- *Ensure that all staff, particularly new staff, are adequately briefed on the security situation and the procedures to be followed*
- *Take security decisions and ensure appropriate action in the case of evacuations, hostage taking, vehicle accidents, or other major events affecting the security of staff*
- *Limit the risks taken by field staff, using appropriate security guidelines and ensuring that individual staff members take their responsibility in this matter*
- *Keep headquarters staff informed of key elements of field security, and manage internal and external communications in the event of severe security problems*

1.2.6 Managing policy

- *Apply organisational policy to programme strategies and activities in a way that is appropriate to specific contexts*
- *Ensure the application of humanitarian and development policy in programme development and management, and in specific programme decisions*
- *Ensure respect for national policy, as far as this is in line with humanitarian and development principles and the ethics and mandate of the organisation*
- *Communicate with the authorities and supply information and arguments to the organisation to encourage the application of humanitarian and development principles*
- *Contribute to organisational policy by engaging in organisational debate and by transmitting the experience of the programme*

1.2.7 Managing negotiations

- *Negotiate on more strategic or contentious issues within the field team, with headquarters, and with external actors*

- *Be the negotiator of last resort in the field on all issues, including security, human resources management, and contracts (see relevant sections)*
- *Manage relations between headquarters and the field, negotiating compromises that allow the flexibility and resources needed by field staff, while respecting the needs and constraints of the organisation*

1.2.8 Managing contracts and law

- *Draw up or contribute to codes of conduct and conventions*
- *Promote NGO law (as relevant) and the charter of the organisation*
- *Ensure the application of the law in force in the country where the programme is carried out*
- *Supervise the drawing up and management of contracts such as rental contracts, funding contracts and memoranda of understanding*

2. Competencies and personal attributes

2.1 General management competencies – the post-holder should be able to do the following:

2.1.1 Human resources / personnel management

- *Apply legal, ethical and administrative aspects of HR management in the programme context, with support from the agency headquarters*
- *Use human resources planning tools*
- *Undertake task analysis and write job descriptions and terms of reference*
- *Use performance evaluation tools*
- *Manage health and safety for programme staff and ensure that organisational responsibilities in this area are met*

2.1.2 Individual and team management

- *Assign and monitor tasks and responsibilities*
- *Manage team dynamics positively and develop individual motivation and performance*
- *Monitor staff performance and well-being continually*
- *Recognise various forms of stress and ensure their appropriate management*
- *Lead, delegate, co-ordinate, persuade, direct, supervise, facilitate, train, and encourage staff*

- *Transmit the organisation's ethical and operational approach to other staff*
- *Choose and use the appropriate management mode for a given situation*
- *Mediate, arbitrate, negotiate, and enforce when necessary*
- *Rapidly understand the essentials of a range of professional disciplines, in order to manage a multi-disciplinary team*
- *Transmit information, approaches, and skills*

2.1.3 Financial management

- *Apply accounting principles and procedures, including audit, financial planning, and financial monitoring*
- *Use general budgeting procedures and meet the budgeting and financial reporting requirements of different donors and organisations*
- *Use appropriate resource planning tools*
- *Choose contracts for the supply of goods and services, and manage them*

2.1.4 Organisational and communications management

- *Analyse organisational structures and processes*
- *Understand and communicate on ethical issues*
- *Plan and manage internal and inter-agency meetings*
- *Present and promote organisations and programmes*
- *Communicate effectively, verbally, with a wide range of internal and external contacts*
- *Communicate in writing, in a way that is concise, reliable, and useful*
- *Build networks for co-ordination and support*
- *Represent an organisation at the highest level*
- *Negotiate, lobby, and persuade*
- *Work effectively with the media*
- *Understand and manage communications and communications problems within teams and organisations*
- *Communicate verbally and in writing in English or another language commonly used in the field*
- *Use common computing tools for word processing, spreadsheets, and email communication*

2.1.5 Self-management

- *Recognise and make use of opportunities, and work with constraints*
- *Handle large amounts of information and gain and communicate an understanding of the key issues*
- *Think clearly and take decisions under stress*
- *Take difficult decisions without immediate and present organisational support*
- *Handle team conflict and challenges effectively*
- *Set and review priorities in situations of uncertainty and change*

2.2 Knowledge and skills specific to humanitarian and development contexts

- *Describe international organisations, structures, roles and activities*
- *Apply knowledge of international law relating to humanitarian and development programmes to programme strategy and activities*
- *Evaluate and analyse global and regional politics in relation to organisational and programme objectives global and regional politics*
- *Undertake cultural, social, political, and economic analyses*
- *Manage in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural context*
- *Take account of social structures, gender, and social diversity in relief and development contexts and programmes*
- *Apply an ethical approach to humanitarian and development action, based on a knowledge of relevant international law and humanitarian principles*
- *Describe common programme activities*
- *Analyse and apply national law*
- *Manage personal health, stress, and preparation for the field*
- *Apply the principles of the project cycle - objective setting, indicators, implementation strategy, monitoring, and evaluation*
- *Carry out security management activities, including assessment and analysis, developing security strategies, writing security guidelines, and managing operational security procedures and responses*

2.3 Personal attributes

- *Initiative*
- *Team spirit*
- *Ability to work independently*
- *Flexibility and adaptability*
- *Responsibility for personal actions*
- *Demonstrable humanitarian / social justice motivation*
- *Adaptability*
- *Taste for leadership*
- *Common sense*
- *Listening ability and ability to remain available to listen*
- *Self control*
- *Ability to recognise and manage personal stress*
- *Knowledge of personal capacities and limits*
- *Ability to learn fast*
- *Patience*
- *Analytical skills*
- *Personal and professional organisation*
- *Ability to work within the limitations of organisations, programmes, and people*
- *Decisiveness*
- *Creativity / entrepreneurial capacity*
- *Ability to self-criticise positively*
- *Sense of service*
- *Sensitivity to others*
- *Ability to say no*
- *Communication and negotiation skills*