

Organizational Staff Support in South Sudan

An overview of current services and
recommendations for future initiatives





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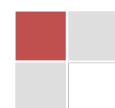
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Abbreviations

HR	Human resources
INGO	International non-governmental organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NNGO	National non-governmental organization
QMU	Queen Margaret University
R&R	Rest and recuperation
UN	United Nations
USD	United States dollar
WASH	Water, hygiene and sanitation



Research background

The research on staff support in South Sudan presented in this report is part of a larger research project on the mental health and well-being of humanitarian workers in South Sudan undertaken by Queen Margaret University (QMU), Edinburgh. QMU, through an online survey on the mental health and well-being of humanitarian workers in South Sudan, established an overall high symptom burden of mental health problems among humanitarian workers and the need for organizations to adjust their staff support services to better meet the needs of their workforce (Strohmeier, Ager, Scholte, & O'Brien, 2017). Building on these findings, the second phase of the research project started in January 2018 with field research in Juba. In its original design this second phase aimed primarily at exploring the lived experiences of humanitarian workers in South Sudan and their effects on approaches to mental health and staff support.

Throughout their collaboration with QMU, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in South Sudan, especially ACTED, expressed a strong interest in the particular area of staff support. In line with the established need for additional work related to staff support and with the objective to address organizations' interest QMU expanded the original focus of the research project's second phase. Consequently, the adjusted objective of the fieldwork in Juba included the gathering of qualitative data related to staff support provided by NGOs in South Sudan. ACTED South Sudan supported the planning and implementation of this additional research component. Ethical clearance for this research was obtained by QMU.



The crisis context South Sudan

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan is worse than ever (UN News, 2017). As of December 2017 an estimated seven million people are in need of assistance and protection, and one in three South Sudanese people have been forced to flee their home (UNOCHA South Sudan, 2017). The violent chaos in South Sudan also affects humanitarian organizations on site and their staff: the total number of aid workers killed in the country since the conflict began in 2013 has just reached 100 (UNOCHA, 2018), and 31 major attacks against aid workers were counted in 2015, and 52 in 2016. This makes South Sudan the most dangerous country for aid workers globally in recent years (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2016, 2017). The outbreak of violence in Juba in 2016 led many organizations to evacuate large parts of their international workforce (Deutsche Welle, 2016), and major incidents such as the 2016 assaults of aid workers residing in the capital's Terrain Hotel intensified the global debate on aid worker security (Patinik, 2017).

Humanitarian workers' exposure to such attacks and other traumatic events as well as chronic stress can have severe implications on humanitarian workers' mental health (e.g., Connorton, Perry, Hemenway, & Miller, 2012; Strohmeier & Scholte, 2015). With regards to South Sudan, preliminary results from an online survey in 2017 on the mental health and well-being of humanitarian workers (national and international staff, consultants, UN Volunteers) in the country indicated that 21% of all participants experienced symptoms indicative of high risk of post-traumatic stress. Thirty-nine percent of all participants scored at or above levels suggestive of depression, and 38% at or above levels suggestive of anxiety. Thirty-six percent of all women and 35% of all men who participated in the survey reported hazardous alcohol use. Regarding burnout, 24% of all survey participants fulfilled the criteria for high burnout on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale; 19% on the depersonalization sub-scale; and 38% on the personal accomplishment sub-scale (Strohmeier et al., 2017).

This situation requires action from humanitarian workers themselves and their organizations on moral, legal and economic grounds (Porter & Emmens, 2009). For instance, common consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder on life course include significantly heightened risks for marital instability and unemployment (Brunello et al., 2001). The accident and illness rates for 'stressed out' employees are overall higher. They are absent from work more often, consult health services more frequently, and are not as effective and efficient in fulfilling their duties (Antares Foundation, 2012; Curling & Simmons, 2010).

Specific research on staff support provided by national and international NGOs active in South Sudan has not yet been undertaken. However, related research and evaluations in other crises settings show that staff support is overall still underfunded and services insufficient. Further, staff support differs greatly between organizations and within organizations, whereby national staff are oftentimes disadvantaged in two ways: first, national NGOs (NNGOs) – which mainly employ national staff – do not necessarily have the resources to provide encompassing support. Second, international NGOs (INGOs) may have support services, but these are often limited for national staff. Up to this date a universal definition of staff support does not exist. This makes it difficult to hold organizations accountable on the one hand and manage staff's expectations on the other (Porter & Emmens, 2009; Stoddard, Harmer, & Haver, 2011; Surya, Jaff, Stilwell, & Schubert, 2017; Welton-Mitchell, 2013).



Objectives of this report

The objectives of this report are twofold. First, it aims at providing an overview of staff support services that are currently provided by selected national and international NGOs in South Sudan. This includes information on the overall staff support system, gaps and challenges in service provision, and good practices as reported by organizations. Second, this report aims at discussing these findings and formulating recommendations how services can be adjusted to address the identified gaps and challenges. The greater objective hereby is to support organizations in achieving an overall better response to humanitarian workers' needs within the South Sudan context.

Research methodology and proceeding

Eligibility criteria

To be considered for participation in this research, organizations had to fulfill the following three criteria:

- 1) Being listed as a member of the South Sudan NGO Forum;
- 2) Having operated in South Sudan for one year or longer; and
- 3) Employing a minimum of 20 staff in South Sudan.

Organizations that fulfilled these criteria constituted the sampling frame.

Sampling strategy

A two-step sampling procedure was applied. This included self-selection sampling, followed by maximum variation sampling.

Self-selection sampling

In the context of this research self-selection sampling meant that organizations participated of their own accord. Such proceeding ensured the required commitment and interest in the research. First, the research was announced and explained by the ACTED representative in the NGO Forum. This included the circulation of a research proposal among NGO Forum members (Annex 1). Interested organizations were requested to contact the researchers who then evaluated organizations' eligibility for participation based on the above-mentioned criteria. Subsequently, eligible organizations were asked to provide more precise information on the following components:

- Number and composition of workforce in South Sudan (national/international staff);
- Years active in South Sudan;
- Availability/absence of separate staff support policy; and
- Additional staff care measures/initiatives provided to staff in South Sudan (other than those specified in the staff support policy).

The sample of all confirmed organizations was then reviewed with a focus on the following criteria:

- Diversity regarding the above-listed information (e.g., number of staff); and
- Organization type (minimum: 3 NNGOs, 3 INGOs; maximum: 7 NNGOs, 7 INGOs).

Maximum variation sampling

The self-selection sampling procedure did not reach the desired diversity. Specifically, the number of confirmed INGOs was too low. Hence, maximum variation sampling was applied – a purposive sampling technique that aims at capturing diversity. In the context of this research maximum variation sampling facilitated gaining greater insights into the variety of staff support services provided by organizations, recurring gaps and challenges in service provision, and potential remedies. Organizations that fulfilled all eligibility criteria were identified and contacted to explore their interest. This process was continued until the desired level of diversity was reached.

Data collection and analysis

The data collection process began with a desk review of organizations' profiles and, where available, human resource (HR) and staff support policies. Subsequently, field research in Juba took place over the course of four weeks between January and February 2018. Appointments with participating organizations were scheduled over the course of this time as per their convenience. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with organizations' Country Directors, or experienced HR Officers based on an interview guide (Annex 2). All interviews were conducted in English, the working language in South Sudan, and took between 30 and 60 minutes.

The data was analyzed with a focus on three components: first, organizations' staff support systems and the main services currently provided.¹ Second, challenges and gaps organizations faced in the provision of staff support, and third, achievements and good practices.

Participating organizations were granted confidentiality. Thus, names of organizations and interviewees are anonymized throughout this report.

¹ Note that some organizations may offer additional services to specific groups of staff or under specific circumstances (e.g., specific hardship, locations other than South Sudan). This report reflects the bigger picture of service provision in



Research findings

South Sudan labor law

South Sudan has a labor law which covers employment of national staff by NNGOs and INGOs. This law has been adjusted in early 2018. Amongst others, this new law requires organizations to grant female national staff three months of maternity leave. Fathers have the right to take 14 days off. Further, organizations must pay a termination benefit to their national staff. This includes two components: first, a national security withholding throughout employment (25% of staff's salary for every month worked with the organization, whereby 8% are contributed by staff and 17% added by the organization); and second, gratuity (one month salary for every year worked with the organization).²

NNGO 1

Profile

NNGO 1 was founded with the objective to serve vulnerable populations in deserted areas of South Sudan. A group of South Sudanese nationals established the organization as a response to the crisis the country is experiencing. Current key areas of intervention include health, nutrition, food security and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). NNGO 1 also implements activities in the areas of protection, mine risk education, and peace building. The organization operates mainly in the greater upper Nile region, the greater Bar-El-Gazhal region, and the greater Equatoria region.

NNGO 1 currently employs 19 national and one international staff. At present, the organization does not have a separate staff support policy and the written profile that outlines the organization's vision, mission and core areas of intervention does not include any references to HR practices in general and staff support in particular. However, NNGO 1 highlighted its strong commitment to improving its current staff support services and aims at creating a sustainable funding mechanism to be able to expand its support to its workforce:

"[Staff support] is important because this will motivate the workers, it makes them feel at home, foreign workers are attracted when we provide this for them."

NNGO 1 has heard that other humanitarian organizations have some guidelines for staff support. However, the organization is not familiar with widely referenced guidelines, such as those prepared by the Antares Foundation (2012) or the IASC (2007).

Current staff support system

The only constant service currently provided by NNGO 1 for its national and international staff are board and lodging. Specifically, the organization provides women and men with separate bedrooms,

²Note that the labor law was adjusted only after the field research had taken place. Some organizations' policies were not updated yet at the time of review.



and all staff have access to water and food. The organization rents the accommodation and uses personal funds from its executive members to cover the costs.

If staff falls sick NNGO 1 grants the option to see a doctor of their choice, including outside South Sudan if need be. The incurring costs are also covered through personal contributions from the organization's executive members.

In order to minimize the risk of incidents in the field, the organization considers gender with regards to the recruitment of staff for certain project sites. Specifically, it prefers sending men to environments that are well known to be risky.

The organization collects basic data on incidents, such as injuries and cases of sickness. If staff falls sick, they are required to fill out a sick leave form. However, the organization does not administer systematic, encompassing records aside from these forms. NNGO 1 has also carried out one staff survey. This survey included questions for staff as to how organizational welfare services could be improved.

Reported gaps and challenges

At the moment NNGO 1 does not offer any kind of insurance for its staff, neither health insurance nor any other form of insurance, such as life insurance. The organization highlighted this situation as one major gap in its current service provision. Related to this, NNGO 1 reported the lack of mental health care as a huge challenge and identified the provision of psychosocial support as a much needed intervention.

Another challenge the organization reported relates to the area of transportation: currently, NNGO 1 does not own a car. It hires taxis and pays other organizations that transport humanitarian workers to facilitate movement of their staff within Juba and across the country. As a result, staff oftentimes stays in remote field locations much longer than needed. Indeed, staff frequently wait for transport to be made available to them long after they have completed their tasks.

Closely related to the above is the issue of limited communication in some project sites. In remote areas the organization has not yet installed Internet. Where Internet and phone connections are available they are at times very poor and affected by frequent interruptions. This, in turn, triggers a series of additional issues, such as limited coordination, and communication of issues and concerns staff may have.

Generally, it is difficult for NNGO 1 to find donors to support their projects, and especially donors that are willing to pay for staff support services. The organization hopes to sign a contract with an external insurance company in the near future – for instance Crown Insurance or a local provider – to be able to provide its staff with health insurance as a start.

Achievements and good practices

NNGO 1 reported improvements in its communication systems as a change that had many positive effects. The decision to install Internet in some field locations facilitated easier and more frequent communication between staff, including the reporting of issues and concerns to the Juba office if



need be. This action had also a very positive effect on any matters related to coordination and logistics.

The organization perceived the roll out of the staff survey as another useful activity. This survey helped a great deal in identifying major gaps in service provision and needs and priorities of staff, respectively. Specifically, the survey results identified limited communication and coordination as well as transportation as key issues to be addressed. Based on these findings the organizations began to take action.

NNGO 2

Profile

Founded by a team of South Sudanese professionals, NNGO 2 focuses especially on food security towards achieving a society free from hunger, poverty and marginalization of vulnerable groups. Other areas in which the organization is active in include the provision of water, HIV/AIDS prevention, and disaster risk reduction. NNGO 2 also invests in skill building and the delivery of services and goods to communities.

The organization currently employs a total of 28 staff. This includes nationals and internationals. It has a separate Procurement Policy and a recently updated HR Policy. These documents also outline services and benefits provided to staff. NNGO 2 adheres to the Sphere standards, which detail provisions required to facilitate aid worker performance. The organization has not heard of any other widely referenced staff support guidelines.

Staff support plays an important role for NNGO 2:

“Staff support helps the organization to achieve its objectives, it motivates staff to work hard, and when they work hard we can achieve the objective of the organization”.

Current staff support system

As outlined in the organization’s HR policy, current staff support services include time off and compensation for additional hours worked. The HR policy also includes a dedicated section on staff motivation. Support services under this section especially refer to trainings and mentorship, rewards, awards and promotions based on performance. The policy also includes a section on staff grievances. The organization acknowledges its responsibility to address staff grievances and takes note of respective issues through ‘grievance committees’. These committees are formed in every field office and comprised by the heads of departments in the respective location. The committees meet every Monday to identify and discuss urgent matters that have to be addressed. Vice versa, these meetings also serve as an opportunity to brief staff and provide advice regarding their issues.

While NNGO 2 does not undertake surveys related to staff support, it carries out regular staff appraisals. These appraisals are an integral part of the organization’s procedure to monitor progress and staff development. The tool also provides an opportunity for staff to evaluate and comment on the organization, including its leadership.



Although not specified in the HR policy, staff receive health insurance for medical assistance within South Sudan. The organization covers 92% of the costs for this insurance. Staff also receive allowances, such as transport allowance and hardship allowance, and has access to accommodation through the organization. In case staff experiences particular hardship, such as the loss of a family member, NNGO 2 offers ‘compassionate support’ – individual contributions from the personal pocket of the organization’s founders. Lastly, NNGO 2 occasionally organizes parties and get-together events. These serve as an opportunity for staff to socialize and exchange experiences.

There are some differences in service provision for national and international staff. For instance, international staff receive payments in United States dollars (USD). Whether national staff receive payments in USD or South Sudanese pounds depends on their position. Further, the organization pays international staff two flights per year to their home country.

The organization does not systematically collect data on incidents and security issues – the organization reported that establishing an appropriate internal mechanism was not possible. NNGO 2 thus relies on data collected by larger organizations, such as UNOCHA, and information made available through the NGO Forum. The organization stated though that collecting such data internally would be useful.

Reported gaps and challenges

NNGO 2 reported they face numerous challenges related to staff support. One key challenge referred to the safety and security of staff, especially that of female staff who sometimes fall victim to sexual harassment while on duty.

Another pressing issue the organization identified relates to the comparatively low salary NNGO 2 is able to pay its staff. This salary is not very attractive and a key reason for the high staff turnover. This, in turn, impacts the organization’s service delivery to beneficiaries.

Closely related to the above is the challenge of paying hardship allowance. Sometimes, the organization cannot pay this allowance. This has a negative effect on staff’s motivation.

Achievements and good practices

One practice that has proven to be very effective, especially with regards to understanding staff’s needs as well as their grievances and requests, is the establishment of staff grievance committees and the holding of regular meetings of these committees, respectively. These meetings serve as an opportunity to discuss a wide range of topics, including issues related to contracts. Inventing this mechanism has also enhanced the level of team cohesion within the organization.

NNGO 3

Profile

The interventions of this NNGO focus on mine action, and key activities include mine risk education and mine clearance. NNGO 3 also engages in the clearance of battle areas and explosive ordnance disposal.

The organization currently employs 21 national staff. NNGO 3 does not have a separate staff support policy and is not aware of common staff support guidelines, such as those prepared by Antares Foundation (2012) or the IASC (2007). However, the organization has an HR and Employment Policy. This document outlines certain benefits provided to staff. All staff have access to this policy, and the organization reminds staff during meetings about the common proceedings in case they face any basic issues.

NNGO 3 considers staff support important “because it is holistic, it motivates, (...) and improves efficiency [of staff] if they are more motivated”.

Current staff support system

NNGO 3 provides its staff with health insurance for work related incidents through a regional provider. This insurance does not cover psychosocial support services.

The organization invests greatly in capacity building initiatives for its employees to address knowledge gaps and facilitate skill development. The bulk of the costs for these initiatives are covered by the organization, but employees in key positions contribute through the paying of a ‘personal development fee’.

The organization also provides staff with the termination benefit. While the organization does not pay an extra allowance for leave, staff are granted 30 days of paid leave. Staff operating in the field are granted six additional days of stand down every 21 days. NNGO 3 also grants sick leave, including for prolonged periods of absence. Should an accident lead to disability, the staff member receives a ‘severance pay’. Women have the right to take maternity leave. Additional forms of leave staff members can request include compassionate leave, and leave without pay.

Other services the organization provides include equipment needed for the job and appropriate work clothes. If the organization does not provide travel to the duty station, employees receive a travel allowance to cover the costs. Staff also receive per diem allowance in case they stay away from their designated duty station over night.

The staff support services are funded through projects, which include distinct budget lines for overhead costs. In case a project ends the organization uses some of its core funds to cover the costs for staff support.

The organization has a policy that foresees the collection of data. In practice, however, NNGO 3 stated that data, for instance on accidents while at work, are not collected and recorded as carefully as they should.

The organization does currently not undertake specific surveys on staff support. However, line managers undertake annual staff evaluations. These evaluations also provide the opportunity for staff to back report on concerns and issues on their end.

Reported gaps and challenges

One key challenge NNGO 3 reported relates to the current health insurance, which covers work-related accidents of employees only. The insurance does not cover any other health issues and excludes dependents. These conditions are perceived as sub-optimal, and the organization would like to change this. However, any planning that has financial impacts is a huge challenge for the organization due to the nature of the economy and the constantly increasing prices in the country.

Another challenge is that some staff are based in remote areas. This makes it very difficult for the organization to provide staff with any type of services, including medical care and transportation in case of sickness. Currently, NNGO 3 tries to relocate staff in case of need. This, however, is a difficult undertaking in the absence of external support.

Achievements and good practices

The organization stated that it is good practice to have at least a minimum level of insurance coverage for its staff. NNGO 3 explored the different insurance options available and made the best possible choice within their means. While there is room for improvement, staff still appreciate the support attached to this current insurance scheme.

The evaluations carried out by line managers are good practice, too. This proceeding helped the organization to identify issues of staff and ways to address these. For instance, the findings of one evaluation showed that staff perceived one of the allowances as too little. NNGO 3 subsequently increased the amount.

NNGO 4

Profile

The areas of intervention of NNGO 4 focus on WASH, food security and livelihoods, and education in emergency settings. Within these areas, the organization puts a specific focus on working with women and children.

The organization currently employs 44 national staff and has both, an HR policy and a separate staff care policy. NNGO 4 is dedicated to staff support, including as “it enhances performance”.

NNGO 4 is not aware of any widely referenced guidelines for staff support. However, management liaises with other organizations on staff support to identify services that suit their own context and needs. The organization includes information on staff support in employees’ contracts.



Current staff support system

Given that NNGO 4 only employs national staff, services are the same for everyone. The organization provides each staff as well as up to six dependents per staff with food twice a day. NNGO 4 also provides its staff with medical insurance. It identifies suitable clinics in field locations and transfers staff to Juba in case of need. In addition to paid annual leave, the organization offers staff the option to request other forms of leave, such as bereavement leave and family and medical leave, which includes maternity and paternity leave. The organization follows the social insurance scheme required by South Sudanese law and disburses a termination benefit to staff at the end of their contract. In case of emergencies, staff can request payment advances.

NNGO 4 also offers a range of capacity building options to support its staff with developing skills relevant to the job and furthering their education. The organization also invests in social events: each year the organization organizes one or two days where staff and their families meet and spend time together.

The organization's HR policy includes an encompassing section dedicated to grievances and appeals, and spells out procedures how to communicate these. This includes a 'grievance form' – a template staff fills out if grievances can't be resolved otherwise. The respective issue will then be discussed with support from a grievance committee.

The organization finances staff support largely through projects funded by larger organizations. These projects include budget lines for staff support services, such as medical insurance. NNGO 4 records data on incidents: each time a staff member wants to visit a clinic, the office in Juba has to be informed to notify the insurance provider and approve the proceeding.

The organization does not undertake formal surveys related to staff support. However, every Monday morning a meeting with staff takes place, including in field locations. During these meetings staff discuss issues and have the opportunity to raise concerns. The outcomes of the meetings hold in field locations are then sent to Headquarters per email. In case of need, the organization also holds meetings with the insurance company and the medical facilities staff visit.

Reported gaps and challenges

NNGO 4 reported they face numerous challenges regarding staff support. The main issue is the limited availability of funding for staff support. This was reported as being especially problematic in the context of the deteriorating economy: on the one hand, the economic crisis in the country increases staff's vulnerability. On the other hand, providing consistent staff support is challenging as the inflation affects the budgets allocated for such services.

Achievements and good practices

One service that staff particularly appreciate is the medical insurance the organization provides. In field locations staff have the option to access clinics run by MSF or other organizations, which is a great advantage. Another good practice is the social insurance scheme, which provides staff with a financial buffer at the end of their employment.



Textbox 1: What is staff support? Excerpts from interviews with NNGOs in Juba

Staff support means that standard care is provided by the organization, for example insurance covers, such as medical insurance and insurances that cover costs for evacuation, and accommodation for staff (Representative from NNGO 1)

Staff support is not only confined to finances in the form of good salaries. It should also entail conducive working environments, capacity building of staff, ensuring they are able to understand the vision and mission and objectives of the organization. It also means understanding the problems of staff, for instance through staff grievances committees (Representative from NNGO 2)

Staff support in my view means the effort that is coming from the organization to provide human resources in order to run or manage particular programs. For instance, we provide an orientation to new recruits and based on this are able to identify strengths and weaknesses of new staff members, and provide training or peer support to enhance skills so that he or she can do the work better (Representative from NNGO 3)

Staff support for me starts with livelihoods: give support to staff to eat twice a day, and support their next of kin, be able to support staff to live the next six, seven months or one year. Second, be able to increase staff's capacity to deliver and support their educational development (Representative from NNGO 4)

Staff support generally includes things like benefits that are outside of what the employer should be giving back to their employees, such as medical insurances, housing allowances, transport allowances – it really depends on the organization. Salaries do not count as staff support (Representative from NNGO 5)

NNGO 5

Profile

Seven South Sudanese nationals founded NNGO 5. The organization supports livelihood-challenged communities in South Sudan to sustainably improve their well-being and standards of living. This includes initiatives in the sectors education, food security, HIV/Aids and peace and security.

The organization currently employs 16 national and four international staff. NNGO 5 has an HR manual, which also outlines staff support services offered by the organization. The organization informs its employees about staff support through a briefing at the beginning of their contract. The organization is not aware of any widely used staff support guidelines, such as those prepared by Antares Foundation (2012) or the IASC (2007).

NNGO 5 funds staff support through monthly personal contributions from its founders. To facilitate a minimum level of security, the organization plans on a quarterly basis and continuously lobbies with external partners to acquire additional funding.



Current staff support system

The organization provides 'field leave' for those staff located outside Juba. Depending on the level of risk and hardship in the respective area, staff are entitled to take ten working days away from the field. This time is usually spent at the employees' home base in Kenya or Uganda and meant to be used to follow-up on outstanding work-related matters.

In addition to salaries, the organization supports its employees in establishing voluntary savings and investment schemes and provides an annual bonus to all staff. The organization also has a provident fund, and the money is disbursed to staff after resignation as termination benefit.

NNGO 5 provides health insurance to its staff, too. The insurance covers injuries at the workplace. Regarding mental health and well-being, staff benefits from one of the organization's programmes, which includes psychosocial support components: when staff receives training at the beginning of their assignment, they also receive training in psychosocial support.

Other services the organization provides include free lunch for staff, reimbursement of work-related transport costs, including travel of spouses and dependents at the beginning and end of staff's assignment, and opportunities for capacity building and training.

The organization collects data on sickness of staff and related incidents. The data is collected through communication from staff to management. Regular surveys related to staff support are not in place but there are weekly meetings during which employees have the opportunity to raise and discuss concerns.

Reported gaps and challenges

One key challenge the organization voiced refers to the economic situation and the financial constraints experienced in the South Sudan context, respectively. These make it difficult for the organization to implement activities and provide encompassing services for its staff.

Achievements and good practices

According to their own evaluation, the organization is not able to offer many services to staff. However, NNGO 5 highlighted that especially the provision of free meals, the opportunity for professional and personal development through trainings, and the travel money are much appreciated by employees.



Table 1: Overview of participating NNGOs

Organization	Active in South Sudan	Number of staff	Main areas of intervention	Key staff support services
NNGO 1	Since 2016	19 national staff, 1 international staff	Health, nutrition, food security, WASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Access to food and water • Reimbursement of medical expenses
NNGO 2	Since 2006	28 staff	Food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave • Staff motivation (e.g., trainings) • Health insurance • Allowances (e.g., travel allowance) • Staff grievance committees
NNGO 3	Since 1999	21 national staff	Mine action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health insurance • Leave • Capacity building • Termination benefit • Provision of equipment (e.g., work clothes)
NNGO 4	Since 2014	44 national staff	Wash, food security, education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food for staff and dependents (max. 6) • Medical insurance • Leave • Termination benefit • Capacity building • Grievance committees
NNGO 5	Since 2015	16 national staff, 4 international staff	Education, food security, HIV/AIDS, Peace and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave • Provident fund • Support in establishing saving and investment schemes • Health insurance • Free lunch • Reimbursement of work-related expenses (e.g., travel) • Capacity building



INGO 1

Profile

This INGO's primary focus is to support vulnerable populations affected by crises through emergency, rehabilitation and development projects. These are implemented in numerous locations across the country.

The organization currently employs 600 national and 45 international staff. INGO 1 is not familiar with any of the widely referenced staff support guidelines, but has recently begun drafting a separate staff support policy for their South Sudan country office. The document is work in progress. Currently, key staff support services for international staff are specified in their employment contracts. For national staff, the organization developed a HR Guide which also includes references to staff support. This Guide is updated every six months to ensure it adequately reflects the constantly changing conditions in the country. In addition, INGO 1 has a Security Guide which includes information and processes related to staff support. Both Guides are accessible to all staff for information and reference.

Current staff support system

INGO 1 has different staff support systems in place for national and international staff. For instance, national staff receives a series of allowances that are factored into salaries. These include medical-, mission-, and relocation allowances. The medical allowance is a fixed amount paid by the organization on a monthly basis to all national staff in USD. The mission allowance covers expenses incurred by staff when working outside their usual base of operation, such as costs for transport, accommodation, meals and evacuation within the country in case of need. The relocation allowance is designed to compensate national staff recruited in one area and sent to a different area within the country. The allowance covers a return flight between these locations every three months, accommodation, and evacuation within the country in case of need.

In exceptional circumstances and if certain conditions are fulfilled, the organization also provides the option for salary advances to its national staff. This provision is sought to support staff in cases of dire need. Further, INGO 1 offers staff the termination benefit as required by the labor law.

The organization provides various forms of leave, including 24 days of annual leave per year, and a maximum of 15 days of paid sick leave. In certain cases of long-term sickness and depending of the length thereof INGO 1 continues paying salary in full or parts for up to nine months.

Women and men are eligible for paid maternity and paternity leave as per the labor law. INGO 1 accepts if fathers request longer periods of leave and treats this as compassionate leave. Based upon approval, this form of leave provides staff with additional days off for special events. Other forms of leave staff can request include study- and exam leave.

INGO 1 also provides national staff the option for training. These trainings include internal and external training initiatives.



For international staff the organization follows the labor law applied in the location of its Headquarter. This includes services such as health insurance and access to counseling. It also captures evacuation out of the country. The organization also provides rest and recuperation (R&R) every three months. In addition, those based in field locations are granted time in Juba every six weeks. International staff are also granted free accommodation in Juba and field locations.

The organization also has a staff representation body. This body consists of three to six members and represents the work force in negotiations of issues such as salary, leave, safety and security, equal treatment of staff, and working hours.

Although not implemented on a regular basis yet, the organization has recently undertaken a staff survey. This survey included questions on well-being, to better understand employees' concerns and needs. Follow-up surveys are planned to evaluate if newly implemented measures have had their desired effect. INGO 1 systematically collects data on incidents, such as accidents and evacuations.

All staff support services are funded through projects. In addition, the organization's Headquarters has funds available that can be utilized in case of emergencies and as a contingency plan, respectively. Overall and as observed by the organization, the current staff support system is rather designed to react to issues than to the prevention thereof.

Reported gaps and challenges

One major challenge INGO 1 faces relates to evacuation. This includes the logistical challenges attached to this procedure on the one hand and the double standard for national and international staff on the other. Specifically, while international staff are evacuated to a location outside the country if need be, national staff can only be relocated within South Sudan. While this proceeding is common practice it has caused resentment among the workforce.

One challenge that affects particularly national staff relates to the organization's current health care system. The medical allowance national staff receive is not insignificant, but not as comprehensive as insurance which causes particular issues for those who have the responsibility for large families.

Regarding the services for international staff one key issue relates to psychosocial support: currently, the psychologists available are contracted by the organization and based abroad. This situation causes some staff to hesitate over consulting these psychologists. While staff generally have the option to identify and consult a psychologist of their own choice, the lack of availability of qualified professionals on site hampers the utilization of psychosocial support services.

Achievements and good practices

INGO 1 identified their encompassing and clear security infrastructure as an achievement, especially after some adjustments took place based on feedback provided by staff. In addition, the salaries the organization pays are competitive for both national and international staff, and staff highly appreciate the accommodation provided by the organization. INGO 1 reported the provision of R&R as another good practice.



INGO 2

Profile

The focus of INGO 2 is emergency relief through the support of communities in tackling malnutrition, restore livelihoods and repair vital water infrastructure. Most programmes are implemented in the former Jonglei state area. Further initiatives with partners take place in Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Central and Western Equatoria.

The organization currently employs 96 national and 16 international staff. Its key staff support policies for national staff are outlined in a separate handbook. All staff receive an induction at the beginning of their assignment, including information on health and welfare. Albeit not as a fixed agenda point, staff support options are also at times mentioned throughout meetings. INGO 2 is not aware of any of the widely referenced guidelines on staff support.

Current staff support systems

The organization offers a specific psychosocial support programme for its national and international staff. This covers amongst others the option for regular counseling to ensure staff's personal well-being, counseling in case of traumatic events, and debriefings at the end of assignments. The counselors are contracted by the organization and based abroad.

INGO 2 also provides its staff with medical insurance through an international insurance company. National staff can request coverage of up to five dependents, and international staff can access medical care inside and outside South Sudan.

The organization also grants certain allowances, such as travel allowance for drivers, and provides relevant equipment such as SAT phones and mobiles. In exceptional circumstances INGO 2 offers salary advances to its national staff. This is intended to support them in dire straits. Further, INGO 2 evacuates national staff to Juba and international staff to a destination outside the country in case of need.

As required by the national law, INGO 2 provides a termination benefit system for national staff. Further, relocated staff are given the option to stay in the organization's accommodation in or close to the office compound and receive an equipment grant. The organization also provides three meals per day. National staff based in the field are granted R&R every three months in Juba, and INGO 2 covers the costs for the flights to the capital. The organization also provides staff with annual leave, short- and long-term sick leave, compassionate leave, and women and men with maternity and paternity leave, respectively.

Complementing these services, the organization's national staff handbook outlines possible proceedings to deal with grievances between staff members. This provision is intended to support staff in resolving problems and enhance team cohesion. INGO 2 also foresees regular appraisal meetings between staff and their line managers. These meetings serve as an additional opportunity for staff to raise issues and concerns.



INGO 2 is committed to staff development. The organization thus provides the opportunity for national and international staff to engage in trainings.

While this is not done on a regular basis, INGO 2 recently contracted an external company to undertake a staff survey on behalf of the organization. This survey also captured components related to staff support.

INGO 2 collects data on incidences through reports written by staff. These are then sent to the organization's Headquarter.

Staff support is generally funded through projects. In case of need the organization has core funds available to cover additional costs.

Reported gaps and challenges

Theoretically it is a great advantage that national staff can register up to five dependents as part of the medical insurance scheme. However, INGO 2 highlighted that not all staff have their families in Juba or other larger cities. In fact, many family members live in the countryside or outside South Sudan, which makes it difficult for them to benefit from the medical services they are granted to access. While this is beyond the organization's control and responsibility, INGO 2 would like to identify potential solutions to this issue.

Achievements and good practices

INGO 2 stated that overall the medical insurance system is working well. This is especially the case for international staff. So far, no complaints have been received from international staff regarding this component of the organization's staff support system. INGO 2 interprets this as a strong indicator for employees' satisfaction.

Textbox 2: What is staff support? Excerpts from interviews with INGOs in Juba

Staff support in our organization devolves a lot to individuals; it is for them to identify when they need support. Then ad hoc provisions will be made to assist the person with that. It is also more of a response to incidents; the response is usually better than the prevention, there is no real system in place to support staff other than people identifying issues themselves (Representative from INGO 1)

Staff support is how organizations care for their staff. There are many things this should entail. We can support staff for instance through psychological support when they experienced incidents (Representative from INGO 2)

Staff support is based on the duty of care, which is more like a guiding principle. Coming from this vision the organization tries to provide some services. For expat staff for example we have insurance coverage (Representative from INGO 3)



INGO 3

Profile

Key programmatic activities of INGO 3 include protection, camp coordination and management, and food security and livelihoods. The organization implements its activities mainly in Upper Nile and Unity states and employs currently 440 national and 58 international staff.

INGO 3 does not have a formal, separate staff support policy. However, the organization has an HR manual for national staff and terms of employment for international staff. Further, INGO 3 has a series of written policies that outline rules and procedures regarding specific benefits, such as R&R. The organization sends all these documents and information to staff at the beginning of their contract. The organization is not aware of any of the widely referenced staff support guidelines.

Current staff support system

There are some differences in the services INGO 3 offers to its national and international staff. The HR manual for national staff for instance states explicitly that staff has the right to voice concerns and suggestions and provides information about adequate processes. It also outlines benefits such as food-, accommodation-, medical- and relocation allowances. For instance, national staff are expected to stay at their homes, and accommodation expenses are reimbursed when on professional trips.

The HR manual for national staff also specifies leave regulations. INGO 3 offers annual leave at the rate of 2.5 calendar days per month, sick leave, including full or partial compensation in case of long-term illness, compassionate leave up to ten days, and unpaid leave up to three months. Relocatable staff are granted five days of R&R every three months. Women have the right to take maternity leave, and fathers can request paternity leave.

INGO 3 also provides retirement benefits to its national staff and per diems when staff are required to work away from their duty station. Staff are insured when travelling outside the country on official business through an international insurance company. The organization provides access to Internet and telecommunication, and is committed to offer its staff internal and external training opportunities to acquire and enhance relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Services for international staff are outlined in the terms of employment for expatriates and the specific manual on compensation, benefits and salary scales. Services include among others allowances such as experience allowance for time served in the organization, pension-, location-, relocation-, and luggage allowance. INGO 3 also provides its international staff with housing. Annual leave are 25 working days per month and staff are entitled to R&R every six weeks when based in the field, and every eight weeks when based in Juba. Similarly to national staff, internationals can request sick leave and compassionate leave. The organization provides medical insurance and women and men are entitled to take maternity and paternity leave.

The medical insurance the organization provides to its international staff covers also mental health and psychosocial support services. In addition, the package includes pre-and post deployment briefings. The insurance company identifies the counselors undertaking these briefings.



Reported gaps and challenges

One key challenge for INGO 3 relates to its medical insurance and the lack of access to medical care in the field, respectively: having medical insurance but no clinic to go to is a problem. One option to address this situation at least in parts is to provide the respective staff members in the field with a medical allowance instead of insurance. However, the allowance would be marginal and the insurance company does not proceed in such a way.

INGO 3 reported evacuation as another challenge. Questions that arise particularly concern national staff and their families: even if staff are relocated from the field to Juba in case of need it is not clear what happens next in terms of their stay in the capital. The situation is easier for international staff who can be evacuated out of the country.

INGO 3 also mentioned the different status of national and international staff within the organization as a challenge, as some national staff feel disadvantaged. Further, this situation leads some national staff to have high expectations of their international colleagues. One example is the perception that international staff have high salaries and a small number of dependents. This generates the expectation that international staff should be generous and support national staff financially and with regards to formal training and skill building, regardless of whether this is part of their job description or not.

A related challenge INGO 3 observed concerns communication. Specifically, some staff at times feel that matters are not adequately conversed or explained by colleagues or management. One example is (unintentionally) leaving out team members from emails, which disgruntles some staff members, especially since some employees take such actions quite personal. This can impact team cohesion.

Overall, INGO 3 concluded that some serious challenges persist that should be addressed. However, even if these challenges were addressed staff likely will not be satisfied with the services provided and request the organization for more.

Achievements and good practices

INGO 3 reported their very flexible R&R policy as a good practice. Specifically, staff are permitted to leave on a Friday afternoon and come back on a Monday morning. This allows them to make use of the weekends before and after the official days off. INGO 3 reported that staff are highly appreciative of this flexibility.

Another good practice is the fixed allowance the organization meanwhile offers for R&R. Previously, INGO 3 reimbursed the exact costs of tickets and other bills related to R&R. The new proceeding is not only easier and faster from an administrative point of view. It also provides staff more flexibility and for some, especially those based in the region, the surplus presents an additional, much appreciated source of income.



Table 2: Overview of participating INGOs

Organization	Active in South Sudan	Number of staff	Main areas of intervention	Key staff support services	
				National staff	International staff
INGO 1	Since 2007	600 national staff, 45 international staff	Emergency, rehabilitation, development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowances (e.g., medical allowance, relocation allowance) • Leave • National Social Insurance • Training • Equipment (e.g., phones) • Relocation within the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Health insurance (including psychosocial support) • R&R • Leave • Training • Evacuation • Equipment (e.g., phones) • Staff representation body
INGO 2	Since 1998	96 national staff, 16 international staff	Nutrition, livelihoods, water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health insurance (including max. 5 dependents) • Allowances (e.g., travel allowance) • Equipment • Pension fund • Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health insurance (including psychosocial support) • Training • Allowances • Equipment • Evacuation
INGO 3	Since 2005	440 national staff, 58 international staff	Protection, camp coordination and management, and food security and livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocation within the country • Allowances (e.g., food-, accommodation-, medical allowances) • Leave • R&R (for relocatable staff) • Retirement benefits • Insurance during business trips • Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R&R • Leave • Accommodation • Allowances (e.g., relocation-, pension-, luggage allowances) • Health insurance (including psychosocial support)



Discussion of findings

This research demonstrates that participating NGOs are very committed to staff support, understand the importance thereof, and are interested in expanding their knowledge in this area. However, the findings also show that organizations and individuals, respectively, differ in their understanding of staff support as a concept. Different opinions for instance exist as to whether salaries are part of staff support or not. These differences also impact the reportage of achievements and good practices, and especially challenges and gaps. In this context it also stands out that organizations' awareness of recommended staff support standards and widely referenced guidelines is limited: only one of the participating NGOs was aware of the Sphere guidelines, and none of the researched organizations was familiar with those developed by the Antares Foundation (2012) or the IASC (2007).

Overall, there are significant gaps in organizations' service provision, whereby especially the services NNGOs provide are currently limited. Recurring concerns among NNGOs were the lack of health insurance or limited insurance coverage, respectively. Similarly, several NNGOs and INGOs reported the lack of health care services in field locations as a great challenge they consider difficult to address. For INGOs, one repeatedly mentioned challenge is the double standard of service provision between national and international staff within their organization. This is especially the case for evacuation policies, which usually foresee international staff to be brought outside the country, and national staff to be relocated within South Sudan. This situation has caused frustration among some staff members in the past and hence deserves attention.

It stands out that services related to staff health also played a major role in the context of organizational achievements and good practices. Specifically, organizations highlighted staff's great appreciation if being provided with some form of health insurance – even if coverage is limited. Multiple NNGOs and INGOs identified offering health insurance as achievement and good practice, respectively. Further, several NNGOs and INGOs emphasized the positive effects of providing staff the opportunity to share feedback and concerns through means such as surveys, dedicated committees, or regular appraisals; understanding staff's needs and priorities helped organizations a great deal in identifying potential solutions and taking adequate action.

Another important finding of this research is that despite their interest and eagerness, NNGOs in particular struggle with scaling up their staff support. The key barrier that hampers these organizations to improve the quantity and quality of their service delivery is the limited availability of funds for such initiatives in a context of a rapidly deteriorating economy and significant inflation. Many organizations are hesitant or not in the position to systematically and continuously invest in staff support; they heavily rely on external support to keep their programmes and projects running in the first place. NNGOs thus oftentimes provide support through informal, personal contributions from founders or executive leaders. This is contrary to the institutionalized services provided by INGOs. With regards to INGOs' resources it is important to note that while they usually have larger budgets available, they mostly also have larger numbers of staff. This may render the provision of comprehensive services for these organizations challenging, too.



Recommendations for organizations

Research on the efficacy of staff support services and their impact on employees' mental health and well-being over time is hardly available. This makes formulating recommendations on scientific grounds challenging. The recommendations presented in the following are based on first-hand experiences from senior NGO representatives and HR staff as presented in this report, the systematic collection and analysis of suggestions how to improve staff support services delivered by humanitarian workers in South Sudan (Strohmeier et al., 2017), and findings and recommendations from related research on organizational staff support (e.g., Antares Foundation, 2012; IASC, 2007). While some of these recommendations are tailored specifically to NNGOs and INGOs in South Sudan and can be implemented by organizations themselves in the short term, others are more generic and focused on long-term improvements.

Knowledge and Awareness

- ❖ Review existing staff support guidelines

Entities such as IASC and especially Antares Foundation invested in research on staff support and developed evidence-based guidelines (Antares Foundation, 2012; IASC, 2007). These guidelines are available online and aim at supporting organizations in identifying their own needs and establishing adequate staff support systems. NNGOs and INGOs can benefit greatly from these guidelines. As a start it will help a great deal if those working on staff support within organizations (e.g., Country Directors and HR Officers) did familiarize themselves with these guidelines and the recommendations therein, respectively.

- ❖ Review existing findings on the mental health and well-being of humanitarian workers in South Sudan

The research project on the mental health and well-being of humanitarian workers in South Sudan generated findings on prevalence rates and determinants of common mental health problems among humanitarian workers in the country. It also systematically collected and analyzed humanitarian workers' suggestions how organizations can improve staff support services. Organizations that supported this research have already received a brief practice report. Further findings of this research will be made available online and can serve as a reference frame for organizations in South Sudan. This will be especially beneficial for those organizations that do not collect data systematically and/or do not undertake regular staff surveys.

- ❖ Inform staff regularly about the risks associated with humanitarian work and existing staff support services

Some staff, especially those recruited internationally, are not always fully aware of the effects the work in South Sudan can have on their well-being, and how to prevent and address potential issues,



respectively. Further, humanitarian workers experiencing issues, especially those related to mental health, are frequently stigmatized. While humanitarian workers themselves need to apply self-care, organizations are required to support staff well-being on moral, legal and economic grounds. Encompassing pre-deployment briefings and discussion of risks and remedies help reducing stigma on the one hand and likely incentivize staff to utilize existing services in case of need.

- ❖ Establish an online knowledge base on staff support

With the objective to simplify access and with a view on time efficiency, relevant material related to staff support, such as links to websites, guidelines, and research papers should be compiled in one place and made accessible to NGOs in South Sudan. One option to achieve this would be to gather relevant links and material on the NGO Forum website. Ideally, the Forum would then announce that this knowledge base exists. The material should be updated and expanded on a regular basis.

Data collection and research

- ❖ Assess staff's needs and priorities on a regular basis

Measures such as staff surveys, appraisals and meetings helped NNGOs and INGOs a great deal in identifying issues and concerns individual staff members face, challenges and gaps in their organization's service provision, and potential ways to address these. In addition, regular surveys can help organizations in monitoring perceptions and evaluating efficacy of existing and newly introduced staff support services. At the same time though it is important to manage staff's expectations and clarify that potentially not all demands can be met.

- ❖ Collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data on incidents

Collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data on incidents such as work-related accidents and hospital visits is important. It provides organizations with an overview of the type and scale of issues staff experiences and – if done systematically – facilitates better planning and financing of staff support. For instance, such data supports the selection of suitable health insurance providers and contracts. Further, if compared across organizations and over time, such data can also help in identifying what works in staff support and why.

- ❖ Undertake research, especially on service efficacy

With the objective to better understand what works in staff support and why staff surveys need to be complemented by additional, rigorous research. If need be such research can be implemented with external support, for instance from Universities such as QMU, or specialized entities such as Antares Foundation. The findings of such cooperation will facilitate evidence-based service delivery and substantiate organizations' requests to donors for staff support financing. In case organizations lack funding to commission research on staff support, novel funding opportunities such as those offered by R2HC may offer solutions.



Cooperation between organizations

- ❖ Exchange experiences and engage in inter-organizational learning

This report and its presentation of different systems, challenges and good practices is a starting point in facilitating inter-organizational knowledge exchange and learning in the area of staff support. Such proceedings should be continued: there is great potential for organizations in the country to learn from each, for instance with regard to suitable health insurance providers and schemes. Options to facilitate such learning include the establishment of specific inter-organizational working groups or including staff support as a recurring agenda point in NGO Forum meetings.

- ❖ Team up in providing selected staff support services

Where applicable, cooperations between organizations can even be taken one step further: instead of establishing individual staff support systems, the delivery of some services may be more attractive for staff and more cost-effective for organizations if organizations teamed up. One example is the provision of specific training for staff, such as psychological first aid. Another example is the provision of counseling options for staff within the country: pooling resources to contract qualified counselors based in South Sudan who are not affiliated with one specific organization likely incentivizes staff to utilize the opportunity for psychosocial support while causing marginal costs for individual organizations.

Staff support financing

- ❖ Ensure staff support funding mechanisms are sustainable

There are various ways to finance staff support. The most common option is to factor staff support into the overhead costs of projects. However, this option alone is not sufficient: projects may not be extended, which then causes termination of staff support services, and the deteriorating economy and inflation may adversely impact the financial resources available to organizations. Consequently, organizations need to establish complementary mechanisms that cover staff support in case of need. Earmarking core funds for staff support is one option towards this end.

- ❖ Lobby with donors for staff support financing

Staff support is essential and to be provided by organizations on moral, legal and economic grounds. Enhanced lobbying with donors for staff support funding is needed to facilitate upscaling of current services to prevent and manage mental health problems of staff and support their well-being. Research findings, such as those on prevalence rates and determinants of mental health problems among humanitarian workers in South Sudan as well as potential adverse consequences for organizations and beneficiaries are helpful resources towards this end.



❖ Invest in prevention and planning rather than response

Generally, investments in prevention and planning are more (cost-) effective in the long run than investments in response. For instance, access to health services in field locations in South Sudan is limited or absent and organizations struggle with the provision of care for sick staff based in these areas. One option that may help addressing this situation is to ensure staff undergoes regular medical check-ups in Juba, and receives regular briefings about health risks and well-proven prevention measures. Storing basic medical supplies in field bases is useful, too. While such proceeding will not address the full scope of the problem it will likely reduce the number of incidents. Other examples where prevention and planning pay off include pre-deployment briefings, monitoring of dynamics within teams, as well as evacuation: developing and updating evacuation plans and reassuring staff that they are covered is good practice.

Specific staff support services and organizational initiatives

The following list reflects repeatedly mentioned suggestions provided by the wider humanitarian community in South Sudan as to how organizations can improve their staff support services (Strohmeier et al., 2017). This list is not exhaustive. As mentioned before, rigorous research on the efficacy of the suggested measures and actions is scarce.

- As an established policy, provide regular counseling sessions for all staff, including managers, and make staff well-being an organizational priority, including the roll-out of targeted interventions that address the stigma oftentimes attached to mental health problems;
- Raise awareness of the importance of mental health and well-being within the organization as well as among donors, including requests for funding for staff support activities;
- Build capacities of all staff in the area of mental health and well-being, including how to deal with common stressors in humanitarian settings, how to build resilience, and what to do in case of distress (e.g., provision of contact details of counselor and information material);
- Restructure existing support services to enhance confidentiality and trust that utilizing these services does not adversely impact staff's standing in the organization (e.g., through outsourcing counseling to independent practitioners/institutes that are not part of the organization);
- Ensure mental health care is covered by insurance plans provided by organizations;
- Facilitate regular team building activities to improve team cohesion and build trusting environments within organizations;
- Formulate stricter internal harassment policies, especially on sexual harassment, and pursue cases thereof;
- Improve staff security, especially in the field (e.g., through provision of communication equipment);
- Improve staff accommodation, especially in the field (e.g., through provision of fans/air conditioners in very hot environments), and provide options for recreational activities (e.g., nets, balls, board games);
- Pay more respect to work-life balance (e.g., through reducing high workloads);
- Pay increased attention to the specific needs of national staff and reduce inequalities in treatment as far as possible, including regarding access to staff support services.



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Annex 1: Request for participation in research

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF HUMANITARIAN WORKERS

Request for Participation in Research on Organizational Staff Support Services for Humanitarian Workers in South Sudan

What is this research about?

Through a recent online survey on the mental health and well-being of humanitarian workers in South Sudan, Queen Margaret University (QMU), Edinburgh, established an overall need for organizations to adjust their staff support services to better meet the needs of their workforce. Building on these findings and the voiced interest of organizations in the country, this research aims at collating information on existing NGO staff support services and formulating recommendations how to adjust these within the specific context of South Sudan. ACTED, in cooperation with the South Sudan NGO Forum, supports the planning and implementing of this research.

What organizations are eligible to participate in this research?

We are going to include three to seven national and three to seven international NGOs that

- 1) are listed as a member of the South Sudan NGO Forum;
- 2) have operated in South Sudan for one year or longer; and
- 3) employ a minimum of 20 staff in South Sudan.

When, where and how will this research be implemented?

This research will be implemented between 16 January and 9 February 2018 in Juba. This research comprises a desk review of staff support-related documents participating organizations are willing to share (e.g. staff support policy), and one face-to-face meeting between a researcher and an organizational representative familiar with the organization's staff support system (e.g. Country Director or Human Resources staff). This meeting will take approximately one hour.

How can organizations initiate participation in this research?

Organizations can initiate participation in this research through the following two simple steps:

- 1) Check if your organization meets the eligibility criteria mentioned above;
- 2) Email Hannah Strohmeier at hstrohmeier@qmu.ac.uk by **15 December 2017** and indicate your interest in participating in this research.

Hannah will provide your organization with further information and answer research-related questions.

How will the researchers use the results?

The researchers will prepare a report that reflects on how participating NGOs approach staff support, and how these services could be adjusted to better respond to humanitarian workers' needs within the South Sudan context. The report will be made available to organizations in the hope to benefit the humanitarian community. The results may also be published in an academic journal. Organizations and interviewees can request anonymization; in this case their names will not be disclosed to the public at any time.

Who are the researchers?

This research is part of a larger research project undertaken by Hannah Strohmeier, MSc and MA, a doctoral student at the Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD), QMU, and Visiting Assistant in Research at Yale University. The supervisory team of the research consists of Professor Alastair Ager, PhD, Director of IGHD and Professor of Population and Family Health at Columbia University, New York; Pim Scholte, MD, PhD, Academic Medical Center of the University of Amsterdam; and Oonagh O'Brien, IGHD, Queen Margaret University. Professor Ager, Dr Scholte and Ms Strohmeier have all worked in humanitarian settings and published on the mental health and well-being of humanitarian workers. The researchers obtained ethical clearance for this research by QMU.



Annex 2: Interview guide

Interview Guide: Research on organizational staff support

- How does your organization understand staff support?
 - What does it ideally entail (e.g., medical care, constant psychological care, crisis support, evacuation, safety and security measures etc.)?
- What is your organization in fact doing in terms of staff support (e.g., induction of new staff, R&R, regular medical check-ups, post-assignment support, etc.)?
 - Is there a specific component on psychosocial well-being?
 - Based on what grounds does your organization provide staff support (e.g., legal, moral, economic reasons)?
 - Who delivers these services (in-house capacity, external contractors etc.) – and what are the benefits and challenges of this model (and why)?
 - How does your organization inform staff about these services (e.g., briefing at start of assignment, regular emails etc.)?
 - Are there any differences for national/ international staff (if yes, what are these)?
 - Are there any other dimensions/groups you have specific precautions for (e.g. women/men)?
- How does your organization finance staff support (e.g., is there a separate budget for this)?
- Does your organization collect any data related to staff support (e.g., medical complaints/evacuations, psychological complaints/evacuations, % of staff making use of certain staff care provisions, such as counseling etc.)?
- Have you undertaken any staff surveys or other measures to evaluate staff support services?
 - If yes, what were the results?
 - If no, why not?
- Where do you see major gaps and challenges in service provision?
 - What are the causes for these gaps and challenges?
 - How could these be addressed/ how do you think staff support could be improved within your organization?
 - What would you need to achieve this?
- What do you think is going well/ what are good practices regarding staff support within your organization?
- Are you aware of any guidance manuals on humanitarian staff support (e.g., IASC Guidelines, Antares Guidelines etc.)?

