

CHALLENGES TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:

The management of employee risk in the humanitarian aid and security sectors

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Abstract

A more severe focus on the ever-changing political and security global landscape highlights the attendant safety and protection of humanitarian aid and security sector employees who arguably are in greater danger today than at any other time. In almost every jurisdiction organisations have a statutory duty to provide a safe place for staff to work and is expected to mitigate the risks staff may reasonably face. However, the clear message from government, non-government agencies and security specialists alike is that they should be doing more. The key issues in this paper are addressed from an organisational perspective, with a focus on the role of HRM and the crucial part the function should play in the identification, development and implementation of risk management strategies, policies and practices to support organisations. This paper builds on recent research and using an exploratory qualitative research approach based on relevant INGO and government case studies the analysis reveals interesting results that supports some extant research whilst identifying key challenges for organisations to manage in the future. In conclusion, a discussion of the study implications and suggestions for further applied research in the area of risk management in the humanitarian aid and security sectors is proffered.

Keywords: risk management, HRM, humanitarian aid, security sector management, duty of care, employment cycle, inter-agency working, lessons learned.

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to undertake a timely examination of the role of human resource management (HRM) practices and processes in the organisational support of the management of risk of employees deployed to hazardous environments by organisations in the humanitarian aid and security sectors. A further aim of this exploratory research was to identify current and emerging key issues in the organisational support as well as the barriers to the success of the support for employees deployed in dangerous regions of the world. Additionally, the study was planned with a view to contributing to existing theory and providing useful models for practitioners to utilise.

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Theoretical background

A more severe focus on the ever-changing political and security global landscape highlights the attendant safety and protection of humanitarian aid and security sector employees including the military and civil servants, who arguably are in greater danger today than at any other time. It would appear such employees are no longer immune from increasing acts of violence or terrorist attacks and would seemingly require more adequate support from their organisations whilst having been deployed. This paper develops on research and literature that examines aid and security organisation responses to security risk challenges (Stoddard & Harmer, 2010; Stoddard, Harmer & Haver, 2006; Stoddard, Harmer & DiDomenico, 2009; Brauderlain & Gassmann, 2006). Concomitantly, this paper also highlights the need for more focus on organisations (governments, non-government agencies (NGOs)) to increasingly provide in law a 'duty-of-care' for its employees. However, it is argued that the duty of care is often adhered to more for prevention rather than cure with an emphasis on avoiding the potentially catastrophic cost of organisations being found negligent. This paper further promotes the notion that management requires an integrated, risk-based approach to security management of its employees sent to work in hazardous environments. Further it is suggested that raising the awareness of government and non-government organisations is needed to comply with minimum legal requirements for a healthy and safe work environment and to ensure that they are not exposing their staff to unnecessary and avoidable risk.

This research is timely given the contemporary worldwide examples of injuries and loss of life to aid and security sector workers and it's relevance to the improvement of organisational support particularly in the key area of human resource management (HRM). The increased levels of violence against aid workers have prompted organisations to address more the issues of staff security and organisational responsibility as vital policy and operational success factors. Yet little research has focussed more clearly on the role of HRM in this vexed area of the support for staff in the discussion on security management. Therefore, this research also provides much needed debate to challenge aid and security sector organisations, policy makers and stakeholders' responses to an often overlooked or the down-graded issue of organisational support. This is particularly apposite in the area of HRM for individual employees working in areas of threat to human life or employees sustaining major injury whilst performing the duties required of them by their organisation.

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It is axiomatic that humanitarian aid and security sector work is predominantly in insecure environments which also subject employees to many threats and risks. The two examples below highlight the complex array of situations that aid and security sector employees find themselves confronted with:

1. Kidnapping in Darfur, North Sudan:

Darfur in Western Sudan remains one of the world's worst humanitarian crises with a total of 4.7 million people affected by the on-going conflict. Many of these people rely on aid provided by local and international organisations. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to operate. Over the past few years, violence towards aid workers has seen a marked increase with humanitarian staff becoming the targets of direct attacks. Compound break-ins, car-jacking and robberies have become commonplace, perhaps an even more worrying trend though is the recent increase in the number of relief workers kidnapped and abducted.

According to UN statistics, between January and August 2009, a staggering 50 staff from UN or aid organisations were reportedly kidnapped or abducted in Darfur. National staff is particularly vulnerable to attack as Sudanese aid workers represent the vast majority of relief workers in Darfur and are usually on the front line. However, recent developments have shown that foreign nationals are increasingly at risk - kidnappers have seized six groups of foreigners in Darfur since June 2010, a trend that was virtually unheard of before.

2. Insecurity in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

In Haiti, after the devastating earthquake on January 12th 2010, insecurity and the complete breakdown of law and order in the main city Port-au-Prince hampered rescue efforts. The UN and military recommended, and in some cases enforced curfews and restricted zones in certain areas of the city for mainly personal safety reasons. Fears have arisen over a dangerous power vacuum in the aftermath of the disaster. With food and medical supplies delayed, there were widespread reports of mounting desperation and looting. Footage from the US broadcaster CBS showed young men roaming the streets of Port-au-Prince armed with machetes and hunting for food.

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"I fear we're all aware that the situation is getting more tense as the poorest people who need so much are waiting for deliveries," said David Wimhurst, spokesman for the Brazilian-led UN peacekeeping mission. "They want us to provide them with help, which is, of course, what we want to do," he said. But people see UN vehicles patrolling the streets to maintain calm and not delivering aid, and "they're slowly getting more angry and impatient".

Elizabeth Byrs, the UN humanitarian spokeswoman, said: "People who have not been eating or drinking for almost 50 hours and are already in a very poor situation, if they see a truck with something ... or if they see a supermarket which has collapsed, they just rush to get something to eat."

The country's 800-strong police force "are not visible at all", said Wimhurst, and aid convoys have been warned to travel only with security escorts. The situation is exacerbated by more than 4,500 criminals who fled from two prisons destroyed in the city.

Press release 15 Jan 2010 by Esther Addle and John Vidal, guardian.co.uk.

Further, statistics show that nearly one third of deaths of humanitarian aid workers occur in the first three months of duty implying that humanitarian and security workers are more at risk than ever before (Sjeik, 2000; Rowley & Burnham, 2005; Stoddard, Harmer & Haver, 2006; Buchanan & Muggah, 2005). Additionally, from an organizational perspective, it is suggested that as a matter of good management practice organisations should have policies and practices that clearly state what happens during and after such critical incidents. How an organisation handles sensitive information and protects the people involved is also important. Concurrently, any critical incident reported locally is susceptible to global media attention, so how an incident is dealt with is crucial not only for the staff member and team on site, but also for the organisation's reputation. Further, it is also relevant to the safety of other NGOs in the region and highlights that information about security incidents needs to be shared appropriately.

Indeed, Van Brabant (2001) prompted further debate by calling for a 'need to change' as he believed aid organisations were not doing enough to strengthen their security management systems. His research argued that some organisations claim they don't need to change their systems, stating for example the following:

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...‘no-one has died’, ‘risk is an unavoidable part of our work’ and ‘we have been managing risk for decades with existing tools and competences, there is no need for additional or new measures’ (p10).

Extant evidence seems to provide a contrary viewpoint which places more focus on organisational culpability and the necessity for appropriate management action to mitigate employee injuries and possible fatalities whilst also learning from past actions and previous organisational mistakes.

The role of Human Resource Management

In many ways, the HRM function in organisations is an area where security management and legislation ultimately converge. The extent to which organisations see staff as central to their mission is often reflected in the policies and practices that relate to staff welfare (O’Sullivan, 2010; Fenwick, 2005). In almost every jurisdiction the organisation has a duty of care towards its staff and is expected to mitigate the risks staff face. Indeed it could be argued that the duty of care towards staff is the HRM department’s reason for being. If the safety of a staff member has been compromised, employment legislation can provide a robust framework for investigation and tough sanctions if culpability is proven. For this reason, it is vital that human resource professionals in humanitarian aid and security sector work environments are involved in the design and implementation of risk management strategies and practices.

It is often argued that pre-deployment preparation including security training and information on personal security go a long way towards keeping staff safe, fit and healthy as well as meeting the needs of both the employee and employer in maintaining the important psychological contract (Guest, 1997;1996; Guest and Conway, 2000; 2001). However, pre-departure training is sometimes overlooked, not afforded a priority or given scant attention by humanitarian and security sector organisations. Nevertheless, given the insecure nature of the environment employees are often sent to dangerous regions where serious incidents can and do happen. Staff can find themselves in very difficult situations or may be involved in critical incidents such as a robbery, violent attack, kidnap, serious sickness or injury, and in the extreme, potential loss of life (Stoddard, Harmer & DiDomencio, 2009).

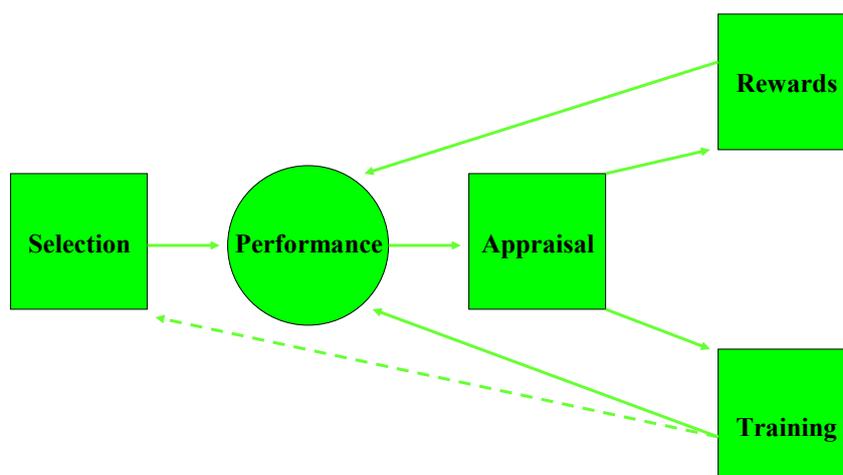
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From an organizational perspective, this research has already highlighted salient issues linked to the notion of duty-of-care of employers involving culpability and the notion of vicarious liability on the part of organisations. These issues focus on the responsibility (in law) of employers to employees and by definition, require an organizational response to the whole issue of risk management when managing humanitarian and security sector employees.

However, any discussion of policies and practices to manage staff should be prefaced by an organizational understanding of the role and key functions performed by HRM in context. A resource-based approach to HRM (Barney, 1991, Wright et al, 2001; Lepak & Snell, 2002; Darby, 2000) focuses on regarding people as a resource to be invested in, as opposed to viewing people as a commodity and a cost to the organization. Figure 1 below, identifies those key functions within the HRM cycle, which play a major role in managing human resources in all types of organizations. The utility of the model is twofold and provides a framework which identifies the key HRM functions of resourcing, development, reward and relations, all geared to the broader goal of organisational performance. It also highlights the necessity for the integration of key functions to work together for HRM to be successful.

Figure 1:

THE HUMAN RESOURCE CYCLE



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(Adapted from Formburn et al., 1984)

However, any discussion of the functional nature of HRM needs to be viewed within the overall perspective of strategic management, including the external environment of an organisation which is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

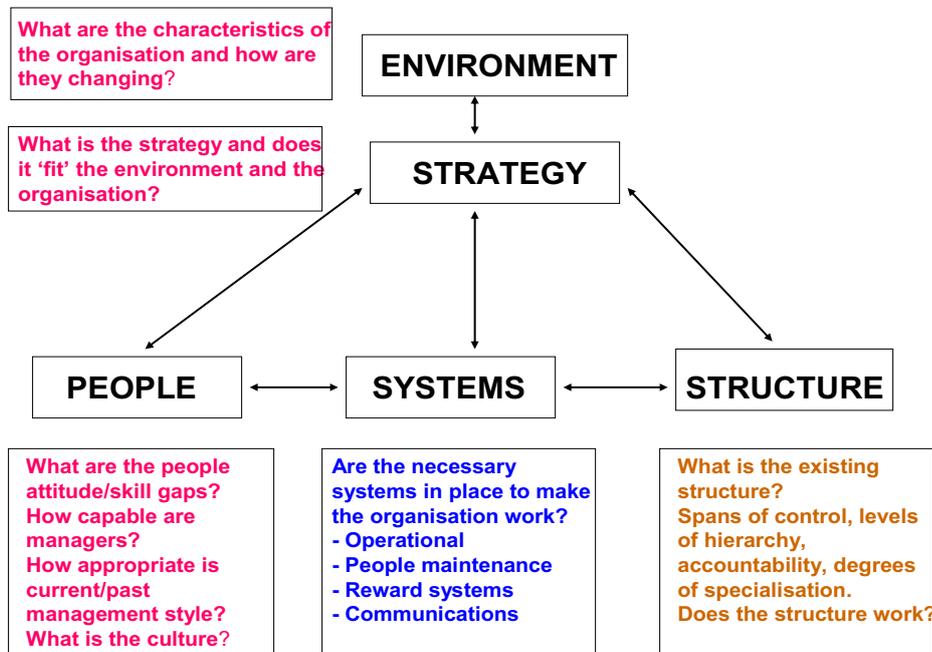


Figure 2: The External Environment and HRM (Darby, 2006)

As previously alluded to, there is a crucial interplay between the key variables when managing strategically. Budhwar (2000) points out that one of the central features of the debate on HRM has been the importance placed on integrating HRM with the service or business corporate strategy, concentrating on how and when HR issues (i.e. risk and security management) are considered in the formulation of corporate strategy (Akingbola, 2006).

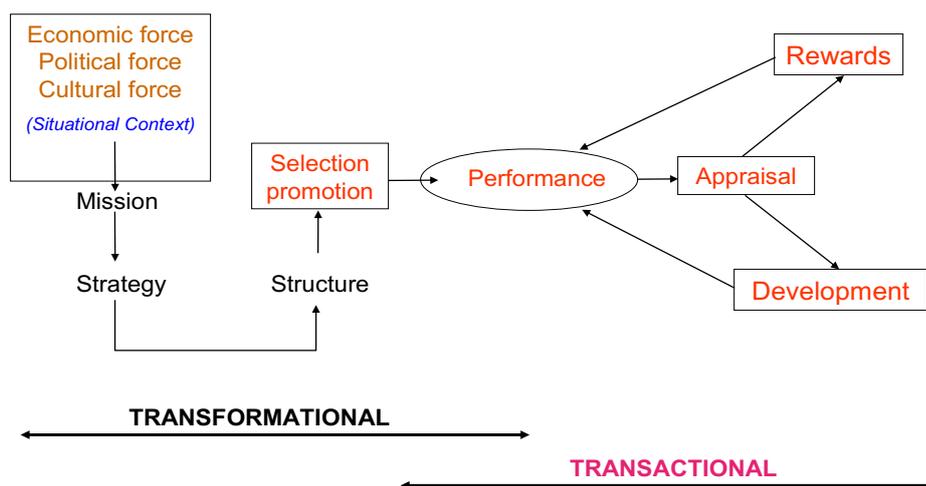
Such human resources are seen to have a strategic importance to support the creation of competitive advantages for organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors (Forbrun et al, 1984; Miles & Snow, 1984). Further, HRM seeks to develop an internal fit among human resources functional areas and an external fit between HRM policies and practices with the organisation's strategy. (Beer et al 1984, Schuler & Jackson, 2005; Schuler and Rogovsky, 1998).

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Figure 3 below building on Figures 1 and 2, highlights that important link between strategic and functional HRM. A further point to add here is the movement of HRM from performing a transactional to a transformational role. This suggests a major conceptual step in thinking about the purpose of HRM. Traditionally, it has been seen to perform more transactional roles, some would even posit, a reactive administrative role in organisations (Legge, 2005). The movement of HRM to a more transformational role necessitates HRM being at the centre of strategic decision making and championing the development of one the key resources namely, people in the organisation.

Figure 3:

The Human Resource Cycle and 'Fit' with Organisational Strategy



Darby (2006)

Focussing more specifically on security sector management and humanitarian aid work, Van Brabant (2001) suggests the HRM has a very important role to play in ensuring safety and security standards in the organisation, and needs to be actively involved and draw attention to the evolving legal requirements of employers and to legislation relevant to national staff. Furthermore, Van Brabant along with other commentators (People in Aid, 2003, 2007; Red Cross Finland, 2003) stresses the importance of an integrated approach towards good security management. They argue that

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organisations should establish a formal group at the HQ and field level with a remit of strengthening security management by ensuring:

- Good and well-understood security procedures coupled with clear and followed through disciplinary procedures should they be breached
- The attitudes to security are assessed in the recruitment process as well as the competences for those responsible for security
- Pre-deployment inductions and briefings include contextual security information and training and personal behaviours and conduct expected from staff
- Debriefing of staff on their return from assignment in particular a psychological debrief for those exposed to a critical incident
- The general culture towards risk management is a healthy and cautious one in the organisation.
- Good insurance policies are in place including medical evacuation.

However, previous research does not clearly identify the necessity for integration of all the key functions in HRM. Neither does it explain how staff should be trained before and during a deployment. Given the situational context of aid and security sector work, security training is essential and staff needs to understand how to behave and protect themselves whilst working in insecure environments. HRM could play a vital role with the development of good contextual briefings and training packages. For example, The Red Cross Finland (2003) published guidelines on security management for its own federation and national societies. It suggests key HRM-related factors organisations should consider or be aware of in order to strengthen its security management, which are briefly summarised below:

- A written commitment to the well-being of personnel
- The importance of clarifying the responsibility of people in management, human resources and operations
- Donors may require safety and security policies for staff
- Insurance companies insisting on good and well-implemented safety and security policies
- To avoid legal problems, organisations must be able to prove that the protection of its staff is of the highest priority. (2003, p51).

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Building on the work of Van Brabant and others the Red Cross Finland list basic principles that an organisation's security management practice should include:

- A statement on the basic position of the organisation towards national laws, local culture and customs
- A statement of responsibilities and freedoms of individual staff members and adherence to the personal code of behaviour
- A commitment to provide insurance cover

The Red Cross Finland also provides further support for the claim that an HRM department has a very important role to play in ensuring safety and security standards in organisations and needs to be actively involved. In particular, it points to the need for clarity regarding authority and responsibility, lines of communication and decision-making and that human resource issues should be an integral part of all HRM strategies, policies and practices which ultimately affect the success of the whole operation. Further, the Red Cross Finland believes it is important to develop a safety and security policy in order to clarify the decision-making process as part of good human resource management practice.

The Employment Cycle

In developing this discussion it is clear there is a necessity to move on from theory to practice and assess ways to support organisations to implement more formal practices to sustain risk management of aid and security sector employees. The employment cycle in Figure 4 below provides a useful model for HRM practitioners when considering the different areas that are affected by or affect security management both for national and international staff. It is argued in this research that organisations should seriously consider the impact of each stage on HRM policy and practice. At each phase of the cycle, decisions are made and it is necessary to understand how security management decisions are integrated and then to provide further support to manage each stage. To emphasize in more detail the necessity of identifying the linkage between people and security management the following key stages are highlighted below:

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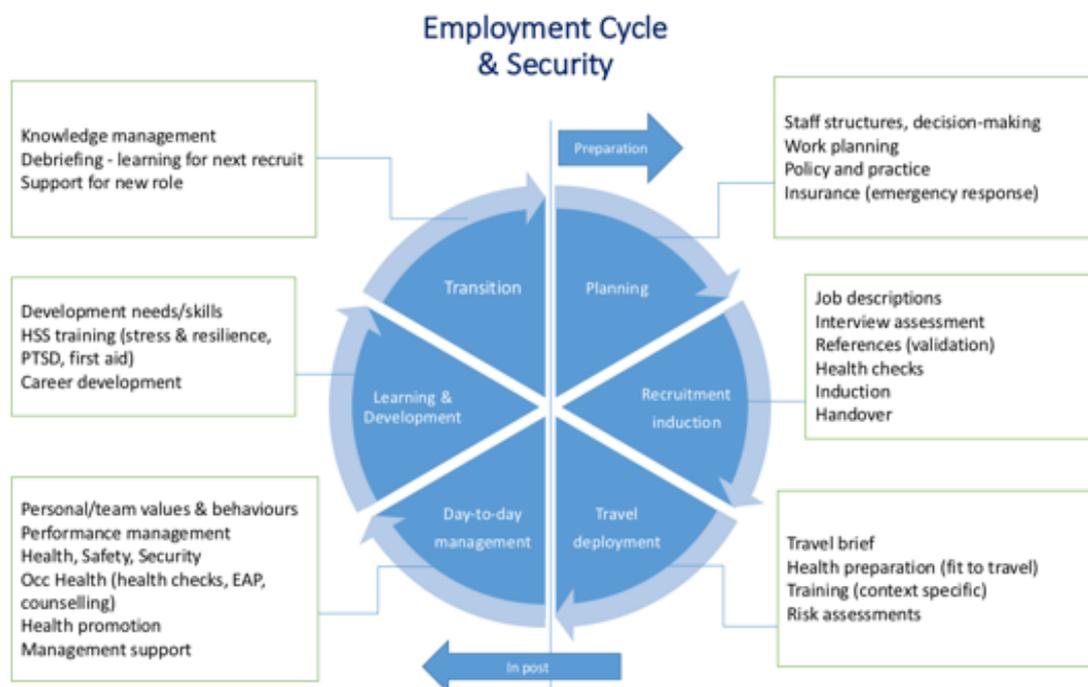


Figure 4: Employment Cycle & Security

(Williamson, 2012)

Preparation stage

For example, hazardous environments require staff with specific skills and experience; therefore an organisation should never underestimate the importance of the recruitment and selection process and the risks associated with hiring the wrong person. Placing the wrong person in any overseas environment can be very costly, unproductive and ultimately dangerous. Apart from the amount of time spent on recruitment and selection, which has been put at between three and five times an employee's annual salary, staff are likely to be unhappy and underperform, which will have a direct impact on programme implementation (and therefore a waste of donors' money), their manager's time, team morale and even threaten security.

Preparing a staff member for their assignment it could be argued is the single most important thing an organisation can do. Given previous stated statistics show that nearly one-third of deaths of humanitarian workers occur in the first three months of duty (Sjeik, 2000), it is surely unreasonable

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and bad management practice to send a staff member to a conflict zone without substantial preparation. Many organisations give briefings on the role and some give general security training; some even give specific contextual training in the field. However, the clear message from government and non-government agencies and security specialists alike is that they should be doing more. If organisations are sending people on assignments without fully understanding the pre-deployment stage of the employment cycle then it is likely that these people, and the organisation as a whole, are ill-prepared leaving an ill-equipped staff member to make decisions that could jeopardize personal security (and the security of others) and is an abdication of responsibility and duty of care on the part of an organization.

During the pre-deployment period, it is suggested general information should always be given to staff on personal conduct, staff rights and responsibilities, the organisation's values and mandate, personal objectives and reporting lines of communication. Research has identified two areas in particular warrant more attention: personal security awareness and stress. Staff must be aware of the risks to their own personal security. They should know what is expected of them during and outside normal working hours and that they should behave accordingly. They should fully understand the context in which they are working (how the society around them functions and communicates), and how their own behaviour can affect their vulnerability. Staff should also be aware of how stress affects their personal behaviour – people can often release stress in damaging ways, such as excessive drinking and promiscuity. It is suggested that organisations must consistently enforce sanctions against staff that put themselves and others at risk.

In-Post stage

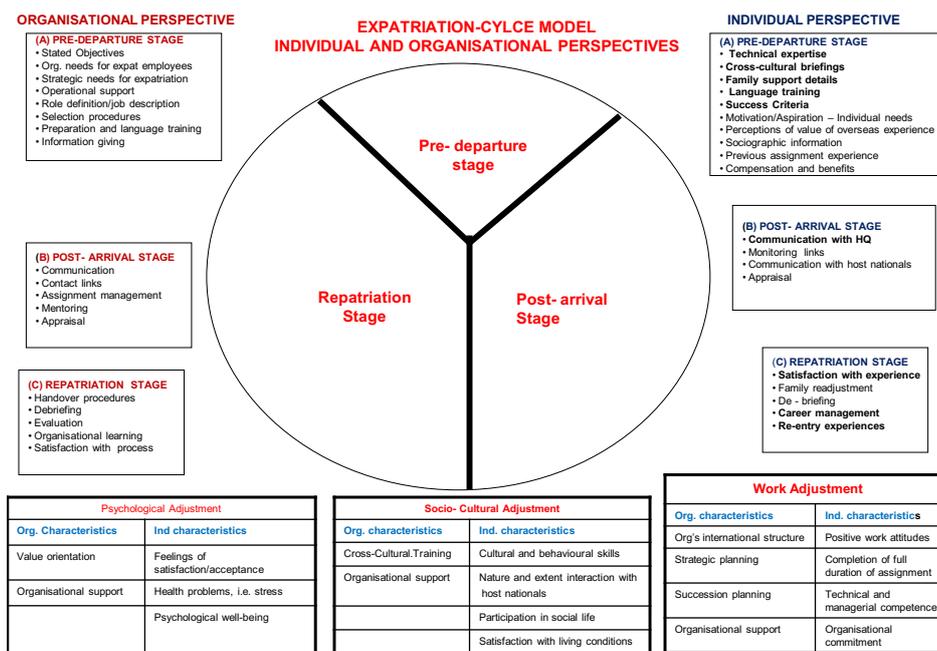
It has been argued that there are many issues that HRM could and should be involved with in risk management at both the strategic management and operational levels. For instance, once the staff member has been recruited then the management of risk depends upon the support that has been put in place at the planning stage of the employment cycle, the preparation of the staff member before deployment and the management of staff (and their development) whilst on assignment and finally, the repatriation of staff on their return to HQ. In a humanitarian and security setting, if one of these stages is weak and ill-managed, it could mean the difference between a safe, healthy and

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productive assignment in contrast to an unproductive and stressful one where the employee could have sustained a serious injury been burdened with ill-health or even faced possible death.

Figure 5 below, based on Darby's (2000) research, highlights the importance to organisations and employees alike of the utilisation of a conceptual Expatriate-Cycle Model. It identifies a typology of support that offers an heuristic model for practitioners and places emphasis on the crucial stages (both from an organisational and individual perspective) that need to be considered to support the overall process of managing the cycle of work undertaken by humanitarian aid and security sector employees. This involves identifying the crucial stages of pre-departure, post-arrival and repatriation in people and security management.

Figure 5: Individual & Organisational Perspectives in the Expatriation-Cycle



Adapted from Darby (2000)

The research also showed that there was a need to acknowledge the duality of the whole assignment process involving both individual and organisational experiences of the assignment process – not always necessarily providing the same conclusions. Further, it also provided a means of juxtaposing the experience of organisational support of assignees with their organisation's provision throughout

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the whole cycle of the assignment. This significantly addresses the whole process from a cyclical rather than a linear perspective to avoid, amongst other things, a fragmentation of the process. The key psychological, socio-cultural and work adjustment factors also identify the importance of fit in reducing conflict and enhancing effectiveness in the whole process of the assignment. Finally, the model helps to identify the wider implications of the process supporting humanitarian aid and security sector employees by enlarging the focus to incorporate context and process issues in HRM support for aid and security sector employees.

Methodology

Research design

In addition to reviewing extant research and relevant literature, this study adopts an exploratory qualitative approach that centres on relevant case study organisations and appropriate personnel to highlight key issues and provide more information in this much needed developing area of research. This research topic is well suited to a case study approach for gathering primary data because the concept of organisation responsibility and duty of care of employees in dangerous environments is often subjectively grounded and lacking comparative empirical data to inform further useful debate and influence best practice whilst also extending existing theory (Yin, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Given the specific context it was felt that exploratory qualitative research was justified to support the clearer explanation of how people experience a phenomenon, which cannot be easily observed otherwise (Creswell, 2008; Carson et al., 2001).

The case study organisations were chosen to provide an eclectic mix from the public and voluntary sectors, with various organisational sizes, different corporate governance, all with HR departments and security units; all working within international and multicultural environments and operating in many dangerous regions in the world for over 10 years.

Table 1: Profile of Case Study Organisations

	Org A INGO	Org B INGO	Org C GOVT ORG.
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Vision & Mission	People together can create a fair world, free of poverty and injustice.	A world of hope, tolerance, and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. The mission is to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world. Drawing strength from global diversity, resources and experience, to promote innovative solutions and are advocates for global responsibility.	Defending the country and its interests. Strengthening international peace and stability.
Org Structure & Human Resources	Confederation of 12 Org. offices around the world	Federation of 12 members	Government Minister of Defence responsible for the formulation and conduct of Defence Policy.
No. of Employees	4634	12000	160,000
Mode of Entry (Primarily Autonomous Implementers or Primarily Partnership Oriented)	Partnership-Oriented. As part of a federation they approach their development projects by partnering with organisations including INGOs worldwide.	Autonomous implementers. Part of a federation. They place expats in leadership positions in country offices. Sometimes work with partners	Autonomous implementers. Linked with other government departments and overall govt. strategy. Sometimes work with in partnership with other

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			govt. agencies and INGOs.
Program Orientation (Primarily Service-delivery or Primarily Advocacy –based)	Mix of service delivery and advocacy-based. Supervise development projects many of which involve component of empowerment and advocacy.	Service delivery. Development projects provide services and commodities.	Mix of service delivery and advocacy-based.
Type of Projects	Humanitarian development Realignment of People, deliverable skills, managing change Aid & Earthquake response, Long-term development programmes	Regional role overseas in the management of 6 countries in Asia high risk environments	Post-conflict reconstruction Education Support Team Civil Servants deploying in support of military support operations programme for civilians working in defence and security Recruitment, preparing for deployment, return, support for civilian subject-matter experts being deployed.
Countries of Operation –	Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Haiti, Niger	Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, Somalia, Nepal	Afghanistan, Iraq, Ethiopia,

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(relevant examples)			
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Additionally, a purposive sample of senior personnel from the range of different international and government case study humanitarian aid and security organisations was interviewed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The use of a cross-section of senior personnel provided insights from appropriate staff who view the important issue of organisational support in the risk management of employees deployed in hazardous environments from outside as well as inside the HRM function. This supported Creswell's (2007) view that individuals selected from case organisations are those engaged with the core phenomenon.

The senior personnel provided a suitable cross-check of perceptions and a rich source of valuable insights and information from both strategic and operational standpoints. The senior personnel selected from different organisational settings included those holding a cross section of various key positions involving a Secretary General, an International Programmes Director, Regional Directors in East and Central Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Asia, an International HR manager, a Director of Security, Security Advisors and a Training and Development manager for support operations. Their years of experience ranged from 2 to 20 years in humanitarian aid and security sector work. Their range of involvement in major short and long term projects included: post-conflict reconstruction, supporting civilian subject-matter experts, humanitarian and earthquake response and long-term development programmes in a number of regions of the world many of which are still considered very hazardous environments (e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia).

This research used in-depth semi-structured interviews which allowed the researchers to explore a full range of factors to emerge. Semi-structured interviews with expert respondents were undertaken as part of a wider research enquiry into the question of the role of HRM in the duty of care provided by organisations in the risk management of employees. Drawing on previous research, a semi-structured questionnaire framework was developed which guided interviews in each of the case study organisations focussing on the following key themes drawn from extant research and relevant literature:

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- Risk Management and the responsibility of organisations (Stoddard, Harmer & Haver, 2006; Stoddard & Harmer, 2010, Stoddard, Harmer & DiDomenico, 2009);
- The Role of HRM and how to improve the role in Risk Management (Williamson, 2010; Akingbola, 2006; Darby, 2000; O'Sullivan, 2010; Guest and Conway, 2000; 2001; Barney, 1991, Wright et al, 1994; Lepak & Snell, 1999, 2002);
- Duty of Care and the legal responsibilities of organisations (Sjeik, 2000; Rowley, 2005; Stoddard, Harmer & Haver, 2006; Buchanan & Muggah, 2005);
- Transfer of knowledge involving lessons learnt (Gilbert, Morabio, & Stohr, 2010; Evans, Pucik & Barsoux, 2002; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007);
- Future trends and implications (Van Brabant, 2001; Stoddard & Harmer, 2010; People in Aid, 2008, 2007; Red Cross Finland, 2003; Parry & Keliher, 2009; Ulrich & Brookbank, 2005).

Data collection and analysis

Data collection was gathered from multiple sources to provide corroborative evidence on the key themes. This included primary data from a range of participants and case study organisations but also secondary data including reviews of organisation's websites, annual reports and various relevant documentary evidence distributed by the participating organisations. With regard to the primary data, the interview protocol was pilot tested and subsequently refined to improve clarity. The semi-structured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis and averaged 45 minutes in duration. On completion of the recorded interviews reflective notes were made to record feedback issues and observations of respondents. Finally, interviews were transcribed verbatim after recording. Data was collected over the course of 3 months.

The data analysis process was primarily inductive (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Neuman, 2006) and supported by a theoretical framework to identify the main variables, components, themes and relationships between them (Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). With the aid of template analysis (King, 2004) the first step was breaking the data into meaningful units of information which was then coded. Then units were combined into larger categories. The third step was combining categories into topics. Next the researchers met to discuss content-analysis of the transcripts and to compare

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and contrast their initial findings. Emerging categories were then combined to highlight a common set of broad themes for evaluation, critical analysis and discussion.

Findings

To reiterate, the aim of this research was to undertake from an organisational perspective, a timely examination of the role of HRM practices and processes in the organisational support of the management of risk of employees deployed to hazardous environments by organisations in the humanitarian aid and security sectors. This exploratory research also sort to identify current and emerging key issues as well as the barriers to the success of the organisational support for employees deployed in dangerous regions of the world.

As described above, the research design drew on extant research and relevant literature, to identify a number of key issues in this study area which will be used to act as a framework to develop a more thorough analysis of the primary data. This included the following:

Risk Management and the responsibility of organisations:

The analysis revealed that the main risks faced by case organisations fell into three main categories. First, crime which accounted for about 50% of incidents, involving robbery, burglary, armed robbery, theft, muggings and random attacks with examples cited in Afghanistan and Nepal involving suicide attacks. Second, more political incidents, were cited which included working in conflict situations, and having to manage ongoing conflicts. Thirdly, a smaller portion around what was termed, management issues, generated from within the organisations involving disgruntled staff, sacked staff, those facing disciplinary procedures and fraud investigations which were all deemed to generate a security risk. In support of the literature (Stoddard, Harmer & DiDomencio, 2009), evidence from organisations suggested local staff were the largest number of victims whilst although expatriate employees were vulnerable to shocks, to kidnapping, to car jacking however national staff are in far greater danger than expatriates.

Interestingly, the two NGOs officially followed a policy of non-engagement with the military suggesting closer relationships ran the danger of blurring humanitarian aid and military activities and potentially compromising neutrality but exceptions were identified were this policy was

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overlooked for example in Somalia, Pakistan, and Kenya. In reality it appears that information exchange in the humanitarian aid and security arena does take place and is often formally done through the UN. This was supported by the following quote:

“Yes, there is information exchange and formal stuff through the UN. Because I think on one hand it needs to happen and it’s good. On the other hand, it’s narrowing the humanitarian space and the aid workers become associated with the Army.....its quite difficult anyway and I’m thinking of Yemen were we were targeted as a British NGO...”

On a more ethical note, it was suggested that there had been an erosion of the Humanitarian Principles as a result of the proliferation of many additional NGOs and:

“...winning hearts and minds which make it difficult to differentiate aid workers from belligerents who have other motivations. Maybe the erosion of humanitarian principles as a result of the proliferation of many additional NGOs that maybe haven’t embraced such principles is less principled than some NGOs.”

In terms of mitigating risks, the issue of security was professed to be on the top of the agenda in all the organisations researched. Structurally, at both the senior management level and in operations at regional levels, all organisations had security advisors supported by policies and practices. These involved an approach covering a security management framework including context analysis, risk and threat analysis, linked with strategies including the common three of acceptance, protection and deterrence, linking up with the work on the ‘tri-partite model’ by Van Brabant (2000). From the government case study organisation, 18 roles to mitigate risk were identified, across a range including, a dedicated safety team, policy advisors, defence advisors, civil secretaries, financial and commercial officers and military defence police. Of course, the nature of operations wherever the organisation is working creates different challenging problems, reflected in the following quote:

“...we are having to develop military as a whole including civil servants to deal with the complex operations and not knowing what the next one looks like. And I think the biggest challenge that we face is making sure that we understand exactly what we are asking of our people to go out and do.”

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Understanding what is required from an organisational perspective and what performance is essential of staff highlights the question of measurement and its link with the mitigation of risk. There does appear to be some confusion as to the use of clear metrics for the measurement and assessment of risks.

“...so I think the key management judgement we need to make is whether these people are like the ‘frogs in boiling water’, not aware of the risks of people are panicking or whether they have a very conscious and a high awareness of the risk entailed and can be trusted to understand what is the risk of pulling people out versus the benefit of keeping them in the country and doing our programmes.”

Indeed, when health and safety and security were discussed, there seemed to be a formal split between the two functions.

“..we deny it’s both Health & Safety and Security Management. We have different staff managing the two....There’s not actually a business partner on Security Managements’ side of HR....”

Further analysis showed that much emphasis was placed on the responsibility of line managers to ensure that their staff are abiding by health and safety a rules and security management policies.

The Role of HRM and how to improve the role in Risk Management

The analysis revealed that in two out of the three case studies organisations structural relationships supported HRM integration. Specifically, this included HRM representation at senior level and often a direct reporting relationship with the CEO and senior directors whilst also seeing devolution of HR responsibility to line management. In one NGO this was evidenced by a structure that included HRM managers in all of the 7 regions it operated in with support from the centre to translate strategy into operational plans. This finding was supported by comments from senior personnel including:

“HR is the glue that holds all the pieces together.”

“It’s a strategic role. I think an administrative role is when you evacuate people, they sign the contract and do the logistics....I think in this particular case like in Yemen or in Pakistan or in Palestine in Gaza they (HR) play the strategic role in asking the right questions and challenging

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managers who are trying to do more sort of 'yes lets go' ... So they are sort of checks and balance managers.”

“I see HR is an important and strategic function. It's a business partner function. It's not sort of personnel management and for example, the HR manager is in my team and is an important regional management team member.”

However, in the government organisation, what has transpired over a relatively short time is a split between the Safety and Security Team still in central military headquarters positioned away from the main city, whilst the rest of HR side run from the in main government building in the capital.

In relation to Figure 1 (Formburn, et al., 1984), evidence highlighted the importance given by organisations to the integration of the key functions in the HRM role. However, fragmentation still seemed to occur and operationally there was mixed reactions to overall management of the HRM cycle:

“I think it is integrated but I think it could be integrated more effectively and it comes down to the fact we are an anomaly, but it doesn't excuse the fact that we could improve in some areas, but it involves buy-in from everybody....”

“Where does it break down? On selection – because if we are having to bring people back from theatre because they are not happy or not settled, we are putting everybody under pressure, creating extra tension and leaving gaps in theatre.”

The comments on recruitment and selection in the research further highlight some potential weaknesses in organisational support:

“Most of the recruitment that we do is remotely done and probably 70%-80% of our overseas employees are foreigners and hired from Europe, Western Europe, Easter Europe and Africa. So most of the recruitment will be done by phone. We've moved to the newest technology but it does have some constraints in terms of identification of candidates and questions about risk management and personal security.”

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“Too many of them are focussed on the traditional civil service way of interviewing for candidates which are mainly competence based. However, we are asking people to go and do this in a very different environment and there needs to be flexibility to be able to ask the questions, ‘How are they going to cope without you?’ ‘How do you think you will cope with working 24 hours a day?’ ‘And at the moment a lot of these questions aren’t been asked in some areas and I think that’s something we need to make sure is across the board.”

Observations on training and development and its relationship with security were noted with one NGO clearly identifying the necessity of synergy between the two:

“...this strategy is looking more at how do we keep security current in other ways, so for example we have looked across the organisation at what other training opportunities there are so we can piggy-back security onto them.”

In terms of performance management, the government organisation had by far the most structured and deeply grained performance management system. Even when employees were deployed they were appraised. Although one NGO also reported it had a thorough performance management system but was open to the vagaries of facing different emergencies in different countries which challenged the notion of ‘one size fits all’ approach to performance management in this sector:

“We have a sophisticated long and thorough performance management processes and procedures. It’s the implementation of the processes that is a challenge but it does work in some of the country offices. Given the world now has more challenges again in countries that experience more emergencies per year – more precisely I think of Chad but overall I think it’s an area we have significantly improved over the last few years.”

Drawing on the heuristic models developed in Figures 4 (Williamson, 2010) and 5 (Darby, 2000), relating to the importance of the cycle of expatriation and deployment, the data showed that organisations in theory were cognizant of a cycle of deployment but operationally co-ordinated practice did not always follow. The following data offered interesting insights into managing the whole cycle of deployment of employees:

Pre-departure:

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“In terms of briefings and induction, I can’t say yes blankly. It’s yes and no....If you ask me about every international staff going to Somalia – do they get a briefing, yes. If you ask me about any national staff newly on board in Zambia – I would say not necessary.

“The briefing package is sent to all employees prior to the deployment, along with a security guideline for any destination and if there are any specific security instructions, those are sent as well. All employees are required to complete an on-line security academy website test. Although I could safely say that the on-line security training is probably not provided systematically or not monitored systematically.

Post-arrival:

“In-country briefings – yes, as soon as they arrive. So there is a corporate health and safety policy and then that’s obviously adapted for local law and context. Every employee has a performance appraisal whilst in-country.”

However, the government case study appears to have adopted a more thorough approach to this stage:

“Yes, post-arrival briefings. And they also have a reception staging and onward integration which is something the military do and it’s a 2 or 4 day course depending whether they are armed or not and it gives you all the up to date briefings in theatre and what’s going on and the latest happenings. Also there is a reminder of getting on and off a helicopter and things like that.”

Repatriation:

Again, the government organisation appears to have the more thorough repatriation processes in place, for example, as noted in the evidence:

“Yes we have a debriefing session for the support operation organisation every 6 months...and one of the things we do is to go through questions about the HR Cycle, ‘How was your selection?’ ‘Did you have your performance appraisal filled in?’ ‘Did you have any dramas getting home for your leave?’ And they all get medals and recognition return as well. So we do that every 6 months....”

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Yet the following extract from an interview with staff from an NGO highlights the complexity of managing the 'cycle':

"People in this organisation stay for quite a long time, but not always and quite often we have senior staff at country level and regional level that is national staff, so there isn't that sense of repatriation at the end."

However, there were evident contradictions at the operational level and the evidence on the importance of the role HRM played in security management was mixed. The data portrayed a picture where HRM was seen as more of an administrative rather than a strategic role (Legge, 2005) in two out of the three case studies. This was supported by the following comments:

"I think generally in an international organisation, HR is considered a support service and you know what it's like when organisations take decisions about budget, often the last item on the list is training for staff...but in fact the single most important resource, and everybody says it but nobody acts on it, is the quality of people you get in the organisation.

Further, in relation to security:

"Around safety and security, risk management is wholly supported by the Security Unit and there isn't a connection between the two.... I think it's something that would benefit from having a much closer tie between safety and security side of things and risk management associated with HR."

More tellingly, senior managers said:

"I find particularly that we still seem to be a little reactive. We remember about risk management when serious incidents happen. We then tend to forget how important the strategy and methods are and how important it is to maintain and keep the mentality of employees and managers thinking about risk management. "

"I think HR should actually be clear about what it means and what risk management means....Risk management is typically set within the security field and actually we need to start thinking more about how risk management is taken much more seriously across the organisation....Risk

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management needs to become very much more an integral part of the way that we work especially in insecure environments because it's very much connected."

Duty of Care and the legal responsibilities of organisations

The notion of 'duty of care' in extant research was shown to be an elemental issue in this discussion. Generally, it fundamentally impacts on the employment relationship and more particularly, on the psychological contract between employer and employee (Guest and Conway, 2000, 2001). It also raises questions not only about the rights of individuals but also the responsibilities of organisations in statute and natural law. Increasingly employment law permeates through all the inter-sections between employer and employee. Mistakes whether by design, bad management or by accident, can be financially costly and has the potential to badly damage the worldwide reputation of an organisation found culpable. In this research, all the case study organisations was shown to have strict systems of legal support and control structurally in place.

"This organisation is a confederation and each of the members who deploy staff has an ultimate legal responsibility for the safety and security of the staff and at the organisation-wide level we have a Safety and Security Unit that is responsible for policy, standards and has an ultimate appeal process if it feels a particular member isn't noticing certain security threats...."

"We have 2 full-time lawyers in our legal team. As the Security Advisor I personally work closely with them on a number of things that come up....We have talked recently about co-operate manslaughter, for example.

" In August last year we had some staff killed in an ID incident and I know all the trustees got a briefing on duty of care because they are the ones who may be imprisoned...."

From the government organisation case study, duty of care was closely linked to thorough risk assessments:

"Duty of care comes in risk assessment and individual risk assessment. The individual go through assessment and sign to say that they are happy with the risk. There is also an agreement that if there

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are any dramas we will get them home. The employed civilians will be treated exactly like the military when it comes medical support etc.”

However, one constant theme was how do organisations manage the complexity of different laws from different countries :

“Being a Confederation we have an issue around the law in the US the law in Australia, the law in France or Canada...so in some circumstances we are facing quite a bit of a challenge.”

All the researched organisations have Codes of Conduct which are signed by every new starter.

Transfer of Knowledge involving lessons learnt

The effective transfer of knowledge was shown to provide the necessary ‘life blood’ in supporting growth and development of an institutions (Gilbert, Morabio, & Stohr, 2010; Evans, Pucik & Barsoux, 2002). In reality, what was found in this research was somewhat contradictory. Given the acknowledgement of the importance of recognising and managing the cycle of deployment with its short and long-term benefits to both organisations and individual employees (Darby,2000), in practice what was seen was a very fragmented picture. Further analysis of the results revealed the transfer of knowledge from pre-departure through to repatriation was often disjointed and lacking integration. The corollary been that there was a danger that organisations lost a great deal of valuable knowledge from deployments as well as ending up ‘re-inventing the wheel’ for future projects, thus potentially wasting a great deal of time, effort and resources.

NGO case study organisations highlighted a number of key issues:

“In terms of debriefing, it does happen in most cases at the country officer level. At the HQ level they require that all employees complete a survey upon completion of the assignment and again I would say probably 50% are completed and the other 50% often are not.”

“There is debriefing but there’s purely a more mechanical debriefing from an HR perspective in terms of finding out a bit more of the reasons why someone is leaving the organisation. There isn’t a thorough detailed sort of re-integration process with debriefing.”

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“...we set up on-line communities of practice. We’ve got cross-divisional sharing which has grown and gained recognition ...However, you still find yourself scratching your head thinking, ‘I’m sure we talked about this months ago’.....”

From the Government Department, it was suggested they had little formal transfer of knowledge:

“ However, in the role of training manager for deployment we are looking at picking this up because some areas are good at doing it and they use their people well particularly Policy Advisors, Defence Advisors who are good at using the knowledge of people returning to train the people going out and that is why some of it takes up to a year to train....”

Although it was suggested that a ‘cross-government approach’ has been looked at involving all the pre-deployment courses including the Foreign Service’s Hostile Environment Training, the Stabilisation Unit’s Hostile Environment Awareness Training course, however, all of which seem to be teaching more or less basically the same topics.

‘We are just going through the process now of looking at the training we do which is very military and that’s the reason the SU don’t particularly want to use our training for their people. But if you are working with provisional reconstruction teams, a lot of those are actually working out at the military bases, so it makes sense that they (NGOs) have an understanding of the military and it’s roles.’

Future trends and implications

When looking at future trends and their implications in this area of research, the analysis revealed all organisations professed a desire to learn from mistakes and support the development of improved strategies, practices and processes, when risk-managing employees sent to hazardous regions. From the organisational perspective, there was a discernable call for a more systematic approach lead through learning and development. Although contradictions were voiced suggesting organisations were not really prepared enough for the changing world, were still reactive and too often remembered about risk management when accidents and serious incidents had happened.

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Issues were raised about the 'professionalism' of HR staff and the need for more professional HR training particularly for staff based in-country. This issue also highlighted the apparent 'double-standard' applied in organisations when dealing with national and expatriate staff.

More strikingly, comments raised more fundamental questions about the HR role in risk management:

"That was the thing I was struggling with when I was trying to organise a Health and Safety network. HR people were named because nobody else would do it. And actually they didn't really know what they were doing....talking about risk assessments about measuring risk, talking about work safety assessments....Sometimes quite junior people were given the task of health and safety..."

The issue of the transference of knowledge involving raising awareness of how different people manage risk in different places, and how improving organisational knowledge capture and transfer, would be helpful, was emphasised in all the organisations researched.

"....we don't very often talk about security incidents and lessons learned, especially when people are kidnapped until they come back.....one of the areas that could improve is lessons learned shared with other managers."

One of the interesting suggestions was to improve cross multi-stakeholder learning from organisations not necessarily closely associated. For example:

"Useful to see how people in the Army do that and what can NGOs learn. Because they have the scale and they have the logistics. They have a proper command and control structure...."

"On lessons learned, I think we had a case of abduction, after that there were several simulation exercises...to make sure that we learnt lessons from that, and as far as I know, I think we used external agencies to help us with that."

For government run organisations a significant future organisational challenge identified in this research centred on structure and process. For the government case study, the organisational split between the Safety and Security Team in PGHQ located away from the capital and the Policy Team in

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the main building in the capital city, created apparent tensions in both operational and strategic management.

Of course the sheer magnitude of various crises as a result of population growth, climate change and human conflict it was suggested, continued to create major risk factors. This was aligned to the key issue of change fatigue and the more effective management of risk involving the need for increased inter-agency working. This prompted a final issue to be highlighted in this section which could play a major role in future trends namely the one of Humanitarian Aid and Civil-Military relations.

Undoubtedly, this is timely, given the apparent need for additional inter-agency co-operation in, amongst other issues, the duty of care process in a burgeoning number of disaster and conflict regions throughout the world.

“I think there should be definite discussions at all levels where the information can flow (between agencies) ... But from the military side there is frustration. They (NGOs) say we are nothing to do with the military but as you know when there is a problem, the first people they ring are the military. There needs to be a structure in place that we know whose where, who’s doing what, not keep an eye on them but just so if there are dramas we can deal with them.”

Conclusion and discussion

In conclusion, this paper contributes exploratory qualitative research on the role of HRM in the provision of support when organizations undertake risk management in the deployment of employees to hazardous environments in the humanitarian aid and security sectors. Further, the exploratory research from an organizational perspective was used to identify in general, current and emerging key issues in the support of and the barriers to, the success of organisational support of employees deployed in hazardous regions of the world. In particular, the aim was to assess the role of HRM in the challenging process of a duty of care by organisations to its employees when deployed in dangerous work environments.

An exemplar of rhetoric and reality in the risk management of humanitarian aid and security sector staff can be identified in The People In-Aid Code of Good Practice in HRM for the relief and development sector, which states:

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‘The security, good health and safety of our staff are a prime responsibility of our organisation.’
(2003, p20).

However, as identified in this research, the rhetoric in some organizations is often different to the reality that aid and security sector employees sometimes face in the field.

This paper builds on research and policy literature and argued that the opportunity for organisations to collectively consider the issue of the security of humanitarian aid and security sector employees is prescient. Indeed the importance organisations place on this issue sends a message to leaders, managers and employees alike, as to how much of an organisational priority it should be. There is a general tendency in the international humanitarian aid and security community to react quickly after an incident, but focused attention on the importance of risk management in relation to HRM has been hard to maintain. Moreover, as this paper has argued, the lack of active engagement and co-ordination between organizations in relation to security support for its personnel can have a negative impact on the overall humanitarian and security project outcomes.

It is recognised that the work of humanitarian, development and security organisations often place great demands on staff in conditions of complexity and risk. Organisations therefore have a duty of care to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of staff before, during and on completion of their period of work with the organisation. Health, safety and security are dynamic themes that should permeate every part of an organization and influences its strategic management approach. It has been posited that if staff is central to the achievement of the missions of an organisation, how central are people in the planning of risk management strategies? If organisations are going to continue to work in highly complex and insecure environments it is argued they must place a high level of importance upon the care of staff, so that it becomes part of the culture across the whole organisation – from the senior management down to the operational level.

Stressful and risky situations are inevitable in both humanitarian and development work but maintaining the safety of staff should be paramount. Yet it is suggested, there is much more that can and must be done to mitigate the risks of illness, injury, stress, and critical incidents, for staff and their dependants. It is axiomatic that employing organisations should ensure that the security, health and safety of all staff are appropriately provided as far as is possible, and that measures are in place

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to safeguard their well-being. The primary objective is ensuring that staff is able to deliver the services organisations require in the most challenging environments. However, this will require significant thought and planning on the part of managers, and a recognition that improving staff security may also add to project costs.

Overall, the research supported the literature (Stoddard & Harmer, 2010) which has suggested the more successful field-level security coordination platforms have been generated by the organisations themselves. Often driven by extreme need, the field platforms offer organisations a range of additional support to their existing security management arrangements, including:

- Convening inter-agency security meetings and opportunities for the transfer of knowledge;
- Providing security alerts, cross checking information and undertaking security incident reporting and analysis;
- Carrying out risk assessments, undertaking trend analysis, and communicating these in periodic security threat reports;
- Providing introductory security briefings, as well as technical assistance and advice to individual agencies, and training;
- Crisis management: providing support with contingency planning; and facilitating in-extremis support, for example, if an agency suffers a critical incident such as the kidnapping of staff, the platform might be able to provide additional analysis and support through local networks.

However, literature in this area of study has not fully focussed on the fact that, in many ways, the HRM function is where security management and legislation ultimately converge. As previously suggested, in almost every jurisdiction the organisation has a statutory duty to provide a healthy and safe place for staff to work and is expected to mitigate the risks staff may face. For this reason, it is argued it is imperative that HRM professionals are involved in the design and implementation of risk management strategies and practices. It is clear that in the past the HRM function has often been missing or considered insignificant when it has come to risk management decisions. Along with evidence from this research, common sense, good management practice and employment law

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dictates that the HRM voice be an integral part of the design, implementation and review of security management policy and practice.

Much of the extant research in this area highlighted many relevant points and a good foundation from which to build a case for HRM involvement in strategic security management decisions. It is this foundation combined with extant research, that has informed these conclusions about what is missing in, rather than what is wrong with, the work already done in this important area. To summarise, conclusions drawn include:

- There is a lack of comprehensive information shared in organisations on how legislation impacts on security management and not acknowledging or integrating this could expose organisations to huge amounts of risk and cost.
- Managers who make decisions on security management do not always recognise HRM as playing a key role within the strategic landscape of security management.
- There are inadequate or no audit and evaluation tools to assess appropriate security management systems.
- The language used in most security management literature is aimed at the operational audience and should be written to include all the key stakeholders involved including HRM professionals.
- HRM practitioners need to understand the nuances of security management and ensure they have the right competences themselves to influence security management strategy.

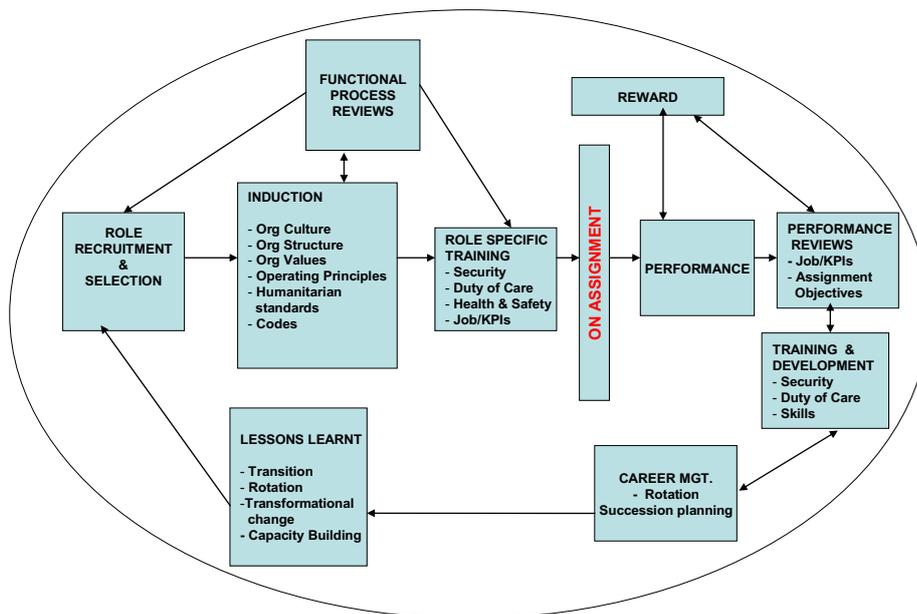
Primary data also provided support for the need for organisations to understand the utility of expatriation cycle-type models to provide a more integrated approach towards effective people and security risk management. Management professionals are encouraged to use them heuristically when managing the organisational support of the whole employee work cycle from pre-departure through to repatriation of aid and security sector projects.

A key heuristic aid developed from this research and shown in Figure 6 below indicates the relationship between a number of key factors drawn from the literature and supported by the primary data analysis for consideration by management practitioners to develop for future use:

Figure 6 HRM Security Support Cycle

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HRM Security Support Cycle



(Darby, 2011)

The literature and research results highlight the key role played by HRM in the cyclical nature of the deployment of an employee on a humanitarian aid or security sector project. Further, the central theme identified here is the necessity for the integration of all the key functions managed by HR to provide necessary support in the overall practice of employee deployment in hazardous regions. For the individual the duty of care process begins right from the recruitment and selection stage through to the return from an assignment, and beyond. From an organisational perspective, the initial stage of recruitment and selection of an employee with appropriate skills and competencies aligned with overall situational organisation objectives is imperative to the overall long-term success of the assignment. The employee begins by going through a number of key stages for example, an induction and role specific training involving security training and duty of care before being assigned. During the post-arrival stage performance is appraised and rewards allocated. This is supported by post-arrival continuous training and development linked to career management and succession planning. On completion of the assignment and during the repatriation stage, the crucial process of capturing lessons learned from the returning employee should be undertaken.

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Concomitantly, for organisations a critical factor is to identify the process as a cyclical rather than as a linear process. Furthermore, as evidence from this research shows, organisations need to acknowledge the role of the management of knowledge (including essential knowledge on security and risk management issues in various regions around the world) and the necessity for knowledge transfer through a lessons learned process of the whole employee experience for the benefit of the organisation in the future.

The key issues raised in this paper were addressed from an organisational perspective; with a focus on the role of HRM and the crucial part that function should play within the design, development and implementation of employee risk management strategies, policies and practices to support deployed staff in humanitarian aid and conflict zones. It is suggested that further research be conducted using the models presented to be empirically tested to ascertain their usefulness in supporting more effective risk management of employees in the humanitarian and security sectors. Further, it is suggested that this research could provide a basis for more longitudinal studies from which to develop organisational case studies with the ultimate aim of testing the validity and use of existing heuristic models; and to provide more effective and efficient HRM strategies and systems for employee support in the burgeoning area of humanitarian and security sector aid.

In the past, cynicism would suggest all of this may still not convince governments and NGOs to strengthen their duty of care practices – and although it is argued in this research prevention is better than cure – more often than not it is only when the human cost of something serious has happened that an aid agency has considered changing its policy and procedures. However, is the cost worth paying and can aid organisations in the future so easily abrogate responsibility in the eyes of its global employees and international law?

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