



Overview

The paper explores recruitment in humanitarian organisations, and proposes that a fresh approach is needed to encourage the sector to adopt respectful recruitment practices. Respectful recruitment extends beyond ethical recruitment by acknowledging ethical and fair processes as a starting point, but also encourages humanitarians to develop a better understanding of how the sector can more holistically support local organisations facing challenges from the loss of staff. It seeks to open a wider conversation about respectful recruitment in order to explore how a combination of collective and context-specific solutions can enable the sector to make progress on these issues and better support local systems.

Methods

The research sought to explore staff movement in the context of different types of responses, aid structures, and labour markets. It used a mixed methods approach, including desk review, a global survey, key informant interviews (KIIs), and organisational case study analysis (Figure 1). Data collection tools were developed in consultation with national partners across four country contexts: Ukraine, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Lebanon.



Why respectful recruitment is important

Evidence suggests that current approaches to recruitment in the humanitarian sector are falling short of respectful practice, including unethical headhunting and poaching of local staff. These practices disrupt program implementation, cause financial strain, and weaken civil society by causing loss of leadership and institutional capacity. High-level global initiatives and policies have not effectively changed these practices. Addressing this issue requires solutions grounded in local realities and a shift from short-term thinking. Respectful recruitment is crucial to support localisation and local leadership effectively.

Shifting practice

Improving recruitment practices in the humanitarian sector requires context-specific approaches, as no single solution fits all scenarios. This paper uses research-informed hypothetical scenarios to examine the factors and systems influencing staff movement and recruitment decisions. Each scenario includes a contextual analysis and possible actions to promote respectful recruitment. By exploring these scenarios, researchers identified options for actors to consider based on context, highlighting priority and feasible actions.

Recommendations

The report provides targeted recommendations for larger intermediary organisations, donors, and smaller local and national organisations to enhance roles, responsibilities, accountability, and collective advocacy in the humanitarian sector.



Larger Organisations and Intermediaries

Country Directors and Leadership Teams

Engage in ongoing dialogue with all actors to understand contextual recruitment factors and develop respectful strategies. Ensure respectful recruitment is part of organisational policies and M&E frameworks and invest in long-term partnerships with local actors.

Program Teams

Prioritise respectful recruitment in program design and staffing and develop long-term capacity programs with local partners. Support national surge capacity through peer exchanges and collaborate on respectful exit strategies.

HR Teams

Update recruitment policies to include respectful practices and align with national regulations. Work with local partners to reduce unethical recruitment, support HR and institutional capacity development, and document best practices.



Donors

Incentivise respectful recruitment through policies and funding and hold intermediaries accountable to the Grand Bargain commitments. Incorporate respectful recruitment in donor localisation strategies and policies. Support pooled fund initiatives and increase funding to local partners during international exits.



Smaller Local and National Organisations

Establish advocacy forums and collaborate to develop respectful recruitment strategies. Include ethical recruitment clauses in contracts, support national surge capacity, invest in HR systems, and document and share best practice in respectful recruitment.

Read the full paper [here](#). If you'd like to learn more about our work, please contact: info@humanitarianadvisorygroup.org