

Appendix II

**PREPARATORY RESEARCH FOR EPS3
Quick Survey on
Current Human Resource Issues in
Emergency Personnel**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was commissioned by the Emergency Personnel Seminar Steering Group to provide an up to date view of human resource practice around emergency personnel in emergency response implementing and specialist recruitment agencies. The overall aim of the survey is to stimulate reflection and debate ahead of, and during EPS 3.

A quick survey approach was used to obtain feedback from agencies by e-mailing a list of thirty-two statements and inviting them to say to what extent they agreed with them. A further nine questions asked them to provide further details including their perceived successes and failures, their current top three concerns with regard to emergency personnel. Thirty-two completed questionnaires were returned, about half the number sent out. The responses came from individuals and may or may not represent the consensus in their agency.

The data is presented in tabular, graphical and text form in the appendices, and readers are invited to peruse these pages before reading the comments and analysis in the main body of the report.

The survey shows that the recruitment and retention of staff is still the number one issue for agencies working in emergency response. In this regard, little seems to have changed since the first Emergency Personnel Seminar held in November 1997. Agencies are particularly concerned about the difficulty they have in recruiting and retaining good emergency field programme managers.

Overall, agencies seem to be fairly upbeat about the current state of their emergency personnel human resource performance. Judging by the responses to the survey interviewing, briefing and de-briefing are all being well handled, insurance policies for emergency personnel are adequate, and adequate stress/trauma counselling is available. The majority felt that their salaries and benefits are competitive, although a significant minority did not agree.

The feedback seems to be contradictory in a few cases. For example, agencies generally consider that they have made advances in the recruitment, training and deployment of staff from within the region of operation, and yet this topic hardly features in the list of agency successes or in the top three emergency personnel issues. Also, while agencies are relatively happy that emergency personnel are well managed on the ground, this does not seem to fit with the stated difficulty of finding experienced field managers.

A few statements in the survey were specifically aimed at agencies' experience of the Kosovo crisis. For those agencies directly involved, there was a general consensus that their response to the Kosovo crisis weakened their existing programmes. They were equally clear view that Kosovo did not negatively affect their response to crises that came after Kosovo.

The survey indicates that, to some extent, agencies have evaluated their responses to recent humanitarian crises for lessons on human resources, and that the lessons learnt have affected their HR practice.

The results show that agencies are deploying inexperienced personnel, either as a matter of policy to develop the skills of new people, or because posts cannot otherwise be filled. This ties in with agencies' perceptions that they are in competition with other agencies for personnel from the same pool.

Section 3 of the report provides a brief commentary on each statement and question within the survey while Section 4 draws out strategic issues emerging from the survey and adds a number of questions, some of which may be picked up during EPS 3 discussions.

Section 5 of the main report includes a brief review of three other inter-agency initiatives in Europe and North America, Sphere, People In Aid and InterAction PVO Standards, all of which potentially impact on human resource policy procedure and practice with regard to emergency personnel. Questions are posed for possible exploration during EPS 3.

Introduction

The last Emergency Personnel Seminar (EPS2) was held in November 1998. In preparing for EPS3, the EPS Steering Group decided that some background research¹ was required to provide an up to date picture on HR practice amongst participating organisations as an input to the seminar.

Aim

The overall aim of the research as stated in the Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1) was

“Preparing a research report on the emergency personnel response to the Kosovo crisis, 1999, covering recruitment agencies and some operational agencies, noting developments and changes (if any) and drawing out lessons still to be learned regarding emergency personnel”

In discussion with RedR², it became clear that the EPS Steering Committee was interested in how HR practice in recruitment and implementing agencies had been affected by the “mass mobilisation” of emergency personnel since EPS2, in response to the multiple crises of Kosovo, East Timor, Hurricane Mitch, Sierra Leone and so on. A secondary aim was to see what learning had been obtained from this experience with regard to emergency personnel matters. The research has therefore been refocused on the state of HR practice against the “*Shadow of Kosovo*” and other crises, rather than addressing the Kosovo crisis alone.

Methodology

Funding for EPS3 was only agreed late in the day, and therefore there was only a short period available to undertake this background study. Due to the short time frame, it was decided to gather information using a questionnaire which could be completed quickly using “Agree, Slightly Agree, Slightly Disagree, Disagree” format, with 32 statements for recipients to react to. Nine additional questions gave opportunity to those who wanted to provide more detail to do so.

Mostly, the questionnaires were completed by one individual from each organisation, and in a few cases in discussion between HR and emergency managers. In many cases, those completing the questionnaire are the same individuals who will be representing their organisations at EPS3. Of the 32 completed questionnaires³, 24 were from human resource professionals/managers, and 8 from senior and programme managers. The feedback may or may not reflect the consensus in each organisation.

The same questionnaire was sent to recruiting, voluntary, NGO and UN agencies. Respondents saw some of the questions as not relevant to their organisation but, for the main section of 32 questions, 91% of the questions were answered overall within the 32 completed questionnaires.

In addition to the questionnaires, phone and face to face interviews were held with non-operational agencies involved with emergency personnel with a view to uncovering background issues that could then be cross-referenced against the questionnaire responses, including RedR, International Health Exchange (IHE), APSO, People in Aid and Bioforce.

The reason for holding EPS3 in New York was to give more opportunity to US-based agencies to take part. An effort was therefore made to increase contacts with US-based agencies, and to elicit responses from them.

The analysis that follows should not be assumed to be scientific or statistically based and uses an intentionally discursive and questioning style to avoid any such impression.

Respondents

Representatives of the following organisations returned completed questionnaires:

- ◆ Africa Humanitarian Action
- ◆ American Red Cross
- ◆ American Refugee Committee

¹ This paper is titled a “Quick Survey”, as such a brief exercise cannot fairly be described as “research”.

² RedR have managed the commissioning of this study on behalf of the EPS Steering Group

³ One arrived too late for inclusion in the report

- ◆ Australian Red Cross
- ◆ British Red Cross
- ◆ CARE USA
- ◆ Christian Aid
- ◆ Christian Relief and Development Association
- ◆ Churches Action in Relief and Development
- ◆ Community Aid Abroad (Oxfam Australia)
- ◆ Concern Worldwide
- ◆ Danish Red Cross
- ◆ Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Agency
- ◆ International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- ◆ International Health Exchange
- ◆ International Rescue Committee
- ◆ International Training Programme for Conflict Management
- ◆ Merlin
- ◆ MSF Belgium
- ◆ MSF Holland
- ◆ MSF Spain
- ◆ Norwegian Refugee Council
- ◆ Oxfam GB
- ◆ RedR
- ◆ Save the Children UK
- ◆ Tearfund
- ◆ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- ◆ United Nations Volunteers
- ◆ Village Education Resource Centre
- ◆ Voluntary Service Overseas
- ◆ World Health Organisation
- ◆ World Vision International

By Country

- | | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| ◆ Australia | | 2 |
| ◆ Bangladesh | | 1 |
| ◆ Belgium | 1 | |
| ◆ Denmark | | 1 |
| ◆ Ethiopia | 2 | |
| ◆ Holland | | 2 |
| ◆ Italy | | 1 |
| ◆ Ireland | | 1 |
| ◆ Malawi | | 1 |
| ◆ Norway | | 1 |
| ◆ Spain | | 1 |
| ◆ United Kingdom | | 9 |
| ◆ United States | | 6 |
- ◆ UN/International 4 (mostly Geneva based)

(Total 32)

Seven organisations replied but did not complete the questionnaire because they felt they did not have time, the questionnaire was not relevant or they were not prepared to respond on behalf of their organisation. No reply was received from a further 25 organisations to which the questionnaire was emailed.

Results

The results drawn from the completed 32 questionnaires are included as Appendix 2. A blank of the original questionnaire and covering e-mail letter is also included for reference.

Responses to Questionnaire Statements 1-28

Readers are encouraged to peruse Appendix 2 before reading this section and use the charts to think over where their own organisation sits in relation to other respondents. When returning to this section, please keep your finger in Appendix 2 so as to refer to the charts and text responses.

Comments are included below on each of the Statements section of the questionnaire.

1. *The competence of field staff is the most important element in delivering effective humanitarian relief.*

There was strong agreement with this statement. This would have been a better question for managers than HR professionals, who would be expected to answer in the affirmative, so it is worth noting that all the managers who responded put Agree.

2. *Securing good staff is the single most challenging step in mounting an effective relief operation*

This had a less clear endorsement than the first, with more Slightly Agree's than the first statement. A number of respondents wrote "one of" before the single most challenging, indicating that it is only one of a set of requirements that need to come together to provide an effective response.

3. *Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily trained pre-mission.*

While more people agreed than disagreed with the statement, more than twice as many put Slightly Agree as Agree, indicating some uncertainty about the level of training that personnel receive.

4. *Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily briefed pre-mission*

The majority of Respondents agreed with this statement, with more Agree than Slightly Agree's and 6 Slightly Disagree's.

5. *Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily briefed during their mission,*

There was more uncertainty here, perhaps because of a lack of first hand evidence available to the respondents who might not be in contact with personnel during missions. While only 3 disagreed with the statement, only 9 Agreed, with 16 Slightly Agree's.

6. *Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily de-briefed after their mission*

Only 3 disagreed with the statement. There were more Slightly Agree's than Agree's. This ties in with later comments that systems may not be reliable enough to ensure debriefings take place in all cases.

7. *Adequate stress/trauma counselling is available to those of our emergency personnel who need it.*

26 agree while 3 disagree. The graph shows that there is not full agreement however, perhaps because HR personnel are aware of cases where it has been missed.

8. *Emergency personnel coming to work with us from specialist emergency personnel recruitment agencies (e.g. RedR) have the foundation skills we need*

This was not relevant to all because some organisations don't use the recruiting agencies. 80% of those who did make a response indicated that they Agreed or Slightly Agreed, indicating a relatively high level of satisfaction with personnel from the specialist agencies.

9. *Our emergency personnel are well managed on the ground*

This produced a lukewarm response with 20 out of 29 Slightly Agree or Slightly Disagree and only 9 Agree's.

10. *Our agency only deploys personnel with prior experience of emergency response*

This produced a very mixed response. While 18 organisations agreed, a significant minority did not. These responses probably reveal policy differences between implementing agencies. (See also Strategic Issues section below).

11. Our agency has retained effective emergency personnel between assignments and re-deployed them successfully to new operations.

This statement produced a fairly positive response when compared to the number of respondents identifying retention of staff as a major issue in later questions. With 13 Slightly Agree and 10 Agree, most agencies seem to be happy or quite happy that they are generally able to “recycle” skilled staff into other assignments. However, this does not tie up with the concerns expressed under Q41 below.

12. The gender balance amongst emergency personnel is adequate to allow male and female beneficiaries (refugees/IDPs etc.) to be equally well served by our agency

With 21 out of 30 in agreement, this seems to present a positive view of gender balance and its beneficial impact on beneficiaries. Looked at again, only a third of respondents put Agree, so there would seem to be room for improvement. One respondent said that female candidates were hard to find.

13. Our responses to recent humanitarian crises have been evaluated for lessons on our HR practice with regard to emergency personnel.

A positive 75% agreement with this statement.

14. Lessons learnt from recent crises have significantly affected our HR practice with regard to emergency personnel

Here again, there is a 75% agreement with this statement, with more Agree than Slightly Agree’s. This could be seen as encouraging, especially when taken together with the response to Q13 above. One of the EPS Steering Group’s main concerns was to find out the extent to which lessons are being learnt. The responses to Q13 and Q14 seem to indicate that a number of reviews have been undertaken which have impacted on HR practice with regard to emergency personnel. (But responses to Q32 might contradict this).

15. Our HR practice reflects the views of current and returned expatriate emergency personnel

75% agreement overall, but only partial, more Slightly Agree than Agree’s.

16. Our HR practices reflect the views of local/in-region emergency personnel

Respondents are a lot less convinced that their organisations are listening to their local staff than to expatriate staff, with only 4 Agree’s.

17. Our agency uses a competency framework as the basis for the recruitment of emergency personnel

17 out of 30 have responded with Agree. Of the remainder, half Slightly Agree, possibly indicating that they have a recruitment system that contains a competency element, while the other half disagreed with the statement, and put comments such as “want to find out what this is”.

18. Our agency interviews all new emergency personnel before appointment

Firm agreement with this statement, with only 2 Slightly Agrees and none in disagreement.

19. Our agency asks for and takes up references before engaging new emergency personnel

Almost as firm an agreement as for 19. 5 Slightly Agree’s probably indicate that some agencies recognise that they have some recruitments where references are not taken up. One respondent referred to the unreliability of referees.

20. Our agency finds itself in competition with other agencies for the recruitment of personnel from the same pool

Strong agreement with this statement. Those few in disagreement seem to be the volunteer agencies and agencies based in developing countries.

21. Our agency has adequate insurance policies for emergency personnel

This surfaced in previous EPS as an issue but with 25 out of 29 replying Agree, this would seem not to be a problem any longer.

22. In the last 2 years, our agency has made significant advances in the recruitment, training and deployment of staff from within the region of operation.

Strong agreement with this statement, with only 5 disagreeing. Here again, previous EPS have shown in-region recruitment to be an important and growing issue. Progress seems to have been made in the 18 months since the last seminar.

23. Our agency has an adequate personnel security policy and procedures in place

With no one in disagreement, the picture seems to be positive, though there were more Slightly Agree than Agree's. Only two organisations indicated in later questions that security was a key issue.

24. Our agency has an adequate policy on local staff evacuation

A very mixed response to this statement, with slightly more in agreement than not. Several of those putting Disagree added that they do not evacuate local staff as a matter of policy. For them, it is not that the policy is inadequate, there is none. Another respondent distinguished between local (as in resident to that location) and national staff sent to that location for work. The first group is not covered by their evacuation policy while the second one is.

25. The skills and experience of HR professionals in our agency have made a positive impact on our agency's policy and practice on emergency personnel

A strong agreement with this statement, including 18 Agree's, shows that HR professionals, who are themselves most of the respondents, feel they have made an impact on their agency's HR practice. This is somewhat in contrast to the frustration about the lack of influence of HR personnel that come through in the record of the two previous EPS. Does this mean something has changed in the recent past to improve the situation, or is it just a new more confident set of people responding?

26. Our salaries and benefits are sufficient to attract and retain suitably qualified emergency personnel

Overall there was a broad spread of responses. Taken with the answers to the later questions, it appears that salaries and benefits are not a serious issue for the majority but there is a significant minority for whom it is a concern.

27. Our salaries and benefits are competitive with other similar non-government agencies working in emergency relief

Just under half the respondents put Agree to this statement, a higher proportion than those who considered that salaries and benefits were adequate for retaining personnel.

28. Our agency has already adopted and implemented the People in Aid Code of Practice

This might seem to be a simple Agree or Disagree choice in that agencies either have or have not adopted the Code. However, there were 7 Slightly Agree's, probably indicating an informal adoption of the Code rather than a formal sign up to compliance and external social audit. The Code is freely available on the People in Aid web site. Some of the Disagree's added that they did not know what this is – which is understandable given the UK/Ireland focus of People in Aid. (See more on People in Aid below).

Kosovo Specific Statements 29-32

This section put forward four statements specifically about the Kosovo crisis. As far as possible, only responses from those agencies directly engaged in the Kosovo crisis have been included.

29. *The Kosovo crisis was the biggest emergency personnel recruitment challenge for our agency in the past 2 years*

A strong agreement with this statement. Over 60% (17) of respondents replied with Agree to this statement and a further 20% (6) Slightly Agree.

30. *Our response to Kosovo weakened our operations in other on-going emergencies*

31. *Our response to Kosovo has limited our ability to respond to new major crises (Hurricane Mitch, Timor etc.)*

When taken together, the responses to statements 30 and 31 present a marked contrast. While two thirds agree that Kosovo weakened their on-going programmes, the pattern of responses to 31 is almost exactly the reverse, with two thirds disagreeing that their response to new emergencies was limited by the Kosovo crisis. The picture emerging here is that Kosovo led to a weakening of existing programmes, probably due to a diversion of personnel away from existing emergency and, sometimes from development programmes, while for new crises, personnel were found and deployed in addition to the Kosovo complement.

32. *The experience of the major deployment of personnel in response to the Kosovo crisis has resulted in a significant improvement in our emergency personnel recruitment and management systems*

This statement met with agreement from 15 out of 23 replying, though with more Slightly Agree than Agree's. This seems to indicate that recent crises have led some agencies to improve their recruitment and management systems. The remaining third did not agree that there had been a significant improvement in systems.

Questions 33 to 41

Appendix 2 also contains the assembled responses to questions 33 to 41⁴. Each block of bullet points indicates the response from one organisation, and blank lines separate the responses from organisations.

33. *Which categories of emergency personnel does your agency find it hard to recruit?*

Responses have been listed first by organisation and then sorted by type i.e. groups of jobs that agencies find it most difficult to recruit for. Top of the list comes senior management, leadership, and programme co-ordination posts together with administration and finance. Health related positions also present a challenge, though less so.

The difficulty in recruiting experienced managers seems to tie into concerns expressed in previous emergency personnel seminars about the shortage of skilled managers, especially for rapid deployment.

A number of respondents also identified language skills as a constraint. Interviews with Anglophone recruitment agencies indicate that they struggle to find sufficient candidates with French, Spanish and Portuguese, while Bioforce, which based in France, has difficulty finding enough competent English speakers.

34. *What are your key sources of recruits?*

36. *What is the average response level to newspapers/Internet advertisements?*

The recruitment pattern for emergency personnel clearly does not follow that of standard recruitment in other sectors. Of primary importance are the specialised agencies, RedR, DRA, IHE, APSO, and for the UN system, UNV. Another primary source is former employees or those who have had prior emergency experience with the agency in some capacity. A number of agencies maintain their own registers of personnel. These may contain details of individuals who have approached them unsolicited, and in some cases (probably fewer overall) those who have responded to advertisements recruiting to the register. In the process as a whole, word of mouth referral seems to be important, as well as networking between agencies.

Newspaper advertisements are just one avenue and seldom the most important. UK-based organisations referred to the Guardian publications, but no other newspaper was mentioned as being significant. The larger and better-known agencies get a large response to newspaper advertisements when they use them. The feedback on Q36 seems to indicate that smaller organisations get fewer applicants from their newspaper adverts, probably reflecting name lower recognition and salaries offered. From the responses to Q36, the Internet is becoming increasingly important as a source of CVs and recruits. *Are their specific Web sites, apart from the agency's own, that are most useful?*

35. *What is the average cost of recruitment for emergency personnel?*

Unfortunately, this question does not seem to have been well understood. A few organisations responded with costs per recruitment, which was the intended meaning of the question, while others responded with total cost of recruitment for the organisation, and others have stated monthly employment costs for emergency personnel. Recruitment costs per recruitment vary between US\$1,000 plus travel costs and US\$12,000, where this includes all associated costs including HR and management time, and deployment costs.

37. *What is the average time from decision to recruit to deployment of personnel?*

Responses to this question have been sorted approximately from fastest to slowest, and divide themselves roughly into three blocks for emergency recruitment: 1-2 weeks response time, 2-4 weeks and 2-4 months. Some agencies say that they can respond in less than a week. Not surprisingly, most agencies indicated that emergency recruitments operate in a shorter time frame than "normal" recruitment.

36. *In the past two years what proportion of emergency personnel came to you on secondment/release from another organisation?*

There are three categories of response here: four organisations with no secondments in the past two years, several organisations stated that they have had few - up to 5% of posts filled by secondment, and a few organisations depending on secondments for a significant proportion of their staffing - 25-66%.

⁴ not in the pre EPS3 version of the report

39. Does your agency hold a register of pre-screened emergency personnel ready for deployment? If yes, approximately how many records does the register now hold?

Three agencies said that they do not hold a register, because they do not need to, or because it is not appropriate for them to do so; a further twenty-one organisations said that they do have a database, or are developing a new one. Of those agencies with registers, the number of records varies from six to over 1,000. A number of respondents pointed out that the registers are not as useful as they might be because, in practice, people are often not available when required.

40. Overall, what do you consider the greatest successes and failures in recruitment and retention of emergency personnel to recent crises?

Responses show the individual successes and failures of the various organisations, and it is difficult to generalise from them. If there is a pattern, two types of success seem to be repeated. The first is a sense of achievement that the agency has been able to deploy large numbers of personnel rapidly and efficiently against the odds. The second set of successes are around the development of improved systems and strategy either in the development of registers, improvements in long-term retention of personnel, or in the development of regional capacity. The stated failures include the flip side of others' successes, particularly a failure to retain staff. Management of personnel in the field, inadequate salaries and a lack of pre- and post-assessment also feature.

41. What are your agency's top three most pressing concerns with regard to emergency personnel?

The number one challenge appears to be recruitment. Finding sufficient people of the right calibre, attitude and experience, especially for management positions comes out of this survey as the primary concern for a majority of agencies. Related to this is finding staff available for rapid deployment, and this, in turn, relates to perceived competition for the same personnel from a limited pool, as the Q20 response clearly showed.

A second, though less general area of concern, was continuity and retention of personnel between assignments, and the related issue of developing loyalty, improving skills, and providing a career path.

Health and security for emergency personnel was said to be an issue by a minority of agencies, while the development of local and in-region staff was only highlighted by a few organisations.

Statements Ranked by Level of Agreement

To provide an alternative view of the data, the statements 1-32 are listed below by their average ranking, calculated using 1,2,3, or 4 for Agree Slightly Agree, Slightly Disagree and Disagree and then averaged across all responses to that statement. 1.0 would mean total agreement and 4.0 total disagreement. An assessment is also given of the level of consensus, High, Moderate or Low, as an indicator of variation between agencies. A low level of consensus means a diversity of response from agencies.

No.	Statement	Average	Consensus Level
18	<i>Our agency interviews all new emergency personnel before appointment</i>	1.1	H
1	<i>In our agency's experience, the competence of field staff is the most important element in delivering effective humanitarian relief:</i>	1.2	H
19	<i>Our agency asks for and takes up references before engaging new emergency personnel</i>	1.2	H
21	<i>Our agency has adequate insurance policies for emergency personnel</i>	1.2	H
2	<i>In our agency's experience, securing good staff is the single most challenging step in mounting an effective relief operation:</i>	1.5	H
20	<i>Our agency finds itself in competition with other agencies for the recruitment of personnel from the same pool</i>	1.5	H
25	<i>The skills and experience of HR professionals in our agency have made a positive impact on our agency's policy and practice on emergency personnel</i>	1.5	M
23	<i>Our agency has an adequate personnel security policy and procedures in place</i>	1.6	H
29	<i>The Kosovo crisis was the biggest emergency personnel recruitment challenge for our agency in the past 2 years</i>	1.6	H

7	<i>Adequate stress/trauma counselling is available to those of our emergency personnel who need it</i>	1.6	M
22	<i>In the least 2 years, our agency has made significant advances in the recruitment, training and deployment of staff from within the region of operation</i>	1.7	H
4	<i>Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily briefed pre-mission</i>	1.7	M
5	<i>Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily briefed during their mission</i>	1.8	L
17	<i>Our agency uses a competency framework as the basis for the recruitment of emergency personnel</i>	1.8	L
8	<i>Emergency personnel coming to work with us from specialist emergency personnel recruitment agencies (e.g. RedR) have the foundation skills we need</i>	1.8	M
13	<i>Our responses to recent humanitarian crises have been evaluated for lessons on our HR practice with regard to emergency personnel</i>	1.9	H
14	<i>Lessons learnt from recent crises have significantly affected our HR practice with regard to emergency personnel</i>	1.9	H
6	<i>Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily de-briefed after their mission</i>	1.9	M
9	<i>Our emergency personnel are well managed on the ground</i>	1.9	M
15	<i>Our HR practice reflects the views of current and returned expatriate emergency personnel</i>	1.9	M
27	<i>Our salaries and benefits are competitive with other similar non-government agencies working in emergency relief</i>	1.9	M
3	<i>Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily trained pre-mission</i>	2.0	M
11	<i>Our agency has retained effective emergency personnel between assignments and re-deployed them successfully to new operations</i>	2.0	M
12	<i>The gender balance amongst emergency personnel is adequate to allow male and female beneficiaries (refugees/IDPs etc.) to be equally well served by our agency</i>	2.0	M
26	<i>Our salaries and benefits are sufficient to attract and retain suitably qualified emergency personnel</i>	2.0	M
30	<i>Our response to Kosovo weakened our operations in other on-going emergencies</i>	2.1	M
32	<i>The experience of the major deployment of personnel in response to the Kosovo crisis has resulted in a significant improvement in our emergency personnel recruitment and management systems</i>	2.2	L
16	<i>Our HR practices reflect the views of local/in-region emergency personnel</i>	2.2	M
10	<i>Our agency only deploys personnel with prior experience of emergency response</i>	2.3	L
28	<i>Our agency has already adopted and implemented the People in Aid Code of Practice</i>	2.3	L
24	<i>Our agency has an adequate policy on local staff evacuation</i>	2.5	L
31	<i>Our response to Kosovo has limited our ability to respond to new major crises (Hurricane Mitch, Timor etc.)</i>	3.0	M

Strategic Issues Emerging from the survey

In this section, some reflections are offered on the feedback gathered from the questionnaires and interviews. It is not designed to provide definitive analysis or answers but to stimulate thinking ahead of the seminar and discussion over the weekend of EPS3.

The key issues emerging from this survey can be neatly summed up by quoting from one of the responses – “Getting them and keeping them”. Recruitment and retention were the key issues raised, especially in the feedback on the failures and top three concerns. Given the volume of recruitment in the past two years, perhaps this is to be expected.⁵

All in all, the feedback from the questionnaires gives a fairly upbeat assessment of the state of HR management in the emergency personnel field and perhaps more optimistic than the tone of the previous EPS reports. The discussions in EPS3 will no doubt show more clearly whether this optimism is justified.

Many of the issues emerging are the same as those seen in previous seminars. This could be due partly to the format of the questionnaire in that the first Statements section (1-32) sought to look at issues already known to

⁵ Only 5 agencies supplied base data on numbers or types of recruitments for 1998 and 1999. This was not enough to attempt any kind of analysis

be current. However, the later section of questions did not direct people in any direction and it is here that some themes familiar from EPS1 and 2 crop up clearly.

There was less in general on in-region and in-country HR matters than might have been expected and more on the issue of “right people, right time”, perhaps reflecting the pressure on recruitment experienced by most agencies since the last EPS seminar.

Quality of field management

As in previous seminars, the issue of finding the managers with the right experience and attitude has again surfaced through this questionnaire as an important issue.

In 1997, Francesca Taylor’s research⁶ for EPS1 pointed out that “the fundamental problem faced by those recruiting relief staff is the serious shortage of appropriately skilled and qualified personnel in particular competencies. There is a general consensus that the most difficult posts to fill are those at management level. Equally, the importance of these positions has escalated as emergencies have become more complex in nature.”

The average score of 1.9 (equivalent to Slightly Agree) against the statement “Our emergency personnel are well managed on the ground” confirms that there are still seen to be some question marks over the quality of field management.

The problem is partly one over-demand but also one of lifestyle. As personnel gain experience, they also become less inclined to take on the lifestyle of the roving short-term contract emergency worker. People moving into their 30’s need a more stable lifestyle.

Bioforce report that 50% of the personnel trained on their programme and placed by them are still working in International Solidarity five years after leaving their first assignment. This seems a fairly good proportion but there is no indication that their work is still emergency related.

One approach to reducing the problem of where to find experienced managers at short notice is to develop and retain your own. For example, Oxfam GB put the development of a pool of emergency managers as one of their key successes. These managers can deal with the early phases of a crisis while personnel are recruited or re-deployed to make up the “second wave”. Would this approach suit other agencies? Can organisations afford to do this?

Interview feedback suggested that one way ahead may be recognise that the expectations on one manager may be unrealistically high. The technical, project management and people management skills required to manage complex emergency programmes are high, so why not create one or more role, accepting that the people management skills and project management may not be available within one person. This then means developing a field management structure that puts HR management with, say, a deputy management position. This only works where a group of personnel are to be posted together in one location.

Questions

How can the recruitment and retention of emergency managers be improved? Is an investment in permanent staff managers (with some career prospects) necessary or can agencies rely on the band of skilled people who have built their own careers as freelancers in emergency management?

Retaining New Recruits

As described under Q10 above, the reaction the statement “Our agency only deploys personnel with prior experience of emergency response” was very varied.

It is clearly policy for some organisations to use inexperienced personnel alongside more experience staff to ensure there that skills are developed in new recruits. This approach recognises that there has to be a place for first timers in emergency response because new people need to be trained an increase the body of skilled personnel. It is also realistic to acknowledge that without inexperienced personnel, some posts will not be filled because of demand.

⁶ Preparatory Research for an Interagency Emergency Relief Personnel Seminar, F Taylor, October 1997

As one respondent put it, the key may be to have experienced personnel supervising the inexperienced (this has to be done with care and skill). Another commented that they want personnel to move on, the new hands should replace the old hands, otherwise how is new thinking brought in to the organisation? (This assumes the old hands will not learn and change of their own accord).

More than one respondent referred to the “disappointment” experienced by field workers, especially first timers, when exposed to the realities of emergency work. There is a suggestion that disillusionment for first timers could be a major cause of loss of people from the emergency response sphere and their disappearance from registers. The specialist recruiting agencies are alive to this danger.

With this loss of personnel, the size of the pool potentially decreases. Recruitment is an expensive process, as the figures given in Q35 indicate.

Difficulties with retention do not seem to apply just to the voluntary agencies. Agencies with paid staff gave the same feedback on retention as a problem issue in the same way as the voluntary agencies. It may be as much the nature of the work than the nature of the pay.

Question

How can emergency personnel, and particularly those on first assignment, be given a more realistic view of what their working environment and experience is likely to be like and be given proper supervision when on assignment, so that they are less likely to lose heart after one assignment?

Regional and Local Recruitment

Locally recruited staff was the subject of a research paper by Jim Henry presented to EPS2⁷, the discussion from which generated a number of recommendations around protocols, training, transparency on conditions of service and related ethical considerations, and the development of the capacity of local NGOs.

The questionnaire feedback was very positive on regional staffing developments, with 80% of respondents fully or partially agreeing that they had made “significant advances in the recruitment, training and deployment of staff from within the region”. A few disagreed with the statement. There should be a lot to share during EPS3 on this topic, especially as regional and national staffing considerations were notable by their absence from the lists of the three major concerns (q41). One outstanding issue is shown up by the response to Q16 “Our HR practices reflect the views of local/in-region emergency personnel”, which had an average score of only 2.2, hardly a firm endorsement.

Questions

To what extent have in-region recruitment and personnel management systems been developed? Have agency HR management systems been applied to national staff?

Personnel Registers

The questionnaire feedback shows that personnel are sourced from many channels. While RedR etc. are top of some organisations’ list of sources, they are not the first, and only one among many, for others. Word of mouth and ex-employees are both important sources.

While the specialist agencies, RedR, IHE, APSO, Bioforce, DRA etc. have continued to develop and extend their service to the sector since the last seminar, many operational agencies have been improving or developing their own databases of emergency personnel. It seems that these registers are varied in their size and sophistication. This may indicate that in a competitive word, agencies are making sure they keep their own records rather than becoming dependent on the recruiting agencies. A couple of respondents referred to the recruiting agencies being over-stretched during recent crises (but then who was not?).

The question of combining registers was raised at EPS1 but seems not to have been on the agenda for EPS2.

Questions

Is there still life in a discussion about joint registers to reduce duplication and concentrate the management of such data into a few centres of excellence? Is there a form of information exchange or pooling of personnel details that can work to the advantage of all in a competitive environment?

⁷ “Sometimes Maybe, Sometimes Not”, The Recruitment, Employment and Retention of Locally Employed Staff in Emergency Situations - A Study by Jim Henry for IHE, November 1998

Stress on Emergency Personnel

The questionnaire feedback was quite positive on the availability of stress/trauma counselling for those that need it. Interviews indicate that this picture may be over-positive. Perhaps the counselling is available but not always known about or used?

The Room for Improvement report that preceded the People in Aid Code highlighted stress for field workers resulting from poor management. This subject was raised at EPS1 in November 1997. In this survey, two respondents only highlighted stress for field workers amongst their key HR issues and none referred specifically to stress induced by poor management.

Question

Does this mean that stress induced by poor management, and indeed stress as a whole, has become less of an issue for emergency personnel, or did it just not appear in the survey?

Preparedness

Some organisations seem relatively well prepared for the rapid deployment of large numbers of people into emergency response programmes. The Red Cross/Red Crescent movement relies on a network of sources, mostly ten plus major western National Societies holding their own registers of nationals who can be deployed into IFRC, ICRC or national society programmes. UNV provides many of the personnel needed within the UN system, though UNHCR and WHO have their own recruitment systems in addition. Some of the larger implementing agencies consider that they have made strides in recruiting systems.

One of the themes of the feedback seems to be that, even through the somewhat chaotic rush at the outset of emergencies, several agencies feel satisfied that they have managed to field large numbers of personnel in reasonable time. There is a sense of achievement, especially given that the Kosovo crisis required a response at a speed and scale which caught all agencies off guard.

Nevertheless, emergency recruitment can still be a hit and miss process and posts can and do go unfilled. Feedback provided to IHE concerning recruitment for Kosovo shows how many of their clients had unfilled positions, or posts that could only be filled by transferring their personnel from elsewhere. This ties in with the feedback on the negative impact of Kosovo on pre-existing programmes (Q30).

The specialist recruitment agencies have grown up as a response to the need to provide a better qualified and "ready to go" contingent of personnel at least partially prepared for the demanding roles that emergency work often requires. Judging by the feedback in this survey, they have been at least partially successful both at meeting demand and providing adequately trained personnel.

All the same, even the better-resourced agencies may struggle to find the right personnel at times of high demand. Concerns were expressed in the survey about rushing the recruitment process. A recent IHE survey showed that some agencies do not have a short-listing process for emergency recruitments but recruit "as they go along" i.e. as soon as they find a suitable CV for someone who is available. Agencies are aware that programme quality may be at risk of compromise because of recruitment and retention problems.

Not that recruitment issues only arise with new programmes. The upside of the new is that each new crisis also brings new money. It can be the on-going chronic programmes, such as the Great Lakes where money becomes hard to find and replacement personnel still harder to locate.

The specialist recruitment agencies APSO and IHE both raised the issue of staff release to increase the pool of available personnel. Much of IHE's effort goes into getting health professionals released from their posts temporarily, in a way that fits with the career structures of the National Health Service. IHE feel that few of their client agencies understand the constraints on these health personnel.

APSO has the status of an official agency in Ireland and has the blessing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its effort to get other parts of the Irish Government to release personnel. At moment, this blessing seems to have limited benefit.

Questions

In an industry this size, is this level of recruitment preparedness and risk taking over the quality of personnel really acceptable? Can any of the Sphere, People in Aid or InterAction standards be met in the current situation? Are there mechanisms that can increase the size of the labour pool and reduce the level of scrambling for personnel to staff up each new crisis?

Parallel Initiatives to the Emergency Personnel Seminars

Developments in HR practice and the discussion in the Emergency Personnel Seminars are taking place against a backdrop of other interagency initiatives and codes of practice. Some of these are considered below.

The Sphere Project

In July 1997, the Sphere Project was launched by a group of humanitarian agencies. This project sought to develop a set of universal minimum standards in core areas (water supply & sanitation, nutrition, food aid, shelter & site planning and health services) of humanitarian assistance. The standards were completed and published last year.

Earlier this year 20 NGOs from around the world (not just Europe or North America) decided to participate in Sphere piloting - they have made a commitment to attempt to systematically incorporate the Standards into their agency policy and practice. Several of these agencies will be represented at EPS3.

The commitment does not seem to be to changing practice at this stage but to “thinking through how to implement the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in policy and practice”, with a view to developing organisation-wide commitment to Sphere and looking at changes to policies, training, and systems and procedures.

The emphasis of Sphere is not on human resources but on the standards of delivery of services to beneficiaries. The People in Aid Code (see below) was incorporated into the first draft of the Sphere standards but now is referred to in the notes on each set of standards. However, each chapter of the handbook includes one or more Human Resource Capacity and Training standard (with a subsequent list of indicators to help measure whether that standard has been met).

An example of such a standard is “Water supply and sanitation programmes are implemented by staff who have appropriate qualifications and experience for the duties involved, and who are adequately managed and supported.”

Guidance given with the standard states “providing training and support as a part of emergency preparedness is important to ensure that skilled personnel are available to deliver quality services... humanitarian agencies should ensure that qualified and competent staff are identified and properly prepared before eventual assignment to an emergency situation... When deploying staff and volunteers, agencies should seek to ensure that there is a balance in the number of women and men on emergency teams”.

The Sphere project has a fairly high profile on both sides of the Atlantic. Interviewees for this survey indicate a concern that the standards are not explicit enough about human resource issues and that they may be downplayed. The Sphere project manager has indicated that there are no plans to include new areas, including HR, in the standards.

Question

Does Sphere need to be more explicit on HR, or will a commitment to achieving the standards necessitate improvements in HR practice anyway? Do pilot agencies see that it will impact on their HR policy and practice?

The Sphere Project is based at the IFRC in Geneva. For further information, see <http://www.sphereproject.org>.

People in Aid

The People in Aid Code of best practice in the management and support of aid personnel was developed in the mid 90's, initially under the auspices of the Relief and Rehabilitation Network at the Overseas Development Institute, London. The code, which is designed for aid interventions in general, not just emergencies, covers seven principles of HR practice.

- ◆ The people who work for us are integral to our effectiveness and success
- ◆ Our human resource policies aim for best practice
- ◆ Our human resource policies aim to be effective, efficient, fair and transparent
- ◆ We consult our field staff when we develop human resource policy
- ◆ Plans and budgets reflect our responsibilities towards our field staff
- ◆ We provide appropriate training and support
- ◆ We take all reasonable steps to ensure staff security and well-being

In 1997, 11 agencies in the UK and Ireland made a commitment to testing the People in Aid Code. The agencies were free to decide what parts of their operations would be included. Most have chosen to focus on expatriate and HQ personnel.

An interim report in August 1999 highlighted that progress had been made on the first three standards Corporate Strategy, Policy, Fairness and Effectiveness but far less on the remaining four - Consultation, Projects, Training, Safety and security.

Two agencies have dropped out of the pilot but the remaining nine have all been audited recently by an external auditor using a social audit methodology. The auditor's report is due in June 2000. The future will involve the engagement of more agencies signing up for the Code, which implies a willingness to be externally audited, something not built in to the Sphere Project standards, which is less demanding, at least so far.

In this survey, five respondents who are not part of the People in Aid pilot agreed fully with the statement "Our agency has adopted and implemented the People in Aid Code of Practice". A further nine said that they Slightly Agreed with the statement, presumably because they have adopted it partially, informally or have adopted the principles in some way into their HR policy and practice. The Code is available on the People in Aid web site.

For further information, see <http://www.peopleinaid.org>.

People in Aid are based at the British Red Cross in London. They will be represented at EPS3 by Board members who are also representatives of other agencies.

Question

Have those UK/Irish organisations within the pilot of the People in Aid Code benefited from the last two years experience with the Code and from the recent social audit?

InterAction PVO Standards

InterAction is a coalition of 170 plus US based agencies working in relief and development. It is a membership organisation and membership involves a commitment to compliance with the InterAction Standards for Private Voluntary Organisations. As membership is valued by members, there is an incentive for them to keep to the standards.

The PVO Standards include a section on management practice and human resources, which involve commitments to clear definition and communication of; written policies and procedures; clearly described and communicated benefits; and clear definition of the organization's expectations of employees. Members are required to have policies and procedures to promote gender equity, pluralism, diversity, and affirmative action. Specifically, "members shall endeavor to recruit and retain staff that combine professional competence with a commitment to service."⁸

For more information see <http://www.interaction.org/>

Question

Do InterAction members consider that additional codes or guide are required to promote good practice in HR concerning emergency personnel?

⁸ At the time of writing, it was not possible to confirm whether InterAction has published standards specific to emergency response or emergency personnel.

Conclusion

The author would like to thank those organisations that took time to provide the base information for this brief survey, analysis and discussion. The aim of the paper is to reflect back to EPS participants some of the issues raised by some of the participant organisations. The hope is that this will further stimulate the debate at EPS3 and beyond.

Simon Lawry-White
For EPS Steering Group
April 2000

**Preparatory research
for
Emergency Personnel Seminar 3, April 27-29 2000**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Objective of the research

The purpose of the research is to provide, in a succinct fashion, the information needed to bring participants up to speed with the issues being addressed in the EPS fora and allow them to participate fully in EPS3.

The research will consist of:

- 1) Compiling a participant briefing paper, including an executive summary of the documentation arising from and relating to the two previous conferences for those arriving at the third Emergency Personnel Seminar in New York at the end of April 2000.
- 2) Preparing a research report on the emergency personnel response to the Kosovo crisis, 1999, covering recruitment agencies and some operational agencies, noting developments and changes (if any) and drawing out lessons still to be learned regarding emergency personnel
- 3) Presenting both of these papers at the Emergency Personnel Seminar in New York on April 27-29, 2000.

Timeframe

15 days has been allocated for research.

A draft report on the information collected to be ready for dissemination to agencies participating in the seminar in good time for the seminar. This is envisaged to be not less than two weeks before the start of the seminar on April 27 2000.

Background

There have been two previous Emergency Personnel Seminars, held in Dublin in 1997 and Brussels in 1998. The idea behind EPS 1 was for agencies to come together in a fairly informal way to collaborate on policy with a focus on finding, selecting, preparing and retaining emergency personnel. The term emergency personnel 'pool' or 'reservoir' was used to describe the personnel resource which all the agencies draw from and which emergency personnel move in and out of for a variety of reasons. It is necessary constantly to prepare people entering the pool to replace those who have left so that both the quality and quantity of the pool is maintained.

Demand for emergency personnel is stochastic, i.e. agencies can expect peaks in demand, but can not know when, or how big, the peaks will be. This requires preparation to ensure that agencies have the capacity to meet demand when it arises. The three day EPS1 in Dublin generated a statement for advocacy and also affirmed, for those who recruit emergency personnel, that it is impossible to find the perfect candidate for the field.

The aim of EPS2 was to build on the work of EPS 1, to improve the ability of participating organisations, both individually and as a community, to find, select, prepare and retain personnel for emergency operations.

More specific objectives included: to monitor progress of the EPS1 working groups and to propose and plan ways forward on issues of emergency personnel.

The time between EPS2 and EPS3 has been a period of major activity for humanitarian aid agencies globally. From December 1998, when Hurricane Mitch struck the Honduras, to February 2000 when there was catastrophic flooding in Mozambique, there has been repeated demand for emergency personnel, through immediate mass mobilisations such as those seen for Kosovo and East Timor or constant demand in response to sequential crises in the Great Lakes and West Africa.

EPS 3 provides a timely opportunity to reflect on lessons learnt by the repeated demands on the pool of emergency personnel, in terms of availability of such personnel and management and replenishment of the shared 'pool' of relief workers. EPS 3 is being held in the United States to bring in more US-based agencies.

Guidelines for data collection

The research will focus on readily available data from key agencies, including:

- a reasonable selection of key operational agencies
- agencies involved specifically with personnel, including RedR, APSO, IHE, DRC, NRC, Bioforce.

Suggested information to be collected:

- Basic data on each agency: e.g. total number of personnel deployed in 98/99/00 (so far) and per emergency/year
- The manner in which human resources issues are dealt with in evaluations of the agency's responses to the recent major crises
- Problems associated with recruitment of personnel to posts.
- How such data influences operational and policy decisions
- Examples of changes made as a result of such evaluations;
- How such data influences future planning
- Summary views on:
 - a) what worked well;
 - b) what needs to be improved &
 - c) other comments

SURVEY RESULTS

QUICK SURVEY RESULTS

Average from scoring Agree(A)=1, Slightly Agree(SA)=2, Slightly Disagree(SD)=3, Disagree(D)=4

1. In our agency's experience, the competence of field staff is the most important element in delivering effective humanitarian relief:

A	SA	SD	D	Average
24	7	0	0	1.2

2. In our agency's experience, securing good staff is the single most challenging step in mounting an effective relief operation:

A	SA	SD	D	Average
15	13	0	0	1.5

3. Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily trained pre-mission

A	SA	SD	D	Average
7	16	5	1	2.0

4. Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily briefed pre-mission

A	SA	SD	D	Average
14	10	6	0	1.7

5. Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily briefed during their mission

A	SA	SD	D	Average
9	16	3	0	1.8

6. Our emergency personnel are satisfactorily de-briefed after their mission

A	SA	SD	D	Average
12	14	1	2	1.9

7. Adequate stress/trauma counselling is available to those of our emergency personnel who need it

A	SA	SD	D	Average
17	9	1	2	1.6

8. Emergency personnel coming to work with us from specialist emergency personnel recruitment agencies (e.g. RedR) have the foundation skills we need.

A	SA	SD	D	Average
10	10	3	1	1.8

9. Our emergency personnel are well managed on the ground

A	SA	SD	D	Average
9	15	5	0	1.9

10. Our agency only deploys personnel with prior experience of emergency response

A	SA	SD	D	Average
10	8	5	7	2.3

11. Our agency has retained effective emergency personnel between assignments and redeployed them successfully to new operations

A	SA	SD	D	Average
10	13	1	4	2.0

12. The gender balance amongst emergency personnel is adequate to allow male and female beneficiaries (refugees/IDPs etc) to be equally well served by our agency

A	SA	SD	D	Average
11	10	6	3	2.0

13. Our responses to recent humanitarian crises have been evaluated for lessons on our HR practice with regard to emergency personnel.

A	SA	SD	D	Average
12	12	4	2	1.9

14. Lessons learnt from recent crises have significantly affected our HR practice with regard to emergency personnel

A	SA	SD	D	Average
12	10	5	2	1.9

15. Our HR practice reflects the views of current and returned expatriate emergency personnel

A	SA	SD	D	Average
10	13	4	2	1.9

16. Our HR practices reflect the views of local/in-region emergency personnel

A	SA	SD	D	Average
4	14	5	0	2.2

17. Our agency uses a competency framework as the basis for the recruitment of emergency personnel

A	SA	SD	D	Average
17	6	4	3	1.8

18. Our agency interviews all new emergency personnel before appointment

A	SA	SD	D	Average
26	2	0	0	1.1

19. Our agency asks for and takes up references before engaging new emergency personnel

A	SA	SD	D	Average
24	5	0	0	1.2

20. Our agency finds itself in competition with other agencies for the recruitment of personnel from the same pool

A	SA	SD	D	Average
21	5	2	2	1.5

21. Our agency has adequate insurance policies for emergency personnel

A	SA	SD	D	Average
25	3	1	0	1.2

22. In the least 2 years, our agency has made significant advances in the recruitment, training and deployment of staff from within the region of operation.

A	SA	SD	D	Average
16	7	2	3	1.7

23. Our agency has an adequate personnel security policy and procedures in place

A	SA	SD	D	Average
12	15	0	0	1.6

24. Our agency has an adequate policy on local staff evacuation

A	SA	SD	D	Average
7	8	3	8	2.5

25. The skills and experience of HR professionals in our agency have made a positive impact on our agency's policy and practice on emergency personnel

<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Average</i>
18	9	2	1	1.5

26. Our salaries and benefits are sufficient to attract and retain suitably qualified emergency personnel

<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Average</i>
9	11	6	2	2.0

27. Our salaries and benefits are competitive with other similar non-government agencies working in emergency relief

<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Average</i>
13	7	6	2	1.9

28. Our agency has already adopted and implemented the People in Aid Code of Practice

<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Average</i>
9	7	2	8	2.3

Kosovo Specific

29. The Kosovo crisis was the biggest emergency personnel recruitment challenge for our agency in the past 2 years

<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Average</i>
17	6	1	3	1.6

30. Our response to Kosovo weakened our operations in other on-going emergencies

<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Average</i>
10	8	5	4	2.1

31. Our response to Kosovo has limited our ability to respond to new major crises (Hurricane Mitch, Timor etc.)

<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Average</i>
2	6	8	10	3.0

32. The experience of the major deployment of personnel in response to the Kosovo crisis has resulted in a significant improvement in our emergency personnel recruitment and management systems

<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Average</i>
7	8	3	5	2.2