Emergency Capacity
Building Project
Staff Capacity Initiative
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Humanitarian

Competencies Study

Summary

This document explores the use of competency-based human resources (HR) management systems amongst members of the Interagency Working Group on Emergency Capacity (IWG), and identifies tools useful to those developing such systems for the recruitment, management and development of humanitarian professionals.

1. Purpose and scope
- Competency-based HR management practices are widely acknowledged as a 'best practice'. Most IWG agencies have developed and implemented competency frameworks, though these are often focused on long-term posts.
- Sections 2 to 4 detail the practical benefits of competency-based HR systems and consider how they can be applied specifically in the humanitarian context – including short-term roles.
- Sections 5 and 6 aim to assist organizations already using competency models to develop them further and to guide future inter-agency collaboration.
- Specific tools presented include: a matrix of job descriptions and levels of knowledge and responsibilities for program and HR managers; a set of generic advisory competencies; and a shortlist of competencies for use in telephone recruitment for short-term humanitarian posts.

2. Overview of competency models
- Competencies represent the underlying experience, skills and behaviors required to perform effectively in a given job, role or situation. They can include characteristics, motives, skills, self-image and body of knowledge.
- Core competencies are underpinning behaviors required by all humanitarian staff.
- Specialist or technical competencies are based on the demands of specific jobs.
- Competency models legitimize conversations on performance management and interpersonal skills, and help clarify the key "thing" that makes humanitarian workers effective.
- Some IWG organizations use competency models selectively, while in others they have greatly influenced overall training and staff development programs.
- In situations of change and complexity, such as many emergency scenarios, higher-level competencies are required.
- Recruiters of emergency staff can notice quickly which humanitarian workers fit into cross-cultural teams and tough working environments, because of their person-based, higher-level competencies.
- Well researched competency models based on observation of high performers and analysis of characteristics required by the organization are robust and can improve HR and operational processes
- Ineffective competency approaches have often resulted from a tick-box approach identifying 'lowest common denominator' behaviors that everybody should display.
- Five factors make certain posts hard to fill: tough environments; language requirements; war-torn and corrupt countries; senior posts requiring significant experience; financial and administrative skills.

3. Benefits from competency models
- Competencies allow focus on process - 'how things are done' - not simply outcomes.
- Competency models can clarify expectations and contribute to a clearer understanding of desirable actions and behaviors, for all staff.

- Competencies help organizations define what they need and apply a structured approach to selection, and encapsulate key behaviors such as respect and diversity.
- Competencies provide greater scope for workers to transfer within and across organizations, and make this process more transparent.
- Usable competency tools facilitate performance management, including negative feedback and clarification of unacceptable behaviors.
- Competency models that do not make day-to-day problem-solving easier will quickly become obsolete.

4. Competencies and improved performance management
- High staff turnover and weak performance tracking mean that staff on repeated contracts often receive little feedback. Behaviors and attitudes become entrenched.
- Competencies need to be molded into usable tools that make recruitment and performance management more robust.
- Some competency frameworks break down behaviors into levels of performance that can be tracked in individual development plans.
- Competency models developed at HQ can seem remote, especially for national staff. Use in training, performance management and recruitment helps clarify benefits.

5. Practical outcomes
- Many IWG organizations are currently reworking and strengthening their job descriptions and associated competency requirements for key humanitarian posts.
- Clarity over essential responsibilities, decision-making authority, budget responsibility, and key internal and external contacts is welcome.
- A matrix of the core experience, skills and behaviors required in different roles and management levels forms a starting point for discussion. Samples are provided.
- Specialist advisors help managers arrive at rational, informed decisions, and the study offered a set of generic advisory competencies.
- 'Softer' skills such as the ability to fit into an existing context and work with other staff are often neglected in emergency recruitment. The study offers a shortlist of competencies for short-term assignments, for use in telephone recruitment.

6. Career development and competencies
- Competency approaches that are relevant to performance development answer specific, highly felt organizational and individual needs and have a practical, day-to-day impact.
- Competency accreditation programs have had mixed results. They provide a strong staff development focus, and clarify the learning and development route available. However, they impose significant workload and costs.
- Learning programs to develop competencies are best chosen by emergency or HR team leaders. Suggested approaches include: workshops; simulations; case studies; secondments; apprenticeships; and role modeling.
- Competency models are too frequently separated from training requirements. Instead, training should reflect the experience, skills and behaviors required to perform effectively in a given job, role or situation.

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1. Background to the study

1.1 Introduction

The Interagency Working Group (IWG)[1] agreed early on that staff capacity remains one of the most significant, current limitations to effective humanitarian programming. This humanitarian competencies study was initiated to help organizations **introduce or update competency based human resources management systems** and to **guide future collaboration** in sourcing and developing staff with needed competencies to increase the pool of humanitarian professionals.

Competency based human resources management practices are widely acknowledged as a "best practice," and most of the IWG agencies already have adopted competency frameworks.

The IWG agencies currently employ approximately 50,000 staff in humanitarian programs (emergency response and emergency preparedness) in 100 countries. On average, 94 percent of their global workforce are nationals of the country in which they work, with a range of 2 to 10 percent expatriate staff mainly in management and senior technical posts.

1.2 Purpose and scope of the study

The participating organizations offered themselves as examples of good practice, to work together and with others to identify and disseminate best practices in relation to competencies work. The consultant worked with agency staff to **identify effective and tested tools** and methods that could be more widely adopted. The work built on a preceding investigation of current practices in global workforce capacity management, the individual work of participating organizations and other sectoral initiatives. In particular, the findings in this report derived from telephone conversations across the IWG organizations, from reading documentation supplied to the project and from models in use elsewhere in the humanitarian and other sectors.

1.3 The consultancy TOR

The consultancy as originally conceived aimed to compare and distil the core knowledge, skills and abilities needed by humanitarian professionals so employing managers could update their existing competency frameworks and focus on priority areas. It also aimed to disseminate practical tools for use by line managers, particularly in the field. Overall, it was hoped that reviewing best practices on competencies would lead to an increased pool of competent humanitarian professionals.

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[1] In 2003, CARE International, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Mercy Corps, Oxfam-GB, Save the Children-US, and World Vision International formed the Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Emergency Capacity Building. An assessment of their emergency response capabilities identified four main areas where inter-agency collaboration would greatly improve response. These areas formed the basis of the ECB project (www.ecbproject.org), funded by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Microsoft Corporation.   The IWG is using this funding to leverage the agencies' substantial resources to build their capacity for emergency response.

The consultant was asked to:

> A. Collate job descriptions for key humanitarian roles and analyze underlying competency frameworks (where used) to facilitate a shared understanding of equivalences between organizations' expectations of staff and the teams in which they work. Identify key gaps/hard-to-fill posts.
> B. Identify a common set of experiences, skills and behaviors needed by humanitarian professionals in emergency preparedness and response.
> C. Develop a curriculum of how to apply humanitarian agency competencies, with particular attention to national staff hired in the field.

During an early set of conversations with each of the IWG organizations, these parameters and resulting outputs were narrowed to:

- Matrix of **roles of two levels of program manager** and **HR manager in the field** – observations on existing job descriptions and levels of knowledge and responsibilities;
- Set of **generic advisory competencies**
- Analysis of **hard to fill areas** – selective observations as few organizations have thought about this
- **Shortlist of competencies for humanitarian workers** that can be used for telephone recruitments of short term posts
- **Application of humanitarian agency competencies** with particular attention to national staff hired in the field.

This report examines each of these areas in detail, using the following structure:

2. Overview of competency models in use

3. Benefits derived from competency models

4. Competencies and Improved Performance Management

5. Practical outcomes of the consultancy:

- Matrix of roles of two levels of program manager and HR field manager – observations of job descriptions and levels of knowledge and responsibilities in those roles
- Set of generic advisory competencies
- Shortlist of competencies for humanitarian workers that can be used for telephone recruitments of short term posts

6. Career development and competencies - applying humanitarian competencies

7. Conclusions

8. Future possibilities for collaboration on competency associated areas

9. References and source documents

This study aimed to meet the needs of the IWG organizations at their different stages of competency development. For those new to competencies, sections 2 – 4 detail the benefits of using competencies and the tools that can be used to develop them. For organizations that already use competency models, it is hoped that the study stimulates further development and that the specific, practical outcomes in section 5 can be used to deepen understanding and increase interagency collaboration.

2. Overview of competency models in use

2.1 Introduction to competencies

Some humanitarian organizations have decided that competencies are central to their ability to achieve goals. The study found that competency models, which underpin organizational processes, help to legitimize conversations on performance management and interpersonal skills, and provide managers and staff an accepted vocabulary to discuss these matters. This has a clear link to the ongoing conversation between ECB participants on what the key 'thing' is that makes for effective humanitarian workers. Competency models are recognized as useful measuring tools because they bring together the behaviors required to do the job and the attributes that allow one to do things well.

Competencies represent the ***experience***, ***skills and behaviors*** required to ***perform effectively*** in a given job, role or situation. They are what a person has; i.e. a characteristic, motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image, or body of knowledge which he or she uses.
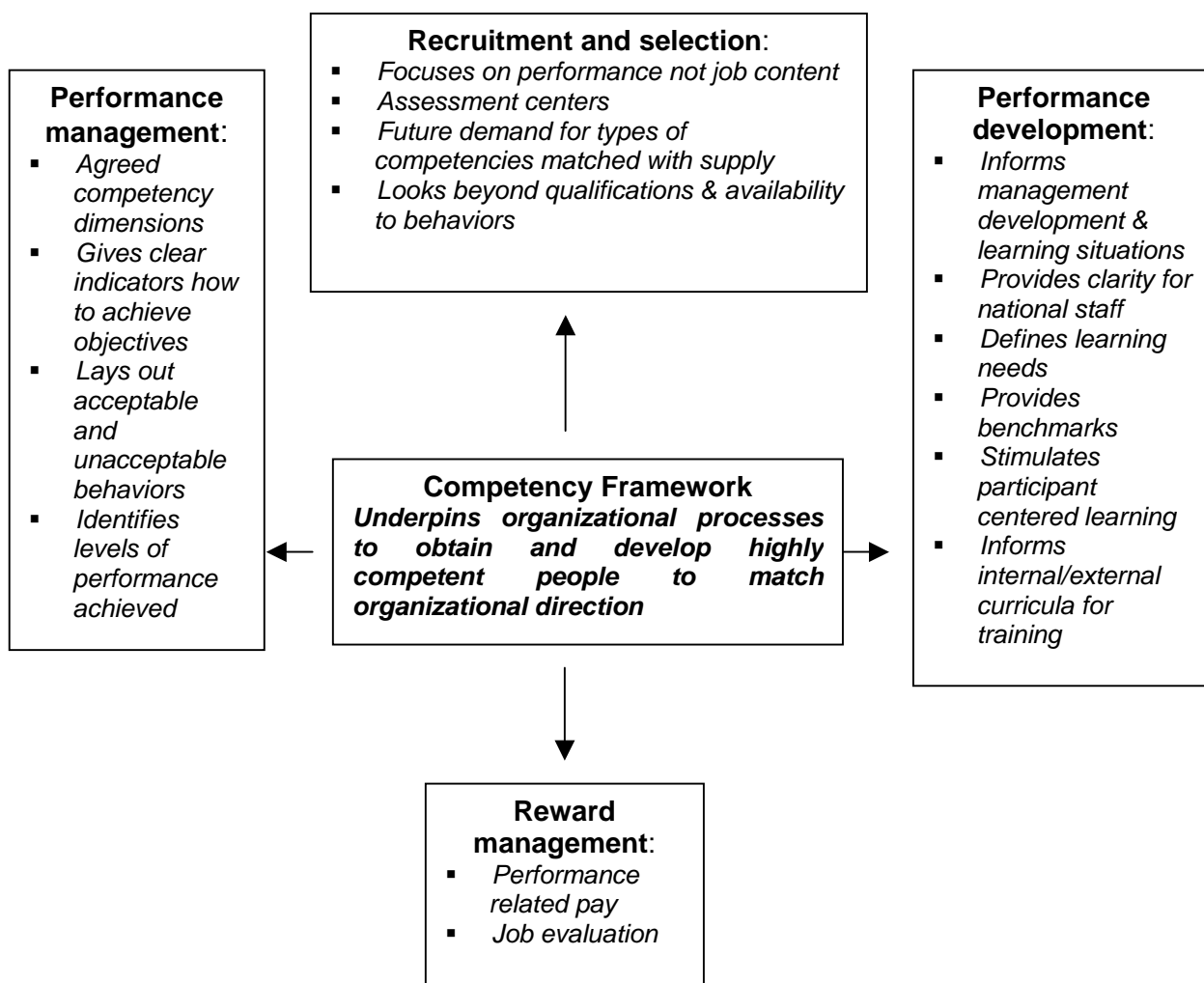
Recruitment and selection:
- *Focuses on performance not job content*
- *Assessment centers*
- *Future demand for types of competencies matched with supply*
- *Looks beyond qualifications & availability to behaviors*

Performance management:
- *Agreed competency dimensions*
- *Gives clear indicators how to achieve objectives*
- *Lays out acceptable and unacceptable behaviors*
- *Identifies levels of performance achieved*

Competency Framework
Underpins organizational processes to obtain and develop highly competent people to match organizational direction

Performance development:
- *Informs management development & learning situations*
- *Provides clarity for national staff*
- *Defines learning needs*
- *Provides benchmarks*
- *Stimulates participant centered learning*
- *Informs internal/external curricula for training*

Reward management:
- *Performance related pay*
- *Job evaluation*

Figure 1: Competency Based Integrated People Management

The study reiterated that competencies focus on behaviors that contribute to individual and organizational success. They provide a set of statements that can be used to measure achievements and identify learning needs or resource gaps. In general, competencies are a common-sense response to identifying how to ensure that people are doing their jobs effectively in order to achieve the task.

For IWG organizations, two types of competencies are relevant: core or person-based, and specialist or technical. Core or person-based competencies are the underpinning behaviors required by all humanitarian staff to carry out their role effectively, such as ability to work under pressure and in difficult conditions. Specialist or technical competencies are based on the particular sets of skills and behaviors required by staff to carry out specific jobs. For example, public health advisors may have specific competencies related to malaria and vector control, and those who work in IT may specialize in database management. This study has highlighted specialist or technical competencies required by program managers and HR Field managers.

2.2 IWG organizations and competency models

Competency models are used widely in the public and private sectors, and most IWG organizations use them to manage the staff of their longer-term programs. One of the questions this work sought to address is whether competency frameworks apply to humanitarian (emergency) work and what benefits they can provide.

Some IWG organizations use competency models selectively, while in others they have greatly influenced overall training and staff development programs. The model used by Mercy Corps was developed and led by the Operations Division, which helped its acceptance and promotion. Even so, country offices still show variable use of the model. New senior staff members are introduced to it at orientation, and this has helped increase the model's value and relevance. Managers often adopt a competency approach in their own area of work.

One of the original developers of competency thinking, Schroder, wrote that '***The capability of your organization to achieve excellence is to be found in a match between the characteristics of managers and those which are demanded by the internal and external environment of the organization.' (1989)***

According to Schroder (1989), competencies are 'personal effectiveness skills' which vary from the more basic specialized/functional skills to the generic, person-based higher-level competencies. In situations of greater change and complexity, higher-level competencies are demanded, as normal planning and operating procedures become obsolete. This fits many emergency scenarios. Stories and evaluations tell us that success in emergencies often comes down to performances by individuals who have managed to make things happen despite substantial constraints. Recruiters of emergency staff stated during this study that they can notice quickly which humanitarian team members ***fit*** into the demands of sensitive, cross-cultural teamwork and the tough working environment where things need to move forward quickly. Early thinkers on competencies i.e. Schroder (1989) would have encouraged attention given to the person-based, higher-level competencies to differentiate high performers.

The most effective individuals cope with a range of contextual factors that go beyond the performance of the task in hand. In the context of an emergency, the internal and external environment often demand an 'extra something.' This 'extra' reflects an ability to work in mixed, often changing teams, with high pressure demands to perform and in difficult contexts. The study found that competency based recruitments using specific questioning can help the interviewer to understand how a person has worked in such contexts before, and are useful in predicting job performance.

2.3 Origins of competencies and the work of high performers

Competencies are underlying characteristics that lead to superior performance. They are the behaviors, experience and skills that outstanding performers exhibit more often, and at a higher level of complexity or sophistication, than typical performers.

Effective humanitarian program managers who oversee program staff and multiple program tasks in demanding contexts would be classified by most organizations as high performers. Early research to identify competencies was based on observing and interviewing such high performers. These results were then combined with what characteristics organizations would need from their staff in the future to ensure the organization has the right skills and behaviors in place. Well-researched and developed competency models are therefore extremely robust and the study found that their widespread use can improve HR and operational processes. It is therefore disappointing when competencies get bad press -- often when their application has been simplified to a tick-box approach, representing behaviors that everybody should display, reduced to lowest common denominators.

2.4 Competencies plus

Competencies are just one lever to improve organizational strength. Employees have competencies that are supported by their technical/specialist skills and their other attributes such as previous cross-cultural experience, proficiency in languages, etc. Competencies provide a common vocabulary for discussing performance and development, which helps to break down confusion across work cultures.

2.5 Hard to fill job posts

The study identified the following factors that make certain posts hard to fill:

- Work in tough environments (for example, Chad, Rwanda and Sudan). Most IWG organizations know which regions are the toughest to recruit for, but don't yet have a mechanism for quantifying how often they recruit to those places. There was general agreement that these trends could be mapped out from organizational registers, but no organization has yet done so.

- Fluency in French, Spanish or Portuguese. One organization noted that an individual without the language capability must possess strong interpersonal skills to work with others. French- and Spanish-speaking public health promoters are also difficult to find. For technical posts, organizations now recruit from Africa and this has increased the recruitment pool. French-speaking logisticians are more readily available as French NGOs have a greater history of working in logistics.

- War-torn and corrupt countries. The review found that it is hard to recruit people to work in countries where governments and militia have been fighting for years and where corruption is rampant. In contrast, there was mass volunteering to work in the tsunami response. Interviewees explained this by pointing to the scale of the emergency and the fact that it was a natural disaster.

- Program Managers and Representatives. Oxfam-GB stated that it sometimes struggles to recruit for these positions, which require experienced people who are often not available and hard to retain once recruited. People in these posts need to understand fully the internal systems and workings of the organization before they can be deployed and so need a robust induction.

- Financial and administrative skills. CRS noted that program managers need substantial training in finance and administrative skills. They hope to benefit from a trend in combined MBA and MPH degrees to find individuals with these non-emergency skill sets.

In general, IWG staff felt that they have options for improving recruitment for hard-to-fill posts, but that this will take time and resources.

3. Benefits derived from competency models

This section identifies specific benefits that arise when competency models are applied to humanitarian work.

3.1 Competencies allow focus on process, not simply outcomes

Competencies provide a common language for discussing *how* things are done, not simply *what* things are done. The competencies approach led to a key change a few years ago when humanitarian agencies began to deconstruct the behaviors of their workers and realized that better and longer-lasting results could come from improving process behaviors and delivery, not just an emphasis on working hard.

3.2 Competency models can lead to clearer expectations

Clearer expectations, which can come from widespread use of competency models, feeds into organizational recruitment processes and learning and development. National staff understand better the expectations that organizations have of them and how to develop and grow within the organization. All staff – managed and managing – have clearer benchmarks as to what is expected of them. In general, IWG agencies agreed that competencies contribute to understanding the desirable actions and behaviors to achieve set goals.

3.3 Competencies help the organization define what it is looking for

When using a competency framework, recruiters apply a more structured approach to selection and think through the behaviors that the job entails. This study found that many emergency recruitments tend to be influenced more by availability and specialist skill sets presented. Only after these have been considered do recruiters inquire into behaviors demonstrated on previous deployments – provided, of course, enough time remains in the interview.

3.4 Competencies link people and program management

This study found that emergency staff are more at ease when talking about managing risks and decision making than aspects of working with team members. Competency language, adopted by staff and their managers, puts the people

element at the center of such discussions, because managing risks and decision-making are very much influenced by how staff work with others.

The conversations through this study and research into UN leadership competencies, made clear that reverence for heroic leadership, or the old, derogatory term 'humanitarian cowboys,' is replaced now by the need for workers to demonstrate emotional intelligence, including self-awareness and self-regulation. It seems that staff need this high level of emotional intelligence to work in a participative way with communities and to cope with insecure situations.

3.5 Competencies offer a more measurable language, and encapsulate key behaviors

Characteristics of effective humanitarian workers are often discussed and attempts made to pinpoint what is needed. Competencies provide such definition. Respect and diversity become highlighted in behaviors and expected ways of working. Some IWG organizations have separated out clusters of competencies relating to diversity or team working, whereas others have decided that these behaviors are included within their other clusters and do not need to be made explicit.

3.6 Competencies allow for transferability within and across agencies

As the IWG organizations develop a shared understanding of competencies that humanitarian workers must demonstrate, there will be greater scope for workers to move within and across organizations. It will become more acceptable to do so. Competency frameworks, if tied into performance management and feedback systems, make this process more transparent. Currently, transferability comes when individuals or their managers spot opportunities elsewhere.

People have the opportunity in large organizations to move from emergency work to development and vice versa. The report found that recruiting managers are still reluctant to make this happen. Development managers may see emergency staff as 'not participative enough' or 'too known for relief.' These assumptions need to be explored more fully. It is of slight concern that all IWG organizations' competency models frequently mention 'flexible/adaptable,' yet development managers evidently do not see this as a competency demonstrated by emergency staff.

CRS now accepts that people are recruited to the agency and not simply a post. This means that the focus of orientation and employment is different. Individuals are not simply taking on a job but becoming a player within the organization and can expect to move around within it. Expecting that all managers appointed to the organization have some emergency experience would also be a way to open up crossover possibilities.

3.7 Competency models are helpful for monitoring poor performers

In emergency situations, people management can be crowded out by the need to get the job done. Where competency language is translated into tools and usable forms,

performance management is more likely to be implemented within the busy-ness. Competency frameworks link recruitment, performance management and career development, and provide a consistent language to record performance feedback. This could help several 'criticism averse' IWG organizations that said they remain poor at giving negative feedback to staff.

Some private sector models clarify **unacceptable behaviors** in their competency frameworks. The study found that no IWG organization did this. Without such clarity, competency models tend to focus more on performance development and less on current expectations. Examples of unacceptable behaviors are shown below, and appear again in Table 1 in section 4.3.

Unacceptable behaviors *(May indicate a significant development need)*

▪ Unaware of how emotions affect own behavior ▪ Lets current feelings affect how things are done	▪ Has an inaccurate view of own strengths and weaknesses ▪ Learns little from previous experience

3.8 Life cycle of competency models

Systems and models, including competency models, can run out of steam. Several IWG organizations said that their staff like new things. Models have to be relevant, exciting and flexible else they will not be used. Competency models must therefore be developed into tools that make day-to-day problem-solving easier. Behavioral checklists will not be used regularly and will therefore become obsolete very quickly.

4. Competencies and improved performance management

4.1 Competencies and staff turnover

The IWG Metrics Study found that the IWG organizations have weak systems for tracking the performance of short-term personnel. HR staff stated that performance management is sometimes cited as not being relevant for emergency work. Managers attributed its non-use to high staff turnover.

The review found that staff turnover is indeed high, but that organizations often employ the same people on repeated contracts without giving or receiving feedback on recent deployments. Without feedback or appraisals, it is very easy for people to continue to use the same behaviors and become quite entrenched in their attitudes. They work harder using behaviors that worked for them in the past but that may no longer be relevant in today's climate.

4.2 Competency frameworks and useful tools

Competencies need to be molded into usable tools that make aspects of recruitment and performance management more objective and robust. Tools enable consistency and greater fairness of opportunity. Tools that help national staff prepare for interviews are cited as particularly useful (e.g. CARE International Competency Development Planning Guide, CARE USA Targeted Selection Interview Guide and Oxfam-GB's recruitment grid.)

Another way of using competencies is to decide on threshold competencies, or the minimum competencies that someone needs to do the job at his or her entry point into the organization. These can be backed up by a personal development plan to develop other areas.

4.3 Competency frameworks and levels of behaviors

Along similar lines, in certain competency frameworks each behavior is broken down into four levels of performance that increase in complexity as one moves up the scale. The *intention* behind the behavior is what links the levels together. Operating at level 3, for example, assumes that level 1 and level 2 behaviors are also being demonstrated regularly. An example is shown below in Table 1. An alternative would be to use the levels as part of an individual's development plan. The Metrics report gave an example of headings that could be used: Needs Improving → Emerging → Effective → Exceptional

Table 1: Knowing, Managing and Developing Self

Knowing, managing and developing self involves the ability to recognize our emotions and motives and their effects on our performance. It involves being aware of our own strengths and limitations and the effect these have on others. Finally, it is about managing emotions in stressful situations and taking action to improve our own performance and capability.

Scale*: Moves from a basic awareness of emotions, strengths and limitations to a deeper understanding of why these emotions occur and how they have an impact on behavior. It also moves from controlling one's emotions and negative actions to managing strong emotions over time.*

Level 1	*Level 2*	*Level 3*	*Level 4*
Aware of own emotions, strengths and limitations, resists impulsive emotional reactions	**Understands own emotions and behaviors; responds appropriately; seeks feedback**	**Acts to improve own capability and performance in the short-medium term; manages stress over time**	**Builds own capability in the longer term; takes risks to grow**
▪ Aware of own feelings and emotions ▪ Aware of own values	▪ Describes the source of own feelings; recognizes typical circumstances in	▪ Understands how own emotions can affect personal performance ▪ Aware impact of	▪ Plans and takes action to ensure that own core capabilities are developed

▪ Aware of strengths and limitations ▪ Feels the impulse to do something inappropriate and resists it ▪ Feels strong negative emotions and holds them back or walks away from the situation when necessary	which own emotions develop ▪ Aware of own drivers, i.e. what motivates ▪ Sees themes and patterns in own behavior ▪ Holds strong negative emotions back when necessary and acts appropriately ▪ Understands own possibilities for development and seeks feedback from others ▪ Has self image in line with current role	own emotions and behavior on others ▪ Develops short-term strategies for overcoming personal gaps ▪ Manages effects of strong emotions and stress over time ▪ Shows stamina despite stress ▪ Seeks new growth experiences within current capability	▪ Challenges own values, assumptions and behavior ▪ Develops deep personal insights to enhance future performance ▪ Consistently chooses development opportunities at edge of capability ▪ Develops long term strategies to productively manage emotions in important situations

Unacceptable behaviors *(May indicate a significant development need)*

▪ Is unaware of how emotions affect own behavior ▪ Lets current feelings affect how things are done	▪ Has an inaccurate view of own strengths and weaknesses ▪ Learns little from previous experience

A key question that helps to prompt thinking about where an individual is for each competency is: ***Do you act on what you know about yourself in order to build your capability?***

4.4 Making competencies accessible to national staff

Competency models developed at HQ can seem remote for staff in general but in particular for national staff. Using the competencies to inform training, performance management and recruitment processes means that staff begin to see them in action and realize the benefits.

This study found that some models in use in the public and private sector include examples or stories to illustrate the behaviors under the particular competency headings. Examples inserted into Table 1 would yield the following:

Table 2: Knowing, Managing and Developing Self

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Aware of own emotions, strengths and limitations, resists impulsive emotional reactions	Understands own emotions and behaviors; responds appropriately; seeks feedback	Acts to improve own capability and performance in the short-medium term; manages stress over time	Builds own capability in the longer term; takes risks to grow
I'm very much the type of person, who says, 'we can do this. No matter how long it takes, how hard it is along the way, we can do it.' Except that sometimes it's not good, I'm too optimistic and I don't think that there's a problem with anything.'	*When I found out that it was her – that she had been lying to us all this time I was so angry I couldn't tell you. I could feel myself burning up so I just walked out. I had to or I would have…I don't know, maybe not hit her but I would have screamed at her and that wouldn't have done any good. So I just went for a walk to calm myself down. Then I went back to talk with her and…'*	*At the time I just didn't have the confidence to do that sort of thing, especially when I didn't know them. So what I did was I arranged to see them individually at first, then in smaller groups – 2 or 3 at a time. Once I knew them a bit better and had started to feel more confident I was able to see them all together.'*	*I know full well that I can become very task-oriented at times at the expense of the team and I know that this can de-motivate everyone. I'm driven by a need to get things done. If I set myself a goal, I have to achieve it. That was what happened this time. I can spot it in myself now.* *So I simply stopped and apologized to the team and put the task out of my mind for a while. I told myself that the task was to make the team feel valued, to make them enjoy what they were doing.*

Discussion at the country office level could yield examples of desired and undesired behaviors, and this would help national staff become more familiar with the competency language. Each country office could develop its own behavioral examples arising from its own program context.

5. Practical outcomes of the competencies study

This study found that many of the IWG organizations are currently reworking and strengthening their job descriptions and associated competency requirements for key humanitarian posts. The consultant looked at the job descriptions available and compared requirements for three positions: HR field manager and two levels of program manager.

5.1 General observations of program management job descriptions

Project and program managers must demonstrate experience to be considered for one of these roles. The type of experience expected of program managers varies across the IWG organizations, which use the following terms:

- Humanitarian
- Management
- Operational humanitarian
- Leadership
- Development
- Program Management

Each of these terms could mean something slightly different to applicants. IWG organizations might consider clarifying the usage and sharing what they look for under the different categories.

CARE International asks recruiting managers to determine <u>seven essential responsibilities for which the jobholder is held accountable</u>. In the climate of increased accountability in the humanitarian sector, this clarity is welcome and it helps prevent an unmanageably long list of responsibilities. Other good practices that this research highlighted are:

- Inclusion of <u>decision making</u> authority – typical decisions and actions the job holder is authorized to make or do alone
- <u>Budget responsibility</u> – level of sign off and authorization
- Key <u>internal and external</u> contacts that the jobholder is expected to maintain, and the purpose of those interactions.

5.2 Two levels of program manager

The study looked at how to incorporate person-based and technical competencies and levels of knowledge and responsibilities required at two levels of program management. Level 1 program managers are responsible for a single program. Level 2 managers oversee multiple programs. It would be expected that level 2 managers would be competent in the Level 1 areas before promotion.   IWG organizations are invited to compare the following tables with their current job profiles. The specifics suggested by the tables will help focus recruitment and formulation of training plans. For each of the named competencies, the organization should fill in columns 3 and 4. It is hoped that the tables will form a starting point for discussion of the core experience, skills and behaviors needed by humanitarian professionals at the two program management levels.

The following areas of knowledge are prerequisites for both levels of program manager:

- *Principles of emergency preparedness and response*
- *Scope of operations, mandate, policy priorities, administrative procedures, culture from own organization;*

▪ *The wider humanitarian system, the range of actors who impact on the work and the opportunities for partnership that exist.* (Source: IASC team leadership program)

5.2.1 Program Manager (Level 1) Person-based Competencies

The second column in Table 3 highlights the person-based competencies critical to the post of program manager, level 1, as suggested by the consultant's interviews and documentation research and from the work described in section 5.5. IWG organizations can expand on this column from their own organizational competency models. (For source documents and references, see section 8.)

Table 3: Person-based Competencies

Competency Cluster	Competency Name	Level Required	Criticality
Empowering others	People management	High	Vital
	Leadership	Medium	Necessary
	Listening	Low	Nice to have
	Coaching		
Working effectively together	Leads local & international staff		
	Internal communication		
	Group dynamics		
	Builds & maintain relations in forming teams		
Planning & organizing	Project cycle management		
	Resource management		
	Operational decision making		
	Adaptability		
Managing expectations & quality	Performance and results oriented		
	Program support oriented		
	Quality and detail minded		
	Cultural sensitivity		
	Continuous improvement		
Thinking & understanding	Analysis & synthesis of ongoing situation		

	Exercises judgment in development situations Analytical thinking		
Self management & awareness	Initiates action Copes effectively		

5.2.2 Program Manager (Level 1) Technical Competencies

Table 4 shows the technical competencies required for the function of Program Manager at level, taken from the job descriptions available through ECB.

Table 4: Technical Competencies

Competency Cluster	Competency Name	Level Required	Criticality
Emergency program management & implementation	Assesses current situation, anticipates needs and resources	High	Vital
	Analysis of political, social & security context of the program	Medium	Necessary
	Proposes program & sets objectives and indicators	Low	Nice to have
	Monitors the program for progress, relevance & efficiency		
	Applies & develops participatory & community oriented programs		
	Develops transition & exit strategies		
Program resource development	Supervises or carries out search for funding		
	Designs appropriate staffing structures		
Policy management	Applies organizational policy to programs to fit with contexts.		
Health & security management	Ensures every day application of security strategies with appropriate behavior		
	Applies guidelines for health & safety in workplace, healthy living conditions		
	Evaluates & prioritizes risks		
	Able to brief all staff on security situation & procedures		
	Manages asset security		

	Manages internal & external communications in event of severe security problems		
Communications	Writes donor reports & grant proposals		
	Writes management reports to HQ		
	Maintains M&E systems for internal & external use		
	Joint work on press releases, advocacy papers		
	Encourages authorities to apply humanitarian & development principles		
	Establishes systems for info flows from HQ to field and vice versa		
	Coordinates & networks with other agencies, local authorities		
	Demonstrates expertise in HF, VHF radios, sat phone		
Codes, contracts & law management	Draws up & manages contracts & memoranda of understanding		
	Understands protocols of donors i.e. UN, EU		
	Adheres & contributes to code of conduct & conventions, People in Aid, Sphere		
	Applies labor, economic and social law relating to national and international staff		
Finance, compliance management & accountability	Coordinates & manages program budgets within spending levels & ensures compliance with organizational & donor regs		
	Secures local/partnership funding		

Underpinning knowledge for Level 1 program manager

- General relief and development environment
- Organizational structure, including formal lines of reporting and responsibility
- Organizational goals and objectives
- Organizational core values and standards of behavior expected of aid workers
- Organizational software
- Knowledge of the local culture
- Donor organizational structures

- Donor priorities
- Sphere standards
- Common field operational practices - UNHCR guidelines
- Sectoral requirements e.g. food security information
- Participant feedback mechanisms
- General project cycle
- Relief to development transition issues
- Logframes
- Analytical tools and techniques appropriate to local context
- Unfair dismissal rules and due process
- Performance management systems used within organization
- Standards for organizational record-keeping and audit requirements
- Key concepts in operational security
- Capacity/vulnerability framework
- Local Capacities for Peace/Do No Harm framework

(Source: WVI humanitarian training package)

5.2.3 Program Manager (Level 2) Person-based Competencies

Tables 5 and 6 relate to the more senior position where the post holder coordinates a number of programs. Again the competencies are separated into person-based and technical. It is assumed that the level 2 program manager is able to demonstrate the competencies of the level 1 manager.

Table 5: Person-based competencies

Competency Cluster	Competency Name	Level Required	Criticality
Empowering others	People management across multiple teams, in matrix environments	High	Vital
	Coaches & mentors	Medium	Necessary
	Forges shared vision & goals among disparate stakeholders	Low	Nice to have
	Leads across boundaries		
Working together	Builds & maintains relations in forming teams		
	Handles team conflict & challenges effectively		
Planning and organizing	Operational decision-making		
	Manages multiple sites		
	Coordinates programs		
Managing expectations & quality	Performance & results oriented		
	Program support oriented		

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	Quality & detail minded		
	Applies ethical standards		
	Ensures continuous improvement		
Thinking & understanding	Organizes information to provide feedback on programs		
	Makes connections between disparate events & processes		
	Thinks and plans strategically		
Self management and awareness	Personal qualities and managerial performance are consistent with organizational performance standards		
	Copes effectively		

5.2.4 Program Manager (Level 2) Technical Competencies

These technical competencies are drawn from available ECB job descriptions.

Table 6: Technical Competencies

Competency Cluster	Competency Name	Level Required	Criticality
Program coordination	Overview of programs within agreed organizational strategy	High	Vital
	Responsible for program progress & quality	Medium	Necessary
	Relays information on quality gaps to internal & external donors to meet contractual requirements	Low	Nice to have
	Develops exit strategies with indicators to phase in & out emergency program work		
Leadership & strategic use of program resources	Develops program strategies that maximize international & external resources and relationships		
	Evaluates program priorities to leverage impact		
	Promotes ethical practice		
Security management	Oversees security assessments & strategies		
	Takes security decisions and action in case of evacuations etc or other major events affecting the security of staff		

Representation & advocacy	Consolidates quickly the learning from experiences to produce policy briefings fast. Lobbies organizations & institutions on important program issues Develops & nurtures culturally sensitive internal & external relationships & networks to ensure optimum program success		
Codes, contracts & law management	Manages memoranda of understanding Applies the law in country as far as possible		
Fiscal responsibility	Oversees & maintains structures to segregate finance, admin & logistics Manages complex funding arrangements Ensures program funds are spent in accordance with donor rules & regulations		
Organizational learning	Records experience & learning from programs and feeds learning across organizational programs Contributes to organizational policy by transmitting experience of program into policy		

Underpinning knowledge for level 2 program managers

- Basic research, demographic and economic analysis techniques
- Strategic planning methodologies
- Risk evaluation practices
- NGO benchmarks in related areas
- Organizational policies and procedures relating to military
- Staff development strategies
- Relevant pay awards and agreements
- Core competency concepts
- Organizational change processes
- Organizational design principles
- Legislation codes and bylaws relevant to the organization's operations
- Key principles of quality management and their application

(Source: WVI humanitarian training package)

The consultant hopes that this work on program management can help IWG organizations pinpoint more exactly the competencies they need in their staff and develop accompanying processes where there are gaps.

5.3 HR Manager, field level

The consultant used the available HR humanitarian job descriptions and the qualifications framework available from WVI to draw up the person-based and technical competencies for the post of HR manager in the field. Another source document was People in Aid (2004).

5.3.1 HR Field Manager Person-based Competencies

Table 7: Person-based competencies

Competency Cluster	Competency Name	Level Required	Criticality
Empowering others	People management	High	Vital
	Leadership in the workplace	Medium	Necessary
		Low	Nice to have
Working effectively together	Communication		
	Global and peer team working		
	Knowledge sharing		
	Promotes team effectiveness		
	Builds & maintains relations in forming teams		
	Network to support HR objectives		
Planning and organizing	Operational decision-making		
	Work and project management		
	Resource management		
	Decision making		
	Flexible		
	Develops work priorities		
Managing expectations & quality	Performance and results oriented		
	Program support oriented		
	Quality and detail minded		
	Continuous improvement		

Thinking and understanding	Judgment		
	Analytical thinking		
	Conceptual thinking		
	Strategic thinking		
Self management & awareness	Initiates action		
	Copes effectively		

5.3.2 HR Manager Technical Competencies

The next table displays the technical competencies expected of HR field managers. These appear more focused than those for the program managers.

Table 8: Technical competencies for HR field manager

Competency Cluster	Competency Name	Level Required	Criticality
Recruitment and employment practice	Employment legislation expertise	High	Vital
	Understands organizational corporate and divisional policies & procedures	Medium	Necessary
	Comprehends how to coordinate recruitments	Low	Nice to have
	Maintains recruitment database		
	Applies knowledge of contract employment and scheduling of extensions, terms & conditions		
	Recruits new and replacement staff, develops new contracts & job descriptions		
	Implements remuneration & employment benefits		
	Manages induction processes		
HR planning and budgeting	Assesses staffing needs & costs		
	Aware of visa application procedures & immigration clearance		
	Supervises and manages contracts e.g. rental		
Development & application of HR policies	Defines country specific policies & procedures i.e. R&R		
	Change management change		

	expertise		
	Skills to monitor and uphold staff conduct and discipline		
	Manages grievance & conflict resolution procedures		
	Manage disciplinary & termination procedures		
Operational planning and roll out of HR initiatives	Identifies HR implications of organizational plans		
	Networks to support HR objectives		
	Establishes & maintains performance management process inc. exit interviews and debriefs		
	Provides strategic feedback on staff issues		
	Identifies training needs & plan & promote training program		
	Facilitates training in small groups		
HRM information systems	Maintains personnel information systems		
Support	Understands finance and logistics & overlaps with HR		
	Auditing skills		
	Understands security management in relation to national and international staff		
	Builds institutional learning and documents experience		

HR Manager Field level Qualifications

Available job descriptions for HR field managers showed that IWG organizations look for 'qualification and/or experience in HRM or an associated field,' and state 3-5 years of professional experience and 3-5 years humanitarian experience are needed. They look for previous development or humanitarian work experience, ideally in a similar organization. Interestingly, none of the organizations stated that HR posts are hard to fill.

HR field manager underpinning knowledge

- ▪ Knowledge of discipline & grievance procedure, sickness & absence management
- ▪ Human resource information systems
- ▪ Identification of training needs

- ▪ Career development strategies
- ▪ Adult learning principles
- ▪ Organizational structures
- ▪ Quality management
- ▪ Reward management strategies
- ▪ Employee relations & HRM
- ▪ Knowledge of organizational policies and procedures, Sphere & Red Cross/NGO Code of conduct, People in Aid
- ▪ Culture management
- ▪ Industrial relations & management of change
- ▪ Motivation theories
- ▪ Contract employment
- ▪ Employment legislation

(Source: People in Aid - HR Information Note 04/04)

5.4 Set of Generic Advisory Competencies

In general, the study found that advisory input helps to achieve a balance between a technically brilliant program and one that is operationally sensible in terms of resources and security. Specialist advisors help managers arrive at rational, informed decisions. They have a clear role as source of or pointer to user-friendly information. The consultant was asked to develop a set of generic competencies that contribute to effective advisory input, and drew on work carried out by Oxfam-GB in 2006.

Those in specialist advisory posts have to be flexible. They often do not directly manage the program but have a role to improve the quality within its operating context and constraints. They must understand the needs of the program managers, their experience and capacity. There was a strong consensus that advisors need to draw from local knowledge and experience rather than imposing their own views.

The competencies highlighted below were developed from interviews with emergency advisors and program managers and they could apply to other staff in internal advisory roles. Interestingly, some of these competencies are parallel to those highlighted by the Management Standards Centre in the UK (www.management-standards.org).

- ▪ Listen carefully to understand the context.
- ▪ Demonstrate understanding of the problem described, before advising on the solution and understand whether there is sufficient capacity to deliver your advice.
- ▪ Read management reports to understand the problems before simply asking more questions.
- ▪ Support advice with examples to aid understanding - practical ways to make suggestions happen within the constraints of the program and be prepared to support those, through for example, helping with recruitment, development of ToRs, implementation plans etc.
- ▪ Give advice from a broader lens, not simply one specialism – understanding the organization's general approach to humanitarian programming to incorporate its thinking on gender, HIV Aids etc.

- Application of field implementation experience using active problem solving - understand why theory can't simply translate into practice.
- Communicate technical expertise in a positive and constructive way, recognizing that people will be tired and stressed.
- Ensure that technical advice must be informed by and inform organizational and operational policy.
- Act as a sounding board to managers, helping them to make sense of situations in a more non-directive coaching role.
- Serve as brokers for organizational learning; sharing more actively the experience and learning across programs e.g. exit criteria, advocacy approaches and tactics.
- Demonstrate facilitation skills, using adult learning principles – able to run meetings and training events and explain to staff the process involved.

To summarize, effective advisors demonstrate clear competencies. These competencies could be used more actively to inform advisory staff recruitment and development. Softer skills are as necessary as harder technical expertise.

5.5 Shortlist of competencies for humanitarian workers that can be used for telephone recruitments for temporary assignments

Recruiters for contract or temporary assignment posts stated the need for humanitarian workers to 'fit' into existing contexts, to work well with other staff to produce results and to demonstrate emotional intelligence. Sometimes under pressure to recruit quickly, interviews focus most on where people have worked before and their availability. The consultant was asked to develop a few critical competencies relating to the softer skills that recruiters could use during telephone recruitments for temporary assignments.

The original list, generated from IWG organizational competency models, was tested at the February ECB learning event where participants were asked to prioritize from the list and to add any competencies that they felt were missing. The consultant then tested these further with emergency program managers to determine their robustness and relevance. The program managers felt that it was reasonable to ask them to deconstruct their experiences in this way and that the process helped them to describe their leadership qualities.

Table 9 on the following pages shows the competencies selected, and questions have been added that can be used during telephone interviews. The questions come from CARE USA's Interview Guide.

Recent work in Oxfam-GB has confirmed that new staff in humanitarian responses often start as contract staff on temporary assignments. They then take on repeated contracts or become Humanitarian Support Personnel and eventually advisors and more senior managers. This means that early recruitment and contractual processes need to be robust and thorough to demonstrate the professionalism of the organization and how seriously it takes selection, performance management and development. The consultant found that, very often, IWG organizations do not value contract staff as part of their expanded team, and performance management and staff development are often neglected or haphazardly implemented.

Table 9: Shortlist of Competencies for short term/temporary assignments

Competency cluster: Taking Action to achieve goals

Taking decisive action to achieve goals in a demanding context where there are often low levels of support and infrastructure present. In mixed teams, work is undertaken at a rapid rate and simultaneously to multiple other tasks.

1. Operational Decision making

All staff	Program Manager 1	Program Manager 2
▪ Recognizes own scope of authority and when to refer up through the line ▪ Consciously follows through on a course of action within a reasonable time	▪ Recognizes issues, problems or opportunities and determines whether action is needed ▪ Makes discretionary decisions in new situations where specific guidelines, policy or accepted practices do not dictate specific action. ▪ Uses knowledge and experience of national staff and delegates assignments based on skills	▪ Decision making takes into account needs and expectations of both internal and external groups ▪ Includes others in the decision-making process as warranted, to ensure buy-in and understanding of the resulting decisions

Interview questions

Describe a situation in which you identified a problem and took action to correct it rather than wait for someone else to do so.

Describe the most successful troubleshooting you have done on a recent emergency response. Contrast this with a time when you were unsuccessful. What did you do differently?

Tell me about a time you were in a team and had to involve other team members in decisions and actions. What was your approach?

Tell me about a time you were faced with conflicting priorities. How did you determine the top priority?

2. Copes Effectively

All staff	Program Manager 1	Program Manager 2
▪ Adjusts behaviors to deal with rush situations and multiple, conflicting priorities ▪ Shows resilience in the face of constraints and frustrations ▪ Manages personal frustration to avoid conflict and stress	▪ Able to cut through red tape to get the job done without compromising organizational values and standards ▪ Delegates assignments to appropriate individuals based on their skills and roles ▪ Develops appropriate awareness and strategies, as needed, to sustain physical and mental well-being for oneself, peers, colleagues and direct reports	▪ Keeps results focused; able to recognize when to change approach in order to succeed ▪ Explicitly demonstrates confidence in own judgment and abilities, or professional expertise

Interview Questions

What was the most stressful aspect of your job role during your last deployment?

We all have times when the responsibilities of our jobs are overwhelming. Give me an example of a time you felt overwhelmed at work. How did you react?

3. Builds and Maintains Relationships in Forming Teams

All staff	Program Manager 1	Program Manager 2
▪ Behaves consistently across situations and keeps commitments around agreed upon actions ▪ Takes responsibility for own work and assists team members to undertake required roles and responsibilities	▪ Personal performance and behavior contribute to developing a team, which earns credibility and respect from those in contact with them ▪ Actively listens and works to understand the different perspectives of all staff and adapts approach accordingly ▪ Constructively challenges inappropriate behavior ▪ Builds and retains a solid team from the best available staff	▪ Own contribution to work team serves as role model for others ▪ Builds a culture of mutual respect in which all variety of staff can contribute their best effort to achieve team objectives ▪ Does not let conflict or disagreements fester - addresses them confidently, quickly and effectively

Interview Questions

Tell me about one of the toughest teams/groups that you've had to work with. What made it difficult? What did you do?
Tell me about a time you worked with someone who wasn't as cooperative as you needed him or her to be. What did you do?

6. Career development and competencies

6.1 Application of competencies to learning programs

Competency approaches that are relevant to performance development answer specific, highly felt organizational and individual needs and have a practical, day-to-day impact. In general, high performing competencies develop out of experiences in coping with interpersonal and intergroup situations. They can be developed through practice and supported by structured learning programs, backed up by action learning, mentoring and coaching.

Performance development has to be aligned with the overall organizational vision, strategy and key capabilities. Competencies can help individuals understand how their own behavior supports the organization. They learn more *how* to do their jobs and understand *why* they should be done that way. Competencies can be used to help individuals identify their learning and development needs and gaps. They can see what they need to develop to move on in the organization. Competencies also help trainers measure individuals' progress throughout a learning program.

Organizations can make the application of competencies too complicated. They need to be applied systematically across a range of HR processes, including recruitment, job descriptions, performance appraisals and individual development plans. Mercy Corps has had success with introducing competencies to senior managers at their orientation and encouraged them to use competencies in their daily work. This can work better than a top down, larger scale initiative.

Organizations can incorporate their competency models into existing learning programs. It is also important that they be linked to existing management/leadership models to make the latter more robust and anchored in expected behaviors. In fact, integration helps overcome the possibility that competencies may be viewed as simply the latest management fad. Changes can be suggested where the training programs do have identifiable gaps. Competencies need to fit the organizational culture and mindset and there has to be a plan for sustainable application.

Competencies can allow effective conversations about people's potential, and help people understand their strengths and weaknesses. Decisions about career development for national and international staff can be more consistent and evidence-based. Managers and staff become more aware of their strengths and learn to use them to maximize their contributions. Self-responsibility results.

6.2 Competency accreditation programs

There are training programs specifically designed to certify individual achievement of competencies, such as implemented in WVI. Elsewhere these have had mixed results in organizations. Positively, they deconstruct the area of work – in this case humanitarian – into its various components to ensure that staff undergo similar training and learning experiences to gain the skills necessary to effectively perform their jobs. The programs provide a strong staff development focus, which helps with succession planning. The focus of the training and learning is in the workplace and

not in the training room. Accreditation programs give a clear sense of the learning and development route available for all staff. Problems can stem from the additional bureaucratic workload that comes from the development of the standards, the assessment tools, the implementation of the schemes and the heavy workload on assessors and qualified trainers. HR managers in the private sector who have worked on large-scale internal accreditation or certification programs state that they can use up all available resources and time for training without making significant improvements in performance, and they can stifle alternative ways of developing staff. In addition, accreditation programs that focus on evidence requirements can deter people from using the standards in a wider organizational context.

There is also an argument that testing participants on the attainment of certain competencies is not participant-centered learning, which helps participants identify their own learning needs, empowers a community of practice, and creates the desire and habits for continuous learning. Proponents of competency-based training would counter that participants keep portfolios of their own learning and experiences, and build good practice in this way.

The review also found that some private sector organizations that went the route of competency based training have since brought in creativity training to get people out of the tick-box mentality that competency based training can cause.

6.3 Learning programs & competencies

Learning programs for developing competencies are best chosen by emergency and HR team leaders. The following are suggested approaches for developing person-based and technical competencies:

- **3-5 day workshops** within or across emergency teams to develop particular understanding of an emergency issue, such as contingency planning or logistics and how to apply that knowledge (the know-how/the use of competencies). The advantage of training within a team or region is that competencies are presented within the trainees' own work context: participants can understand what high performance looks like in a particular setting.

- **Simulations** are highly participative events to draw out behaviors that would be used in real life examples. Simulations provide ideal opportunities for participants to learn, via feedback, about their skills in decision-making, influencing, leadership and followership. It is essential that the simulation process allows sufficient time for participants to reflect individually on their performance and that comprehensive debriefing and action planning is a part of the program (often the simulation 'action' can use up too much time). Some IWG organizations have recently developed simulations for improving the humanitarian skills of their development program staff, and these could be reworked slightly and used for emergency staff from multiple agencies.

  Organizations can identify competency weaknesses in advance, such as carrying out performance reviews or coaching a poor performer under time pressure and tailor the simulation to draw out maximum learning, and the basics and benefits of performance management.

The study found that it can be difficult to assess certain competencies in a training situation, such as whether someone is a 'sufficiently competent' advocate on behalf of his or her organization. It is recommended that micro-skills such as continuous learning and active listening, which are components of advocacy, be identified and tested.

- **Case studies** are based on the assumption that managerial competence and understanding are best achieved through the study and discussion of real events. Done well, case studies promote inquiry, the exchange of ideas and the analysis of experience to draw out underlying principles that can be applied to wider situations. Linked to competency development, case studies allow participants to work in an objective, rational way to identify mistakes and generate alternative ways to improve work.

- **Secondments** help staff gain a fuller understanding of an organization's ways of working. Secondments to HQ have helped field staff tap into a global network and gain further organizational understanding, which they can take home and apply locally. Competencies that inform personal development planning help clarify what learning is expected during a secondment and how that will be translated into practice back in the field.

- **Apprenticeships** are periods of training within an organization to equip individuals with the skills and competencies needed for future roles. CRS has built a very valuable apprenticeship program in conjunction with selected universities, and uses it to source and train new leaders. Competency models can underpin the curricula to ensure that managers are developed in a way that fits the organizations' needs.

- **Role modeling**. The study found that humanitarian managers can easily identify their most effective emergency staff: those who model the organizational values and competencies that achieve results and draw the best out of team members. Organizations may choose to formally equip these role models to mentor and coach other staff within a team. The caveat to this is that these role models are often already overloaded by requests to contribute to projects and initiatives beyond their normal duties.

Organizations with competency models cannot separate decisions about training requirements from the work done to develop their competency models. The consultancy found that this happens too frequently. Training in an organization needs to reflect: *The experience, skills and behaviors required to perform effectively in a given job, role or situation*.

7. Conclusions

The competencies study across the IWG organizations found that the use of competencies emphasizes improving behaviors and delivery; it helps to build the quality of programs by informing individuals and their managers how things can be delivered better through softer, person-based behaviors, complemented by technical skills. This underlines that competency frameworks are applicable to emergency work, in the same way that they are useful and relevant to longer-term programs.

Those IWG organizations that use competency models stated that competencies are useful measuring tools across HR processes. They bring together the behaviors required to do the job and the attributes that allow individuals to do things well. Used consistently, competencies provide a common language for discussing performance and development, and this helps eliminate confusion in multicultural, multi-country organizations. All of this confirms their relevance to emergency work.

For the roles of program manager and HR field manager, the consultant looked at person-based and technical competencies that are the underpinning behaviors required by emergency staff to carry out their roles effectively. Tables 3-9 show examples of how recruiting managers can apply a more structured approach to selection and think through the behaviors that emergency jobs entail. Recruitment questions to test competencies can help reveal how a person has worked in crisis contexts before, and an interviewee's answers give insight to predict his or her future job performance. Highlighting specific behaviors for the different levels of management is the start of defining and measuring what is the essential 'thing' that effective humanitarian workers demonstrate.

Competency models incorporated into job roles help national staff understand better the expectations that organizations have of them and how to develop and grow within the organization. The study found that another useful way to develop national staff is to decide on threshold or entry competencies, which some of the IWG organizations use as minimum competencies that someone needs to do the job at his or her entry point into the organization. These can be backed up by a personal development plan to develop other areas.

The study discovered that IWG organizations benefit when emergency workers demonstrate high levels of self-awareness and self-regulation - attributes of emotional intelligence that help them work more closely with communities and cope with insecurity. Competency models define behaviors linked to emotional intelligence. The respect and diversity that emergency staff must demonstrate can be presented in behavioral language and clear expectations. Similarly, competencies can be used more actively in the recruitment and development of advisory staff, particularly the person-based skills that must be present alongside harder technical expertise.

Competency approaches that are relevant to performance development answer specific organizational and individual needs and have a practical, day-to-day impact. The consultant expects that, as IWG organizations develop a shared understanding of the competencies that emergency workers need to demonstrate, workers will enjoy greater scope to move within and across organizations and that it will become more acceptable to do so. Within organizations, competency frameworks make the process more transparent, especially if they are tied into performance management and feedback systems. Decisions about career development for national and international staff can be more consistent and evidence-based. Managers and staff will become more aware of their strengths and learn to use them to maximize their contributions. To achieve this, competency models have to be developed into tools to make day-to-day problem-solving easier.

Overall, it is important that IWG organizations link competencies to their existing management and leadership models to make them more robust and anchored in expected behaviors. This leads to more sustainable application and fit with the overall organizational culture and mindset. In general, the study concluded that as

the IWG organizations continue to develop and refine their use of competencies they will improve the sourcing, development and retention of quality staff.

8. Future possibilities for IWG collaboration on competency associated areas

Most of the IWG organizations have developed their own competency models, which are embedded to varying degrees within their organizations. Future joint work on competencies could focus on gaps in current approaches, and organizations might join forces to test some of the ideas put forward in this report. Suggestions for future work are listed below:

- Individual IWG organizations should review their models to determine if unacceptable behaviors are clearly identified in their competency frameworks.

- Map the 'hard to fill' posts from organizational records.

- Clarify the problems and possibilities of people moving from emergency to development work; gain feedback from development managers about what, in reality, makes this difficult.

- Review current systems for including short-term, emergency staff in performance management. Simplify and strengthen these and test over six months the impact of stronger performance management of short-term staff on overall outcomes.

- Use the competencies and accompanying questions from Table 7 for short-term personnel. Test and revise them, then put them into accepted use by HR and emergency recruiters.

- Review and refine the templates put forward in this report to develop a joint approach to program manager and HR field manager job descriptions.

- Consider further exploration of how organizations can pinpoint the key 'thing' or person-based competencies during the interview process, perhaps by working with an assessment center or similar approaches.

9. References and Source Documents

IASC emergency Team Leadership programme 2004 *Emergency Team Leadership competencies*

People in Aid 2004 *Developing Managerial Competence* www.peopleinaid.org

Schroder H.M (1989) *Managerial Competence and Organizational Effectiveness: The Key to Excellence*

www.management-standards.org   *Contains information on UK standards and links to training approaches*

Bioforce: Competencies for International Relief and Development Programme Manager (available from www.redr.org. Look under EPN documents for this and other useful sources)