

**Short Training**

# **Addressing Staff**

**Retention & Improving**

**staff engagement**

**Programme Manager**

**Participant's Notes and Handouts**

**October 2010**

**A People In Aid and Emergency Capacity Building Project Horn of Africa  
Consortium Project**



**ECB** || Emergency Capacity  
Building Project

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## Introduction

This training is sponsored by the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) [www.ecbproject.org](http://www.ecbproject.org) Project Horn of Africa Consortia: *a collaborative effort of the inter agency working group on emergency capacity*. The training materials were prepared by People In Aid. [www.peopleinaid.org](http://www.peopleinaid.org)

Staff retention is a worldwide issue throughout the humanitarian and development sector. People In Aid has produced a range of relevant resources and tools, notably our research into employee perspectives and the paper produced during ECB Phase One entitled “Understanding and addressing staff turnover in the humanitarian sector” (HPN Network Paper Number 55 June 2006. This was followed in 2009 with research for ECB into “Addressing Staff Retention in the Horn of Africa”.

Many external factors affect turnover and there is little agreement on how to measure its impact. The key indicator is tracking employee engagement over time<sup>1</sup>. We believe that key to retention is engagement: engaged staff are more likely to be effective staff and more likely to stay.

Following the 2009 Report for the ECB Horn of Africa Consortium, People in Aid were asked to develop the findings of the report into practical resources to equip agencies with strategies, tools and techniques for enhancing retention / addressing staff turnover and ensure trainers/facilitators within agencies in the Horn region are able to deliver short sessions on retention as part of other learning events.

### Purpose

The purpose of this training is to support the application, development and dissemination of the findings of the People in Aid / ECB research on retention and staff engagement in 2009.

### Outcomes

The expected outcomes from this training are:

- Enhance participant knowledge and understanding regarding staff turnover and retention issues.
- Equip participants with strategies, tools and techniques for enhancing retention / addressing staff turnover.
- Ultimately, to improve employee engagement among consortia members and agencies in the region.

### Overview

The training comprises of four sessions

**Session 1 – Introduction**

**Session 2 – Understanding retention**

**Session 3 – Addressing retention**

**Session 4 – Mitigating retention**

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<sup>1</sup> Employee engagement has been described as employees being intellectually and emotionally committed to the goals of their organisation and work group. When an employee is 'engaged' they are more likely to speak positively of their organisation to others, to apply their best efforts to their work, and to want to remain part of the organisation.


## Training Schedule

Session	Purpose	Key Questions
Introduction	Introduce main content and aim of the session	Question to the group: On a scale of 1 to 10 is retention a challenge?
<b>Session 1</b> Understanding Retention	Ensure group understands why retention is an issue, whose problem it is and what causes poor retention.	Why is retention an issue and whose problem is it?  What causes poor retention?
<b>Session 2</b> Addressing Retention	Enable the group to address retention and improve engagement.	How can you encourage staff to stay?  Have you helped implement initiatives that have intended to improve retention?
<b>Session 3</b> Mitigating Retention	Ensure the group can take steps to mitigate the impact of poor retention on their programme.	How can you ensure poor retention doesn't damage your programmes?  What steps have you taken to mitigate the impact of poor retention?
Review	Ensure the groups has all questions and comments addressed	

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## Participant's aims

Identify your personal aims for this workshop



A large empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for participants to write their personal aims. In the top-left corner of the box, there is a red and white target icon with a red dart hitting the bullseye. The word "SUCCESS" is written in red, curved letters above the target.

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## Understanding Retention

It is critical that HR managers have accurate data and analysis on retention within their organisation. A good way to engage management is to ask them to agree what is acceptable retention for the organisation. Often they will want to know what sector norms are too and how the organisation compares to others.

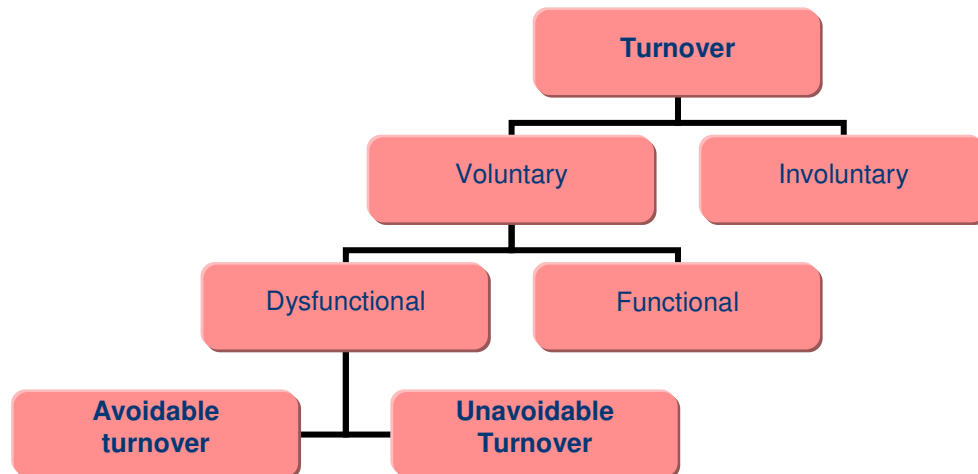
### Measuring retention

There is no standardised way to measure retention. For the UK based Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), there is no such thing as a universally applicable target for an ideal turnover rate.

“Where it is relatively easy to find and train new employees quickly and at relatively little cost, it is possible to sustain high quality levels of service provision despite having a high turnover rate. By contrast, where skills are relatively scarce, knowledge important, relations with customers/stakeholders are close and important, where recruitment is costly or where it takes several weeks to fill a vacancy, turnover is likely to be problematic from a management point of view.” CIPD

### Defining retention

The diagram below shows different categories of turnover.



The main focus of concern for INGOS / NGOS is **voluntary - dysfunctional – avoidable - turnover**.

The difference between **voluntary and involuntary turnover** is whether the employee choose to leave the job, or if the decision was made by the employer.

**Voluntary resignations** are further distinguished between **functional** (the exit of substandard performers) and **dysfunctional** (the exit of effective performers).

**Unavoidable resignations** over which the employer has little or no influence are excluded (e.g. family move, serious illness or death)

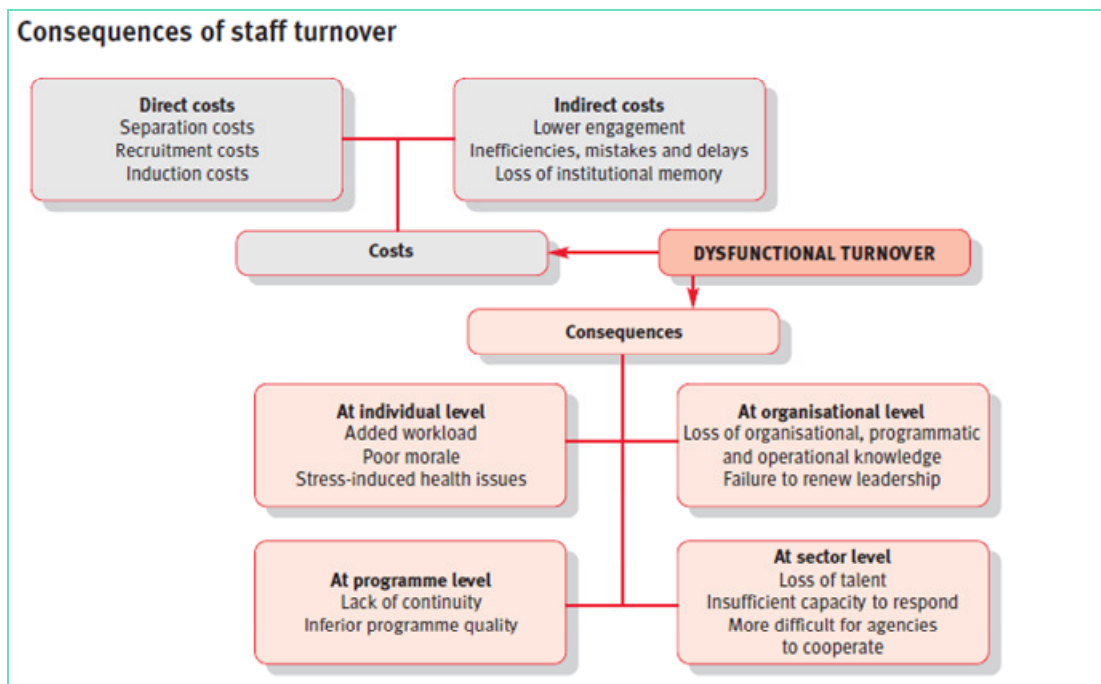
This leaves avoidable resignations (i.e. **dysfunctional turnover**) as the key focus of retention efforts.

### A note on involuntary turnover

High turnover is caused by organisations: programmes ending, lack of funding, poor management, restructures and lack of alignment between emergency and development agendas. Staff not intending to leave the agency may leave anyway – unsure about their future opportunities or due to the negative experience of colleagues.

Organisations can control the impact of these factors and need to mitigate the consequences of staff turnover on the organisation. In the Horn of Africa region, we know that involuntary turnover is an issue and can affect voluntary turnover. The point is to emphasise that organisations’ action can create voluntary turnover by creating a poor experience. Organisations and their managers can make a difference in this area.

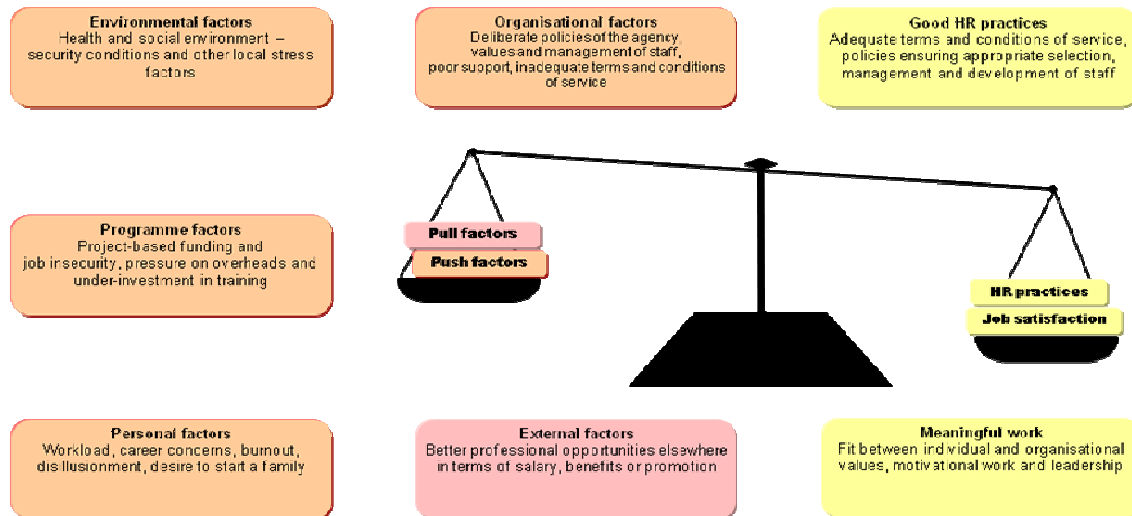
### What are the consequences of staff turnover?



The negative impact of dysfunctional (voluntary – avoidable) turnover is clearly outlined in the diagram above. We are assuming that at this stage excessive turnover is a relative issue. It is recognised that for some HQs international staff turnover may be considered excessive at a lower rate than national staff.



## Push factors, pull factors & retention strategies



The easiest way to understand turnover is by explaining the difference between Push and Pull factors.

**'Push' factors** cause individuals to look for another job (for example, dissatisfaction with working conditions)

**'Pull' factors** draw employees towards another organisation (for example, higher salary or better benefits).

The 2006 People in Aid research corroborates the impact of Push and Pull factors. For each individual there may be a number of inter connected reasons for leaving / staying.

2006 Why do people stay and perform?		2006 Why does our staff leave?
<b>Presence of:</b>	<b>Absence of:</b>	Better pay / terms and conditions elsewhere (50%) Poor leadership / values / culture (40%) Lack of career opportunity and growth (38%) Burnout, disillusionment and frustration (29%)
Good team / colleagues (32%) Challenge / variety (24%) Learning / innovative culture (23%)	Excessive workload (36%) Excessive impact on personal / social life (29%) Bureaucracy / poor systems (25%)	

### What factors are you in control of?

It is important to distinguish between factors that managers are in control of and those they have less control over. Managers need to focus their efforts on engagement with staff as fellow professionals and peers.

An individual's personal and professional expectations are met by their employees. However staff still leave their organisations and move to new positions. Overall Pull factors are dominant in decision-making in the Horn and East Africa. Therefore organisations are not in control of the underlying causes behind mobility of staff in the sector. Retention is a factor of individual self-interest, and any values-driven organisation is seen as a potential vehicle for achieving an individual's goals.

Line managers have little control over many Push factors such as environment, short term contracts (Staff often leave in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of programme cycle), family pressures and poor alignment between development and emergency agendas. Even if funding continues there are other barriers to retention – ethnicity, not speaking the local language, remoteness, and other similar factors. However, other push factor such as management style, staff engagement, job satisfaction and terms and conditions can be influenced.

### Retention scenarios Analysis

It is useful to consider different retention scenarios and the push factors associated with them. It is helpful for managers to identify the exact retention scenario they face, which positions, profiles and skills are most important to them, and where turnover is most detrimental to their organisation. They can then focus on reducing turnover in this area.

Scenarios	Who is responsible	Potential push factors	Potential pull factors	Action Check list - consider each of the following options
Poor retention <b>across the whole region</b>	HQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remuneration Packages</li> <li>Profile / Image</li> <li>Restructuring / new strategy</li> </ul>	Other organisations offering senior position, better salaries, or terms and conditions.	Strategy and Structure – focus, priorities, and overall set up
Poor retention in <b>country programme</b>	Regional or HQ office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line management</li> <li>Poor programme design or funding</li> <li>Development versus emergency agenda</li> </ul>		Operations – security, living conditions, systems, operating procedures
Poor retention in <b>one field location</b>	Country office or HQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line management</li> <li>Living conditions</li> <li>Poor programme design or funding</li> <li>Security</li> </ul>		Programmes – type, design, funding
Poor retention in <b>one team or position</b>	Country office management and HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line management</li> <li>Workload</li> <li>Wrong job description and competencies</li> </ul>		People – salary, terms and conditions, talent development, work load
				Management – style, behaviour, performance
				Leadership – team work, 'esprit de corps', communication , culture



**Notes and Ideas**

## Addressing Retention

### Professional development

The 2006 People in Aid research identified that 49% of respondents said improving career paths and professional development would improve retention. The 2009 research identified that most organisations are committed to providing this.

Organisations cannot always provide the career path staff want, nor can professional opportunities always be made available at the preferred time. Organisations are providing professional development but staff are leaving and working for competitors. However new staff are being recruited from them too, therefore a pool of talent is being developed. Too often the engagement of staff is only attempted formally through contracts, job descriptions and inductions. Managers need to also have an understanding of staff interests and how they can be integrated with the employer's interests. – See annex document on the psychological contract.-

### HR Practices

In the 2006 People in Aid research 43% of respondents said retention can be improved by better pay and terms and conditions, while 24% indicated a better work life balance.

Good HR practices are the foundation for improved retention and staff engagement. You need to allow managers some flexibility. Offering improved salary or terms and conditions can help retain key staff in the short to medium term. In the longer term implementing the People In Aid Code, employee engagement surveys, and appropriate follow up will help. See 2009 Report case studies.

In 2009 research identified that most organisations had improved their terms and conditions. To understand staff needs, especially the cost of living and the impact of work on their lives, they need to be engaged regularly. The main impediment to doing more was financial resources. However in a competitive environment all organisations need to be pursuing the highest standards possible.

### Good management practices

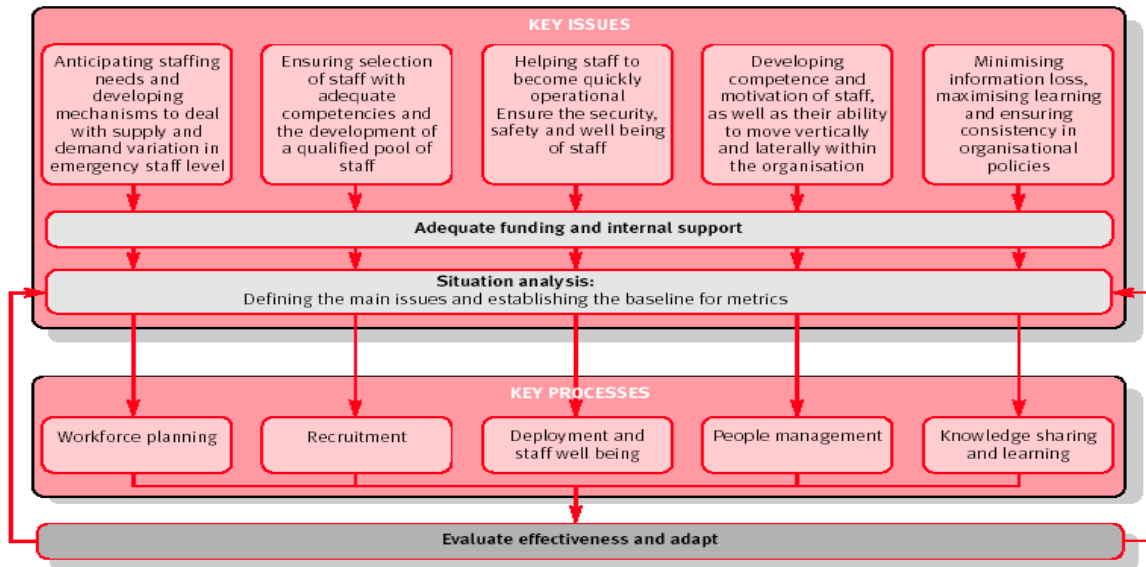
The 2006 and 2009 research identified the importance of management behaviour on retention. Professional development (skills, knowledge, tools, and concepts) will not necessarily lead to improved management and leadership.

Manager's behaviour is a significant catalyst for turnover especially amongst international staff but their behaviour is not always intentional. Managers need to understand the helpful and less helpful impact they can have on staff and the team. They can have a significant impact on the environment and culture staff experience. See annex document on the Johari Window. Personal development involving increasing awareness through feedback can help managers make choices about their practices and behaviour; they have to be able to engage staff formally and informally.

## Retention Strategy

HR needs to encourage a systematic approach to retention. The diagram below maps out the main steps for creating a robust strategy to address retention. The process introduces useful opportunities to engage managers in the strategy development.

### Key issues and processes in addressing staff turnover



**Retention Strategy Exercise** – this exercise is designed to help you develop and implement a retention strategy.

Towards a retention strategy		
Strategic elements	Strategy Development	Strategic implementation
Key issues	What are the key drivers behind your retention strategy?	How can you create a sense of urgency for change?
Adequate Funding and Support	Have you secured funding and support from managers?	How can you create a coalition of support for addressing the issues?
Situation Analysis	Have you identified the key issues for your organisation and identified the metrics for success?	How can you effectively communicate the issues, the outcomes you want to achieve and success?
Key Processes	Which of the key processes is a priority for development?	How can you ensure your organisation excels at the key processes needed to get quick wins and long term change?

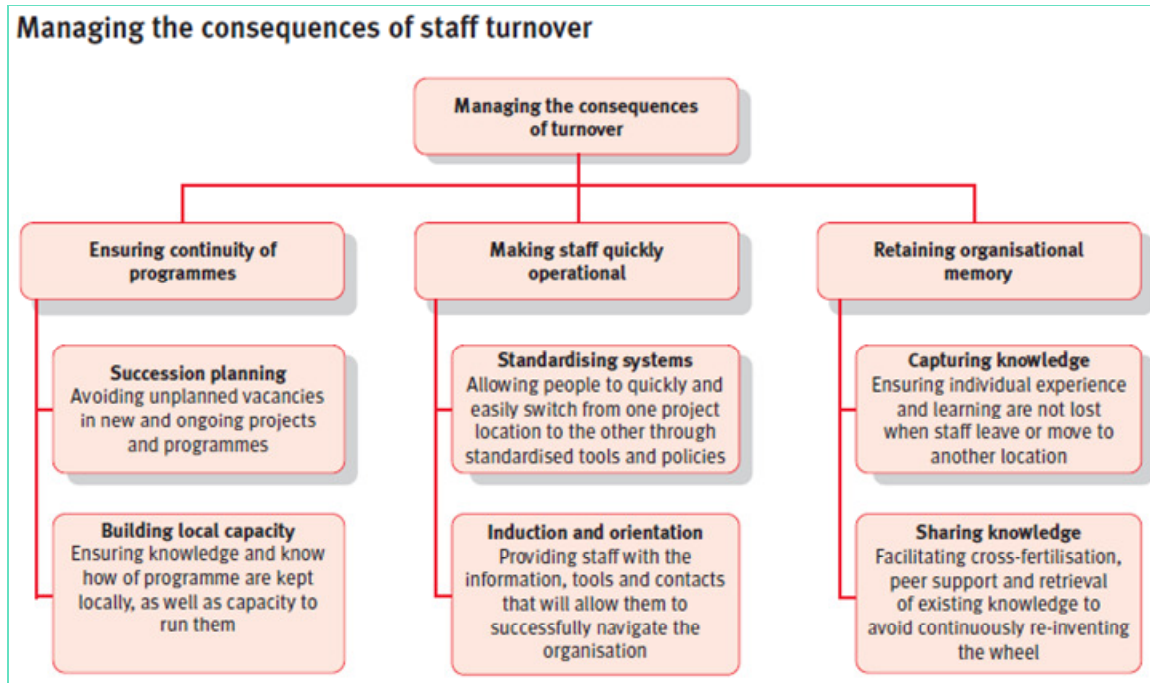
<b>Evaluate and Adapt</b>	How and who will evaluate success and agree changes?	How can you reinforce successes in the culture and learn as the situation changes?
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## Notes and Ideas

## Mitigating the Consequences of Poor Retention

### Practical steps to managing the consequences

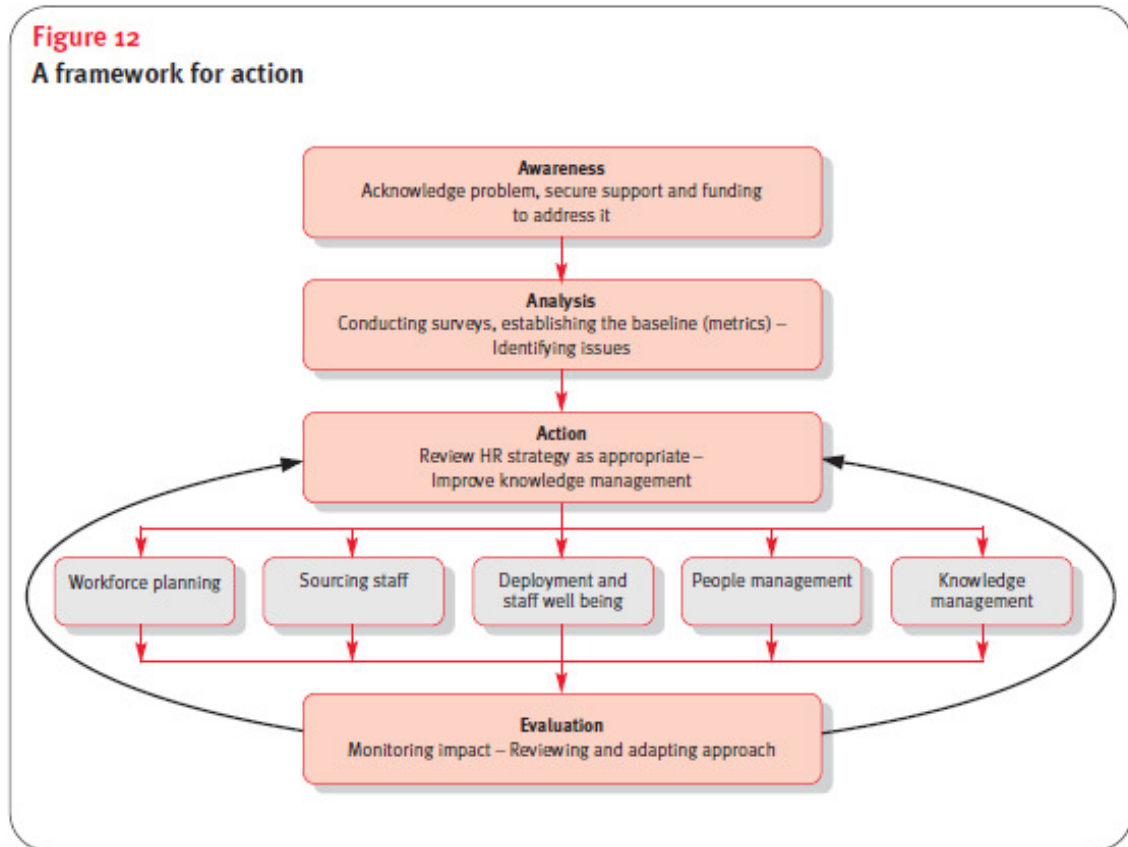


Both the 2006 and 2009 research identified basic measures to mitigate the impact of retention. These form the basis of good management practices regardless of the retention situation. For instance: using ICT to best effect such as the office in a box type tool, rapid inductions especially advice on how to navigate their way in the organisation, learning and development on the job, succession and continuity planning based on strategic foresight to anticipate future deployment and programme needs and mechanisms for preserving institutional memory.



**Framework for action**

The framework for action is a useful tool to guide discussions with Managers.



Which of the four stages do you need to improve?

## Retention Top Ten Tips

These top ten tips for improving retention and staff engagement are drawn from the research and workshops run by People In Aid for the ECB Project. They are applicable to organisational head office or field office perspective. Ideally they would be addressed through a retention strategy.

Top Ten Retention Tips	Key questions
<b>Understanding retention</b>	
<b>Know your organisation's retention issues</b>	What are the retention issues you face? Do you collect retention data? Is the data analysed?
<b>Agree retention indicators and targets</b>	What is an agreed, relevant and appropriate retention rate for your organisation? Have you prioritised positions, teams or countries to learn about improving retention? Who is responsible for meeting retention targets?
<b>Prioritise retention as a management responsibility</b>	Do you have a retention strategy? Do HR and Management work together on talent development?
<b>Addressing retention and staff engagement</b>	
<b>Mitigate push factors</b>	Has your organisation adopted HR best practice? Has your organisation implemented the People In Aid Code of Best Practice?
<b>Mitigate pull factors</b>	Does your organisation offer competitive remuneration packages and terms of reference? Does your organisation have a flexible approach in order to offer competitive packages to key talent?
<b>Improve engagement through conversation</b>	Does your organisation proactively engage staff on issues that are important to them informally and formally? Are your managers encouraged to clarify professional and personal expectations of staff and clarify the organisations? (the psychological contract)
<b>Encourage personal development</b>	Does your organisation undertake leadership and management development programmes? Are your managers encouraged to undertake personal development addressing their behaviour and impact?
<b>Mitigating the consequences of retention</b>	
<b>Plan for the end at the beginning</b>	Do HR and Management proactively undertake succession planning?
<b>Ensure a fast response</b>	Does your organisation have operational staff able to deploy to fill gaps in programmes?
<b>Ensure systems are transparent and practices consistent.</b>	Has your organisation got standard operating procedures, policy and procedures manuals and tools and rapid induction policies to help new staff operate effectively?

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**Notes and Ideas**

## Action Planning

Take this opportunity to use your learning and identify those issues you are committed to act upon. Prioritise your top 3 and record them here.

The Issue & why is it important	What will I do – By when? What's the first step?	What will get in the way? – Personal limitations, people, external factors	What will support me? – personal strengths, people, resources

The Issue & why is it important	What will I do – By when? What's the first step?	What will get in the way? – Personal limitations, people, external factors	What will support me? – personal strengths, people, resources

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## Annex 1 Turnover at a glance

Taken from “Understanding and addressing staff turnover in the humanitarian sector” (HPN Network Paper Number 55).

What is turnover?		
<i>Turnover</i>	<i>Staff rotation</i>	
Time spent with an organisation	Time spent on an assignment	
Why is there turnover?		
<i>Functional turnover</i>	<i>Dysfunctional turnover</i>	
<b>Organisational policies</b> Protecting staff from burnout Building up staff experience Disseminating knowledge within the organisation Bringing fresh ideas into the organisation and allowing staff to maintain an unbiased analysis Adapting workforce to level of funding	<b>Environmental factors</b> Health and social environment, security conditions and other local stress factors	<b>Organisational factors</b> Values and management of staff, poor support, inadequate terms and conditions of service
	<b>Programme factors</b> Job insecurity induced by project-based funding Pressure on overheads and under-investment in training	<b>Individual factors</b> Excessive workload, career concerns, burnout, desire to start a family
	<b>External factors</b> Better professional opportunities elsewhere in terms of salary, benefits or promotion	
What are the costs and consequences of dysfunctional turnover?		
<i>Costs</i>	<i>Consequences</i>	
<b>Direct</b> Separation costs Recruitment costs Induction costs	<b>At individual level</b> Added workload Poor morale and job satisfaction Stress-induced health issues	<b>At organisational level</b> Loss of organisational, programmatic and operational knowledge Failure to renew leadership
<b>Indirect</b> Lower engagement and motivation Inefficiencies, mistakes and delays Loss of institutional memory	<b>At programme level</b> Lack of continuity Inferior programme quality	<b>At sector level</b> Loss of talent Insufficient capacity to respond Weaker capacities for inter-agency cooperation
How can turnover be dealt with?		
<i>Assessing the situation and defining a strategy</i>		
Setting up indicators and assessing situation	Identifying main problems, deciding objectives and action	Securing support and funding from agency's senior management
<i>Managing turnover</i>	<i>Reducing turnover</i>	
<b>Ensuring continuity</b> Improving succession planning and building local capacity  <b>Making staff quickly operational</b> Rapid induction and orientation, standardised tools facilitating movements between locations  <b>Retaining organisational memory</b> Ensuring knowledge and learning are shared throughout the organisation	<b>Workforce planning</b> Anticipating staffing needs and developing mechanisms to deal with supply and demand variation in emergency staff level	<b>Sourcing staff</b> Ensuring selection of staff with adequate competencies and the development of a qualified pool of staff
	<b>Deployment and staff well being</b> Helping staff to become quickly operational Ensuring the security, safety and wellbeing of staff	<b>People-management</b> Developing competence and motivation of staff, as well as their ability to move vertically and laterally within the organisation

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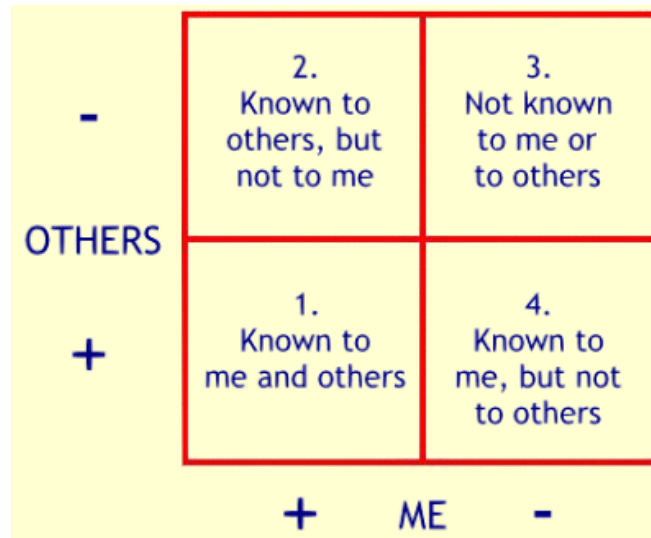
## Annex 2 The Johari Window - Increasing your awareness of your impact.

The Johari **window** is a cognitive psychological tool created by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955 in the United States. It is useful to help people better understand their interpersonal communication and relationships, key elements in being an effective manager. The tool provides a way of how personality is expressed.

Luft and Ingham observed that there are:

- aspects of our personality that we're open about,
- other elements that we keep to ourselves
- there are things that others see in us that we're not aware of
- there are traits that are unknown to anyone

These can be presented as a grid.



1. **The public area** contains things that are openly known and talked about - and which may be seen as strengths or weaknesses. This is the self that we choose to share with others
2. **The hidden area** contains things that others observe that we don't know about. Again, they could be positive or negative behaviours, and will affect the way that others act towards us.
3. **The unknown area** contains things that nobody knows about us - including ourselves. This may be because we've never exposed those areas of our personality, or because they're buried deep in the subconscious.
4. **The private area** contains aspects of our self that we know about and keep hidden from others.

The aim of the Johari Window is to open up the public area, making the other three areas as small as possible. This is done by regular and honest exchange of feedback, and a willingness to disclose.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>[http://images.google.co.ke/imgres?imgurl=http://www.chimaeraconsulting.com/images/baseline/johari\\_picture.gif&imgrefurl=http://www.chimaeraconsulting.com/johari.htm&usq=\\_\\_logSwMXUeYgMxZxm\\_gjq8a6NG88=&h=461&w=600&sz=77&hl=en&start=9&um=1&tbnid=w0QEj3FES8r8RM:&tbnh=104&tbnw=135&prev=/images%3Fq%3DJohari%25E2%2580%2599s%2BWindow%26hl%3Den%26client%3Dfirefox-a%26rls%3Dorg.mozilla:en-GB:official%26sa%3DX%26um%3D1](http://images.google.co.ke/imgres?imgurl=http://www.chimaeraconsulting.com/images/baseline/johari_picture.gif&imgrefurl=http://www.chimaeraconsulting.com/johari.htm&usq=__logSwMXUeYgMxZxm_gjq8a6NG88=&h=461&w=600&sz=77&hl=en&start=9&um=1&tbnid=w0QEj3FES8r8RM:&tbnh=104&tbnw=135&prev=/images%3Fq%3DJohari%25E2%2580%2599s%2BWindow%26hl%3Den%26client%3Dfirefox-a%26rls%3Dorg.mozilla:en-GB:official%26sa%3DX%26um%3D1)

### Annex 3 The Psychological Contract -Aligning personal aspirations and organisation’s needs.

The legal dimension of the contract between an agency and its staff is only one aspect of contract management, and research suggests that an employee’s commitment will be much more dependent on the psychological contract between the two parties. The term ‘psychological contract’ refers to ‘the perceptions of the two parties, employee and employer, of what their mutual obligations are towards each other’. These obligations will often be informal and imprecise: they may be inferred from actions or from what has happened in the past. The contract is based on employees’ sense of fairness and trust, and their belief that the employer is honouring the ‘deal’ between them. Where the psychological contract is positive, increased employee commitment and satisfaction will have a positive impact on business performance.

The kinds of commitments employers and employees might make to one another are shown in the list opposite. Some agencies specifically build up the psychological contract during job interviews, for example by discussing medium-term career objectives when hiring for a short term post, or by confirming a candidate’s willingness to be redeployed to other countries if programme needs change.

Employees commit to:	Employers commit to provide:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work hard</li> <li>▪ Uphold the agency’s reputation</li> <li>▪ Maintain high levels of attendance and punctuality</li> <li>▪ Show loyalty to the organisation</li> <li>▪ Work extra hours when required</li> <li>▪ Develop new skills, and update old ones</li> <li>▪ Be flexible, for example by taking on a colleague’s work</li> <li>▪ Be courteous to stakeholders and colleagues</li> <li>▪ Be honest</li> <li>▪ Come up with new ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pay commensurate with performance</li> <li>▪ Opportunities for training and development</li> <li>▪ Opportunities for promotion</li> <li>▪ Recognition for innovation or new ideas</li> <li>▪ Feedback on performance</li> <li>▪ Interesting tasks</li> <li>▪ An attractive benefits package</li> <li>▪ Respectful treatment</li> <li>▪ Reasonable job security</li> <li>▪ A pleasant and safe working environment</li> </ul>



The diagram below highlights the important role the psychological contract has in increasing staff loyalty.

“Understanding and addressing staff turnover in the humanitarian sector” (HPN Network Paper Number 55 June 2006). P17

