



**So You Think You Want to Be a
Relief Worker?**

Introduction to RedR

RedR is the leading training and recruitment charity working in the area of international disaster relief.

We train relief workers in the UK and around the world, improving emergency response and assisting people affected by natural disaster and conflict.

We recruit experienced professionals following major global emergencies and advise potential new relief workers.

What is humanitarianism?

Webster's unabridged dictionary defines humanitarianism as:

'pertaining to the saving of human lives or to the alleviation of suffering.'

What is humanitarianism?

- Humanitarianism is about the considerations that govern our interventions – not what is done but how and why
- Humanitarianism is constantly evolving
- Based on fundamental principles

Fundamental principles – from RC/RC

- Humanity
- Impartiality
- Neutrality
- Independence
- Voluntary service
- Unity
- Universality

Is it this straightforward in practice?

An Iraqi woman carries an aid parcel home. A convoy of Red Crescent trucks was mobbed by Iraqis scrambling for the desperately needed food inside.

Safwan, Iraq

March 2003



Reuters/Yannis Behrakis

Courtesy www.alertnet.org

Is it this straightforward in practice?

- What are the main problems that humanitarian aid needs to address here?
- What might be the negative effects of the intervention?

Recruitment in the aid sector: context

- Complex situations on the ground
- Higher risk
- Professionalisation of NGOs
- Emphasis on local staff and local partners, increasing local capacity
- Expat staff required need to have higher and more specific skill levels

Issues for agencies

- Massive pool of keen people
- Shortage of relevant and experienced people
- Cannot afford to take a risk
- Cost of sending expats overseas
- Huge number of applicants for each post, most are unsuitable

Technical Skills - What the agencies want

- HIV/AIDS Specialists
- Capacity-building expertise
- Nutritionists
- Engineers
- Security specialists
- Business skills (eg. finance, HR)
- Logisticians
- Midwives/Nurses
- Food security specialists
- Anaesthetists, Surgeons, GPs
- Psychologists
- Managers
- Public health engineers

Personal Skills - What the agencies want

- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Commitment to humanitarian principles
- Ability to build relationships internally and externally
- Good mental and physical health
- Flexibility
- Professionalism
- Cultural sensitivity
- Plan, prioritise and organise own work
- Willing to learn
- Ability to work with limited resources
- Work in difficult circumstances and deal with stress

Enhancing your employability

- Gain skills & experience – commit to the “long-haul”
- Build up knowledge and exposure to relief work and issues
- Consider qualification and training in appropriate technical and/or professional area
- Get appropriate experience overseas
- Consider volunteering in head office of relief agency
- Keep up to date with political issues and consider impact on relief work
- Consider getting involved in fundraising activities and events for humanitarian agencies
- Learn and refresh languages.

Exercise

What steps might the following people take to get into the sector?

1. **Jake** – Studied Spanish and went to Ecuador for third year of studies. On return to UK, worked in corporate event management for the private sector.
2. **Joseph** – Studied physics and worked in a university research department developing software.
3. **Justine** – Studied business, worked for a building society, brewery and travel company.
4. **Cheryl** – Studied civil and environmental engineering, with final year at French University. Worked for large engineering companies.

Exercise

- **Jake** – Attended RedR's *So You Think You Want to Be a Relief Worker* course and volunteered for RedR's Events team and then International Programme team. Now on a logistics internship with Save the Children, working in Tanzania.
- **Joseph** – After being made redundant, travelled to West Africa and volunteered in Mali for 9 months. Attended RedR courses and applied to become a RedR member. First job was in Afghanistan. Now an emergency shelter specialist.

Exercise

- **Justine** – Couldn't afford to volunteer, so accepted low-level administration role in head office of charity. Worked her way up within the sector, spending a number of years overseas in Asia and Africa as an HR specialist.
- **Cheryl** – During summer holidays, went to South Africa to help build a community building. Became familiar with relief issues and codes of practice and applied for a job no one else wanted in DRC. She spoke French, had knowledge of Watsan and was prepared to work in a war zone!

Where do I look?

- Look at www.wse.org.uk
- Make direct applications (press, websites, Opportunities Abroad)
- Submit speculative applications to agencies who accept them
- Use contacts, networks, colleagues etc.
- RedR online database, other websites, www.reliefweb.org , www.alertnet.org, www.devnet.org
- Internships

RedR UK training courses:

- **So You Think You Want to Be a Relief Worker?**
- **Essentials of Humanitarian Practice**
- **Personal Security in Emergencies**
- Security Management Workshop
- Managing Projects in Emergencies
- Managing People in Emergencies
- Needs Assessment Workshop
- Field Logistics in Emergencies