

## Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework case study

### Islamic Relief

### Using the competency framework to support human resources

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#### Background

[Islamic Relief](#) is dedicated to alleviating the poverty and suffering of the world's poorest people as well as responding to disasters and emergencies. Islamic Relief promotes sustainable economic and social development by working with local communities - regardless of race, religion or gender.

The [core humanitarian competencies framework](#) (CHCF) was first developed in 2011, by representatives from a cross-section of humanitarian organisations under the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (now the [Start Network](#)) led by ActionAid and facilitated by People In Aid (now the [CHS Alliance](#)). The competencies framework recommends a set of core competencies that organisations could adopt to systematically build the skills of their employees and thereby improve their efforts to assist people adversely affected by crisis throughout the world.

In 2014, Islamic Relief implemented the core humanitarian competencies framework across some of its country offices.

#### Process

The core humanitarian competencies framework was systematically introduced and implemented in the Middle East and Eastern Europe in 2014 by Mahmoud Almadhoun, Islamic Relief Germany's Human Resources (HR) & Operations Director, and former Regional HR Manager for the Middle East and Eastern Europe for Islamic Relief Worldwide. A terms of reference (ToR) was developed to clearly define his role and responsibilities and the process involved in disseminating the framework.



*Training on the competency framework in the Middle East*

The training was aimed at sensitising senior and middle management from different units - HR, programme, finance, admin and logistics - to the competencies framework and how it may be applied in all stages of an employee life cycle. These stages include planning and preparedness, recruitment and selection, orientation and objective setting, performance management, personal and professional development and debriefing.

It's important to remember the process starts even before the selection and recruitment with

development of a job description based on the competency framework's six criteria that serve as an umbrella for humanitarian work:

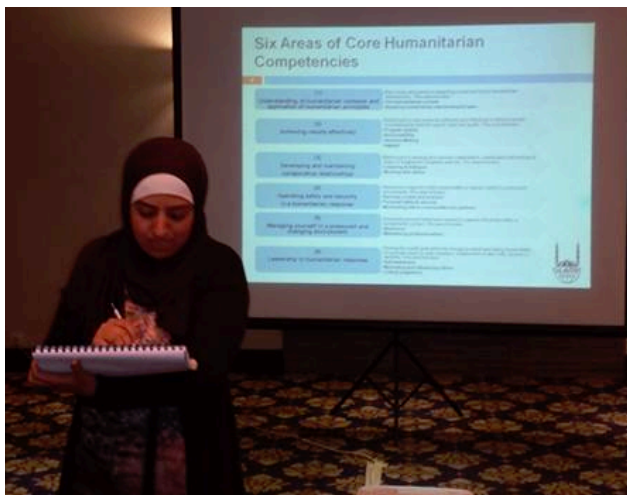
1. Understanding humanitarian contexts and applying humanitarian principles
2. Achieving results
3. Developing and maintaining collaborative relationships
4. Operating safely and securely at all times
5. Managing yourself in a pressured and changing environment
6. Leadership in humanitarian response.

## Outcomes

The most obvious impact from introducing the competencies framework is the structuring of HR management work to fit the organisation's context. The framework also provides managers with the tools to evaluate their own and their teams performance and conduct training to build the capacity of staff. The framework is also useful in the candidate selection process.

Some of the immediate outcomes of this initiative as accounted for by the Jordan country office:

- The framework has provided a new understanding on how to improve country office operations and increase efficiency and effectiveness. The key foundation to this improvement is to start with selecting the right people for the job. This goes hand-in-hand with having strong internal systems that enable the organisation to reduce the suffering of those affected by disasters in an efficient manner. Selecting the right employee is subjective as it depends on the panel's background, knowledge and preference. By using this competency framework however, it was easy to determine the basis from which to choose people according to the merits the organisation is looking for.



*Trainee presents on the six areas of competencies*

- Job descriptions have been redesigned based on the framework. Staff set objective plans based on the framework and made efforts to hold monthly meetings with employees to review progress against the objectives. Employees are now more committed to their job descriptions and are aware of the elements they are evaluated against. Employees actively participate in developing their objective plan and set goals to achieve higher levels of competencies and skills.

- The tools structured staff work and enabled them to measure the performance of their team against a set of clearly defined criteria. The self-assessment tool was crucial to see where they stand today and where they aim to reach.

The usefulness of the framework is beyond using the tools themselves, it is in shifting the mind-set of how the organisation selects people and what competencies the organisation aims to acquire through the right recruitment, setting a capacity building plan and in giving employees direction.

## Facilitating factors

It is crucial that dedicated resources and HR practitioners who are well versed in the competencies framework are assigned in order to promote the effective implementation of the framework. Senior management buy-in is also crucial to ensure the process is completed successfully.

## Lessons learned

In light of the experience made in the Middle East and Eastern Europe and as a continuous effort, Islamic Relief Germany has launched a new project in 2015 called “Humanitarian competency framework: Development and integration into competence-based HR processes”. An international workshop was held on 15 December, 2015 in Cologne, Germany, involving senior field country and programme management staff from Africa, Asia, Middle East, and Europe to give input to achieve the following projects goals:

1. Development of a humanitarian and development competency framework for Islamic Relief Germany.
2. Integration of the framework into the main HR processes along the “employee lifecycle”.
3. Groups who are to be influenced and impacted by the competency framework include:
  - a. Board of trustees
  - b. Top management and managers
  - c. Employees
  - d. Volunteers
  - e. Partner organisations in the project implementation countries
  - f. Other cooperation partners.

The project was successfully completed in May, 2016, with a documented humanitarian competency framework for Islamic Relief Germany.

## Additional information

As part of continuing efforts to strengthen the competencies of employees, the **CHS Alliance is undertaking a review of the competencies framework as part of the [Start Network Talent Development project](#)**. The review will engage as wide a cross-section of organisations and individuals as practically possible to identify the strengths and areas for improvement in implementing the framework. The review process has involved an online survey as well as focus group discussions in Asia, Australia, Africa, and the United Kingdom with participation from aid and development organisations as well as affected communities. The conclusions from the review process will be shared later in 2016.