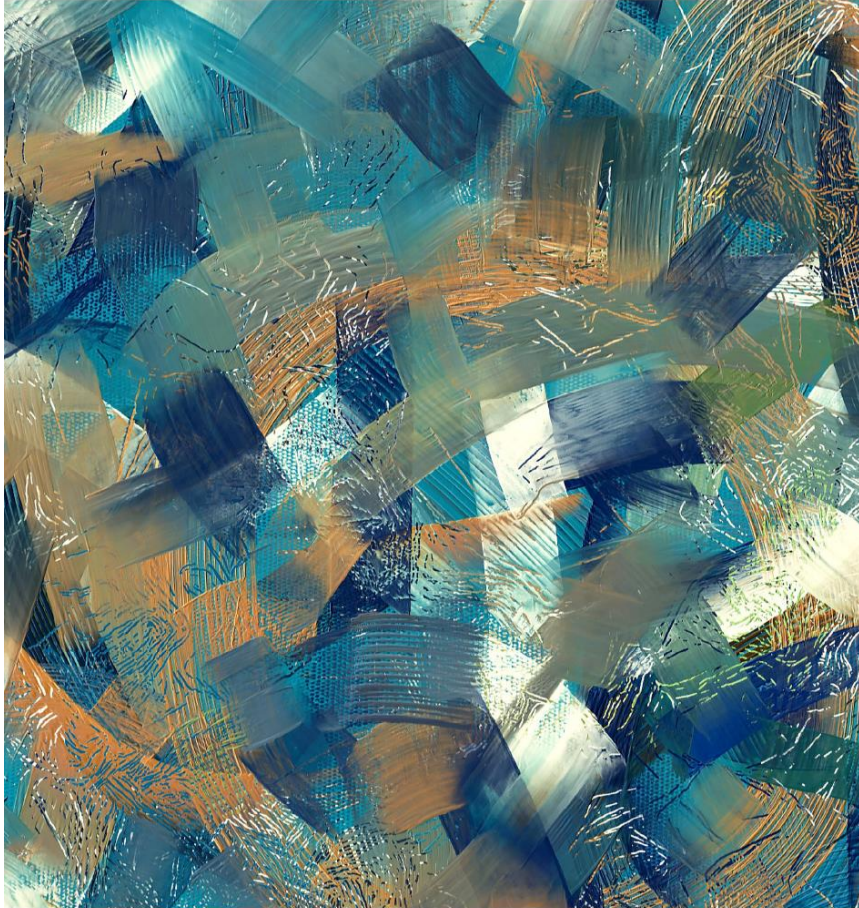


# **Respectful Recruitment in Humanitarian Response: Why it's Important and How We Get there**



RESPECTFUL RECRUITMENT IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE:  
Why we need it and how to do it



# Respectful Recruitment in Humanitarian Response

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Regional Humanitarian Partnerships Week

12 December 2023



# RESEARCH OVERVIEW



## OBJECTIVE

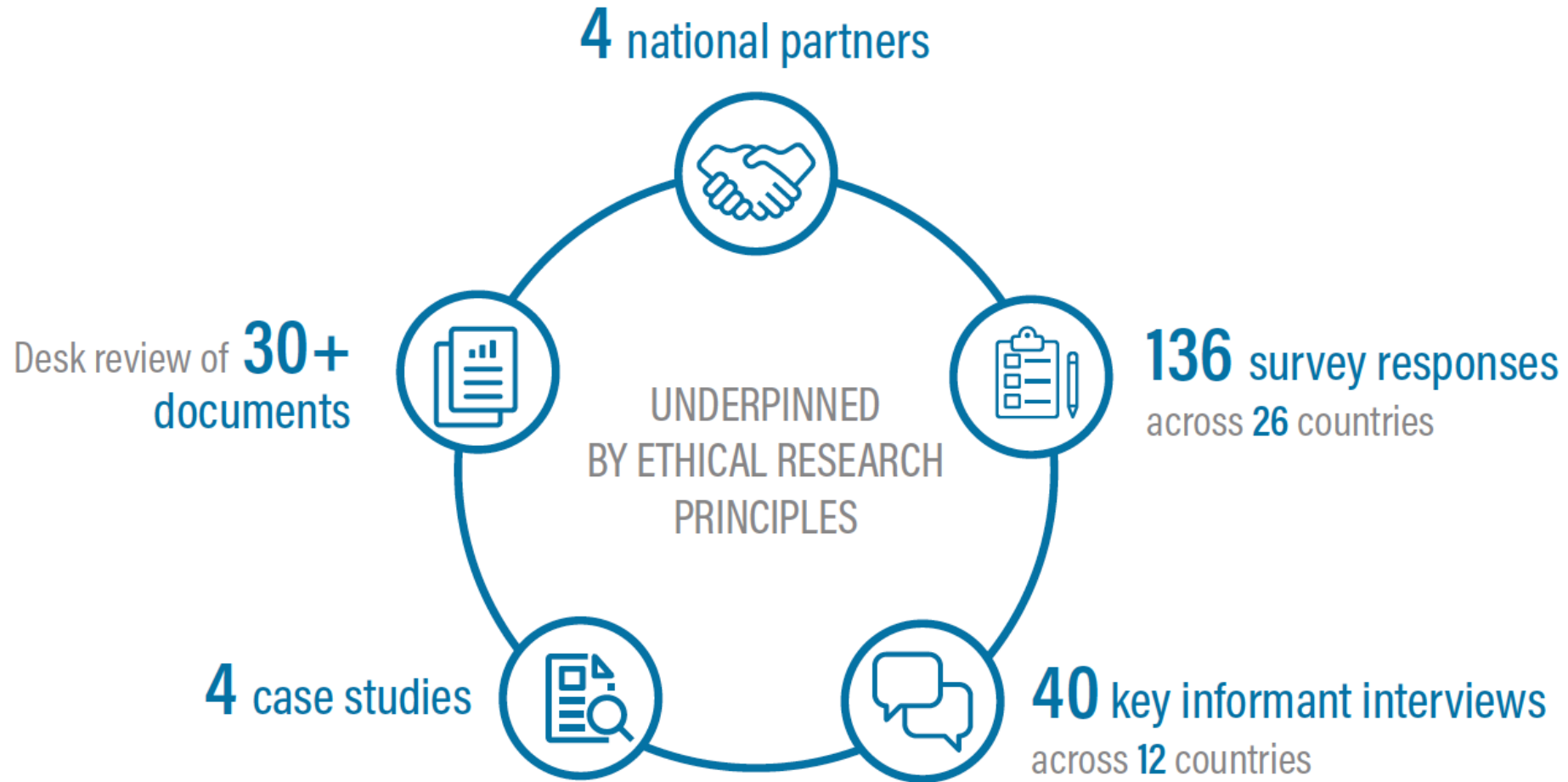
- To better understand the impact of humanitarian staff movement on local and national organisations; and
- To propose ways that the sector can shift to reduce poor recruitment practices and better support local and national organisations facing challenges from the loss of staff.

## AUDIENCE

- International and intermediary humanitarian and development organisations
- Donors and policy-makers
- National and local humanitarian and development organisations

**GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE:** Global

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



# WHAT IS RESPECTFUL RECRUITMENT?

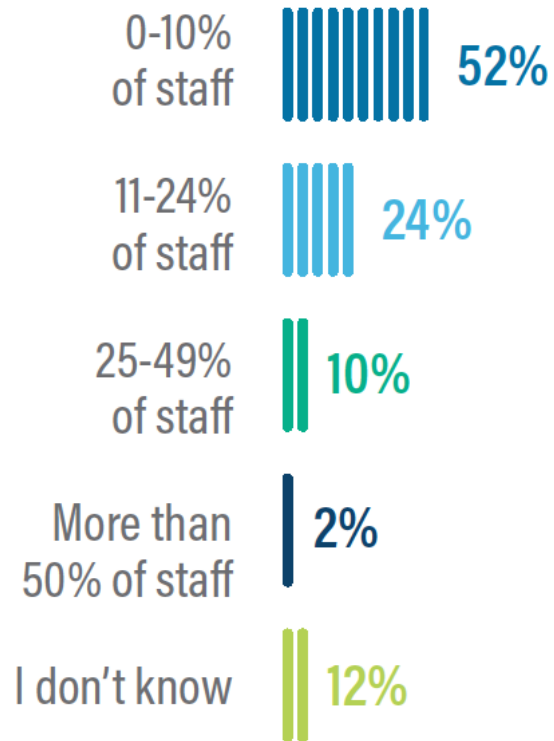
Respectful recruitment **considers the consequences of all recruitment decisions and takes action to mitigate their negative impacts.**

It **seeks to support and maintain a healthy local and national humanitarian system** that will continue to be effective in the absence of international actors.

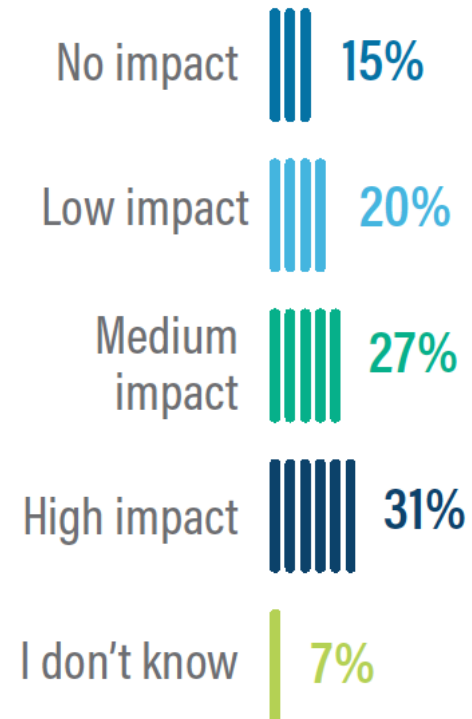
Respectful recruitment practice is **fundamentally ethical**, but also considers and mitigates long-term run-on effects and negative impacts on local civil society.

# THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

What percentage of your staff would you estimate left to join an international or larger humanitarian or development organisation in the last 2 years?



How much has staff leaving to work with an international or larger organisation impacted your organisation?



# THE SEVERITY OF ITS IMPACTS



## Program implementation

60%

**of survey respondents** indicated that staff movement had a **high or medium impact** on their ability to deliver programs effectively in a timely manner.<sup>18</sup>



## Financial sustainability

49%

**of survey respondents** indicated that staff movement had a **high or medium impact** on their financial sustainability.<sup>20</sup>



## Reputation

58%

**of survey respondents** indicated that staff movement had a **high or medium impact** on their reputation in the community and/or with funders.<sup>22</sup>



## Strength of civil society

57%

**of survey respondents** indicated that **loss of leadership** due to staff movement had a **high or medium impact** on their organisation.

61%

**of survey respondents** indicated that **diminished institutional capacity** due to staff movement had a **high or medium impact** on their organisation.<sup>24</sup>



# THE NEED FOR A FRESH APPROACH

“ The discussion is good but there is a complete disconnect between HQ and country offices [...] They sign on to all the changes but can't enforce commitments. (National actor, India)<sup>27</sup>

2015

**Charter 4 Change** includes commitment to reduce the negative impact of recruiting national NGO staff during emergencies.

2017

**START Network Transforming Surge Capacity Project** proposes high-level ethical recruitment guidelines for the sector.

2019

**NEAR launches Localisation Performance Measurement Framework**, including indicators for ethical recruitment.

2020

**Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream releases guidance note** on partnership practices that includes consideration of ethical recruitment.



# DIFFERENT CONTEXTS REQUIRE DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS

“ Solutions need to change depending the context and the organisational work. Generic solutions will not help in moving this discussion. (National actor, Bangladesh)<sup>6</sup>

This research identified several contextual factors that influence recruitment practice:

- Stage and type of response
- Amount of funding available
- Level of education and labour market in context
- Strength of civil society
- Established relationships and trust between international and national actors

# HOW CAN WE SHIFT PRACTICE

This is a complex problem. **There is no one-size-fits-all solution.**

Actors must be able to come together to **undertake a collaborative assessment of the contextual factors** that are influencing recruitment practice and the realistic opportunities to meet these challenges.

Global actors and donors can create spaces for these conversations and incentivise commitments, but the **process must be driven from actors operating in the context.**

# MOVING BEYOND ETHICAL RECRUITMENT GUIDELINES

**Ethical recruitment guidelines are important, but on their own, they are not enough.** Ethical practice is a foundational element of respectful recruitment, but the sector must also take steps to mitigate negative impacts on local actors and systems.

Human Resource management and policy can easily be deprioritised in humanitarian contexts. This is not only an HR issue. **It must be prioritised across all leadership teams.**

Ethical dilemmas will persist in humanitarian recruitment practice, but the sector **cannot continue to operate in the current status quo.** Respectful recruitment should be a core component of efforts to support local leadership and plan successful exit strategies.

# USING SCENARIOS TO EXPLORE SOLUTIONS

Our research uses scenario-based reflection to explore different approaches that may be most appropriate in different contexts.

This is accompanied by an activity guide to encourage reflection within your own organisation.

For more information about this process, please see our report: [Respectful Recruitment in Humanitarian Response: Why we need it and how to do it.](#)

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Larger organisations and intermediaries

### Country Directors and Leadership Teams

- Prioritise ongoing dialogue and collaboration with all actors to understand the contextual factors that influence recruitment practice and develop strategies for respectful recruitment in context.
- Ensure that respectful recruitment is embedded in organisational policy, human resources (HR) procedures, localisation strategies and M&E frameworks.
- Make a senior manager responsible for raising awareness and monitoring respectful recruitment strategies and approaches.
- Prioritise investment in long-term institutional partnerships with local actors to build trust and share capacity over time.
- Increase the percentage of funds allocated to local partners when transitioning out of context to enable them to attract and retain high-level staff.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Larger organisations and intermediaries

### Program Teams

- Prioritise respectful recruitment in program design and staffing.
- Jointly develop and implement long-term capacity development programs with partners and local actors.
- Invest in supporting national surge capacity through peer-to-peer capacity exchange or secondments, and by supporting local and national surge mechanisms.
- Collaborate with local actors to develop respectful exit strategies to maintain a healthy local humanitarian system.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Larger organisations and intermediaries

### HR Teams

- Update and socialise recruitment policy and procedure that includes respectful recruitment.
- Align recruitment processes with national policy, regulations and mechanisms.
- Work with local partners to codify terms to reduce unethical or damaging recruitment practice.
- Support local partners to develop HR and institutional capacity by providing resources and training.
- Develop and resource training programs for entry-level local staff.
- Document and share best practice in respectful recruitment.



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Donors

- Incentivise and engage in proactive conversations at the country level about contextual factors shaping staff movement, and develop strategies for respectful recruitment.
- Incorporate respectful recruitment in donor localisation strategies and policies. Hold intermediaries to their commitments and to follow-up and implementation.
- Include respectful recruitment in conversations with partners to raise its profile.
- Hold intermediaries accountable to the Grand Bargain commitment to transfer 25% of funding to local partners.
- Incentivise increased funding to local partners when international organisations are exiting a context.
- Support pooled fund initiatives to promote respectful recruitment.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## **Smaller local and national organisations**

- Establish forums for collective advocacy (e.g. through consortia or single-issue coalitions).
- Collaborate with all actors to identify the contextual factors that influence recruitment practice and develop strategies for respectful recruitment.
- Include clauses in partnership contracts to reduce unethical or damaging recruitment.
- Support and participate in mechanisms to strengthen national surge capacity.
- Collaborate with international and intermediary organisations to organise capacity exchange.
- Collaborate with large humanitarian organisations to develop exit strategies that include a respectful transition.
- Invest in strengthening HR systems.
- Collectively advocate that national governments and actors create a mechanism to develop the humanitarian capacity of job seekers.
- Document and share best practice in respectful recruitment.

# FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information or support in embedding respectful recruitment in your organisation, please contact:

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And we can connect you with our partners.



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