



*Promoting good practice  
in the management and  
support of aid personnel*

## Policy Guide and Template

### Rest & Relaxation

Created December 2002, Revised 2008

**Disclaimer:** The information contained in this document is provided for information only and does not constitute advice. Neither the consultant nor People In Aid accepts any responsibility for how you use the information and strongly recommends seeking suitable (legal) advice before implementing employment policy, as there may be specific legal implications in the countries in which you operate.

## Table of Contents

Foreword by People In Aid .....	1
Introduction to the Policy Guides .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Acknowledgements .....	1
Rest and Relaxation: Introduction.....	2
Link to People In Aid Code Principles and Indicators.....	2
Definition of 'Rest and Relaxation' (R&R).....	3
Action Plan for preparing a Rest and Relaxation Policy .....	4
Amount of R&R leave: .....	4
Time Off in Lieu.....	5
Appendix 1 - Sample Rest & Relaxation Policy.....	7

## Foreword by People In Aid

*For relief and development personnel, stressful working environments and difficult living conditions are often a normal part of their daily lives. That is why 'Rest and Relaxation' – the opportunity to 'get away from it all'- is so important for the continued health and well being of our staff, and why this is such an important issue for those of us involved in management.*

*People In Aid*

## Introduction to the Policy Guides

Since its inception, People In Aid has been bringing together agencies working in the aid and development sector, to enhance the impact they make through better management and support of staff and volunteers.

This document is part of a People In Aid initiative, the 'Policy Guidelines', whereby agencies share their knowledge and experience of a particular issue in order to increase the quality of people management generally within the sector. It forms part of a bank of reference material on a range of people management themes. The material is categorised in three levels:

- Resource Sheets – one or two pages of references and sources of information
- Information Notes – slightly more detailed overview of a specific area of interest
- Policy Guidelines – more detailed documents offering guidelines on policy development

For those agencies which have no established policy we hope this document both prompts and assists you. For those agencies which already have a policy, perhaps the document will encourage a re-think in one or two areas, or a complete revision.

The following notes are not intended to give you an 'off the shelf' policy which you can immediately use within your own organisation. They do, however, offer you the thinking and experiences of other agencies in our sector and prompt you to assess how your own organisation, with its unique mission, values and resources, can best respond to your organisational and staff needs in this important policy area.

The People In Aid Code of Good Practice suggests that human resource policies benefit the organisation most when staff have been involved in their creation and are briefed on their use. In addition, effective policies require managers to implement them and monitor their effects.

We hope to be continually updating our policy guide documents. This relies on new knowledge and experience being relayed to us by you. Please e-mail us on [info@peopleinaid.org](mailto:info@peopleinaid.org) with your contributions and comments.

## Acknowledgements

This document has benefited from the policies, suggestions or thinking of, International Rescue Committee, Oxfam Australia, Oxfam GB, Save the Children, Tearfund, UNHCR and UNICEF. People In Aid would like to thank them for their input.

## Rest and Relaxation: Introduction

Health and well being of staff is an integral part of the People In Aid *Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel*. Due to the extreme work and living conditions which many aid personnel face, it is important for agencies to consider whether and how the provision of regular opportunities for 'Rest and Relaxation' would benefit their staff.

### Link to People In Aid Code Principles and Indicators

The Code of Good Practice, which prompts agencies to raise their aspirations in a wide range of people management and safety issues, has two principles in particular, which relate to the issue of Rest and Relaxation for aid workers (see below). Those agencies looking to implement Good Practice may find the following notes useful in defining Rest and Relaxation and outlining a number of key issues to consider. They may also find of benefit the example Rest and Relaxation policy and list of useful resources.

#### People In Aid Code of Good Practice

##### Principle 7

##### **Health, safety and security**

The security, good health and safety of our staff are a prime responsibility of our organisation.

We recognise that the work of relief and development agencies often places great demands on staff in conditions of complexity and risk. We have a duty of care to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of our staff before, during and on completion of their period of work with us.

Indicators:

1 Written policies are available to staff on security, individual health, care and support, health and safety.

2 Programme plans include written assessment of security, travel and health risks specific to the country or region, reviewed at appropriate intervals.

3 Before an international assignment all staff receive health clearance. In addition they and accompanying dependents receive verbal and written briefing on all risks relevant to the role to be undertaken, and the measures in place to mitigate those risks, including insurance. Agency obligations and individual responsibilities in relation to possible risks are clearly communicated. Briefings are updated when new equipment, procedures or risks are identified.

4 Security plans, with evacuation procedures, are reviewed regularly.

5 Records are maintained of work-related injuries, sickness, accidents and fatalities, and are monitored to help assess and reduce future risk to staff.

6 Workplans do not require more hours work than are set out in individual contracts. Time off and leave periods, based on written policies, are mandatory.

7 All staff have a debriefing or exit interview at the end of any contract or assignment. Health checks, personal counselling and careers advice are available. Managers are trained to ensure these services are provided.

8 In the case of staff on emergency rosters, managers should ensure that health clearance, immunisations and procedures for obtaining the correct prophylaxes and other essential supplies are arranged well in advance.

## **Definition of 'Rest and Relaxation' (R&R)**

Rest and Relaxation (R&R) is a term which describes leave granted to staff whose working and living conditions do not allow them an adequate opportunity for complete rest and relaxation.

Its purpose, therefore, is to provide regular travel away from the work environment which is, or could be: stressful, isolated, separated from the family unit, lacking in basic conditions or privacy, insecure etc. The travel will allow staff to recover, both mentally and physically.

R&R should not be confused with annual leave, compassionate leave or home leave. As it is not connected to other leave entitlements or salary, it should not be accumulated, exchanged for a monetary value or transferred to another member of staff.

In general R&R is location and context specific and is therefore not a contractual benefit. If the operating base changes or the conditions within the operating base become less acute, then R&R provision is reviewed and can be revised or even removed if the context ceases to justify it.

R&R is typically set and reviewed locally or at regional level within an overarching policy framework.

Because R&R is related to the health, safety and wellbeing of workers it cannot be accumulated and taken in a lump sum in the way that annual leave and some TOIL (time off in lieu) arrangements can. Neither can it be encashed.

Ensuring that workers make use of R&R provision is the responsibility of the line manager on behalf of the employer as part of its duty of care.

"R&R arrangements should be clear and binding, e.g. six days per six weeks. The purpose of R&R is to allow people time out in a more familiar, normal environment. It allows you to stand back and consider; also to recharge physical and emotional batteries. Even if you feel OK – where R&R is in place – it must be taken and should not be missed. People still return after months on the job "without having had a single day off". R&R cannot be "saved up" till the end of the contract. As work hours normalise and living conditions improve, R&R will become less necessary and arrangements should be reviewed. "

Extract from Oxfam's *Preparation and support of staff working in a humanitarian response, 2006.*

NB R&R is also known as 'rest and recreation' or 'rest and recuperation'.

## Issues to consider

When preparing a Rest and Relaxation policy, you may wish to consider the following issues:

### Action Plan for preparing a Rest and Relaxation Policy

#### Eligibility for R&R leave:

- Who is entitled to R&R: which staff and which programmes?
- What criteria will be used to assess whether R&R provision is appropriate?
- Will it only apply to expatriate staff? What about national staff or volunteers who are working under extreme conditions? If only expatriates are entitled then are sufficient stress-management policies in place for other staff?
- Is R&R leave mandatory or voluntary?
- Who is responsible for ensuring that eligible staff are receiving their R&R leave entitlement?
- Is there provision for family members to join staff?

#### Costs:

- How will R&R leave be funded within the organisation?
- Will staff be entitled to a daily living allowance whilst on their R&R leave?

#### Amount of R&R leave:

- Who is responsible for agreeing the amount of R&R leave staff are entitled to and the frequency with which it should be taken?
- What will happen if staff request alternative dates for their R&R leave, e.g. to coincide with annual leave plans?
- Will staff still be entitled to R&R leave if they are nearing completion of their contract or due home leave?
- Should there be a minimum contract length before R&R becomes applicable e.g. 2.5 or 3 months?

#### Location:

- Who makes the decision as to where R&R may be taken, and what factors will be taken into consideration, e.g. cost, facilities available for R&R?
- What will happen if a staff member requests an alternative location? Who has responsibility for such a decision and how will extra costs be funded?

#### Travel:

- Will staff be given additional leave for travelling to and from the R&R location?
- Who is responsible for booking travel arrangements and what factors will be taken into consideration, e.g. cost, directness of route, visa requirements?
- What will happen if a staff member requests upgraded travel or other personal preferences?
- What is the policy if travel back to the workplace is not available on the correct day? Will staff be entitled to additional R&R leave or should the additional day(s), for example, be taken from their annual leave entitlement?

#### Insurance:

- Will a staff member's travel to the R&R destination be covered by travel insurance? What if the destination is to a 'high risk' country?
- Will the travel insurance cover destinations personally requested by a staff member?

**Accommodation:**

- Who is responsible for finding suitable accommodation and who will make the necessary bookings?
- What will happen if a staff member requests alternative accommodation or an upgrade on facilities provided i.e., in terms of booking, funding etc.

**Cancellation of R&R leave:**

- Who will have authority for cancelling R&R leave and in what circumstances, e.g. a security alert, a rapid onset emergency etc?
- What arrangements will be made if a staff member's R&R leave is cancelled?

**Training:**

- What training will you provide for those staff involved in operating the policy?
- How will staff receive initial training and regular updates if they are working in remote locations?

**Staff Involvement in the R&R Policy**

- Will staff be consulted when the R&R policy is developed or reviewed? Will staff be involved in the process of reviewing R&R entitlements? How regularly will this take place?
- How will staff be advised of the policy initially and in future? Will they require training themselves in how to follow the necessary procedures?

**An Example Rest and Relaxation Policy**

Please see Appendix 1 for an example of a Rest and Relaxation policy, under the name of a fictional international NGO.

**Time Off in Lieu**

Time off in Lieu (TOIL) is offered by most organisations to compensate for additional time worked over and above contracted hours instead of offering cash overtime payment. This is distinct from R&R as it is not location and context specific and therefore an organisation-wide approach can, in theory, be adopted.

TOIL is both a health and safety measure to help manage short periods of high workload, and a cost effective method of rewarding agreed overtime. It is granted in recognition that working excessive hours on a regular or sustained basis does not promote wellbeing and a healthy work-life balance. Also, in Europe, the working time directive limits the number of hours that some workers can work each week.

Many INGOs offer two types of TOIL:

- Leave granted to compensate for additional hours worked on an hour by hour basis. The purpose of this type of TOIL is to enable organisations to manage short term workload fluctuations. It is planned additional working and staff must normally agree this with their manager prior to working the additional time. It is therefore different from flexi-time in which workers monitor all their hours worked. They can choose to work extra hours which are “banked” and redeemed at a later date in the form of additional leave. Organisations may choose to cap the number of TOIL days that a staff member can earn in any 12 months period.
- Leave granted to travellers to compensate for travelling and/or working at weekends or overnight. Typically organisations work to a formula which grants

an agreed number of TOIL days for each weekend worked away and is not normally on an hour for hour basis.

Like R&R, TOIL is health and safety related and many employers insist that the leave is taken within an agreed time window after it has been earned and it cannot be encashed i.e. indefinite accrual is not normally be encouraged.

This can cause problems for regular travellers or those working in emergency situations as workloads and working patterns are often structured in a way that does not easily accommodate large amounts of TOIL.

When introducing a TOIL policy it is important to consider when is TOIL appropriate as opposed to R&R or other types of leave. Similarly, it is important to ensure that TOIL is not used in lieu of good workload management on the part of workers and their managers via their day-to-day performance management relationship. One of the biggest gripes about TOIL policies from staff is that they never have the time to take the TOIL that they have earned.

Appendix I offers an example of a rest and relaxation overarching policy framework. In practice, however, R&R is typically agreed and reviewed locally at an appropriate managerial level after due discussion with appropriate parties such as HR, Safety and Security staff and with the agreement of Regional Director/Operations Director. As the circumstances on the ground change, so the local policy is adapted to reflect the local context. Often a local policy document will be drawn up which outlines the exact details of staff entitlement and the dates and mechanism for review. This will reflect the principles and mandatory elements of the overarching policy document but may vary from location to location in its specific provision.

## **Implementation**

The way in which you implement and publicise your policy will depend on the culture and communication norms of your organisation. We have therefore not attempted to offer a “one size fits all” good practice implementation guide, suffice to say that clear communication and the opportunity to ask questions or involve staff in a discussion around the subject and its application within their operational context, as well as in the development of the policy itself, will help to raise awareness and understanding of the issues.

## Appendix 1 - Sample Rest & Relaxation Policy

### RELIEF AID\* – Rest & Relaxation Policy

**Date of Policy Issue:**

**Issue Number:**

**Date of Policy Review:**

#### **Relief Aid Mission and Vision statement**

Relief Aid works in the poorest countries of the world to provide emergency healthcare and sanitation to those most at risk and to educate local people in the necessary skills to maintain these services themselves in the future.

#### **Introduction**

Relief Aid recognises its responsibility towards staff to provide adequate opportunities for complete rest and relaxation in order to maintain their well-being and, in turn, run successful and effective programmes.

However, in some Relief Aid programmes, working and living conditions are such that it is not possible for staff to achieve complete rest and relaxation within the locality.

The purpose, therefore, of the Rest and Relaxation (R&R) Policy is to provide eligible staff members with an opportunity to leave the programme where they are based on a regular basis, in order to recover, both mentally and physically, from the stressful environment in which they work.

#### **Authority for Rest and Relaxation Leave**

The International Staff Director has overall responsibility for deciding which Relief Aid locations are eligible for staff to take R&R leave. He/she will review the list of locations on an annual basis (or more regularly if circumstances warrant it), based on applications received before [date] from each Programme Manager. The list of locations eligible for R&R leave during the following year will be published no later than [date].

Should a programme's working and living conditions change significantly during the year, the International Staff Director has the authority to authorise additional R&R leave for eligible staff within that programme. Equally, if circumstances improve to the point where R&R is no longer necessary it will be removed.

Individual Programme Managers are responsible for ensuring each eligible staff member receives their R&R entitlement. Responsibility for planning R&R leave within the programme may be delegated to another member of staff by the Programme Manager.

Staff will be consulted before any changes are made to the R&R policy, except in emergency situations where consultation is not possible before such changes are required.

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\* Fictitious agency

### **Eligibility for Rest and Relaxation Leave**

The International Staff Director will publish, on an annual basis, a list of locations, and those staff working within them, eligible for R&R Leave.

### **Rest and Relaxation Leave Entitlements**

Staff are entitled to [x] days of R&R leave after [x] weeks of continuous service. They are also entitled to one day's travel at the beginning and end of each R&R leave period.

R&R is leave provided by the organisation as a response to the working and living conditions experienced by staff in certain locations. It is therefore not connected to salary or annual leave entitlements and, as such, cannot be accumulated, exchanged for a monetary value or transferred to another member of staff.

### **Timing of Rest and Relaxation Leave**

Staff will be advised of the date and length of their R&R leave entitlement at least [x] week(s) in advance of travel.

Staff may request an alternative date for their R&R leave, which may be authorised by the Programme Manager after giving due consideration to the effect of such a change on the programme's operations and other staff members.

No R&R leave may be taken within [x] weeks of the end of service. Any R&R leave due within this period will be forfeited.

R&R leave may be taken in conjunction with annual leave and public holiday if authorised by the Programme Manager.

### **Cancellation of Rest and Relaxation Leave**

The Programme Manager has the authority to postpone R&R leave in the event of circumstances requiring an emergency response from the organisation or in the event of a security threat. In such a situation, staff will continue to accrue R&R leave which will be rescheduled as soon as is reasonably practicable.

### **Location of Rest and Relaxation Leave**

The Programme Manager is responsible for agreeing the location(s) for staff R&R leave, based on:

- Ease of transportation;
- Cost;
- Provision of an environment appropriate for R&R.

The Programme's Office Manager will arrange travel to and from the R&R location.

Staff may request an alternative location for personal reasons no later than [x] weeks before travel. This may be authorised by the Programme Manager. The individual staff member is liable for any additional costs incurred in travelling to, or staying at, an alternative location and is responsible for their own bookings and arrangements.

### **Accommodation for Rest and Relaxation Leave**

The Programme's Office Manager will be responsible for booking accommodation of a reasonable standard. Should a member of staff wish to stay in alternative accommodation, they should communicate their request to the Office Manager no

later than [x] weeks before travel. They will be personally liable for any additional costs incurred and will be responsible for booking the accommodation itself.

**Expense Allowance during Rest and Relaxation Leave**

Staff will be entitled to an allowance of [x] USD per day of their R&R leave to cover expenses such as meals, travel etc. Expenses incurred beyond this amount will be the responsibility of the individual.

**I have received RELIEF AID's Rest & Relaxation Policy, which I have read and understood.**

**NAME:** -----

**SIGNED:** -----

**DATE:** -----

Please return this page to Human Resources

ENDS.....

Visit the online People In Aid member resource site for examples of current INGO R&R policies. **The People In Aid Policy Bank:**  
<http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/policybank.aspx>