

Human Resources for Health Management Toolkit

Developed to assist managers in day-to-day HR management

Module 7: Diversity in the workplace



Partnership for Reviving Routine
Immunisation in Northern Nigeria;
Maternal Newborn and Child Health Initiative

www.prrinn-mnch.org

Acknowledgement

Human resource management is key to providing quality health care services. The understanding of the dynamics and management of human resources is the bedrock around which service delivery revolves.

The PRRINN-MNCH programme has over the last 7 years been actively involved in several ways to solve the challenges of managing human resources in the 4 states of its operations (Jigawa, Katsina, Yobe and Zamfara). This manual is one of the modest efforts by the programme to support states to address the challenges of human resource management.

In the course of its work, the programme realised that human resource management, as a distinct work stream, has been lumped together with personnel management. This has led to the neglect of key human resources activities and its attendant effect of overall performance and management of human resources. This manual therefore provides key managers with the basic step-by-step process of managing human resources.

During the development of this manual, several individuals have contributed to this final document. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Consultants led by Michael Siebert; State Teams under the leadership of the STMs; State Stakeholders led by Permanent Secretaries and Office of the Head of Service in Jigawa, Katsina, Yobe and Zamfara States. The Directors of Personnel Management and members of the respective states Human Resources for Health Coordinating Committees have all played significant role in refining this document and its adoption by the states. Also worthy of mention is the Programme's HR LECs who have been responsible for the day-to-day follow up in the development of the manual.

It is my hope and prayers that Human Resources Units of the respective states SMOH and other agencies will utilise this document to improve the quality of their work.

I would also like to acknowledge the funding for this document by UK and Norwegian Government through DFID.

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PRRINN-MNCH

Human Resources for Health Management Toolkit

Foreword

This *Human Resources for Health* Management Toolkit is a step-by-step guide for health planners and managers to improve planning and management of human resources (HR), for the health system as a whole and within health facilities. It aims to help address some of the acute problems from shortages of skilled, experienced health workers.

The HRH toolkit is partly the output of PRRINN-MNCH in northern Nigeria, the Partnership for Reviving Routine Immunisation in Northern Nigeria /Maternal Newborn and Child Health programme funded by the UK Government and State Department of the Norwegian Government for the benefit of the Nigerian people. Many staff and officials in the states where PRRINN-MNCH works and team members of PRRINN-MNCH have helped to develop and test this toolkit – their contributions are gratefully acknowledged. The output is also the result of ongoing collaboration in a number of countries between health professionals of Health Partners International and Health Partners Southern Africa.

PRRINN-MNCH works with federal, state and local governments and local communities to improve the quality and availability of maternal, newborn and child health care.

This management toolkit does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the UK Government, the Nigerian Government or any of the state governments with which we work. However we hope it will provide useful, practical assistance and guidance for human resources managers in their work.

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February 2014

Preface

In any developing public health sector HR forms the foundation of health care service delivery. The key however is making sure that Ministries of Health have the right people with the right skills in the right positions in the right number at the right places. In Northern Nigeria the scenario is no different. In an effort to achieve this, PRRINN-MNCH embarked on a process of strengthening the HR function within the ministries through initiatives such as establishing HR Units with clearly defined objectives and responsibilities. These HR Units however needed basic step-by-step guidance as to not only to administrate HR but to comprehensively and effectively do HR Planning, HR Management and HR Development. Facing the shortage of qualified HR practitioners, the Human Resources for Health (HRH) Toolkit was developed from a wide range of sources to provide a reference document to assist HR officers and managers with HR related functions.

This toolkit is not all-inclusive and covers the key aspects around HR within the Northern Nigerian context and is aimed at addressing the basic elements of HR. Although Northern Nigeria is unique with specific challenges around HR management, planning and development, the basic principles of HR remains the same. The Toolkit therefore applies academic/theoretical HR methodologies and approaches into day-to-day actions.

The HRM Toolkit consists of 10 Modules as listed below.

Module 1: HR Planning

Strategic HR planning predicts the future HR management needs of the health services after analyzing the current human resources, the external labour market and the future HR environment that the MoH will be operating in. The analysis of HR management issues external to the organization and developing scenarios about the future are what distinguishes strategic planning from operational planning. The basic questions to be answered for strategic planning are: Where are we going with health services and how does that impact HR? How will we develop HR strategies to successfully get there, given the circumstances? What skill sets do we need?

Module 2: HR Management & Risk Management

Ministries with good governance practices clearly establish the division of authority and accountability among the senior management, HR director and line managers. The role of the senior management is governance and the role of the HR director is management. Sometimes the roles can get hazy. In clarifying whose job it is, the senior management and the HR director must always keep in mind the legal responsibilities and liabilities as the employer.

Module 3: Recruitment & Retention

Making sure you recruit well is so important. Committed, motivated, qualified employees help your ministry achieve its purpose. Health service providers cannot afford to be short-staffed. Limited financial resources mean that hiring mistakes can be a huge financial burden. Hiring the wrong person is a poor use of resources for recruiting and orienting a new staff member. Having clearly defined recruitment process and procedures prevents costly recruiting mistakes. Repairing the damage can take a lot of time and effort.

Module 4: HR Performance Management

Performance management is a process by which managers, supervisors and employees work together to plan, monitor and review an employee's work objectives and overall contribution to the ministry. More than just an annual performance review, performance management is the continuous process of setting objectives, assessing progress and providing on-going coaching and feedback to ensure that employees are meeting their objectives and career goals.

Module 5: HR Discipline

Clear expectation, appropriate supervision and feedback on a day-to-day basis are the best ways to avoid the necessity of implementing a discipline process as outlined below. However, when problems with behaviour or performance occur, discipline is necessary. By implementing a discipline process, you provide employees with an opportunity to become a productive part of your Ministry and you make any termination more defensible.

Module 6: Employment Termination

Termination is an action taken by the Ministry to end the employer/employee relationship. Ministries have a basic right to terminate the employment of an employee, but along with that right comes responsibilities. Employers must comply with the employment/labour standards and human rights legislation for their jurisdiction and beyond that, employers must treat employees fairly and in good faith.

Module 7: Diversity in the workplace

Building and sustaining diversity in Ministries can only be achieved by planning and design. It is therefore increasingly important to address how to support diverse, inclusive workplaces. What does a diverse inclusive work environment look like? How do we tangibly encourage and support diversity so that all people feel welcome within our workplaces irrespective of their gender, disability or race? When people feel welcome and safe from discrimination and harassment they are more motivated and their performance will improve. Absenteeism and performance problems decrease while productivity, morale and employee retention increase.

Module 8: Effective HR Teams

Despite the daily onslaughts of e-mails, phone calls and memos, meetings are still one of the most effective ways that people share and exchange information, get feedback, plan, collaborate and make important decisions for their ministries. So why do meetings have such a negative impact? Meetings seem to be getting longer, more frequent and generating fewer results. This can result in employees becoming frustrated as they feel that meetings are taking them away from, rather than adding value to their work. Ministries can increase the effectiveness of their team through effective communication, management of conflict and setting-up work teams.

Module 9: HR Training & Development

The changes in the public sector has had an impact on workplace learning. Think of the current positions in your ministry and the need for increased competence in change management, financial management, service delivery management, and so forth. Change also puts the spotlight on training and education as a means of equipping health workers with the tools they need to adapt to changing health skill requirements, organizational change and increasing complexity in the external public health environment.

Module 10: HR Information System

Computers have simplified the task of analysing vast amounts of data, and they can be invaluable aids in HR management, planning and development, from payroll processing to record retention. With computer hardware, software, and databases, Ministries can keep records and information better, as well as retrieve them easier and quicker. HRIS (Human Resources Information System) is an integrated system designed to provide information used in HR decision making. The HRAdmin software was developed and implemented in the four PRINN-MNCH states. This module provides end-users with the know-how of utilising the system to its full potential.

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1. Diversity at Work

1.1 Overview

Building and sustaining diversity can only be achieved by design. It is therefore increasingly important to address how to support diverse, inclusive workplaces. What does an inclusive work environment look like? How do we tangibly encourage and support diversity so that all people feel welcome within our workplaces?

When people feel welcome and safe from harassment and discrimination they are more motivated to perform. Absenteeism and performance problems decrease while productivity, morale and employee retention increase.

1.2 Workplace diversity policies

Human rights legislation is put in place to protect people from discrimination. It seeks to guarantee people equal treatment regardless of a particular identity or historical oppression in relation to employment, offers of employment and in other instances not related to employment.

Most human rights complaints come from the workplace. As organizations strive to create better communities through their missions, it is important that they also work at creating inclusive workplaces that are respectful and welcoming of diversity. Legislation outlines legal requirements of employers; however, the greater goal is not just about legal compliance but nurturing a cultural of acceptance in our workplaces.

It is very important to support intentions with policies and procedures. Policies and procedures both communicate the values of your ministry plus provide everyone with a consistent process to follow.

In general, creating an inclusive and supportive workplace involves:

- ✓ Leading by example with a clear commitment from the top down that diversity is important
- ✓ Adopting policies and procedures to support diversity, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment
- ✓ Promoting (both internally and externally) the organization's commitment to diversity
- ✓ Holding all staff and volunteers accountable
- ✓ Providing training and awareness in the workplace

1.3 Supporting Employees with Disabilities

People with disabilities may just have the skills and competencies required within the ministry yet they are often under-employed. It is important to consider how your ministry can tap this potential source of employees.

A disability can be either permanent (for example, a hearing or mobility impairment) or temporary (for example, a treatable illness or temporary impairment that is the result of an accident). A disability can also be visible (for example, a wheelchair or white cane indicates the person has a disability) or invisible (for example, a mental illness).

When the focus is on building an inclusive environment that is welcoming to people regardless of disability, you may need to make changes to work areas, consider technological modifications, make information accessible in alternate formats or make changes to tasks or working hours. The term for this is accommodation.

Duty to Accommodate refers to the obligation of an employer, service provider or union to take steps to eliminate disadvantage to employees, prospective employees or clients resulting from a rule, practice or physical barrier that has or may have an adverse impact on individuals or groups protected under the Human Rights Act. This includes the hiring process as well as accommodating an individual once they are hired.

The duty to accommodate is most often applied in situations involving persons with physical or mental disability but it also applies to all other grounds covered by basic Human Rights Acts, for example:

- ✓ Race
- ✓ National or ethnic origin
- ✓ Colour
- ✓ Religion
- ✓ Age
- ✓ Sex (including pregnancy)
- ✓ Sexual orientation
- ✓ Marital or family
- ✓ Conviction for which a pardon has been granted

Many accommodation options available to you as an employer can be low-cost or no cost. While you may have to make some changes to workstations or provide an assistive device or assistive technology, many changes are simple. The employee being accommodated will be an important source of information about accommodation needs and sources of information, and potentially, sources of funding for making the accommodations.

Remember that the accommodation process can be ongoing as accommodation needs change or the work environment changes. It is therefore important to have an open communication with any employees with disabilities and check-in with them regularly.

1.3.1 Diversity incorporation during the recruitment and selection process

- ✓ Research for resources and information to support a bias-free recruitment and selection process
- ✓ Make reference to disabilities in your workplace diversity policies
- ✓ Look beyond traditional, mainstream sources for job applicants
- ✓ Post the job ad in alternate formats
- ✓ When you schedule each job interview, ask if the applicant has any accommodation needs
- ✓ Ensure the interview site is accessible
- ✓ Discuss with front office staff how to interact appropriately with people with disabilities before the interview takes place
- ✓ Be aware of what you can and cannot ask during a job interview and only ask for what is relevant to the job
- ✓ Focus on skills, abilities, expectations and desired outcomes
- ✓ Instead of asking if an applicant can fill the job requirements, change the wording and ask *how* they will fulfill the job requirements
- ✓ Make your selection process consistent for all applicants

1.3.2 Adjustments once employed

Start by reviewing the job profile and determine what parts of the job the employee can do without specific adjustments. Then move on to determine what adjustments can be made to support the employee in doing the other aspects of the job. Here are some examples of adjustments in the workplace:

- ✓ Attendant services
- ✓ Adaptive technology
- ✓ Converting printed matter to alternative media and reader services for employees who are blind
- ✓ Workspace and furnishings appropriate to the nature of the disability
- ✓ Interpreters for deaf and hearing-impaired employees
- ✓ A quiet workspace
- ✓ Flexible work arrangements
- ✓ Frequent breaks

Before you purchase any special equipment, have your employee(s) test them out first.

Staff members may have varying degrees of experience interacting with a person with a disability. By meeting with staff, if needed, before a new employee with disabilities starts work, you can provide information and build the comfort level of your staff.

1.3.3 What if the person does not request workplace adjustments?

Not every person will self-identify that they have a disability and need some specific adjustments in the workplace. This may be due to fear of, for example, being passed over for promotion or embarrassment because of society's stigma of their disability. If you suspect that one of your employees requires specific adjustments, approach the employee confidentially and non-confrontationally to discuss if there is a situation that could be fixed with an accommodation. Affirm to the employee that they will not be negatively affected by disclosing this information or in the accommodation process.

1.3.4 Retention and promotion

After the appointment, the focus shifts to employee retention. Here are some suggestions for creating an inclusive workplace:

- ✓ Encourage employees with disabilities to educate other staff about their disability
- ✓ Be creative, flexible and look for new ways of doing things
- ✓ Include staff with disabilities in decision-making and social activities
- ✓ Routinely promote your ministry's commitment to diversity
- ✓ Cultivate a culture of trust amongst staff
- ✓ Include opportunities for staff to interact in settings outside of work so that employees feel more comfortable
- ✓ Conduct exit interviews to find out why a staff person left
- ✓ Support senior staff so that they, in turn, support a diverse and inclusive workplace by recruiting, retaining and promoting employees with disabilities

1.3.5 Preferred terminology

It is important to use language that focuses on people, rather than on disabilities and to shift our thinking to focus on abilities and what people can do. The following preferred words and phrases will help you choose language that is neither demeaning nor hurtful.

1.4 Supporting Non-Indigenes Employees (from Different Cultural Backgrounds)

It is important that the composition of our workplaces reflect the composition of Nigerian society. Nigerian demographics are changing. Changing demographics means that our potential labour force is also changing. Southerners are employed in the Northern States because of a lack of scarce health professional resources and Northerners make their way to the south in search for better career opportunities. The workforce that you need may not have your "State" experience, may not share traditional Northern cultural values and may have very different notions of time, body

language or how to demonstrate respect. Ministries need to consider how they attract and retain employees from diverse cultural backgrounds.

This section deals with cultural diversity and considers that, in Nigeria, creating a diverse workplace includes people of different cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds. While we have generalized and address the needs the common theme is the need to be open, respectful and responsive to people of different cultural backgrounds.

1.5 Potential Barriers

1.5.1 Examples of potential barriers

Potential barriers faced by different Nigerian people include (but are not limited to):

- ✓ Difficulty finding jobs if searching in another part of Nigeria (southern or northern)
- ✓ Typically, networking and who you know provides job-seekers with job leads.
- ✓ Job ads and job descriptions that don't focus specifically on skills and competencies can leave non-indigenes applicants feeling unqualified
- ✓ Difficulty accessing computer, fax, photocopier and other job search tools
- ✓ Lower literacy rates or speaking English or local dialect with an accent may be a barrier
- ✓ Double discrimination in terms of fringes benefits not applying to non-indigenes applicants
- ✓ Religious considerations
- ✓ Lack of education and/or appropriate training
- ✓ Ignorance or fear of other cultures
- ✓ Ethnic sounding names are sometimes used to screen out applicants before the person has a chance to demonstrate their capability
- ✓ Interview questions may be culturally or ethnical-biased and, therefore, difficult for the applicant to answer
- ✓ Feelings of isolation
- ✓ There may be few or no others who share their cultural understanding within the workplace

1.5.2 Practical and supportive practices

Now, if you turn that list of barriers around, you start to get a sense of how to build a diverse and inclusive workplace. In general, creating an inclusive and supportive workplace involves:

- ✓ Leading by example with a clear commitment from the top down that diversity is important

- ✓ Adopting policies and procedures to support diversity, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment
- ✓ Promoting (both internally and externally) the ministry's commitment to diversity
- ✓ Holding all staff and volunteers accountable
- ✓ Providing training and awareness in the workplace

1.5.3 Workforce Diversity: Recruitment and selection process

To encourage all Nigerian people to apply - and to ensure a bias-free selection process - consider the following suggestions:

1.5.3.1 Broaden your recruitment reach

- ✓ Brainstorm the recruitment sources you have through your connections with other cultural groups
- ✓ Advertise placements through non-indigenes-serving and aboriginal organizations
- ✓ Include a statement about your ministry's commitment to diversity

1.5.3.2 Focus on skills and competencies

- ✓ Review your job descriptions and job adverts as well as interview questions to make sure you focus on skills and competencies rather than on demographic and other credentials
- ✓ Focus on the content rather than the style of the resume
- ✓ When interviewing, focus "how" an applicant will apply his or her skills, "how" they would handle a situation, etc.

1.5.3.3 Develop a clear and consistent set of guidelines

- ✓ Use a consistent and formal application process to avoid bias
- ✓ Make sure all questions directly relate to the job description
- ✓ Provide consistent and clear information to all applicants about the selection process

1.5.3.4 Make the interview process less intimidating

- ✓ Make the selection team as diverse as practically possible
- ✓ Avoid using metaphors, jargon or slang
- ✓ Be open-minded and sensitive to cultural differences

1.5.3.5 Become informed

- ✓ Learn as much as you can about different cultures and ethnic groups
- ✓ Find out the holy days of different religions to avoid scheduling interviews at these times
- ✓ Network with other employers who have diverse workforces to find out their best practices

- ✓ Set-up a diversity committee to assist with recruitment and community relations
- ✓ If your workplace is unionized, check to see what diversity resources are available through the union

1.5.4 Workforce Diversity: Retention and promotion

Once a non-indigenes person is hired, the focus shifts to employee retention. Here are some suggestions for creating an inclusive workplace:

- ✓ Include staff from different backgrounds in decision-making and social activities
- ✓ Provide time off for culturally significant events and holy days
- ✓ Provide quiet space for prayer
- ✓ If applicable, involve unions in creating a diverse and inclusive workplace
- ✓ Set up mentors so that non-indigenes employees who have succeeded in the workforce can support others trying to break the same barriers
- ✓ Routinely promote your ministry's commitment to diversity and provide education to staff so that everyone understands what constitutes racism and racial harassment as well as the expectations for all staff
- ✓ Cultivate a culture of trust amongst staff
- ✓ Confidentially discuss the reasons for certain workplace expectations when there is a difference in cultural interpretation
- ✓ Encourage people to discuss personal or cultural preferences and understand the preferences of others
- ✓ Learn as much as you can about each other's cultural backgrounds
- ✓ Include opportunities for staff to interact in settings outside of work so that employees feel more comfortable
- ✓ Create professional development plans so that non-indigenes employees also have promotion goals
- ✓ Conduct exit interviews to find out why a staff person left (See exit interviews)
- ✓ Support senior staff so that they, in turn, support a diverse and inclusive workplace by recruiting, retaining and promoting people from different cultural backgrounds

1.6 Generational Differences in the Workplace

To keep good employees, you must meet their needs and expectations, and understand what keeps them inspired. Employees' needs and expectation vary from one person to the next. They also vary depending on a variety of factors including the generation of the workers. At this particular moment, there are several different generations - all with different worldviews, expectations and needs - in your workplaces.

1.7 Young Employees

1.7.1 Attracting the next generation of employees

If organizations want to survive they will have to learn how to attract and keep the next generation of employees. For this reason, There are two focus groups in attracting younger health professionals. The first include young students & graduates who had had internships. The second include school leavers. IF ministries can attract young students into following a career in a scarce health profession it will address serious gaps. This process usually is part of the operational planning with a strategic plan objective over a period of 3 – 10 years.

1.7.2 Identifying the characteristics of an ideal job

The question to answer is what would attract these young potential health professionals into a career with public health service. Focussing and highlighting the most important aspects of an ideal job, the following common factors should be communicated:

- ✓ Challenging work
- ✓ A variety of work
- ✓ An environment that fosters a spirit of creativity and innovation
- ✓ Recognition and reward for high performance
- ✓ Flexibility (in work schedules)
- ✓ Opportunities for advancement
- ✓ Mentoring opportunities
- ✓ Organizational values that align with personal values
- ✓ An environment that involved a diversity of people
- ✓ Good pay (not always possible in public serve)
- ✓ A good benefits plan and retirement benefits plan
- ✓ Job security
- ✓ The ability to balance personal and professional lives

Can your ministry check off all of these characteristics? Do you market these when looking to recruit new employees into your ministry? Is there more that you can do to offer these in your workplace?

1.7.3 Mid-career employees

Although the age distribution varies between different ministries it is important to be proactive in managing the core of your workforce. Mid-career employees or health professional usually forms the backbone of your service delivery as they are the transition carriers between retiring employees and young recruits. This is the group that should always be the biggest in your work force.

1.7.3.1 Good retention practices for Mid-career employees

Employees who have been with the ministry for more than four or five years sometimes become bored or entrenched in their beliefs. In order to retain good employees, enable them to become even better, and to ensure the health of your ministry and maintain its ability to change:

- ✓ Ensure that mid-range employees are involved in setting the direction and strategic plan for your ministry
- ✓ Ensure that their jobs are based on the plans of the ministry and that the employee can see the results of their work
- ✓ Ensure that they get a good performance review at least every six months and that you listen to, and act on, their ideas, suggestions and concerns
- ✓ Ensure that they are continually learning and enhancing their skills
- ✓ Ensure that you talk with them about career planning
- ✓ Encourage experienced employees to mentor newer staff, volunteers, or, if appropriate, board members

1.7.4 Older employees

The “retirement group” in your ministry is usually the group with the highest level of institutional memory. As a ministry you need to capitalise on this by ensuring that they are part of the development process of younger and mid-career employees. The ministry needs to ensure that the “institutional memory” aspect contained in the “older” employees will not retire with this group.

1.7.4.1 Good retention practices for older employees (Retirement group)

In addition to the retention practices outlined for mid-career employees, your ministry may need to ensure that the following options are available for all staff:

- ✓ Flexible work (flexi-time or flexible work location)
- ✓ Good pension or retirement plans
- ✓ A healthy environment that meets their occupational needs
- ✓ Additional training on new technologies

1.8 Gender Equity

The northern nigerian public health sector is somewhat male-dominated so gender equity in this sector is not about strategies for encouraging more equal representation of men. It's not even focused on increasing representation of men in managerial ranks.

However, the high percentage of men in the public health sector's workforce and managerial ranks means that employers need to be very aware of how best to support, retain and increase their female employees.

1.8.1 Gender: Practical and supportive practices

To understand how to best support female employees means understanding what female employees value and expect in a workplace. The following practices are important.

1.8.1.1 Work-life balance

Women are more family orientated than males. Studies determined that women are more likely to feel stressed by the combined demands of work and family responsibilities. Therefore, offering a flexible and family-friendly workplace is important and workplace policies need to reflect the needs of female employees. This should also be seen as a retention approach to keep high qualified health professional females in the public sector.

1.8.1.2 Support advancement

Women in public health services are not always recognised due to various cultural, ethnical and traditional reasons. Therefore, creating professional development plans and mentoring female employees are important strategies. There are various indicators forcing ministries to rethink employment of males into certain post cadres e.g. midwives. Cultural, religious and traditional beliefs impacts directly on the utilisation of males in certain female orientated health areas. Ministries need to adapt policies that provides for more biased gender recruitment approaches.

2. Workplaces that Work

2.1 Overview

Workplaces are complex environments with multiple integrated systems. Within the typical public health ministry there are many interactions between so many different types of people such as colleagues, other ministries, agencies, board members and other volunteers, donors, patients, and the general public. Managing diverse workplace relationships often requires balancing multiple demands. We need to work together and be attuned to the well being of all those who work to advance the mission of our organizations.

2.2 Conflict at Work

Conflict exists in every organization and to a certain extent indicates a healthy exchange of ideas and creativity. However, counter-productive conflict can result in employee dissatisfaction, reduced productivity, poor service to clients, absenteeism and increased employee turnover, increased work-related stress or, worse case scenario, litigation based on claims of harassment or a hostile work environment.

Managing the day to day conflict that occurs in all workplaces is important as is ways to identify and understand it and ways to manage it effectively. As a manager or supervisor, it is often your role to discern when a conflict is a normal part of the work day and work relationships or whether you need to engage an external alternative and/or refer to a more formal conflict resolution policy and procedure.

Key HR Principal

The Ministry needs to establish procedures and inform employees with regard to how to resolve conflicts within the organization.

2.2.1 Common sources of conflict

Conflict is an inevitable part of human relationships. Where commitment to mission and long hours with minimal resources intersect; nonprofit workplaces can be familiar with conflict interchanges. Conflict can arise from managing differing perspectives and seemingly incompatible concerns. If we can accept it as a natural part of our emotional landscape, it can be easier to work with than if we expect conflict to disappear and never resurface.

As a manager, it is important to be able to identify and to understand the varying levels of conflicts and how these levels are manifested in different ways. An early sign of conflict is that tension you feel, indicating that something is brewing under the surface. Pay attention to non-verbal behaviours such as crossed-arms, eyes lowered or someone sitting back or away from you or the group. These signs can provide you with important information about your current situation and can help you in assessing your next steps. If these signs are not dealt with in a timely manner, this sense of apprehension can shift to another level of conflict and can be manifested more directly with opposition and conviction. This aspect of conflict is addressed in more depth in the sections below.

More often than not, these early warning signs are a part of a larger web of dynamics present in your organization. As part of our analysis, it is helpful to understand the source of potential conflict.

Below are some common sources of conflict:

Conflict type	Description
Values conflict	Involves incompatibility of preferences, principles and practices that people believe in such as religion, ethics or politics.
Power conflict	Occurs when each party wishes to maintain or maximize the amount of influence that it exerts in the relationship and the social setting such as in a decision making process.
Economic conflict	Involves competing to attain scarce resources such as monetary or human resources.
Interpersonal conflict	Occurs when two people or more have incompatible needs, goals, or approaches in their relationship such as different communication or work styles.
Organizational conflict	Involves inequalities in the organizational chart and how employees report to one another.
Environmental conflict	Involves external pressures outside of the organization such as a recession, a changing government, or a high employment rate.

Once you know more about where the conflict stems from, you will be better equipped to address it. A variety of factors influence when and how conflict will surface. To get the bigger picture, consider all the sources above before taking action. Now, we will look at the various ways in which we can respond and manage conflict.

2.2.2 Understanding conflict styles

A model that identified five common strategies or styles for dealing with conflict was developed by Thomas and Kilman (1972). They state that individuals tend to have a personal and habitual way of dealing with conflict which can take over when we are under pressure. Sometimes it's the most productive style for resolving the conflict, but very often it's not and simply worsens the situation. A first step in dealing with conflict is to discover your preferred conflict style(s) and subsequently, learn how to

manage a variety of situations using different approaches. These styles have two basic dimensions:

Assertiveness, which relates to behaviours intended to satisfy one's own concerns. This dimension is also correlated to attaining one's goals,

Cooperativeness, which relates to behaviours intended to satisfy the other individual's concerns. This dimension can also be tracked as being concerned with relationships.

A combination of these dimensions results in five conflict behaviours: Accommodating, Competing, Avoiding, Collaborating, Compromising. Each style is appropriate in particular contexts and learning how to be strategic when approaching conflict is ideal.

2.2.2.1 Accommodating

The accommodating style is unassertive and cooperative. The goal of this stance is to yield. Typically a person using this conflict mode neglects his or her needs to satisfy the concerns of the other person. There is an element of self-sacrifice and this stance is concerned with preserving the relationship versus attaining goals. The mode is also known as an appeasement or smoothing style and is the opposite of competing.

2.2.2.2 Competing

The Competing style is a power-oriented mode that is high in assertiveness and low in cooperativeness. The goal of this stance is to win. In this mode the individual aims to pursue one's agenda at another's expense. This may mean standing up for one's needs, defending a cherished position and/or simply trying to win. The goal is deemed very important. This style is also referred to as a forcing or dominant style.

2.2.2.3 Avoiding

The avoiding style is both unassertive and uncooperative. The goal of this stance is to delay. In this mode an individual does not immediately pursue his or her concerns or those of another. There is indifference to the outcome to the issue and the relationship and the person withdraws or postpones dealing with the conflict. This style can provide a needed respite from the situation or it can inflame things if the issue keeps being pushed aside. This mode is also known as *flight*.

2.2.2.4 Collaborate

The collaborating style is both assertive and cooperative. The goal of this stance is to find a win-win situation. Typically this mode is concerned with finding creative solutions to issues that satisfy both individual's concerns. Learning, listening and attending to both the organizational and personal issues are addressed with this

conflict style. It takes time and effort. This mode is also known as a problem solving or integrative style and it is the opposite of avoiding.

2.2.2.5 Compromise

The compromising style lands one right in the middle of being assertive and cooperative. The goal of this stance is to find a quick middle ground. Parties find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution by having each person give up something and split the difference. This mode is also known as sharing.

2.2.3 Summary on conflict styles

All the styles are relevant, useful and when used strategically, can help you navigate conflict with success. Most people have an instant reaction to the names of the conflict styles deeming some of them better than others. People can be quick to pass judgment, believing that competing style as bad and collaboration as good.

Learn to keep your value judgments in check. Each style is useful and necessary. The more an individual can move with ease between the conflict styles and use them when the timing is right, the more adept one will become at navigating tension and conflict. If you think one is better than the other, you will be locked into certain styles that will not serve you or you will judge others who may employ those styles at times. Obviously if someone is competing in every situation, this will have negative impacts on that person and those around them. The same can be said of each of the conflict modes. The trick is to understand when to use which style.

2.2.4 Using Styles Strategically

While every person can use all five styles at different times; we tend to prefer one or two habitual responses in conflict situations. For example, a person may unconsciously use the compromising style of approaching conflict even when the situation would move more quickly and effectively if they were using an accommodating approach. In order to be effective in conflict situation, you will need to learn to expand your use of conflict strategies.

2.2.5 Strategy grid

An easy way to use the conflict styles strategically is to use the following grid. First, assess your situation: What is the most important to you? Team? Organization? Is it the goal or is it the relationship involved? When the relationship matters the most, use the strategies on the right of the grid (i.e., collaboration or accommodation). If the goal is vital to maintain, above all else, you could use the top two strategies of the grid (i.e., competitive or collaborative). When the result and relationship are both relatively important to you, a compromising style will probably be most effective. If neither the goal nor relationship matter, avoiding conflict may be the best bet.

Cheat sheet:

goal high (most important) and relationship low = compete

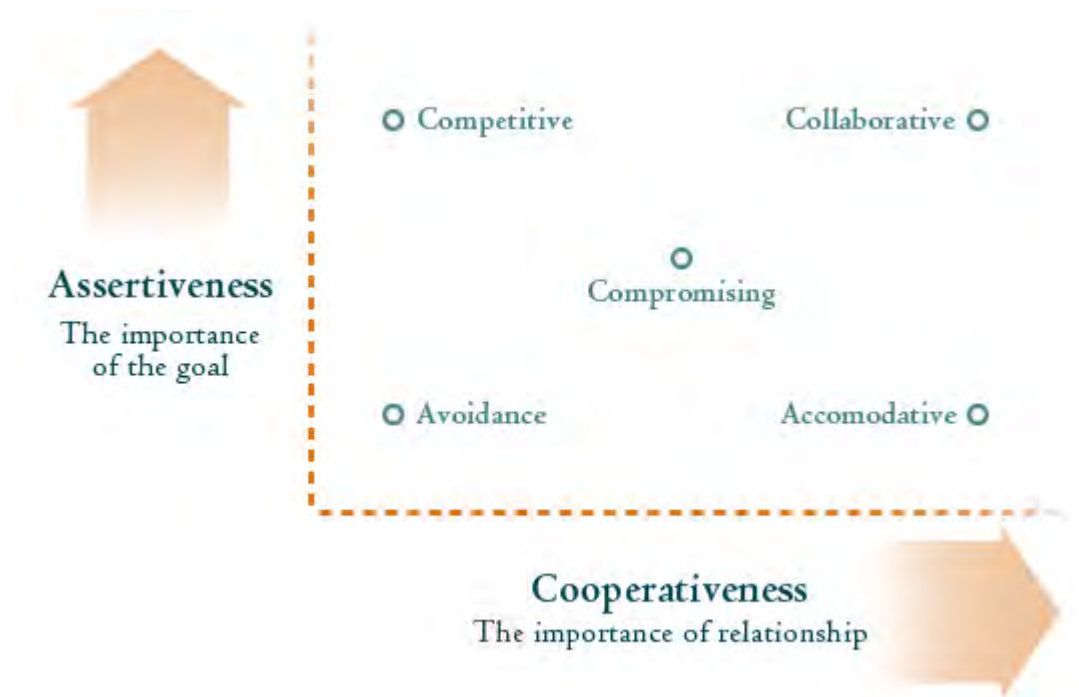
goal low and relationship high = accommodate

goal AND relationship high = collaborate

goal AND relationship low = avoid

goal and relationship are equally important = compromise

The grid is useful for thinking through any given situation.



When assessing what conflict resolution strategy to use, also consider the impact and energy your efforts will make. For example, in many organizations coming to consensus is a valued way of working and making decisions together. For obvious reasons, the "win/win" result of consensus or collaboration is the most rewarding for all parties involved. That being said, it is not always the best approach. It is the most difficult of all styles to achieve due to the high amount of participation, cooperation and time required by you and the other person(s). Before engaging in any type of conflict situation, take a step back (breathe and count to 5) and do a quick scan of the situation to ascertain which style would have the most impact.

Lastly, check your perceptions, clarify your understanding of the conflict and be tough on issues, not on people. Conflicts can help you deepen your relationships, help you identify what matters most, release emotions and act as a cleanser in your relationships – getting rid of irritations and resentments. In the end, conflict navigated successfully can build trust and increase your self-confidence.

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- Timely and accurate data on availability and distribution of health workers is accessible for informed decision making

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