

WS11 The psychology of supporting aid workers I

How could this workshop make a difference to your practice as a pastoral carer, psychologist or mental health supporter?

Aid work comes at a personal cost to those who opt to deploy to the field. This is now well accepted and affirmed by the growing research conducted in recent years complementing what HR departments and individual aid workers around the world have known for decades. Recognition of the mental health of aid workers has come a long way in Australia in the past 10-15 years with many of the international aid agencies now embracing the importance of systematized psychological support of their personnel, embedded in workplace, health and safety strategy and processes.

Aid organizations and individual aid workers alike will often seek out mental health support services to supplement their own processes of preparing for deployment, maintaining resilience in the field or supporting recovery from the demands of undertaking aid work.

For mental health supporters to be effective in working with the humanitarian sector, it is essential that they bring contextual knowledge, awareness, insight and preferably experience to their role.

This is the first day of the 3-day workshop being offered in 2020 for pastoral carers and mental health supporters interested in offering psychosocial support in relevant and informed ways to the aid sector. The workshop aims to provide a practical and contextual orientation to the psychology of working with international humanitarian workers.

Based on both research and the facilitator having worked in the role of psychologist with humanitarian staff from a vast range of organizations for many years, the workshops will provide an opportunity for professional development specifically contextualized for the needs of international humanitarian workers.

In this first day of the workshop, participants will consider the various existential tensions and psychosocial risks prevalent in aid work and be introduced to the system within which humanitarian workers operate. The role of the mental health care or pastoral carer will also be considered relevant to co-existing systems, networks, operational cultures and adjustment challenges that face the aid worker across the cycle of deployment.

What are the topics covered on Day 1?

- Existential perspectives on international humanitarian work
- The role of motivation, ideology, prior experience and assumptions
- Psychosocial risks of the humanitarian field environment
- Short and long term consequences of humanitarian work
- The deployment cycle and emotional phases of deployment
- The systems and protocols of psychosocial support within aid organizations
- The role of the pastoral carer / mental health professional in relation to the role of organizations

What are the take-aways from Day 1 of the workshop?

Techniques and tools for understanding and supporting deployees in the mobilization phase of their assignment. Feedback from the facilitator offered during simulation and role play practice. A comprehensive folder of resources.

How is the training conducted & facilitated?

Training is conducted in small groups to ensure that training is tailored to meet the needs of workshop participants. All training is designed specifically for the context of supporting personnel working in international humanitarian or development agencies. Participants are invited to share their goals and level of experience with the facilitator prior to the training.

Workshops are facilitated in a strongly interactive and specifically contextualized way for those working in the international humanitarian and development sector. Workshops aim to be engaging and may use a variety of training & learning modalities such as contextualization, case examples, participant experience, application of frameworks, demonstration, mini seminars (based on research & practitioner experience), reflective activity, mapping & analysis, group discussions, brainstorming, problem-solving, film clips, hypotheticals and simulations, quizzes, participant-led presentations, role plays (for trying out new skills), coaching and structured peer consultation processes.

Who is the facilitator?

Amanda Allan is the facilitator of this training. She is a psychologist with extensive experience working with international aid agencies, humanitarian aid workers and volunteers. Her work is largely informed by years of professional practice in counselling, briefing & debriefing, facilitating, consulting, mentoring, coaching and education as well as research undertaken as a PhD student at the University of Melbourne over a prolonged period. Amanda led the first Australian 3-day forum in 2003 that envisioned a charter for systematically strengthening the psychological support of aid workers involved in humanitarian work. She also founded the Mandala Foundation and was its executive director up until 2012.

Is there any follow-up to the training such as coaching and mentoring or further training opportunities?

A feature of Amanda's training is not only its tailored approach but the opportunity for follow-up mentoring or coaching. This is offered on a small group basis or individually by Skype or phone. Amanda also offers regular peer consultation opportunities for participants who have attended her workshops previously and who are interested in an opportunity for review, reflection, reinforcement or refreshment of concepts covered in previous workshops.

Workshop date: Friday, 16th October, 2020

Workshop commences: 9.30am

Workshop concludes: 5.00pm

Workshop venue: The Travel Inn, corner of Grattan and Drummond Streets, Carlton (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia)

Workshop fee: Per participant fee: AUD \$ 1,200 (incl. gst) for 3 day training package
20% discount if purchased prior to 16th June (cost \$ 960 including gst)
10% discount if purchased prior to 16th August (cost \$ 1080 including gst)
Postgraduate students who've graduated within the last 12 months and have an interest in humanitarian staff support psychology are welcome to attend the workshops at a 50% discount.

How do I register? Submit an online registration form

Enquiries? Email: workshops@thehumanitarian.com.au or phone 1300 057 303