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Abstract

The non-profit sector has experienced a rapid internationalization during the past 20 years and it is also expected to grow due to continued contribution to emergence response and poverty alleviation. Although aspects of expatriate management have been extensively researched, relatively little is known about international human resource management in non-profit organizations and about adjustment of aid workers. The purpose of this study is to contribute to this research gap by examining theories of expatriate adjustment and their relevance in non-profit organizations. The research objective is to find out what is critical in Finnish aid workers' expatriate adjustment in non-profit organizations. This aim was pursued by exploring factors that influence the aid workers' anticipatory adjustment and in-country adjustment phases. Also the process of cross-cultural adjustment is described.

The research is qualitative and it was conducted by interviewing six Finns with experience in aid work. The interview method used is a theme interview and the themes were developed from theoretical models of expatriate adjustment and the circumstances characteristics to the aid work. The results indicate that the models of expatriate adjustment can be quite well applied to aid workers. However, some modifications need to be made. The important factors in the anticipatory adjustment of Finnish aid workers are previous experience, training, selection criteria and the individual factors. The in-country adjustment is influenced by individual, job, organizational and non-work factors. Some of the most important facilitating factors within these categories were individual's self-efficacy and motivation, social and mental support received from the organization and social life and leisure time activities. The biggest hindering factors for Finnish aid workers' adjustment were role conflict and limited freedom. Unlike the theory suggested role novelty, organization culture novelty, culture novelty or high-risk location did not have significance in aid workers' adjustment. The adjustment process did not exactly follow the U-curve model, but many of its phases were also experienced by Finnish aid workers.

The research suggests that organizations should provided training, improve co-operation between different participants in humanitarian and developmental aid, provide more social and mental support and consider the options for improving the social life and leisure time activities within the limited possibilities of the location. The further research on the expatriate adjustment of aid workers is suggested to concentrate on more specific issues and to use longitudinal method. Other possible topics could be related to repatriation or collaborations between the non-profit organizations, governments and for-profit organizations.

Key words	adjustment, expatriate, Finnish, aid worker, non-profit organization
Further information	