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Office Closure

AN EISF GUIDE FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

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European Interagency Security Forum (EISF)

The European Interagency Security Forum (EISF) is anindependent platform for Security Focal Points from European humanitarian agencies operating overseas. EISF members are committed to improving the safety and security of relief operations and staff in a way that allows greater access to and impact for crisis-affected populations.

Key to EISF's work is the development of research and tools which promote awareness, preparedness and good practice.

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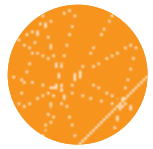
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Office Closure

Contents

Introduction

Office and programme closures happen regularly in the humanitarian sector. Some organisations take operational decisions to work only in first-phase emergency response contexts and so will rapidly establish and withdraw from a programme location; some establish humanitarian response operations but will only stay for the long term if certain development indicators are met (such as poverty levels) and some programmes close as a result of achieving the original goals, or because of economic or organisational constraints. In this guide these are referred to as **planned closures**.

However, other programmes will need to close because of changes in the operational context. These are referred to as **forced closures**.

Regardless of the reason for closure, the hazards of not approaching the process in a considered and organised way remain the same. Of primary concern are the security risks that can arise. How stakeholders are made aware of the closure, and supported during the preparation for departure, will be crucial in minimising these risks.

Furthermore, organisations are bound by a duty of care to all those involved in an office or programme closure. Internationally recognised humanitarian standards and codes of conduct, to which many organisations are a signatory, refer to accountability to, and inclusion of, beneficiaries, a duty of care for the staff employed, and a responsibility to treat people with humanity and dignity. These principles are intended to cover all humanitarian activity, and therefore should be incorporated into any programme throughout the closure process.

Failing to manage the closure process appropriately can leave the organisation vulnerable to:

- reputational damage, hindering other programmes in the area or country, and making it difficult to return with new programmes
- risk of abuse or violence to staff
- theft of organisational or personal resources
- ill feeling, which may extend to the humanitarian community in general, putting other organisations' programmes and staff at risk
- poor accountability to donors and supporters

It is usual for a closure process to include an internal or external audit. Attention must therefore be given to administrative details, as the closure is not the final operation conducted by the organisation.

A substantial amount of groundwork and preparations will need to be completed before reaching the final point of closure. Time and resources must be made available, individual staff roles and responsibilities need to be well thought-out and defined, and transparency and communication around the process must be given high importance.

About this guide

A well-planned and transparent approach to office closure can avoid many of the detrimental impacts detailed above. This guide is not an alternative to adequate planning, but will help you plan, coordinate and implement a successful closure, whether used:

- at the start of the programme, to plan eventual closure
- at the start of the programme, to develop contingency plans for forced closure
- during the programme to plan a closure
- at the time of forced closure to guide the process

It is not an exhaustive list of do's and don'ts. You will need to adapt the tools to your organisation's specific context and day-to-day operations.

The guide applies equally to both planned and forced closures, as the actions required generally remain the same; only the time frame and preparation process change.

> The underlying principle for a successful closure is *appropriate communications*. Remember that different methods of communication will work for different types of people in different situations.

How to use this guide

The guide deals with a number of work sectors, such as finance and logistics, that need to be considered when planning a closure. The intention is that staff can easily consult a specific section relevant to their duties and responsibilities. At the start of each chapter, a navigational chart highlights in green which stage which stage of the process will be discussed.

The following are provided:

- checklists of actions at the end of each chapter. These can be expanded using the checklist template in Tool 1 and are indicated with a ✍
- crucial points and tips, indicated with 🔔
- expert accounts, indicated with 💬
- hyperlinks for easy navigation
- cross references within the guide, indicated with ▶
- tools, including templates and checklists, referenced throughout with the symbol ✂

Information for forced closures is highlighted with ⚠

The templates and checklists are also available to download in editable format from **www.eisf.eu** Checklists and templates need to be modified to suit each organisation and context.

> **Closure planning must be organisation- and context-specific. When alternative suggestions for actions are offered, you will have to choose the most appropriate for your particular programme or office to be closed.**

Closure process

A closure process is not a linear operation. In each context there will be different requirements which will have an impact on each other.

However, there are some overarching principles and activities, such as the communications strategy, which will need to be developed before tackling the more discrete process involved in, for example, finance and logistics.

This Closure Process diagram details the hierarchy of principles and activities involved in a closure but also demonstrates that none of the actions can be considered independently. The Communications Strategy is crucial to any closure.

① Planning

Planning → Co-ordination of Office Closure → Security, Communications Strategy, Information Management → Finance, Human Resources, Logistics, Programmes
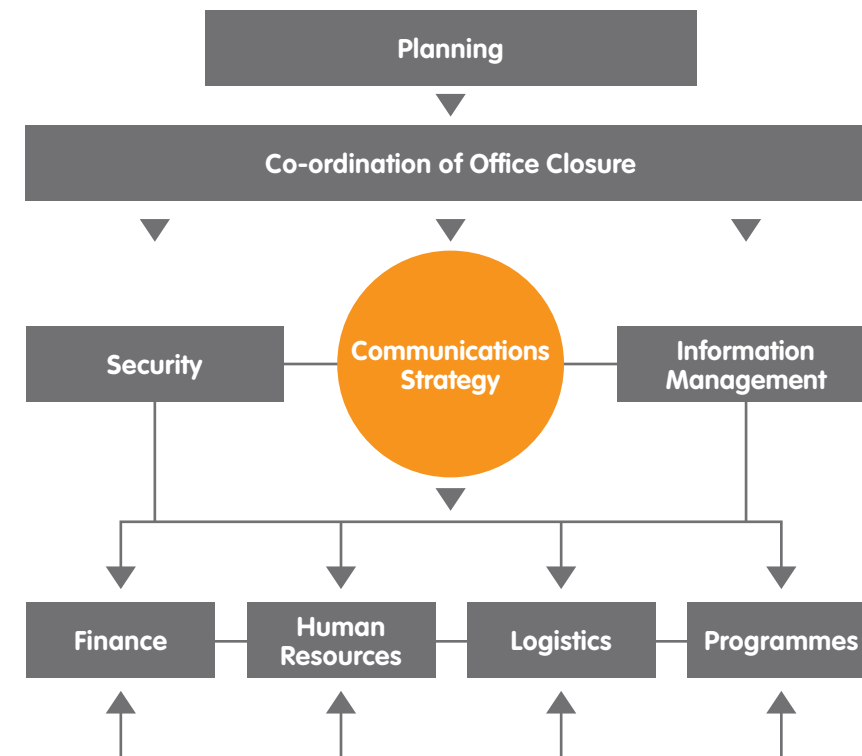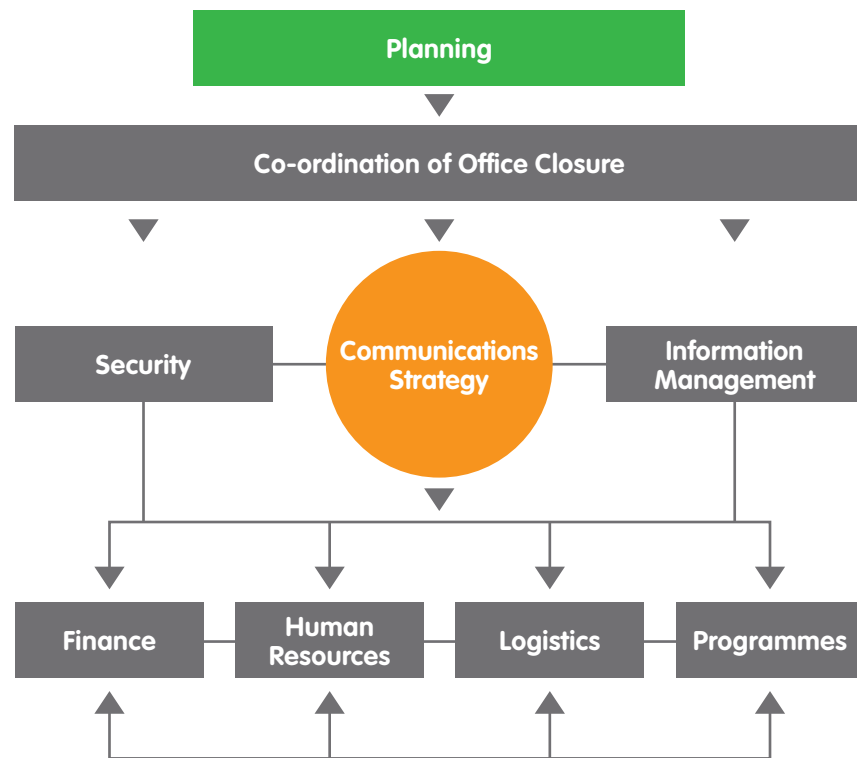
'What can you do in advance so there isn't so much pressure at the end?' [2]

Not every scenario can be planned for but there will be generic processes that can be identified to cover most situations. Ideally, a simulation exercise can be carried out to ensure preparedness for a real closure.

It is also possible to plan for forced closures and suspensions. There should be a contingency plan to cover situations where forced office closure may occur, and it should include both the processes to follow and the actions to take. There are different types of forced closures, for example:

- permanent closure of programmes and office
- closing a programme while maintaining an office in that locality
- closing an office but continuing the programme through remote management/partners
- a temporary rapid closure, which may last from a few hours to a number of days (suspension)

The following points should be kept in mind during the planning process:

- closure should be planned for from the commencement of a new programme
- the closure plan should be included in relevant policies, procedures and budgets
- an exit strategy should be included in the programme planning cycle
- aim for openness, transparency and clarity throughout the process.
  ▶ *See section 4: Communications Strategy*
- make sure that staff with closure responsibilities document the process.
- plan a lessons review at the end of the process to aid future organisational learning
- consider the needs of both international and national staff
- ensure staff feel part of the process; ask for their advice and input, do not just dictate
- risks will change during the closure process. Appropriate risk management should be built in

Organisations tend to repeat similar mistakes. So before starting a closure plan ask for advice to avoid making the same errors and to reduce costs and mismanagement.

Develop a checklist of activities for each work sector. Suggested headings are:

- Action
- Person responsible
- Deadline

Tool 1

Planning checklist

2 Coordination of Office Closure
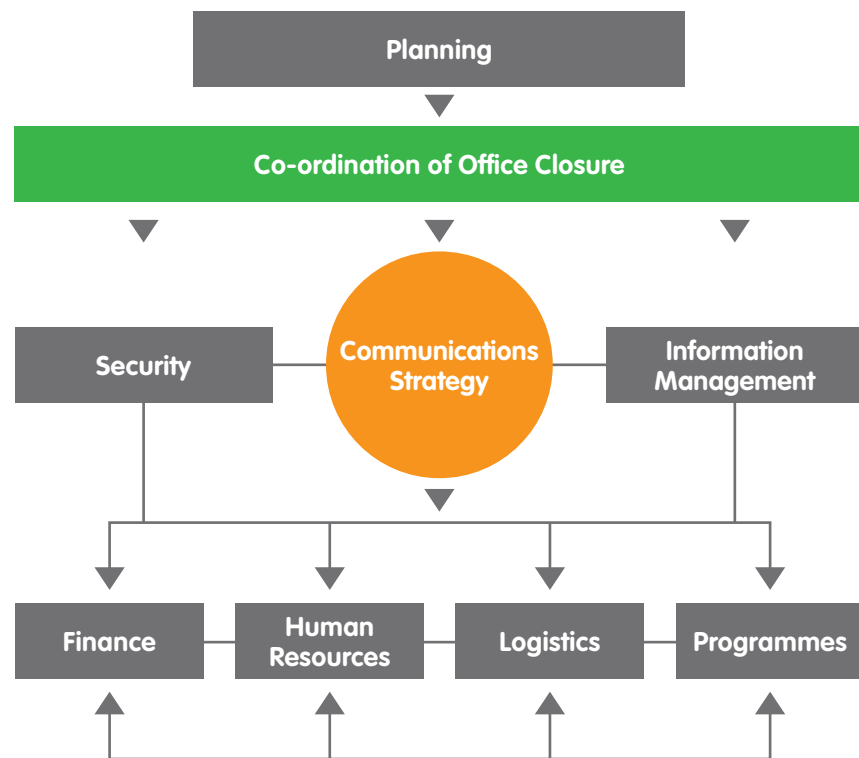
2.1   **Responsibility**

2.2   **Health and safety**

2.3   **Legal issues**

        Coordination checklist

2.1 Responsibilty

'A new CD was appointed just as the office closure process began. Although it was unintended, it seemed as though she came in as part of the exit strategy, and was able to work through the closure without getting bogged down in past histories, providing a more objective viewpoint to help guide the office through the closure.' [3]

In every closure it is important that someone takes overall responsibility to ensure closure operations are managed successfully. This may be the current Head of Office or senior manager, but if a programme has been running for a long time, or particular difficulties are anticipated, an 'Exit Programme Manager' (Exit PM) could be considered, to provide greater independence. This post could last from 3 to 18 months, depending on the scale of the office to be closed. Appointing a senior local staff member from the project area may help to reduce local tensions; however, this could also expose them to greater security risks.

▶ *See section 3.1: Risk Assessment*

▶ *See section 7: Human Resources*

It may be appropriate to appoint an audit/records manager to ensure all information management requirements are met.

▶ *See section 5: Information Management*

Dedicated visits from senior management based away from the location of closure (e.g. country, regional or headquarter offices) will help to convey the organisation's commitment to a successful closure.

The Exit PM should take responsibility for the progress of the closure, to make sure that planning targets and deadlines are met, to supervise activities relating to HR and logistics/administration, and to ensure commitments made to staff and other stakeholders are met. This will reduce the pressure on the Head of Office, who is then able to spend more time engaging in communication with all stakeholders.' [4]

Tool 2
TOR for an Exit PM

In anticipation of a forced closure, identify one or two appropriate local staff members who can take responsibility to finalise any actions and complete any remaining tasks once other staff have departed.

Also, consider making arrangements with a legal entity or another organisation that will remain in the country (or the area, if closing a sub-office), to allow remote operations or finalisation of actions (e.g. supplier payments).

2.2 Health and safety

- Review Human Resources procedures to make sure they cover the added pressures that closure will place on staff, (e.g. increased workloads, financial concerns, uncertain futures, community resentment) and that they recognise the different needs of local, relocated national, and international staff.
- Re-communicate the responsibilities of all staff.
- Remember that staff tend to be more vulnerable during closure periods, and mistakes can happen.
- Consider identifying counselling support for staff; other international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), local respected hospitals or doctors may be able to help identify reputable individuals or organisations which can help.
  ▶ *See section 7.3: Counselling*

2.3 Legal issues

Make sure there is full understanding of, and strict compliance with, legal requirements, to avoid unexpected problems.

- **Local laws** – check that you have copies of relevant local laws, especially local labour law(s), and financial/tax laws. If these are not available, speak to other employers in the area to determine your obligations.
- **Legal assistance** – consider identifying a reputable law firm – other INGOs may be able to make recommendations. Such a firm will be able to:
  - help you navigate contracts (buildings, vehicles, employment)
  - complete local legal responsibilities (tax issues, transfer of assets, etc.)
  - finalise outstanding issues after staff have left the country.
- **Reports/audits** – in many countries organisations can be requested to provide reports, audits, etc. even years after the closure of programmes. Plan for rigorous documenting and archiving.
  ▶ *See section 5: Information Management*
- **Contracts** – any contract developed throughout the life of a country programme should be phrased with a possible closure in mind, to avoid lengthy and expensive negotiations when closing.
- **De-registration** – if the organisation is leaving the country completely, plan for de-registration with all government agencies. This can vary from simply not renewing annual registration to requiring extensive, time-consuming documentation.
  - The process can take months – research the situation early to avoid delays.
  - Consult any Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed with the government, to understand what your obligations are.

- **Taxation** – ensure all financial requirements are submitted promptly to the authorities. De-registration processes will often require payment verification documentation from the tax authorities.

Coordination of Office Closure Checklist

		Action	Cross reference
		Responsibility	
	⚠	Identify those responsible for managing closure operations	Tool 2: TOR for Exit PM
🔔	⚠	Identify apropriate local staff to finalise actions after other staff depart	
	⚠	Identify a legal entity/organisation to facilitate remote operations	
	⚠	Appoint an audit/records manager	Information Management
		Schedule visits from remote organisational management	
🔔	⚠	Assign staff responsibilities for documenting closure process	
	⚠	Schedule lessons review post–closure	
		Health & Safety	
		Review Health and Safety Strategy/Plan	
		Re-communicate staff responsibilities with regard to health and safety	
	⚠	Identify counselling support for staff	Human Resources: Counselling
		Legal issues	
🔔		Consult local laws, e.g. labour, tax	
		Seek legal assistance in-country	
		Plan for de-registration	
🔔		Ensure all financial requirements are submitted/processed	Finance
		Planning	
🔔		Assign staff responsibilities for documenting closure process	
🔔		Schedule lessons review post–closure	
		Archiving and information management	
🔔		Determine types of documents to be kept/archived	Information management
🔔	⚠	Carry out a documentation assessment	
🔔	⚠	Determine process for storing/deleting electronic data	
🔔	⚠	Schedule lessons review post–closure	
🔔	⚠	Update policies and procedures to reflect lessons learnt	
		Learning	
		Share coordination lessons learnt with other country programmes in your organisation and other agencies	

3 Security

3.1 **Risk assessment**

3.2 **Staff security**

✒ **Security checklist**

Planned programme or office closures will have implications for an organisation's security, regardless of how well the closure is managed.

- Begin the closure process with a full risk assessment which considers the context change that either:
  – has caused a forced office closure
  – or will be the result of a planned office closure

- Design mitigating measures to reduce or eliminate the risks identified.
- Consider revising standard operating procedures and contingency plans for the period of the office closure process.

3.1 Risk assessment

'The last week before full closure can be the highest risk period for theft, sabotage, unpleasant visits from suppliers, government and tax officials, corrupt officials demanding certain favours or assets, etc. Plan to keep this last week free, allowing time to handle the unexpected.' [5]

Consider potential risks from all actors who may be affected by your closure.

- Consult the list of stakeholders in the Communications Strategy to include actors not normally identified in risk assessments; consider secondary or indirect stakeholders.
  ▶ *Section 4: Communications strategy*
- Staff potentially pose a significant threat to other staff, the organisation and its programmes and it's assets; give this careful consideration in the risk assessment and when assigning closure responsibilities. For example, giving a staff member the task of leading the closure might increase his/her vulnerability.
- Identify and monitor indicators of dissatisfaction, particularly among:
  – Staff
  – Beneficiaries
  – Community leaders
  – Local officials
  – Partners
  – Suppliers

Tool 3
Closure Risk Analysis

'In one country, an organisation was asked to leave at very short notice. It became impossible to work with existing national staff members to finalise operations, as some of the staff became very threatening towards the organisation, endangering both international staff and supportive national staff. The organisation used key, trustworthy external relationships (such as within the communities, with suppliers, etc.) to complete operations.' [6]

- Maintaining your organisational acceptance is key to adequate security. Impressions of complacency, arrogance or avoidance are liable to reduce acceptance of both your organisation and other agencies.

- Additional protection measures, physical and procedural, may be required, but consider any possible impact on your acceptance strategy.

- When designing your Communications Strategy, consider the security implications of the messages and methods of communication; build in appropriate measures to deal with any negative/hostile reactions.

  ▶ *See Section 4: Communications strategy*

- Farewell events may attract a lot of attention: they should be modest, and if possible, local beneficiaries should be the centre of attention.

  ▶ *See section 7.5: Staff recognition*

Tool 8
Certificate of Service

- All staff, particularly nationally recruited staff, should be warmly thanked for their work and presented with a certificate of service/or other formal recognition.

  ▶ *See section 7.5: Staff recognition*

Forced office or programme closures should be anticipated and planned for in country security guidelines/plan. This should include all aspects of closure discussed in this document, with adequate prioritisation given to essential tasks. Preparation and creative approaches to anticipated problems will reduce the time needed to adequately complete tasks prior to withdrawal.

3.2 Staff security [8]

Staff security should remain of primary importance throughout the closure period.

Particular attention should be given to the following points:

- Staff numbers will dwindle as the closure date approaches; consider moving international and relocated national staff into alternative accommodation (e.g. hotels, other non-governmental organisation [NGO] residences or UN compounds) if they become isolated or more vulnerable.

- International staff and key national staff should maintain means of communication until the departure/closure date (mobiles, satellite phones or radios).

- In locations where security communication checks are used, ensure continuity in adhering to these procedures.

- Maintain up-to-date staff movement lists with embassies and UN offices for possible evacuation purposes.

Be cautious about revealing detailed information such as exact date and time of final departure.

- Staff thought to be carrying significant assets as they leave will be subject to increased risk.

- Plan to conduct goodbyes with relevant stakeholders either well in advance of the departure time or after assets and data have been removed.

- When leaving the country, be prepared for over-zealous officials complaining of discrepancies in tax affairs/labour laws/asset transfer arrangements.

- Consider arranging an escort (formal or informal) to the airport by trusted senior officials from ministries, the UN or diplomatic missions to help avoid such problems.

'The greatest security threat is likely to be internal. Identify possible indicators of this at the start of the process (such as staff avoiding their own line manager, staff making negative comments about the organisation, absenteeism, etc.) so those responsible for managing the closure process can monitor the risks.' [9]

Monitoring for return

If a security situation forces an office closure or programme suspension, it will be important to assess when it is safe to return. Monitoring the situation remotely will be difficult, so systems should be developed, as part of the contingency planning process, to improve access to valid information.

If a return is considered, you need to have clearly identified and documented the reasons for leaving and indicators that would allow for return.

If local staff members are likely to remain in the area in the event of a withdrawal, consider giving them access to a means of communication and training in its use. This may be a mobile phone and credit, a satellite phone, or radio communications. Ensure they understand not to put themselves at risk in trying to communicate with you.

Consider developing a network of key informants in the area whom you can contact in the event of a withdrawal. These may be local government representatives, community leaders, or key community members (e.g. doctors, teachers). Work out how lines of communication can best be set up, but be aware that each person may have their own motivations that will influence the information they share.

3.3 After closure

Following the closure of the office it is important to ensure that the organisation learns from the process for future similar events. Consider:

- de-briefing of relevant staff (national and international)
- evaluation of the closure process, as soon as possible
- organisational learning event
- sharing information with other organisations through NGO coordination mechanisms

Security Checklist

		Action	Cross reference
		Risk assessment	
		Review Security Plan, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Contingency Plans	
🐦	⚠	Conduct full updated operations risk assessment	Tool 3: Closure Risk Analysis
🐦	⚠	Design mitigating measures	Communications strategy
		Staff security	
		Consider relocating international staff into alternative accommodation	
🐦	⚠	Update staff movements lists with embassies and UN offices	
		Schedule goodbyes with relevant stakeholders	Human Resources: Staff recognition
		Arrange an escort (formal or informal) to the airport	Tool 8: work certificate
		Monitoring for return	
🐦	⚠	Identify indicators for safe return	
	⚠	Establish a means of communication with local staff	
		Consider developing a network of key informants in the area	
		Learning	
		Share security lessons learnt with other country programmes in your organisation and other agencies	

(Left margin vertical label: Security)

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④ Communications Strategy
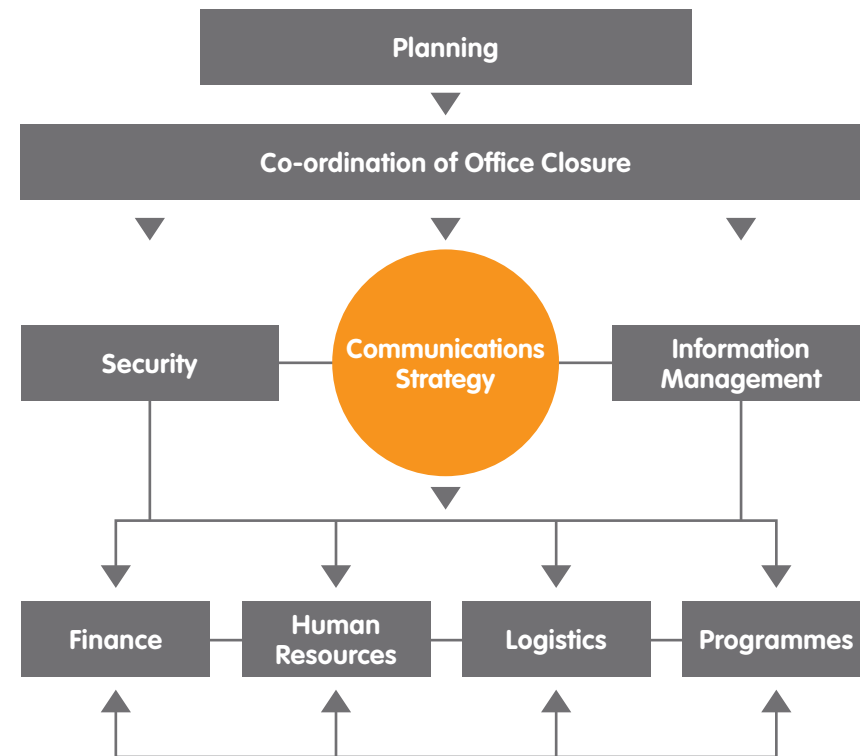
4.1   **Stakeholders**

4.1.1   **Directly affected staff**

4.1.2   **Staff in the wider organisation**

4.1.3   **Partners**

4.1.4   **Community and Beneficiaries**

4.1.5   **NGOs/UN/international community**

4.1.6   **Local and national Authorities**

4.1.7   **Donors**

📝   **Checklist**

(Right margin vertical label: Communications)

Honesty, transparency and consistency are the primary principles by which to work when undertaking an office or programme closure.

Good communications underpin a successful office closure. Developing a communications strategy, along with the risk assessment, should be the first priority following a decision to close an office or programme. This should outline:

- what you are trying to achieve
- the main messages to be communicated
- the stakeholders with whom you need to communicate
- the methods and frequency of communications
- the person/people responsible for those communications.

The details of the communications strategy will be affected by the operating context, the scale, and the type of the programme or office closing.

A simple communications strategy can be prepared as part of the contingency planning for forced closure, in order to guide staff through communications activities in the event of a rapid, temporary withdrawal.

Messages must be kept simple and consistent across all stakeholders.

Think through the implications of each method of communication to ensure that different people are able to access the information. Consider:

- levels of detail required by each stakeholder, e.g. donors will require different information from that required by local government officials
- frequency of communications to each stakeholder
- multiple methods of communication for each audience (e.g. meeting, email)
- timing of communications to different stakeholders
- security implications of messages and methods of communication. Design mitigating actions and contingency plans accordingly

The communications strategy should be reviewed as circumstances change throughout the closure process, and updated if required.

How you are perceived as you close is likely to be remembered longer than the impact of your programmes.

4.1 Stakeholders

'Determining a clear exit message, and staying consistent to that message with every stakeholde,r is essential – you can't tell different people a different story.' [10]

The following are the main stakeholders who may be affected by the closure.

- Staff directly affected
- Staff indirectly affected
- Wider organisational staff
- Partners
- Beneficiaries
- Neighbours (office/compound/warehouse, etc.)
- Suppliers
- Community leaders (religious leaders/community elders/teachers, etc.)
- Local government
- Military/Police
- Opposition groups (political/armed)
- Other international organisations (INGOs/UN/IOs)
- National government
- Other NGOs
- Donors

A summary table of stakeholders, suggested objectives for the communication strategy, key messages, methods for communication and persons responsible for disseminating the information are given in Tool 4.

Tool 4

Communications Plan

Aim to leave behind a positive relationship with the community as well as individuals, remembering the organisation's purpose in working there, and avoiding potential negative sentiment towards your, or other, organisations.

Consider developing communication support packs for different 'audiences' to support those responsible for communications, e.g. managers communicating to staff, programme officers communicating to beneficiary communities. Include:

- outline of their responsibilities
- key messages to communicate
- timescales for communications
- consultation/complaints processes

Carefully plan translations for communicating messages. Inexperienced translators may translate the words but not the meaning.

- For translation/delivery of verbal messages, use only trusted staff/community members who understand the decision and the process well.

- For written messages, reverse-translate to check the meaning has been conveyed as intended.

> During forced closure the communications strategy will have to consider all the same stakeholders as for a planned closure, and the objective for each will remain the same. Although key messages may also be similar, methods of communication and timelines will be very different.
>
> In a forced closure, security risks will be a major concern. A good communication strategy, which considers all the different stakeholder groups, can be crucial in mitigating risks and should be considered as a priority.

4.1.1 Directly affected staff

Objective: To maintain staff morale, in order to ensure the office continues to function effectively throughout the closure process and to minimise the risk of internal threats from disgruntled staff.

To make sure that consistent messaging is passed by staff to the wider community (beneficiaries and other stakeholders) to minimise security risks.

Key messages: What is happening to the office and why, and how this will affect the individual and the programmes.

The timescale and steps that will be followed and what should the individuals' expectations be.

- Communicate the decision and planned actions to senior staff first, then managers, followed by a general announcement.

- Make sure those told know what information they can and cannot share further.

- Assume that rumours will spread. Ensure that wider information dissemination is done in a timely manner.

- Prepare managers for the questions and issues that may arise from staff.

- Consider appointing staff representatives as a focal point for staff discussions and a practical two-way channel to transmit questions, comments and concerns.

- Ensure discussion of:
  - background and reason for office/programme closure decision

Tool 4

Communications Plan

- timeline of closure activities and staff redundancies
- termination package details, both financial and non-financial
- any anticipated difficulties
- the need for continuing support and focus on programme delivery.

- Make staff aware of other opportunities, e.g. training for transferable skills, links with other agencies recruiting new staff, disposal of assets.

  ▶ *Section 7: Human Resources*

A notification to individual staff should follow any full staff announcements to confirm the situation and inform of the termination process directly affecting them. Give sufficient time for them to consider the information, and provide an opportunity to discuss:

- background and reason for their termination
- timeline of termination process
- individual package details (financial elements)
- additional organisational support/provision (e.g. workshops for interviewing skills, CV writing

  ▶ *See section 7: Human Resources*

- other relevant information (may include counselling options)

Follow up any verbal communications with written notification for both general communications and private/confidential letters to those individuals affected. Generally email is not sufficient.

Consideration should be given to addressing the needs of different types of staff. Lower paid and unskilled staff such as cleaners, guards and drivers may find it most difficult to find alternative employment and may be most at risk from extortion threats.

▶ *See section 3: Security*

4.1.2 Staff in the wider organisation

Objective: To make certain that a consistent message is disseminated throughout the organisation and wider community.

To maintain staff morale and ensure support is available for the office closure process if required.

To minimise the risk of internal and external security threats.

Key messages: What is happening to the office and why, and how this will affect colleagues and the programmes. The timescale and steps that will be taken.

Tool 6

Notification letter of termination to staff on fixed-term contracts

Tool 7

Notification letter to staff of reduction in number of posts

Staff external to the office/country programme being closed should also be informed of the decision, in order to limit misconceptions as to why the closure is taking place. This includes staff within the country, region and headquarters.

> **Rumours will spread fast, and if there is no official information they will be circulated as facts.**

4.1.3 Partners

Objective: To maintain an effective and functioning partnership throughout the closure process so that programmes can be completed as planned.

To ensure a consistent message is disseminated throughout the partner organisation and wider community.

To minimise the risk of external security threats.

Key messages: What is happening to the office and why, how this will affect the partner and the partner's programmes. The timescale and steps that will be taken.

How this information should be disseminated to beneficiaries and the wider community.

Once staff have been informed, partner organisations should be told of the office closure. The impact of this information is potentially equivalent to that on your own organisation's staff, and so requires an equal amount of sensitivity.

Provide opportunities to discuss the closure implications, and to identify what is expected from both parties as you work towards the close. Also, provide partners with a point of contact for further information.

▶ *Section 9: Programmes*

Tool 4

Communications Plan

The management within the partner organisation should be supported to ensure the messages are disseminated in an appropriate and timely manner to their staff and beneficiaries. Consider providing them with a similar pack of information as that provided to your own managers and staff.

4.1.4 Community and beneficiaries

Objective: To maintain the (positive) reputation of the organisation and to ensure the acceptance (and community-based protection) security strategies continue.

To ensure beneficiaries understand what the changes will mean for them, and to manage their expectations.

To minimise security threats to staff and assets and allow the programmes to be completed as planned.

To alert neighbours and other contacts to changes in routine at the office or compound.

To manage expectations.

Key messages: Highlight the (positive) impacts that the organisation has achieved. Emphasise sustainability measures for beneficiaries, as well as partners, suppliers and staff.

Explain the context and reasons for closure.

Tool 4

Communications Plan

Members of the community and beneficiaries with whom you work will quickly hear about the planned closure from staff members, who are also often community members.

● As quickly as possible after informing your staff, communicate the decision to the community and beneficiaries, in order to prevent misunderstandings.

● Be open and transparent about the closure and give as much information as possible about:
  – timescales
  – the impact on the programme (completion, termination, or continuation through other organisations)
  – complaints and comments mechanisms they can use to ask questions or raise concerns

'If the programme has been well managed, a complaints mechanism should already be in place as part of the monitoring system. Use the information from this system to be consistent in your communication to the beneficiaries: show the results, the strengths and weaknesses the programme… In other words lead the process and do not react only to problems, otherwise you will be always late…' [11]

Also use the existing programme complaints and monitoring mechanisms to enable beneficiary and community feedback on the closure. Make sure that issues raised are addressed fully, and be transparent about the attitude and perceptions among the community and the organisation.

If expectations of the community or an individual have not been met as the organisation gets ready to depart, then there may be a sense of disappointment, anger or resentment. This can be expressed through demands or threats made against an individual or the organisation.

Expectations may arise from explicit promises, from misunderstandings, or from poor information flow. Aim to prevent this by:

- explaining the aims of the programme from the outset to community leaders
- updating the community and beneficiaries on programme progress
- being honest, transparent and disciplined in statements made, to avoid raising expectations inappropriately
- at closure, emphasise positive programme achievements.

If difficulties do arise, consider whether the grievances are legitimate. If so, the organisation will need to address the complaint, and possibly make compensation. If the complaint is not reasonable, then it must still be discussed, to avoid resentment which could threaten staff and organisational security. Discuss the issue with the individual or group concerned to clarify the situation. This may be best done in private to avoid causing embarrassment, but only if it is considered safe to do so.

4.1.5 NGOs/UN/international community

Objective: To maintain consistent messaging throughout.

To ensure your actions do not increase security risks to the broader international community and vice versa.

To increase opportunities for staff to find alternative employment.

Key messages: What is happening, when and why.

What information has been shared with staff / beneficiaries/community/authorities, etc.

Ongoing activities of communities/partners/staff for sustainability or final operations.

Details of programmes and staff competencies as appropriate.

Tool 4

Communications Plan

Decide which other organisations, institutions, networks and individuals need to be made aware of the closure and determine the most appropriate method of informing them. Programme hand-over options should also be explored at this stage.

4.1.6 Local and national authorities, including opposition groups and military

Objective: To ensure that the authorities support the closure process rather than hinder it.

To maintain consistent messaging throughout and minimise security risks.

To maintain (positive) reputation in case of return and/or minimise negative consequences in other areas of operation.

To be certain that all legal requirements are met.

To manage expectations

To minimize security threats to staff and assets and allow the programmes to be completed as planned.

Key messages: Explain the context and reasons for closure.

Highlight the (positive) impacts that the organisation has achieved. Emphasise sustainability measures for beneficiaries, as well as partners, suppliers and staff.

Meet any legal requirements.

Explain any risk management measures, if appropriate.

Relations with local and national authorities differ from one context to another. However, authorities will be aware of the organisation's presence, and may be heavily involved in the decisions and implementation of programmes. They are a potential source of advice and assistance if difficult circumstances are encountered, and are more likely to respond helpfully if they feel part of the process.

- Approach officials to seek advice about the planned closure and how the organisation might best deal with it. This can be especially important if they become difficult or aggressive.
- Inform the authorities of the closure decision and the reasons for it as soon as possible.
- Ensure they are also informed in writing as they may have to communicate the decision to higher levels.
- Stick to any agreed messages. Do not be tempted to hide or conceal key information in an attempt to smooth the process.
- Research applicable official or legal procedures such as de-registration or asset transfer and seek advice on how to proceed.
- Do not be tempted to bypass government legal requirements even if they seem unfair, e.g. regarding transfer of programme assets.
- Be prepared for any negotiations to take a long time; persevere to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Tool 4

Communications Plan

4.1.7 Donors

Objective: To ensure that the donor pays for all costs in accordance with the contract and that good relations are maintained for future funding opportunities.

Key messages: That the closure is in accordance with good practice, programme exit strategy and donor project agreement.

Highlight the (positive) impacts that the organisation has achieved and emphasise the sustainability measures for beneficiaries.

Keep donors regularly informed of decisions and activities for the planned closure. This will ensure a good working relationship during what is often a hectic process, and may ease operations at the final stages or in future programmes.

- Planned closures should be written into budgets and proposals wherever possible.
- Revisit the donor reporting requirements for any programmes that are due to close and ensure all the relevant information is being collected throughout the closure duration in order that donor reports can be completed and submitted on time.
- Make sure plans are In place to meet donor requirements in terms of asset disposal and audits.

▶ *See section 8.1: Assets*

▶ *See section 6.2: Close-down accounting*

Tool 4

Communications Plan

Communications Strategy Checklist

		Action	Cross reference
🔔	⚠️	**Stakeholders** Identify stakeholders, methods of communication and those responsible for the communications	
		Develop and circulate communication support packs	Tool 4: Communications plan
🔔	⚠️	**Staff** Communicate in order of: senior staff, managers, general announcement	Human Resources
		Pre-prepare questions and answers (FAQs)	
		Appoint staff representative(s)	
🔔		Individual staff notifications	
🔔		Inform staff external to the office/country programme	
🔔	⚠️	**Partners** Inform partner organisations	
		Appoint 'point of contact' for the partner organisations	
		Commence programme closure/continuation discussions	Programmes
🔔	⚠️	**Community/Beneficiaries** Communicate the closure	
🔔	⚠️	**NGOs/UN/international community** Communicate closure	
		Explore programme hand-over options	
🔔	⚠️	**Local and national authorities** Communicate closure decision and seek advice	Co-ordination: Legal Issues
🔔		Follow verbal with written communications	
🔔		Research government requirements for office closure	
🔔	⚠️	**Donors** Communicate closure decision	Finance: Close-down accounting
		Establish regular reporting on closure activities	
🔔	⚠️	Revisit the donor reporting requirements	Logistics: Assets
🔔	⚠️	**Security** Continually undertake risk assessment of messages and methods of communication	
🔔	⚠️	Design and implement appropriate risk mitigation actions	
		Learning Share communications lessons learnt with other country programmes in your organisation and other agencies	

5 Information management

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│            Planning              │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│   Co-ordination of Office Closure │
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│ Security │  │Communications│  │ Information  │
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│Finance │ │  Human   │ │Logistics │ │ Programmes │
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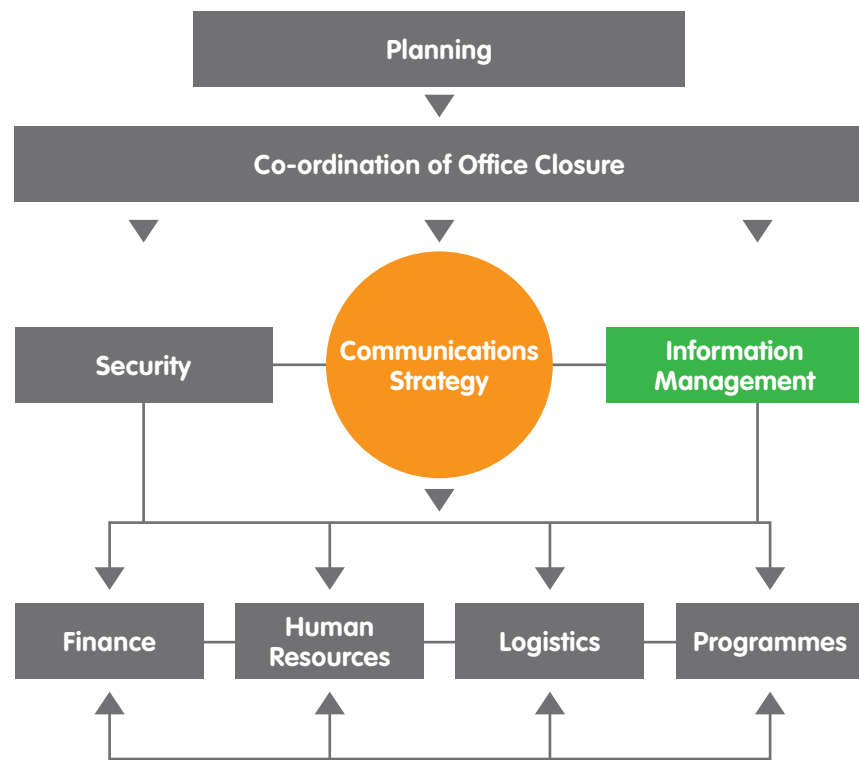
5.1	**Archiving and information management (electronic and hard-copy)**
5.2	**Hard-copy documents**
5.3	**Electronic information**
5.4	**Archiving manager**
	Information Management Checklist

5.1 Archiving and information management (electronic and hard-copy)

Many types of documents will need to be retained even after an office/programme has closed. Reasons for this include:

- organisational legal obligations beyond the lifetime of projects/programmes (both at HQ or in-country)
- human resources issues that may still arise after closure
- programme evaluation and to inform future activities (lessons learnt)
- historical information detailing critical events, project descriptions or results
- audit purposes, e.g. donors may request audits up to several years after the end of a project

A documentation assessment should be conducted at the beginning of a closure process or during forced office closure contingency planning to determine which documents need to be retained because:

- they need to be archived for legal/procedural reasons
- the host government requires them to be retained
- donors require them
- they may be of future relevance to the organisation /sector (e.g. for learning reviews)
- they contain sensitive information and must be discarded appropriately

And consider logistics:

- How to label and ship hard-copy documents (including country export regulations), and where they are to be sent
- How to archive electronic information (at location or remotely), including the process of thorough backups before moving files
- Reputable archiving and storage services in the country

Tool 5

Document Transfer Checklist

Make sure you have enough boxes, of the right size, in time to pack securely. Number each box, and list the contents. Send a copy of the list with the boxes.

> **Sensitive files and information that are not to be archived must be disposed of appropriately and thoroughly in accordance with the internal office procedures. These might include:**
> - **files with personal contact information (e.g. staff addresses, phone numbers, bank details)**
> - **HR files on disciplinary issues**
> - **writings, including political or military analysis, or discussion of human rights issues**

Contingency plans for forced closure should include measures to:
- ensure all electronic information is regularly backed up to offsite locations
- assess the security implications if sensitive hard-copy documents or electronic files are discovered in transit or during closure
- consider burying documents you do not want to destroy if you are expecting to re-establish operations in the future. Suitable locations and containers should be identified in advance
- consider assigning a local staff or community member to destroy or store documents in the event of a sudden departure, if it is safe for them to do so
- include instructions on fully deleting data
- consider the security implications of each decision

5.2 Hard-copy documents

Files to be disposed of should be shredded or burnt rather than simply being thrown away, particularly in complex security contexts or if the information contained in the documents could be misused.

If burning documents:
- a senior member of staff should take responsibility to see that the process is completed and documents are fully destroyed
- thick piles of paper will not burn easily on a home-made fire or oil-drum incinerator. Time must be taken to add papers in small bundles
- take adequate health and safety precautions
- consider the environmental impact

5.3 Electronic information

Data deleted from servers, hard drives and memory sticks is likely to be recoverable by an experienced computer expert if not done thoroughly.

- Assign a trusted IT expert to fully transfer or destroy electronic data from servers and hard-drives.
- Where an expert is not available, detailed advice and instructions will be needed, for example from HQ.
- Alternatively, remove servers, hard drives and memory sticks to be processed elsewhere, but consider that they may be intercepted by customs or other officials during transport.
- Throughout the programme period, names given to files and folders should be carefully considered.

5.4 Archiving manager

Processing, collecting and archiving documents (both electronic and hard-copy) often takes longer than expected, and requires much attention to detail. Consider employing an experienced document manager to oversee this process.

Information Management Checklist

		Action	Cross reference
		Archiving and information management	
		Review document retention policies for: the organisation; the host government; donors	Co-ordination: Legal issues
		Carry out documentation assessment	Tool 5: Document transfer checklist
	⚠	Determine how other files/information are to be disposed of, particularly those with sensitive information	
	⚠	**Hard-copy documents**	
		Assign senior responsibility for shredding or burning	Co-ordination
		Electronic information	
	⚠	Seek advice/instructions to transfer/destroy electronic data	
		Decide which servers, hard drives and memory sticks to take with you	
	⚠	Back up electronic information off-site	
		Archiving manager	
		Appoint an archiving manager	
		Learning	
		Share information management lessons learnt with other country programmes in your organisation and other agencies	

6 Finance
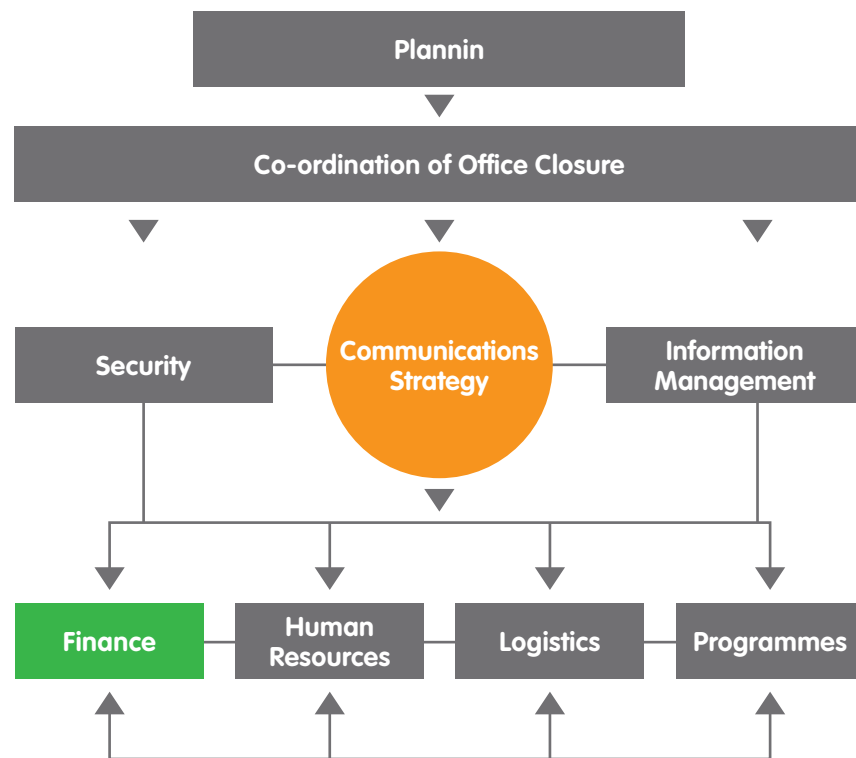
6.1   **Fraud**

6.2   **Close-down accounting**

6.3   **Supplier payments**

            Finance Checklist

Each organisation will have its own confidential finance procedures which should still be followed in the event of closure.

6.1 Fraud

An office/programme in the process of closure is more vulnerable to fraud from staff, suppliers, partners, etc. Following the advice in this guide will help to reduce the risk of fraud.

In particular:

- re-assess financial monitoring processes at the start of the closure, and make any additions or changes necessary
- adhere rigorously to all processes for the duration of the closure
- fix dates for the closure of all procurement and settlement of all outstanding expenditure

> **The communication plan is again critical. If stakeholders (staff, suppliers, beneficiaries, etc) are kept informed, understand the reasons for closure and are confident that obligations will be met, the reasons for fraud being committed can be reduced.**

Security plans should consider the financial priorities in the event of a forced office closure, and make provision for finalising payments to staff and suppliers after the withdrawal. Also consider the following:

- **Salaries** – if appropriate, use bank accounts whenever possible to decrease personal risk of carrying cash, and facilitate remote payments. If not possible, can salaries be paid several months in advance in anticipation of return?
- **Cash** – remove all cash from the safe and take the latest bank statement.
- **Bank accounts** – consider whether cash can and should be withdrawn from local bank accounts.
- **Receipts** – as far as possible, remove all original receipt/invoice documentation.
- **Accounts back-up** – ensure transfer of the most recent electronic back-up of accounting data.

> **Consider the security implications of carrying large amounts of cash or crucial documentation.**

▶ *See section 3: Security*

6.2 Close-down accounting

The following actions apply primarily to a full country programme closure; however, they may also be applicable to some sub-office closures.

A key senior figure should take responsibility for ensuring that accounting processes are completed and accurately documented.

- **Taxes** – check that all accrued taxes to local authorities are paid.
- **Audit** – complete a full audit of the accounts as close as possible to the closing date.
- **Petty cash** – deposit all cash in the bank, or allocate it as an advance by the closing date
- **Cash flow planning** – plan how much funds are required to close down operations, and at what stage it will be needed. Know the rules for taking cash out of the country, and plan accordingly.
- **Bank balance**
  - Transfer the remaining bank balance to HQ.
  - If there are restrictions on the amount of funds that can be removed, funds must be reduced gradually prior to the closing date.
  - Consider maintaining only a small balance in-country (or in the sub-office account) and transferring amounts as needed during the final phase of closure.
- **Receipt and transaction documentation** – transfer all accounts documentation of receipts/transactions to HQ
  ▶ *Section 5: Information Management*
- **Accounts back-up** – send a complete back-up to HQ of any online accounts on the day of closing.

6.3 Supplier payments

Difficulties may arise with suppliers once it is known that an office is closing. This could include, for example, not completing service contracts, or supplying inferior quality goods. Problems can be avoided or reduced by:

- altering the supplier payment structure to decrease the percentage of payment during the life cycle of the service, and increasing the final payment following satisfactory completion
- paying suppliers and landlords well before leaving
- planning for minimal payments in the last month, apart from salaries and petty cash payments
- communicating your closure plans and continued expectations honestly and in a timely manner

Finance Checklist

		Action	Link
		Fraud	
🔔	⚠	Reassess and strengthen financial monitoring process	
		Close-down accounting	
🔔	⚠	Appoint responsibility for accounting processes	
🔔		Finalise payments of all accrued taxes	
🔔		Complete full audit of accounts	
🔔		Dispose of petty cash	Security
🔔		Transfer final bank balance to HQ	
🔔	⚠	Transfer all accounts documentation (hard-copy and digital) to country office/HQ	Information management
		Supplier payments	
🔔	⚠	Communicate closure plans	Communications strategy
		Plan payment schedule for suppliers, landlords, etc.	
🔔	⚠	Alter supplier payment structure	

7 Human Resources

7.1   **Inductions and staff expectations**

7.2   **Staff support**

7.3   **Counselling**

7.4   **Terminating employment contracts**

7.5   **Staff recognition**

        Human Resources Checklist

Staff are likely to be anxious about their future and will require good communication, understanding and support to deal with the closure. In many contexts, particularly that of a broadly decreasing humanitarian response, staff may find it difficult to secure the same level of work again. Staff can pose a significant security and reputational risk to the organisation if human resource management is not done correctly and sympathetically.

▶ *See section 3: Security*

There are positive steps that an organisation can take to assist staff at a difficult and stressful time in their service. Make sure staff understand that their work has been important and valuable. Particular support should be provided to staff who may be most vulnerable to pressure from disgruntled community members, or who feel they have the least to lose, e.g. guards, drivers and cleaners. In some instances, however, it may be impossible to avoid significant staff discontentment.

Consideration should be given to hiring specific staff to manage closure, or hiring contractors to finalise some operations. However, introducing new staff could have security implications, either because of resentment from existing staff or because of new staff not understanding the context.

Staff must be able to voice their opinion regarding the closure and its impact on them. It is also important for the organisation to make sure that it is listening to comments and concerns, and responding in a timely manner to any issues raised, in order to maintain staff morale.

- Engage with the staff council or representatives to hold group discussions which feed into the management team.

- Make managerial staff available for individual meetings with staff as required.

- Use a complaints mechanism to allow staff to raise concerns, including the option to register these anonymously.

7.1 Inductions and staff expectations

Staff expectations in working for a humanitarian organisation should be clear from the beginning of employment – at the interview stage, but primarily at induction. For example, if it is known that the organisation usually remains active for approximately three years after a major disaster, it is important to let staff know.

- Advise staff that as the organisation is an NGO, its programmes are reliant on funding and acceptable levels of security to perform the work and there are times when offices may have to close temporarily or permanently with limited notice.

- Make staff aware that although this can be unpredictable, the organisation will support them through such a process and in accordance with local laws.

As the programme continues, staff expectations should be regularly addressed and staff reminded of possible closure. A lot of information is shared with new staff at an induction and they may forget or choose to forget the transient nature of their employment.

> **Organisations should not assume that the humanitarian objectives and the principles of non-profit organisations are fully understood or important to employees. Some staff will react negatively to changes that threaten them, regardless of what was previously discussed or agreed with Human Resources. Deal with all staff professionally and according to applicable labour laws.**

7.2 Staff support

Internationally recognised codes of practice for humanitarian operations (e.g. People in Aid Code of Best Practice) cite a duty of care to employees as fundamental to successful operations. This duty of care extends to the full lifetime of their employment, and includes supporting them through the closure process.

New employment options

Staff are a valuable asset for the organisation. In any office/programme there will be a great deal of investment in the capacity development of staff, who will also have gained a considerable amount of institutional and sector knowledge. Consider how this investment might best be preserved or developed, including through transferrable skills, which may not be NGO-specific.

- Are any staff members candidates for international or expatriate jobs in the wider organisation? What skills might they be lacking that could elevate them to this level?

- Can any staff members be transferred to other programmes/offices in the country?

- Are there members of staff who are willing to learn and build skills on programme/office closure? Include them in the closure process.

- Are other humanitarian organisations (local or international) recruiting new staff? Consider being proactive as an employer and make contact with other potential employers.
  - Have an open day for staff and possible employers; staff will have an opportunity to 'sell' themselves to various employers
  - Find job notice boards, websites, etc. and let affected staff know about them
  - Circulate CVs and supporting statements for staff to NGO, private or public sector contacts
  - Provide contact details for references to staff before leaving.

Skills-building

'Some organisations have run CV development and job interview training workshops for staff being made redundant by the closure process. Others have invested in tools or specific training to help individual staff into new jobs, such as the provision of a car maintenance toolkit, or language training. Different approaches will be appropriate for different cultures/countries.'

- Allocate a budget to 'Learning and Development' to allow for training over the period of the closure.

- Identify general skill gaps that might hinder staff finding alternative employment, or ask individual staff to propose areas they would like further training in. This might include:
  - international language skills
  - CV writing
  - interviewing skills
  - computer skills
  - specific vocational skills, e.g. training as a mechanic for drivers

- Depending on the job market, aim for flexibility to allow individual staff members to build new skills – their request may be outside their current role, but could increase their chances of future employment.

Tool 9

Letter of recommend- ation

7.3 Counselling

Be aware that closure is likely to lower morale among staff, including those who are not directly affected, or appear to be coping well. With adequate support and influence, you can minimise this impact.

- Consider whether counselling support is required for staff, such as those at risk of losing their livelihood, or those who have found the closure process stressful. The latter may include:
  - those who have been made redundant
  - colleagues of those who have been made redundant
  - those managing the process
- Identify reputable counselling services
  - Seek recommendations from other NGOs, local hospitals or doctors.
  - Services in-country may be limited or over-subscribed. Consider bringing in an expert in to offer workshops on personal expectations and future planning, and individual counselling if required. Allow extra time for this.
  - Remember to take local languages into account.
- Determine how many counselling sessions the organisation is able to provide and communicate this to staff from the outset.
- Encourage affected staff to use the counselling service.

> **Many staff members may not have had time to grieve for their own losses suffered at the core of the humanitarian crisis and may have used their work as a way of coping. For them, leaving the organisation will be especially hard, and they may need extra support.**

7.4 Terminating employment contracts

It is inevitable that employment contracts will have to be terminated. Organisations should already have procedures in place for dealing with this. All staff (international, relocated and local) should be kept up to date with the procedures, including expected actions and benefits.

> **Know the applicable labour law from the start of the programme. In some countries, fixed-term contracts can only be issued twice, after which point they become open-ended. Hence, many staff are receiving both end-of-contract payments and redundancy pay. This can be a huge cost to the organisation as well as a significant legal risk.**

- **Legal representation** – consider this if the organisation is leaving the country completely.
- **Data** – maintain good, up-to-date baseline and staff information to simplify the creation of termination packages and calculating salaries.
- **Termination package** – abide by the local labour law (at minimum) and consider researching compensation packages of other organisations. Be aware that a difference in packages may cause discord among staff of your, or other, organisations.
- **Annual leave** – review existing organisational policy for accrual/taking annual leave. Re-communicate the policy to all staff, and ask managers to submit annual leave plans up to the planned closure date. Consider a policy that allows for unused leave to be paid for, because:
  - if unused annual leave is not paid, many key members of staff may take leave at the same time, hampering office closure activities
  - office/programme closure is time-consuming and so there may not be time for staff to take leave due to them
- **Bonuses** – consider using end-of-contract bonuses to avoid large numbers of staff leaving during the closing period. You will need your staff up to the last days of closure – they know how your operations and systems work, and have the contacts you will need to draw on.
- **Theft** – at a time of uncertainty, even the most honest staff may regard taking 'unwanted' assets as one way of being compensated for their termination; consider additional procedures to avoid mismanagement.

  ▶ *See section 8: Logistics*

The prevention of fraud should already be a component of programme policy and procedure, but prior to closure, consider additional procedures.

▶ *See section 6.1: Fraud*

Relocation policy

> In advance of a forced or rapid closure, the organisation should be clear on its policy for assisting national staff members. This should state whether the organisation takes responsibility to remove staff members (and family) from a given location, provides allowances for transport and/ or accommodation, or assists with the transport of personal belongings.
>
> The policy should be in place and clearly explained to staff prior to any such closure. It may also be necessary to include a relevant clause in employment contracts. This will avoid any misunderstandings and false expectations in the event of a high-pressure situation.

Tool 6

Template notification letter of termination to staff on fixed-term contracts

Tool 7

Template notification letter to staff of reduction in number of posts

During a time of office closure there will many rumours, and misinformation will spread rapidly. Senior management must recognise this and deal with the perceptions of staff and beneficiaries. How documents and discussions are translated can have a significant impact on perceptions; make sure the meaning is translated and not just the words.

▶ *See section 4: Communications strategy*

7.5 Staff recognition

Most staff will have worked hard under difficult circumstances during the lifetime of the programme/office that is to close.

- Consider organising social or celebration events to recognise the successes of the team and make sure that staff feel valued and acknowledged for their contribution; this may need to be done every time a staff member leaves.
- Depending on the circumstances, you may decide:
- to extend events to beneficiaries and other external stakeholders – this will help mitigate reputational risk; or
- to keep farewell parties as small as possible, private, and in a formal setting such as a restaurant or office

Tool 8

Template for work certificate

Consider carefully where you hold farewells: a home may not be a suitable venue.

📋 Human Resources Checklist

		Action	Link
🔔	⚠	**Inductions and staff expectations** Ensure staff are aware of risks of closure right from their induction	
		Staff support Investigate staff transfer opportunities within the organisation Investigate other general employment opportunities Plan a Learning and Development budget Identify general skills gaps Provide group/individual skills training	
🔔	⚠ ⚠	**Counselling** Determine provision of counselling support Identify reputable counselling services	
🔔 🔔 🔔 🔔 🔔 🔔 🔔	 ⚠	**Terminating employment contracts** Organise legal advice services Ensure staff information is kept up todate Review/develop organisational termination package Review and re-communicate annual leave policy to all staff Managers to submit teams' annual leave plans Review/strengthen theft and fraud monitoring procedures Develop references for staff Develop relocation policy	Co-ordination: Legal Issues Tool 6: Template fixed-term contracts letter Tool 7: Template reduction in posts letter Tool 9: Template for recommendation
		Staff recognition Organise social/celebratory events	Tool 8: Template for work certificate
		Security Consider hiring staff for specific closure roles, or using contractors to complete outstanding work	Security
		Learning Share human resources lessons learnt with other country programmes in your organisation and other agencies	

8 Logistics
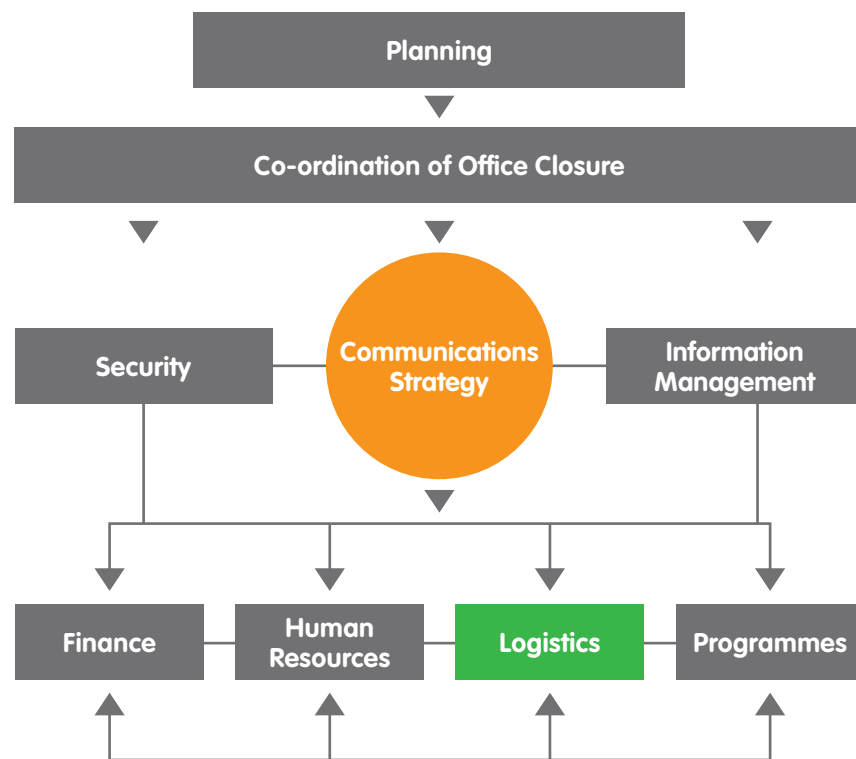
8.1   **Assets**

8.2   **Goods**

8.3   **Building rentals and utilities**

     Logistics Checklist

8.1 Assets[13]

Be aware from the start of the programme what the donor and government requirements are regarding assets. This will avoid false expectations among staff and assist the process of adequate record-keeping. Lack of transparency or a proper logistics phase-out plan can create security risks related to asset disposal, such as dissatisfaction among stakeholders, misuse of equipment, damage or theft.

Disposal of programme assets must comply with all donor, organisational and local government requirements. If there are any contradictions between them these should be identified and addressed early. Ensure requirements are researched and understood at the start of the closure process. It may take significant time and negotiations for all parties to be satisfied.

▶ *See section 2.3: Legal issues*

- Assess the security risks of asset transfers to communities, partners or local authorities.
  - Maintain rigorous asset-tracking and physical inventory checks.
  - Design mitigating actions to be included in hand-over plans.
  - Transparency of the transfer may be achieved by a ceremony attended by local press and key community or government figures.
  - In other cases a discreet delivery of the assets may be more appropriate.
  - ▶ *See section 3: Security*
- Plan a phased approach to shipping assets out of the country.
  - If vehicles are being shipped, consider hiring replacements for the final few weeks of the programme.
- If assets are to be sold, a transparent system should be put in place, with a senior staff member retaining oversight of the process. This could be through sealed but publicly opened bids.
- Ensure legal documentation relating to ownership is completed, and all records of disposal or hand-over transactions are archived, so as to prove ownership in the event of a future dispute – e.g. a vehicle accident.
- Make sure that all data contained on electronic assets is thoroughly deleted or destroyed before hand-over.

▶ *See section 5: Information Management*

> **Consider collecting all agency visibility assets, e.g. t-shirts, banners, etc. to reduce opportunity for misuse. Although these are of low value, this should also be considered when implementing a forced closure.**

Tool 10
Asset Donation Agreement

Tool 11
Vehicle Donation Agreement

Tool 12
Disposal Form

Tool 13
Disposal Plan

Tool 14
Asset Transfer MoU

'A pick-up truck with the back full of gun-waving militia wearing t-shirts of a particular agency can have long-term effects on their reputation and perception of neutrality.'[14]

Securing assets can be particularly difficult under a forced/rapid closure. Unsecured assets may be a target for theft, which may further anger local groups/communities. Although the organisation has an obligation to secure the continued use of assets for humanitarian programming, it is of greatest importance to ensure that items are not taken and used in military operations. Of most value to external parties are vehicles and communications equipment.

Through the security planning process, assess where/how assets are best secured or removed:

- Vehicles – identify a secure compound from which items are unlikely to be confiscated, e.g. a UN compound. Otherwise, consider disabling the vehicles by removing fuel, wheels and batteries. Always take all spare vehicle keys with you when leaving. Make sure you remove all organisation insignia.
- Communications equipment – if safe to do so, take satellite phones and portable communications equipment with you. If not possible, remove batteries and cables from large equipment and place them in a different location from the main components.
- Computers – if possible and safe to do so, take laptops and any back-up disks with you. If not possible, consider removing hard-drives to take with you, or copying important data to a portable memory stick.

Assistance from staff of your organisation's partner or from community members can be sought when there is a likelihood of having assets seized, but make certain they are fully aware that they should not to put themselves at risk.

Keep your inventory/asset registers up-to-date, and record any losses immediately, reporting them to the police and donors.

▶ *See section 3: Security*

▶ *See section 5: Information management*

8.2 Goods

Suppliers and contractors are a potential source of security threats – it is imperative that anyone selling goods or a service to your organisation has the contract settled before the office closes, and knows in good time what the settlement process will be.

Arguments with suppliers are common over issues of quality and quantity of goods supplied. These need to be addressed in the months leading up to closure to the satisfaction of both parties.

8.3 Building rentals and utilities

Landlords may be unhappy that an organisation is leaving buildings that have been rented as offices, warehouses, feeding stations, living accommodation, etc.

- Communicate the decision to close as soon as possible.
- Consider legal advice to ensure that contracts are fully and fairly ended.
- Seek clear agreement about the condition that properties/compounds are to be left in.
- Organisations commonly agree to pay for the rent of premises by undertaking renovation work or other improvements; make sure that written agreements are made confirming this has been honoured to the satisfaction of both parties.
- Make final payment of utilities as near to office closure time as possible.
- If appropriate, engage local elders in the process.

Guards are often outsourced from security companies; hold separate discussions with the company to make certain that guarding requirements are fulfilled up to the day of departure. This will be particularly relevant if the guards employed by the company are going to be made redundant as a consequence of the closure.

Logistics Checklist

		Action	Link
		Assets	
🔔		Confirm donor and government asset disposal requirements	Co-ordination: Legal issues
🔔		Identify assets to be disposed of or sold	Tool 12: Disposal Form
🔔		Plan transparent process to dispose of/sell assets	Tool 13: Disposal Plan
	⚠	Plan safe transfer of assets	Tool 10: Donation Agreement
		Develop plan for assets to be shipped out of the country	
🔔		Complete ownership transfer documents and archive	Tool 11: Vehicle Donation Agreement
🔔	⚠	Identify methods to secure assets during a temporary closure	
🔔		Delete or destroy all data before asset hand-over	Tool 14: Asset Transfer MOU
		Goods	
🔔		Develop contract completion plan for suppliers/ vendors/landlords, etc.	
		Building rentals and utilities	
		Agree property vacation plan with landlords	
		Secure legal advice to ensure contracts are adequately ended	Co-ordination: Legal issues
🔔		Finalise utility payments	Finance: Supplier payments
		Reconfirm security arrangements with outsourced security companies	
		Identify organisation to complete outstanding payments after departure	
		Learning	
		Share logistics lessons learnt with other country programmes in your organisation and other agencies	

9 Programmes

9.1   Sustainability of activities/services (in design and implementation)

9.2   Monitoring, reporting, evaluation and lessons

9.3   Transfer of programmes

📋 **Programmes Checklist**

The length of time needed to complete current programme activities may be the deciding factor in determining when an office/programme is to close, particularly if the closure is for economic reasons.

A realistic assessment of each affected programme and its activities should take place as part of closure planning. This should assess the current state of completion of the programme aims, and the expected time needed to complete, with timing contingencies built in where possible.

9.1 Sustainability of activities/services (in design and implementation)

'Taking the approach of "working yourselves out of a job" should help to achieve the sustainability needed to transfer programme activities to communities or local partners as part of the closure process.' [15]

- A programme should always be designed with an exit strategy and a closure work plan in mind, to ensure the sustainability of the work beyond the presence of the organisation.
- If new projects are being designed with a planned closure date agreed, sustainability actions should be written into design documents.
- Allow contingencies in the timing needed to finalise any project activities.
- Remote management of activities may be possible in the event of a closure, if sufficient relationships and capacity have been established locally. Consider this in the programme design phase.

Contingency plans can easily be built into projects running in locations where forced closures/programme suspensions are possible.

- Prioritise the activities that need to keep running on the basis of their lifesaving potential (e.g. nutrition programmes would be more important than education programmes).

- Determine the elements of each activity that must be continued, and consider creative ways in which this might happen in that context. For instance, you might see whether you could leave a supply of food and nutrition supplements in small store locations close to feeding centres, and in each case appoint a local staff or community member with access to the store in the event of a forced office closure.

- The most important element in successfully putting into operation contingency plans and remote management is the ability to communicate with the people involved. Think through how this can happen, and be prepared to provide means of communications if necessary.

Consider what risks staff, partners or community members might face if requested to carry on operations on your behalf, particularly if a closure is forced because of security concerns.

9.2 Monitoring, reporting, evaluation and lessons

Donor requirements for programme activities must be fulfilled, and it will be more difficult to collect information for reporting and evaluation after the closure.

- Reassess the reporting requirements at the start of the closure period.
- Make sure that all relevant information is being collected and that monitoring activities continue.
  - ▶ *See section 5: Information management*
- Plan time for evaluations and impact assessments before the closure, or arrange a post-closure visit.
- Make certain that senior staff plan to visit the projects during the closure phase, both as additional monitoring checks, and to reassure communities that the work is still important to the organisation.
- Organise and file all project documents for later reference.
- Plan a review and lessons-learnt exercise of individual projects or the programme as a whole as soon after the closure as is feasible.

9.3 Transfer of programmes

For each programme or activity examine the options for hand-over or continuation. Transparency, attention to detail, good documentation and good communication are essential to prevent misunderstanding, resentment or hostility within the community.

- If sufficient progress has been made, and the capacity exists at a community level, it may be possible to empower communities to take over the running of certain services and activities.
- If there is still work to be done, existing partner organisations, local civil society, national NGOs or the local government may be prepared to take over ongoing activities or services.
  - Start negotiations early and be clear about responsibilities and expectations.
  - Involve the new organisation in as many aspects of the ongoing programme work as possible, to ensure a smooth transfer.
  - Assess and implement measures to build aspects of the new organisation's capacity before it takes over the running of activities/services.

Programmes

Programmes

- International organisations may be prepared to continue managing the programmes that have been started. Negotiations should include donor discussions as early as is practical.

'It's important to anchor any project with the relevant government ministry if possible, so they can continue working with the new organisation taking over responsibility.' [16]

Programmes Checklist

		Action	Link
🐦	⚠	**Programme assessment** Assess programme completion requirements and time frames	
🐦	⚠	**Sustainability of activities/services (in design and implementation)** Write sustainability measures into design documents of new projects Prioritise activities to continue and develop continuation plans	
🐦 🐦 🐦	⚠ ⚠ ⚠	**Monitoring, reporting, evaluation and lessons** Reassess donor reporting requirements Plan evaluations and impact assessments Plan senior staff project visit during the closure phase Organise and file all project documentation	Co-ordination: Responsibility
	⚠ ⚠ ⚠ ⚠	**Transfer of programmes** Determine how projects/programmes will be continued/transferred Build capacity of communities to take on management of activities Assess capacity gaps of partners and implement capacity-building activities Negotiate transfer with NGOs, including donor discussions Identify and communicate a point of contact for people who have taken over your organisation's activities Plan a review and lessons-learnt exercise of project/programme	Communications: Donors

Tools

Available to download and edit from **www.eisf.eu**

Programmes

Tool 1 Planning Checklist Template[17]

Steps/Activities	Person responsible	Timeline	Comments
1 **Establish closure approach (e.g. formal project management)**			
2 **Determine roles and responsibilities for people managing the process**			
3 **Identify the factors which will determine when an office / programme should close**			Ensure closure strategy aligns with organisational strategy
4 **Develop Exit Strategy**			Exit strategies should consider: • different types of closure: – full or partial – phased or rapid • the on-going needs of the organisation and beneficiaries • what will be the replacement structure
5 **Prepare Closure Plan** • **Identify all elements to be considered** • **Implementation plan** • **Timetable for implementation** • **Risk identification and mitigation actions**			This document can be provided to Unions/Staff representatives as a basis for consultation as required Check with HQ HR/Country HR as appropriate to confirm proposed closure details
6 **Finalise legal position**			Ensure all actions regarding termination of staff comply with local legislative requirements prior to finalising Closure Plan
7 **Determine organisation and corresponding staff changes**			Detailed analysis of employment issues will be required e.g.: • financial costs of termination • timings and impact of contract end dates • criteria and methodology for selecting remaining posts • identify staff who have priority status, by being "at risk of termination" There should be some consistency in the methods of assessment for same/similar roles, but it is not necessary to have identical approaches, as the actual selection criteria will influence which methods should be used for assessment
8 **Determine financial impacts and prepare budget**			

Steps/Activities	Person responsible	Timeline	Comments
9 **Develop Communication Plan, including:** • **"engagement" strategy for staff remaining** • **regular update points** • **selection process for remaining posts**			Although the decision to close is not negotiable, staff should be encouraged to comment on the process, and their suggestions incorporated into the overall plan. This is particularly important for risk mitigation
10 **Identify impact on individuals and calculate the detailed termination data for each employee**			
11 **Determine the general range of assistance to be provided to staff leaving**			This will cover financial support (both legal and organisation entitlements) and non-financial support
12 **Formally consult with staff, including:** • **Distribution of closure proposal** • **Consultative meetings with staff representatives (collectively and/or in each office)** • **Staff meetings** • **Incorporation of appropriate comments** • **Finalisation of proposal**			It is important to stress that the proposed changes are to positions and not people If the formal process is followed, but agreement can't be reached, may need to refer it to Industrial Court for arbitration (depending on local legal requirements)
13 **Conduct selection process as appropriate**			Keep documentation of procedures for future reference and to defend any complaints made
14 **Finalise arrangements and terminate positions** • **Provide written confirmation to staff regarding their particular situation** • **Ensure final termination payments are made appropriately** • **Ensure that staff return any outstanding monies and equipment owed/belonging to the organisation**			
15 **Track and monitor the change process** • **Keep appropriate records** • **Inform relevant authorities** • **Prepare regular closure reports and updates** • **Before ending the closure process, prepare a "lessons learned" paper for future reference** • **Ensure all personnel records and files are properly destroyed or transferred to appropriate location**			

Tool 1

Tool 1

Tool 2 TOR for Exit Programme Manager[18]

PERIOD	[depending on Closure Plan]
LOCATION	[as appropriate]
REPORTS TO	[relevant Manager]

PURPOSE
Develop and manage the overall programme for the closure of [detail the specific office]

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Working with the management team, develop the Closure Plan for [location], using any organisational Closure Plan Guidelines as a reference document and gaining full engagement with the management team to ensure that all requirements and needs for that location are fully incorporated into the Plan. This will include:
  - Staff consultation and individual employee discussion
  - Determination of approach to programme closure, including expected termination dates of all staff
  - Finalisation of redundancy payments and provision of post-employment support
  - Effective resolution of disputes
  - Management of financial costs of closure
  - Successful completion of all organisational closure requirements
  - Management of organisational risk and maintenance of the organisation's reputation throughout the closure process
- Once developed, follow the Closure Plan to lead and manage an effective organisational closure, ensuring that all legal and organisational requirements are adhered to and that the closure is achieved with minimal programme disruption.
- Work with the Senior Management Team and all managers to ensure they are fully appreciative of the impact of the programme closure activities on their day to day operations and plan programme delivery within the broader context of programme closure.
- Establish good working relationships with local authorities to ensure that all organisational activities are developed and implemented in accordance with country legal requirements and consider courtesy expectations.
- Pay particular attention to, and address, local sensitivities regarding programme closure and organisational withdrawal from a vulnerable area. Ensure that staff are protected at all times.
- Provide regular updates and reports as required to keep relevant staff fully informed of the closure progress. Ensure good records and detailed notes of all activities are made and kept for referral and future reference.
- Ensure risk assessment and risk management plans are kept up-to-date and reflect the closure process
- Provide feedback to Country Programme Manager, Regional HR Manager and others regarding lessons learned and ways of improving future closure activities.

KEY SKILLS

1. Excellent analytical and critical thinking ability
2. Extensive experience with and proven ability to implement organisational change management initiatives
3. Proven project management and organisational skills with relevant experience in large-scale organisational closure activities
4. Excellent communication, facilitation and influencing skills with ability to work with staff at all levels, but particularly senior staff. Capable of representing the organisation with external partners and organisations, often in high profile environments
5. Strong human resource management experience in all HR functional areas, working at senior management levels
6. Fluency in written/spoken [language as appropriate] is essential. Other language skills are an advantage
7. Flexible and adaptable, capable of managing multiple priorities in a fast changing and demanding environment
8. Very strong initiative, self-awareness and self-motivation to deliver results and work well under pressure
9. Evidence of sound judgement and proven decision making capability working with significant levels of autonomy. Able to bear and manage considerable responsibility without recourse to additional HR support
10. Understanding of and experience with the complexities of working in a multicultural environment
11. Professional qualifications in human resource management and/or substantial senior HR experience
12. Ability to travel frequently and at short notice, including to remote locations

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Tool 3 Closure Risk Analysis[19]

The exisitng risk anaysis for a programme or office should be re-visisted at the beginning of, and during closure, to assess whether previous risk analyses are still valid, or need to be updated. The risk analysis should consider:

- Risks arising due to the closure
- Risks to the closure operations
- Risks to the broader organisation as a result of the closure
- Risks which existed prior to the decision to close the office or programme

Below is an example of a simple risk analysis, using possible risks and indicating the likelihood of them occurring and the impact if they do, using a High, Medium and Low scale. Once identified, specific action plans can be developed to minimise each risk.

Risk Detail	Likelihood	Impact	Risk catagory	Mitigation Measures
H = **High** (catastrophic on project and/or Business) **M** = **Medium** (significant (change to plan required) **L** = **Low** (minimal changes)				
Staff leave earlier than planned, potentially jeopardising programme delivery				
Staff leave whom the organisation wanted to retain				
Reduced staff morale due to uncertainty, which reduces programme impact and effectiveness				
Long-term employee disconnect with the organisation due to poor management of the closure				
Inconsistency in treatment of staff at different locations				
Potential violence and conflict because of decisions to terminate staff				
Conflict with Unions/staff representatives resulting in various industrial disputes and litigation				
Reputational risk to the organisation as a whole				
Theft of assets				
Cancellation of operations licence				

Tool 2

Tool 3

Tool 4
Sample communications plan

	Objective	Key messages	Method	Person responsible
Directly affected staff	To maintain staff morale, in order to ensure the office continues to function effectively throughout the closure process and to minimise the risk of internal threats from disgruntled staff. To make sure that consistent messaging is passed by staff to the wider community (beneficiaries and other stakeholders) to minimise security risks. To manage expectations.	What is happening to the office and why, and how this will affect the individual and the programmes. The timescale and steps that will be followed and what should the individuals' expectations be.	Individual meetings, followed by official letter	Line Manager HR Manager Head of Office
Wider organisational staff	To make certain that a consistent message is disseminated throughout the organisation and wider community. To maintain staff morale and ensure support is available for the office closure process if required. To minimise the risk of internal and external security threats.	What is happening to the office and why, and how this will affect colleagues and the programmes. The timescale and steps that will be taken.	General announcement on internal website, email, newsletter	Country Director
Partners	To maintain an effective and functioning partnership throughout the closure process so that programmes can be completed as planned. To ensure a consistent message is disseminated throughout the partner organisation and to the wider community. To minimise the risk of external security threats.	What is happening to the office and why, how this will affect the partner and the partner's programmes. The timescale and steps that will be taken. How this information should be disseminated to beneficiaries and the wider community.	Individual meetings, followed by official letter / ongoing working contact	Country Director/ Senior Manager / Programme staff
Beneficiaries	To maintain the (positive) reputation of the organisation and to ensure the acceptance (and community-based protection) security strategies continue. To ensure beneficiaries understand what the changes will mean for them, and to manage their expectations. To minimise security threats to staff and assets and allow the programmes to be completed as planned.	Highlight the (positive) impacts that the organisation has achieved. Emphasise sustainability measures for beneficiaries, as well as partners, suppliers and staff. Explain the context and reasons for closure. Explain the programme exit strategy.	Group meetings, feedback mechanisms, community focal points	Senior Manager/ Programme Managers and Field Officers

Objective	Key messages	Method	Person responsible
Key contacts in the community, neighbours, religious leaders, community leaders, teachers	To alert neighbours and other contacts to changes in routine at the office or compound. To maintain the (positive) reputation of the organisation and to ensure the acceptance (and community-based protection) security strategies continue. To minimise security threats to staff and assets and allow the programmes to be completed as planned.	Highlight the (positive) impacts that the organisation has achieved. Emphasise sustainability measures for beneficiaries, as well as partners, suppliers and staff. Explain the context and reasons for closure.	Face to face meetings	Country Director/ Senior Manager, Prog / Field Manager and Officers
Community	To maintain the (positive) reputation of the organisation and to ensure the acceptance (and community-based protection) security strategies continue. To minimise security threats to staff and assets and allow the programmes to be completed as planned.	Highlight the (positive) impacts that the organisation has achieved. Emphasise sustainability measures for beneficiaries, as well as partners, suppliers and staff. Explain the context and reasons for closure.	Group meetings, complaints/ comments mechanisms, community focal points and ongoing working contact	Senior Manager/ Programme Managers
Other NGOs / UN	To maintain consistent messaging throughout. To ensure your actions do not increase security risks to the broader international community and vice versa. To increase opportunities for staff to find alternative employement.	What is happening, when and why. What information has been shared with staff/ beneficiaries/community / authorities, etc. Ongoing activities of communities/partners/ staff for sustainability or final operations. Details of programmes and staff competencies as appropriate.	Cluster and Coordination meetings, letter, group meeting, press release, local radio, media announcement	Country Director/ Senior Manager/ Cluster lead
Local and national government	To ensure that the authorities support the closure process rather than hinder it. To maintain consistent messaging throughout and minimise security risks. To maintain (positive) reputation in case of return and/or minimise negative consequences in other areas of operation. To be certain that all legal requirements are met. To manage expectations.	Explain the context and reasons for closure. Highlight the (positive) impacts that the organisation has achieved. Emphasise sustainability measures for beneficiaries, as well as partners, suppliers and staff. Meet any legal requirements.	Face-to-face meetings if appropriate, followed up with official letter and continued updates	Country Director/ Senior Manager / Security Manager

	Objective	Key messages	Method	Person responsible
Military / Police	TTo ensure that the military and/or police support the closure process rather than hinder it. To maintain consistent messaging throughout and minimise security risks. To maintain (positive) reputation in case of return and/or minimise negative consequences in other areas of operation. To minimise security threats to staff and assets and allow the programmes to be completed as planned.	Explain the context and reasons for closure. Highlight the (positive) impacts that the organisation has achieved. Emphasise sustainability measures for beneficiaries, as well as partners, suppliers and staff. Explain any risk management measures, if appropriate	Face to face meetings, followed up with official letter and continued updates	Country Director / Senior Manager / Security Manager
Opposition groups	To ensure that the groups support the closure process rather than hinder it. To maintain consistent messaging throughout and minimise security risks. To maintain (positive) reputation in case of return and/or minimise negative consequences in other areas of operation.	Explain the context and reasons for closure. Highlight the (positive) impacts that the organisation has achieved. Emphasise sustainability measures for beneficiaries, as well as partners, suppliers and staff.	Face to face meeting and/ or official letter, if appropriate	Country Director/ Security Manager / Senior national staff
Suppliers	To maintain an effective and functioning relationship throughout the closure process so that supplies are delivered and programmes/closure can be completed as planned. To ensure a consistent message is disseminated throughout the supplier organisation and to the wider community. To minimise the risk of external security threats.	What is happening to the office and why, how this will affect the supplier. The timescale and steps that will be taken to complete payment. How this information should be disseminated to beneficiaries and the wider community.	Face to face meeting, circular, memo	Logistics Manager
Donors	To ensure that the donor pays for all costs in accordance with the contract and that good relations are maintained for future funding opportunities.	That the closure is in accordance with good practice, programme exit strategy and donor project agreement. Highlight the (positive) impacts that the organisation has achieved and emphasise the sustainability measures for beneficiaries.	Face to face meeting if feasible, followed by official letter and continuous updates	Country Director/ Senior Manager

Tool 5 **Document Transfer Checklist**

You will need to ensure that important information is returned to the country office, or from the field to Head Office following the closure of an office/programme. The information/documents required and the format (electronic or hard-copy) should be agreed between the Country Director and HQ rep. (e.g. Desk Officer).

The following checklist outlines examples of information which should be returned:

Country information

Procedures for operating in the country:
- ⬡ Requirements for NGO registration
- ⬡ Rules on taxation (laws, etc.)
- ⬡ Customs rules on import and export for NGOs
- ⬡ Rules on contracting, procurement, tendering (laws, etc.)

Administrative documents for the organisation in-country:
- ⬡ Registration documents
- ⬡ Tax documents and customs documents
- ⬡ All accounting source documents (bank statements, receipts, invoices, cash sheets)

Data of relevance for planning subsequent operations in the country:
- ⬡ Population statistics
- ⬡ Health, water supply, sanitation, education, etc. statistics
- ⬡ Statistics on government/donor investment
- ⬡ Information on government development priorities
- ⬡ Contact details of other agencies operating in the country

Project information

For each project implemented:

○ Project proposal and revisions
○ Any related plans and designs
○ Budget and final statement of costs
○ Contract with donor
○ Approvals and authorisations from local authorities
○ Contract with contractors
○ All documents relating to procurement (advertisements, tenders, documents submitted by companies, etc.)
○ Any interim and final reports
○ Receipts and proofs of payment connected with the project
○ Certificates of transfer to beneficiaries/infrastructure administrator
○ Any relevant photos

Logistics

○ Closing inventory
○ Signed transfer documents

Personnel

○ Complete personnel database
○ Payroll documents
○ Information relating to disciplinary procedures

Operations information

Information specific to certain types of project (whether implemented or not, and whether developed by the organisation or by other agencies) which may be of use in designing similar projects in the future, e.g. information on designing a refugee camp.

Tool 6 Template notification letter of termination to staff on fixed-term contract[20]

[date]
PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL
[name]
[contact address]

Dear [name]

Following the recent consultation process and finalisation of the new organisational structure, I am writing to advise you formally of the implications of the new structure on your position.

The new structure means that your current post of [name of position] will no longer exist and unless you are able to secure an alternative post, your employment with [organisation name] will end on [date], in line with the current terms of your fixed term contract.

You are very welcome to apply for any current vacancies within [organisation name] in [location], during the notice period and you are very much encouraged to do this. Please refer to the current list of vacancies. If you would like to be considered for any of these positions please submit your interest in writing for the relevant posts by [date], marking your top three preferences.

Please do let me know if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

[name of manager]
[job title]
[department]

cc: HR Department/Personal File

Tool 7 Template notification letter to staff of reduction in number of posts[21]

[date]
PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL
[name]
[contact address]

Dear [name]

Following the recent consultation process and finalisation of the new organisational structure, I am writing to advise you formally of the implications of the new structure on your position.

The new structure means there are more people than posts for the position of [name of position]. Therefore a selection process has been agreed with the staff association [or staff representatives, as appropriate] in order to select staff in or out of the posts in the new structure.

A panel made up of [names and roles of selection panel members] will carry out this selection process. The process will assess your suitability against the agreed relevant skills and competencies for the [name of position] and will consist of:
● written self assessment by the candidate against agreed criteria
● management reference against the agreed criteria, based on previous performance
● disciplinary and absence data
● performance reviews (if agreed in advance by the candidate)

The timescale for this selection process is:
● you are required to express your interest in being assessed for this position and submit the written self assessment by [date]
● assessment will take place by [date]

You also have the right to apply for any current vacancies within [organisation name] in [location]. If you would like to be considered for any of these positions please submit your interest in writing for the relevant posts by [date], marking your top three preferences.

If you have any questions please contact me. Yours sincerely

[name of manager]
[job title]
[department]

cc: HR Department/Personal File

Tool 8 Template for work certificate[21]

I, the undersigned, ... [name] ....

[position] of [organisation name] ....

[location] in [region] testify that ....

Mr/Mrs/Ms ....

residing at ....

has worked within the scope of our activities in [location] ....

in the position of [position] ....

and this, from [date] until [date] ....

Done in .... on ....

M ....

[role] in ....

[Organisation name] ....

Tool 9 **Template for letter of recommendation**

Hereby, [organisation name] would like to recommend the services as provided by:
Name:..
Address:..
Function/country/location: ....
From: .... until ....
Description of tasks 1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

| We are pleased to recommend our former colleague to whosoever considers using his / her services and wish him/ her all the best for the future. Motivation, performance and skills have been very satisfactory. | [Organisation name]
The representative
Name: ....
Function: ....
Signature: ....
Date and place: .... |

Note: when preparing the text for a letter of recommendation, answering the following questions can help you in writing the text.

- How did s/he perform in general: adequately/satisfactory/good/excellent? Try to use at least once the description excellent or good, and elaborate on the performance.

- In what is s/he best?

- How does s/he work: transparently, efficiently, organised?

- Is s/he motivated and committed?

- Is s/he willing to work overtime if needed?

- How does s/he communicate/give feedback on requests?

- Is s/he respectful/diplomatic to colleagues/visitors/public in general?

- What did s/he learn in our service? What has changed in his/her performance in the last 6 months?

- Does s/he master his/her work?

- How is his/her knowledge of English/French/other operational language?

- Does s/he need much explanation or understand quickly?

- How is s/he as a person: quiet, cheerful, serious, motivated, sense of humour, interested in learning?

- What about his/her capacity to cope with stress?

- Can s/he adapt easily to changing circumstances?

- What is his/her influence in the office/on the work?

- Is s/he reliable with regard to assignments given?

> **It is important to know your organisation policy on who is allowed to write reference letters, whether they can be open (i.e. to whom it may concern) and what level of information can be included. Many organisations may only allow you to put position held and length of service.**

Tool 9

Tool 10 **Donation Agreement**

The undersigned parties:
[Organisation name] represented by .... and
[Organisation name] represented by ....declare that
the following items are donated by [Organisation name] without any exchange of currency.

No	Item	Brand	Qty	ID number
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

The listed items are donated under the condition that they will be used exclusively for
....
....
....
....
....

failing which, [Organisation name] will reclaim the property by rights.

[Organisation name] ....

The representative ....
Name ....
Signature ....
Date and place ....

The representative ....
Name ....
Signature ....
Date and place ....

Tool 11 **Vehicle donation agreement and certificate of indemnification**

Between [Organisation name] ....
and [Organisation name] ....hereafter called ....
it is agreed that [Organisation name] will donate the vehicle with the following specifications to
....
....

Licence plate: ....
Make: ....
Type: ....
Chassis n°: ....
Engine n°: ....

Year of construction: ....
Colour: ....
Km reading: ....
Visible damage: ....
Inventory: ....

under the following conditions:

1) both parties agree that the legal ownership of the above-mentioned vehicle will be transferred from [Organisation name] to ....

2) [Organisation name] will not charge for the hand-over of the vehicle;

3) [Organisation name] will from this moment on bear no responsibility for any legal claims or claims for damage, injury, disability or death caused by the vehicle or use of the vehicle. All costs incurred will be fully paid by ....

4) it is .... responsibility to obtain the necessary road licences or any other required document to legally operate the vehicle and .... will also cover the costs made to that effect;

5) the vehicle will be used for humanitarian purposes only;

6) the vehicle cannot be sold to any third party or traded otherwise without written consent of [Organisation name]

7) ....will return the vehicle to [Organisation name] if no formal agreement is reached in handing over the .... programme from [Organisation name] to ....(or any other specific condition to be met).

Seen and agreed:
[Organisation name] ....
The representative ....
Name ....
Signature ....
Date and place ....

[Organisation name] ....
The representative ....
Name ....
Signature ....
Date and place ....

Tool 12 **Disposal form**

Tool 13 **Disposal Plan**

The order of priority for disposal is:

1. As directed by the donor
2. Organisation to use at a different location
3. Donate to other NGOs
4. Donate to civil or local authority
5. Sell
6. Destroy

Consideration of health and safety for safe storage of all items must be strictly adhered to.

Tool 12 – Disposal form fields:

DISPOSAL METHOD
Donate/Transfer/Sell/Destroy*
* Please delete non-applicable methods

FULL BUDGET CODE for shipment

HAS THE DONOR AGREED TO THE DISPOSAL PLAN?
Donor's name:
Regional Funding Coordinator's name:

CURRENT OWNER DETAILS
ASSET LOCATION:

NEW OWNER DETAILS
Ignore if goods are to be destroyed
Name:
Address*
Telephone:
Fax:
Email:

Columns: Line no. | Org. code | Description | Qty | Unit | Purchase unit price | Initial purchase order no. | Initial purchasing currency | Budget used to pay the invoice | Sale unit price | Sale total price | Delivery Note / waybill | Remarks / Received by new owner

BUDGET HOLDER APPROVAL
Signature:
Name:
Position:
Date:

FINANCE ACKNOWLEDGED
Signature:
Name:
Position:
Date:

LOGISTICS
Signagture:
Name:
Position
Date

Tool 13 – Disposal Plan table:

	Description of Activity	Responsible	Timeline	Remarks
1	Distribution of the master asset list to the Programme Manager and Logistics Coordinator			
2	Review of all stakeholders and beneficiaries needs/requirements			
3	Updating of the asset register/physical verification exercise			
4	Identifying budget codes/holders and donors for all assets/equipment, etc.			
5	Retrieval of assets from staff/signing the asset liability forms			
6	Compilation of list for items requested by NGO's local partners, local authority, etc.			
7	Develop disposal plans, i.e. auction sales, donation or transfer			
8	Approval from finance/donor(s)			
9	Notice of disposal/public auction/bids			
10	Opening of bids for items identified for staff auctioning			
11	Sales/public auction day – independent auctioneer services to be required			
12	Filing administration and compilation of bid sums for inputing into appropriate system			
13	Drafting of MOU/agreements with beneficiaries and handing-over process			
14	Transfer of identified assets to other projects			

Equipment or materials no longer required for the programme or project must be disposed of in line with the following procedure. The original donor of the goods must be identified, and their restrictions on disposal, if any, must be followed.

Change of ownership – a letter confirming the change of ownership must be issued. For computers, etc. a statement stating that all software has been removed should also be signed. All insurances and maintenance agreements must be cancelled before handing over assets to new owners.

Tax and duty – for goods that were originally acquired on a tax-free or duty-free basis, approval must be granted by the appropriate government authority before the goods can be sold or destroyed.

Sales – use discretion to choose a disposal procedure appropriate to the value and type of goods. Goods of a high value or a high technical specification require a more formal disposal procedure than those of little value.

Reserve prices – should be set by the Programme Manager, roughly at a price equal to that available on the open market.

Sales to organisation's staff – at the discretion of the Senior Finance Manager, goods may be offered for sale to staff. Interested staff members must submit sealed bids, and the sale is to be made to the highest bidder (subject to meeting the reserve price).

Sales to outside parties – sales are to be conducted by public auction or by submitting sealed bids. Sale is to be made to the highest bidder (subject to meeting the reserve price).

Transfer to other organisation site – at the close of project, assets that are to be transferred to other projects will require finance department consent in order for the transfer to be documented in the disposal register (with a new budget code). Normally the value will be nil since the cost of the asset has been charged against the first project. During the transfer, a signed receipt must be obtained at the time of the transfer stating:

- Date of transfer
- Agreement that ownership and responsibility has passed to the third party
- A brief description of the condition of the asset including a record of any apparent defects
- Signature of both parties

Lost/Theft – Assets/items that are either lost or destroyed in the project will require a theft/loss form to be filled in, and signed off by the budget holder. A copy should be passed to Finance. Depending on the situation, either a full payment must be made by the person responsible (if the loss/theft was due to carelessness), or waived in the event of unavoidable accident.

Tool 14 Example Asset Transfer Memorandum of Understanding

Between [Organisation name] and [Receiver's name]

This Memorandum of Understanding is made between [Organisation name and address], and [Receiver's name and address]
Covered by this M.O.U (Memorandum of Understanding) is [1(one) vehicle, 1 unit Computer and Office Equipment] being donated to the above NGO named [Receiver name]. Under the MOU are the following conditions:

1. That the beneficiary, [Receiver name] is a recognised collaborator of [Organisation name] in the [insert programme] working with the affected populace in [Health and Education of Orphans]. In furtherance of its activities, the below assets are donated to [Receiver name] with details below:

TYPE	CLASSIFICATION	ENGINE No / CODE	CHASSIS No / SERIAL No	OWNED & REGISTERED BY
Vehicle	Mitsubishi Kuda			
Computer	Desktop Monitor 17" Keyboard Mouse			
UPS	APC1000			

2. The above-mentioned vehicle will be donated to the NGO [Receiver name] to carry out their work assisting the recovery of the affected people, which devastated [province] in December 2004. This programme is based in the area of [area name].

3. The above-mentioned vehicle will only be used in the furtherance of the programme named and also if required by the organisation for further monitoring studies in and around [area]. It will not be used in any way that can be construed as "Private Enterprise" type work including for hire and or reward.

4. The vehicle named above will be driven only by drivers competent and selected by the organisation and will look after all requirements of the vehicle mentioned above including but not limited to or ending with the following: vehicle exterior fittings and fitments, interior, cleanliness, service and maintenance.

5. The [vehicle] will not be used for any purposes that can be construed as "private sole use transport" by any member of the organisation mentioned.

6. The receiving organisation agrees to provide all fuels and oils required for the vehicle and also will pay for and provide adequate insurance to cover the liabilities of use of the vehicle. They are also responsible to make sure that the [vehicle] is kept in good condition and will service the vehicle at regular intervals to maintain it thus.

7. [Organisation name] will not be responsible for any claims or penalties no matter how caused and [Receiver name] recognise this point and will by signing this M.O.U undertake to be held responsible for their driving staff. [Receiver name] would ensure the correct use of the said [vehicle and computer] after the signing date of this M.O.U.

This MOU was read, understood and signed below by the representatives of both organisations:

PROGRAMME MANAGER
[Organisation name]
Country
Date

DIRECTOR OF [Receiver Name]
[Programme]
Country
Date

References

1 These include Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), People in Aid, Sphere, and The Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.

The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management is built on standard principles of duty of care and transparency, and provides for 'timely, relevant and clear information about the organisation and its activities' for beneficiaries.

The Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief demands that 'We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources' and that 'Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.'

2 Informant interview, September 2012

3 Informant interview, September 2012

4 Informant interview, September 2012

5 Informant interview, September 2012

6 Informant interview, September 2012

7 Norwegian Refugee Council, Exit Handbook

8 Concern Worldwide, Programme Closure checklist

9 Informant interview, September 2012

10 Informant interview, September 2012

11 Informant interview, September 2012

12 Informant interview, September 2012

13 Concern Worldwide, Programme Closure Checklist

14 Key Informant interview 4/2/2013

15 Informant interview, September 2012

16 Informant interview, September 2012

17 Oxfam GB, Organisational Closure Guide

18 Oxfam GB, Organisational Closure Guide

19 Oxfam GB, Organisational Closure Guide

20 Oxfam GB, Organisational Closure Guide

21 Oxfam GB, Organisational Closure Guide

22 Oxfam GB, Asset Disposal Form

23 Oxfam GB, MOU Asset Transfer

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