**Guidance for Managing the Death of Staff**

This guide outlines the processes and considerations for managing the death of staff. This guidance should be adapted, as required, to comply with local regulations.

**Introduction**

Following the death of a member of staff the situation must be managed sensitively, swiftly and thoughtfully. It is likely to involve liaising with many people, over a prolonged period of time, and it is a difficult and emotional experience for all concerned. It is important to get support for yourself and all those affected.

**Roles**

It is essential to appoint one point of contact to liaise with the next of kin/family of the deceased performing the role of Family Liaison Officer. For national staff this is likely to be the Country Director (CD) or HR. For international staff it will be the Regional Director, CD or HR.

**Notifications**

**1.Next of Kin**

It is imperative that the Family Liaison Officer notifies the next of kin of the death as soon as possible. Sadly, the news of a death travels fast. HR can provide next of kin details which are stored in the Personal Details section on HR system.

Please refer to the Breaking Bad News resource sheet for guidance. Key principles: be present, prepare, present the information, provide an opportunity for the other person to respond and consider your own personal wellbeing. Giving bad news is a stressful experience.

**2. CMT**

Depending on the circumstances, the Crisis Management procedures may be used to initiate the various actions and to ensure close communications between country teams and the HQ.

In all circumstances, please ensure that HR and the Security Manager are informed. Next please inform line managers, key colleagues, and the wider team.

Please inform Internal Communications of the death of the staff member with the following details which will be communicated to all staff:

* Photograph, Full Name, Job Title, Location, cause of death, a few sentences paying tribute to the staff member, name of spouse and children as applicable.

HR will ask the CEO to write an email to the family of the deceased which will be passed to the family via the Country Director.

In due course key stakeholders eg partner organisations should be informed.

**3. Authorities**

Use normal protocols to notify the local authorities. Often the initial contact will be the police and a doctor is normally required to attend the scene to confirm the death. Protocols may vary depending on the suspected cause of death: accidental, criminal, medical issue, natural causes etc.

**Personal Possessions**

Personal possessions should be secured until the next of kin decide what should be done with them

**Registering the Death**

Deaths must be registered in the country where the person died. The police, medical service, embassy, or funeral director, can usually advise on how to register a death and obtain a death certificate.

You will usually need documentation for the person who died, confirming their full name, date of birth, passport details and information about their next of kin.

Most countries, but not all, issue a death certificate for deaths in their jurisdiction.

You may need to tell the authorities if the person who died had an infectious condition such as coronavirus, hepatitis or HIV, so they can take precautions against infection.

**Pastoral Support**

If appropriate, consider arranging pastoral support for next of kin and colleagues.

**FOR LOCAL/NATIONAL STAFF**

**Death in Service Payment**

As outlined in the country staff handbook, we will provide a death in service payment to the staff member’s nominated beneficiary. The amount is stipulated in the handbook and/or employee contract. The payment should be charged to the Country budget but where there are insufficient funds a request for payment from core costs should be made to the International and Finance Directors. The process to activate payment from a central provision is as follows:

1) The Country Director should inform the Regional Director and the HR

2) The Regional Director will then inform the International Director

3) The International Director and the Finance Director will arrange the death in service payment.

A funeral grant may also be available for the family’s immediate use. Please refer to the country staff handbook for details.

If medical expenses were incurred prior to death, these may be claimable against any medical insurance scheme that we have for the country. If this is relevant please contact the insurance company as soon as possible.

Appointing a funeral director and arranging the burial or cremation

A local funeral director should be appointed by the next of kin to arrange a burial or cremation. The funeral director will be able to explain the options available, the costs and help with arrangements.

The next of kin will need to decide between a local burial or cremation. Options will depend on the circumstances of the death and the laws and customs of the country where the individual died.

Please contact HR for any additional help required.

**FOR INTERNATIONAL STAFF**

**Embassy**

Please also contact the deceased’s Embassy. Embassies can provide advice on registering the death; details of international funeral directors and lawyers; information on local procedures and provide. They cannot investigate deaths, give legal advice, pay for a burial or cremation or arrange repatriation of the deceased.

**Registering the death**

Deaths must be registered in the country where the person died. Most countries, but not all, issue a death certificate for deaths in their jurisdiction, including for foreign nationals.

The death certificate should be certified by the authorities of that country. If it is not in the local language of the deceased, you will also need to obtain an official translation for the next of kin and an official translation in English for our records.

Check any additional registration protocols with the deceased’s country of residence. (NB for some nationals, deaths overseas are not required to be registered with the home authorities and the local death certificate can usually be used for most purposes, including probate)

**Death in service payment**

In accordance with the staff handbook, we will pay a lump sum payment to dependents of the deceased recorded on the nomination of beneficiary form.

**Repatriation of the deceased**

It may not be possible in every case for the deceased to be repatriated but where possible we will cover all reasonable expenses incurred in repatriating the deceased back to their home country, where they resided, for burial or cremation. Travel insurance may cover the cost of repatriation, legal and translation fees. Please contact HR who will liaise with the insurance company.

Repatriation of the deceased can only occur once any local processes (post-mortem, police and judicial inquiries etc) have been completed.

The insurance company may have an approved funeral director, or an international funeral director should be appointed. They will be able to explain the options available to bring the deceased home to, the costs and help with arrangements.

If medical expenses were incurred prior to death, these may also be claimable against our medical insurance. Again, please notify HR.

The next of kin may, however, decide for the deceased to be buried or cremated in the country where the staff member died. If this is the case please assist them with funeral arrangements.

Whichever choice they make, please inform them that the options for an inquest or enquiry may be limited. If they opt for the deceased to be buried or cremated in the country of death the local post mortem may be limited and if they opt to repatriate the body it is usually embalmed and this can affect any post mortem once in the home country.

Please contact HR for any help required.