**Norwegian University of Life Sciences**

**Master's Thesis 2020    30 ECTS**
Faculty of Landscape and Society

# Expatriate Management in the Nonprofit, Humanitarian Sector: The Case of NORCAP

Vibeke Rye Pedersen

Master of Science in International Relations

The Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, is the international gateway for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU). Eight departments, associated research institutions and the Norwegian College of Veterinary Medicine in Oslo. Established in 1986, Noragric's contribution to international development lies in the interface between research, education (Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes) and assignments.

The Noragric Master theses are the final theses submitted by students in order to fulfil the requirements under the Noragric Master programme "International Environmental Studies", "International Development Studies" and "International Relations".

The findings in this thesis do not necessarily reflect the views of Noragric. Extracts from this publication may only be reproduced after prior consultation with the author and on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation contact Noragric.

# Declaration

I, Vibeke Rye Pedersen, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature:  *Vibeke Rye Pedersen*  Date: 01.06.2020

# Acknowledgements

# Abstract

Effective humanitarian aid is dependent on the expertise and experience of humanitarian staff, and it is therefore vital to understand how international humanitarian workers are managed. Most research on expatriate management is in the for-profit sector, but the nonprofit sector is increasingly put on the research agenda. This thesis aims to increase the understanding of expatriate management in the nonprofit sector by looking to a Norwegian humanitarian nonprofit organization; NORCAP. The study draws on research from international human resource management (IHRM) and International Relations, and sheds light on how the international environment of the nonprofit sector influences human resource management. The thesis is conducted as a case study with a holistic and qualitative approach. As such, it is designed to capture the interrelationship between the phenomenon of research, expatriate management, and its context, NORCAP. The study concludes that NORCAP deployments can be characterized as a mix of different types of international assignments. At the same time, their unique context requires them to be handled differently from other expatriate assignments. Secondly, this study argues that short contracts, dual employers and loose employment relationships might lead to the construction of transactional psychological contracts, but that relational contracts might develop over time. This influences the dynamics of expatriate management in NORCAP. Finally, this thesis argues that the flexible, transparent and cooperative way of performing expatriate management in NORCAP could contribute to strengthen humanitarian operations. An important contribution of this study is thus increased understanding of the importance of IHRM for the continued influence of humanitarian organizations in the international arena.

# Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| HR | Human resources |
| HRM | Human resource management |
| IHRM | International human resource management |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| NRC | Norwegian Refugee Council |
| PER | Performance evaluation report |
| ROI | Return on investment |
| TOR | Terms of reference |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNOCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |

# List of figures

# Table of contents

# 1.0 Introduction

Effective humanitarian aid is dependent on the expertise and experience of humanitarian staff. In order to better understand the authority and knowledge of independent humanitarian organizations, it is vital to understand how international humanitarian workers are managed. This thesis aims to increase the understanding of expatriate management in the nonprofit sector, and thus to broaden the conceptualization of expatriation in general. The focus of this thesis will be on one particular humanitarian organization; NORCAP. As such, this thesis also aims to illuminate the inner force of humanitarian organizations; its human resources and how they are managed, and how these organizations uphold relations with other entities and actors in the international arena through expatriate management. This study will contribute towards filling the gap in literature on expatriate management in the nonprofit sector by drawing on research from both international human resource management (IHRM) and International Relations (IR).

Increased global connectedness has established a global labor market with a wide range of global workers. Employees who work and temporarily reside in a foreign country are often called expatriates or international assignees (Dowling, Festing & Engle, 2017, p. 3). In addition, new terms like the flexpatriate, short-term assignee and self-initiated expatriate have emerged to account for new ways of performing international assignments (Dowling et al., 2017; Mayerhofer, Hartmann, Michelitsch-Riedl & Kollinger, 2004; Tahvanainen, Welch & Worm, 2005). The vast majority of research within the field of expatriate management is in the for-profit sector, but the nonprofit sector is increasingly put on the research agenda (Fenwick, 2005; McNulty, Vance & Fisher, 2017*)*. Fenwick (2005, p. 499) defines a nonprofit enterprise as having a "primary vocation of providing relief and promoting development via transactions in or between two or more sovereign entities". This term comprises different subsets of nonprofit organizations, of which the non-governmental organization (NGO) is the largest (Fenwick, 2005, p. 498). The focus of this thesis is NGOs in the humanitarian sector. Nonprofit organizations might face different challenges and circumstances related to expatriate management than other organizations, which is important to recognize (McNulty et al., 2017). This study will draw on literature from the academic field of international human resource management (IHRM). Literature on expatriate management in the

for-profit sector will be used as a starting point for reflection. In addition, this study will explore existing research on less traditional forms of expatriation, and on expatriation in the nonprofit sector. Another theoretical aspect in the IHRM literature is the psychological contract, which will also be a central point of departure in this study (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006; Guest & Conway, 2002; O'Donohue, Hutchings & Hansen, 2018).

Since the last decades of the 20th century, NGOs and other non-state actors have received more attention within the field of IR (Joachim, 2017). NGOs and other nonprofit organizations have gained increased influence worldwide due to the globalization of its activities, staff, values and ideas (Fenwick, 2005; Lindenberg & Dobel, 1999). They often hold specialized expertise and information, and operate close to people, which gives them power to influence transnational outcomes (Mingst & Muldoon, 2015, p. 75). In light of this development, the IR perspective could be useful to highlight the contextual factors surrounding humanitarian organizations, and thus to gain a broader understanding of how they practice expatriate management. This study will therefore draw on literature from the field of IR, with particular focus on humanitarian organizations and the nonprofit sector. It will explore literature on the role of NGOs in the international arena and in transnational networks, and on the particular international environment in which humanitarian organizations operate. As such, this study will link IHRM and IR literature by illuminating the international environment of the nonprofit, humanitarian sector, and what implications this has for human resource management. At the same time, this study will extend the IR literature by exploring the inside of humanitarian organizations from an HR perspective in order to increase the understanding of their identity, authority and origins of change.

## 1.1 Research questions and delimitations

This thesis will answer the following research question:

*How is expatriate management of international humanitarian workers practiced in NORCAP?*

This research question will be addressed through two sub-questions;

1) How is the expatriation process structured?

2) How can humanitarian international assignments in NORCAP be characterized?

The first sub-question will shed light on the structure of the expatriation process in NORCAP, and what HR activities this process entails. As such, this question has an overall approach and will primarily highlight the overarching principles, dynamics and structure of the process. It will not explore the substance of each HR practice, but it will draw attention to some specific activities and challenges in NORCAP. The second sub-question will explore the specific characteristics of humanitarian international assignments in NORCAP, with particular attention to the humanitarian operating environment and organizational structures in NORCAP. This question thus aims to capture the particular contextual factors and circumstances of NORCAP assignments. Together, these questions aim to address how expatriate management is practiced in NORCAP, by mapping out the expatriation process and accounting for the circumstances of their international assignments. The research questions will be addressed by analyzing data from eight in-depth interviews with HR workers in NORCAP, called "Deployment Advisors". The thesis will explore the Deployment Advisors' own experiences with and perspectives of expatriate management in NORCAP, and related challenges and opportunities. As such, the thesis will discuss expatriate management in the nonprofit sector from an HR point of view, and will not include the perspectives of the humanitarian workers themselves. The thesis is conducted as a case study with a holistic and qualitative approach. As such, it is designed to capture the interrelationship between the phenomenon of research, expatriate management, and its context, NORCAP.

## 1.2 NORCAP

**NRC and NORCAP**

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is Norway's largest independent humanitarian organization, with presence in more than 30 countries (Norwegian Refugee Council [NRC], 2020b). NORCAP is NRC's global provider of expertise to the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors. They work with partners on national, regional and international levels with the aim to effectively contribute to humanitarian operations (NRC, 2020a). NORCAP has a pool of more than 1000 professionals who are deployed to international organizations and national partners in over 70 countries. These experts are recruited to meet the changing demands of a wide range of partners, situations and crises (NRC, 2020c). NRC's Secretary General, Jan Egeland, describes NORCAP with the following words:

At the heart of NORCAP are our excellent roster members. They are hardworking experts who build capacity and improve the humanitarian coordination and response. They are the ones who make a difference on the ground in challenging and complex working conditions. (NRC, 2020a).

NORCAP was established as a standby capacity to support the UN in emergencies (NRC, 2018). NORCAP is part of the Standby Partnership, which is a network of bilateral agreements between organizations and United Nations (UN) agencies (Standby Partnership, 2017). The Standby Partnership comprises a range of partners from governmental, non-governmental and private sector organizations. These partners all contribute with expert personnel to UN agencies' responses to humanitarian emergencies around the world. The partners have their own roster of humanitarian experts who are requested to fill staffing needs and gaps in UN operations (Standby Partnership, 2017). NORCAP is NRC's contribution into the Standby Partnership. However, NORCAP also works with other partners outside of the UN, like NGOs, national authorities and regional institutions. They also operate their own thematic projects, some of which in cooperation with partners (NRC, 2020c). NRC and NORCAP are non-governmental, nonprofit organizations, which means that their activities are financed by contributions from donors (NRC, 2020d).

**NORCAP's organization and the NORCAP Database**

NORCAP is situated in Norway and is structured in four sections; Roster Management Section (RMS), Deployment Section (DS), Partnership and Development Section (PDS), and Strategy, Information and Support Section (SIS). These four sections work closely together in many areas, but each of them has their own main responsibilities:

- **RMS** is responsible for recruitment, welfare and competence development of roster members, knowledge management, and the NORCAP database.
- **DS** is responsible for operating the deployment of NORCAP experts and members of the specialist rosters to partner organizations' humanitarian operations in the field.
- **PDS** is responsible for project management and reporting on all NORCAP deployment projects, including fundraising, grants management, and project reports to partners and donors.

- **SIS** is responsible for internal and external communication, coordination of departmental strategies, budgets and action plans, and financial control of all projects.

The NORCAP Database is NRC's roster and deployment management system, and a tool for registering, processing and sharing information for both the roster management and the deployment management process. Each expert has his or her own profile, and the roster comprises different units and several specialist sub-rosters on specific thematic areas. The NORCAP Database is used to register requests from partners, match personnel with requests, and to manage and facilitate the deployment process. It is also used for organizing and coordinating training for roster members, donor reporting, information sharing, and ensuring transparency and quality of the deployment process.

## 1.3 Thesis outline

The next chapter of this thesis will review relevant literature and outline the theories used in this study. This chapter addresses the concept of IHRM, explores mainstream and alternative approaches to expatriation, and draws on IR literature to understand the international environment of humanitarian operations and related challenges for HRM. Chapter 3 presents the methods used in the study. It addresses the choice of doing a qualitative case study, and outlines and discusses the research design in detail. The final part of the chapter discusses methodological limitations and ethical implications of the research. Chapter 4 will analyze and discuss the findings from the interviews in light of relevant literature. This chapter is divided in two main sections, corresponding to the two sub-questions. These sections discuss the main themes identified in the analysis related to the expatriation process, and the characteristics of NORCAP assignments. The final chapter presents the conclusions derived from the previous analysis and discussion, and thus addresses the overall research question. This chapter also demonstrates the main contributions of this study, and indicates limitations and suggestions for further research.

# 2.0 International human resource management

This chapter will lay out the theories used in this thesis. The chapter will explore existing research within the field of international human resource management, and review both mainstream and alternative approaches. The aim is to anchor the research questions and to situate this study within the realm of existing research. This review will demonstrate how existing literature can be used to address the research questions, where this study can build upon the literature, and also where it can contribute towards bridging certain gaps in the literature. The chapter starts by giving a conceptual clarification of the terms IHRM and expatriate management. It will then explore central HR activities in the expatriation process, before broadening the perspective to include less traditional forms of expatriation. This entails a change in the contextual focus from the for-profit sector to the nonprofit sector. This part of the literature review will incorporate the IR perspective and review relevant literature on nonprofit organizations, the particular environment of humanitarian operations, and related challenges and implications for HRM.

## 2.1 The concept of IHRM

International human resource management (IHRM) as a concept can only be understood by first defining human resource management (HRM). HRM refers to the activities undertaken by an organization to effectively utilize its human resources (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 2). This involves activities such as HR planning, staffing, performance management, training and development initiatives, and compensation practices. Whereas international HRM often involves the same activities, they are conducted in an international and more complex context. Dowling et al. (2017, p. 4) therefore argue that the main difference between HRM and international HRM is not the various HR activities involved, but rather the complexity of operating internationally and employing different nationalities. International HRM requires a broader perspective in order to recognize the broader external influences (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 5).

The core activity of international HRM is expatriate management. The term 'expatriate' refers to an employee who works and temporarily resides in a foreign country (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 3). This process of moving staff across national boundaries requires engagement in activities that

would not usually be necessary in a domestic environment. Expatriate management includes preparing expatriates for differences and challenges they might face abroad, assisting the expatriates while on foreign missions, and handling the process of repatriation when they get back (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 5). The expatriation process can therefore be seen as a process in three phases; pre-departure, during assignment, and upon return. This process involves activities such as pre-departure training, international taxation, international relocation and orientation, and administrative services (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 5). However, regular HR activities are also important in this process.

## 2.2 IHRM activities

This part of the literature review will explore some important activities in expatriate management, and is primarily based on the book by Dowling et al. (2017). The focus of this book is mainly on the for-profit sector and established multinational enterprises, meaning firms that own or control business activities in more than one foreign country (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 2). Nevertheless, this could be a useful source as it provides valuable information on some core IHRM activities. There are various HR activities involved in expatriate management. The below review is not exhaustive, but sheds light on some crucial activities that are relevant for this study.

### 2.2.1 Staffing

Staffing is an important activity in the pre-departure phase with major influence on the success of the international assignment and 'expatriate failure' (Dowling et al., 2017). The meaning of 'expatriate failure' is debated, but it is often defined as the premature return of an expatriate, meaning that they return home before the assignment is completed (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 125). However, this definition is often criticized for being too narrow, and it is suggested that concepts such as poor performance, and problems and turnover upon return also should be included when discussing expatriate failure (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 125). Expatriate failure is often related to selection errors and ineffective staffing policies. The selection criteria used for international assignments are therefore crucial. Some relevant selection criteria for international assignments are technical ability, language, company requirements and preferences, family requirements, and

cross-cultural suitability (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 128-132). Despite the importance of selection, Dowling et al. (2017, p. 133) highlight that international selection processes often are rather informal, which can lead to poor staffing decisions. In addition, technical skills are often prioritized in selection because such skills are easier to measure; however, they should not be the only criteria guiding the selection process (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 133).

## 2.2.2 Pre-departure training

Pre-departure training is another crucial activity in the pre-departure phase. The objective with this activity is to assist the expatriate to adjust to the demands of living and working in a foreign location (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 184). Pre-departure training is mainly concerned with developing cultural awareness. New environments require many adjustments in a relatively short period of time, and expatriates might therefore experience culture shocks when moving across national boundaries (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 9). Cultural adjustment is crucial for the expatriate's effectiveness and success abroad, particularly in culturally tough contexts (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 176). Pre-departure training programs usually consist of different elements. It is common that they involve cultural awareness training, preliminary visits, language training, practical assistance and security briefings. Security briefings have become increasingly important as expatriates more often relocate to locations with higher safety and security risks (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 182). Dowling et al. (2017, p. 280) emphasize that HR in certain organizations should be involved in risk management practices. This is particularly important for companies that operate in socially or politically turbulent regions. HR should be involved in risk analysis and security training, in order to be prepared for various global security risks, such as terrorist attacks, cyber-terrorism, state collapse or crises, or even pandemics. However, the extent to which HR is involved in this work differs with the type of company and environment of operations (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 282). Despite the importance of pre-departure training, Dowling et al. (2017, p. 184) point out that this is often not provided.

### 2.2.3 Performance management

Performance management refers to the process of evaluating and continuously improving both individual and corporate performance against clear and pre-defined goals (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 150). The focus in this thesis will be on individual performance. Performance management is a complex activity, and there are many factors that influence expatriate performance. Dowling et al. (2017, p. 155) outline some important variables, like compensation, the assignment task, headquarters' support, the environment in which the task is done, and cultural adjustment. This shows that contextual factors need to be taken into account when evaluating performance. When measuring performance, it is common to distinguish between hard goals, that are objective, quantifiable, and can be directly measured; and soft goals, that are more related to relationships, traits, and interpersonal skills. In addition, there are contextual goals, which attempt to take into consideration the situational factors influencing performance (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 162). Measuring expatriate performance could therefore be complicated, and it might be difficult to measure direct outcomes of the assignment in some international contexts (Fenwick, 2005, p. 501).

### 2.2.4 Repatriation

Repatriation refers to the activity of bringing the expatriate back to the home country when the international assignment is completed (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 190). As mentioned, expatriate failure is often connected to early return without completing the assignment, or to expatriates opting to leave the organization shortly after the return. Repatriation is therefore a crucial activity to make sure that the company retains their resources. There are different factors that influence repatriate adjustment. Job-related factors often involve employment prospects, how the international experience is valued internally, how the repatriate copes with new roles and demands, and the potential loss of status or financial benefits upon return (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 193). This means that how the expatriate is treated and rewarded upon return is crucial in terms of whether the person decides to stay in the organization. Dowling et al. (2017, p. 198) even emphasize that these signals influence the possibilities to recruit staff for future international assignments. Another reason for wanting to retain staff is because expatriates play an important role in transferring knowledge and competence between various units in the organization (Dowling et al., 2017, p.

175). The organization should therefore invest in efforts to extract and build upon knowledge from the expatriates' international experience (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 202).

Repatriation activities are also crucial in light of the organization's return on the investment related to an international assignment (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 200). There is no agreed-upon definition of return on investment (ROI), but it usually entails a cost-benefit analysis in which the costs of the assignment are measured against the purpose of the assignment. This might be complicated as both costs and benefits can be hard to measure (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 201). In their literature review, McNulty & Tharenou (2004) examine how expatriate return on investment should be measured, and the influence of HR activities on expatriate ROI. They emphasize that quantitative measures alone are inadequate to measure expatriate ROI (McNulty & Tharenou, 2004, p. 69). Common definitions of ROI are largely concerned with financial data and economic value; however, ROI calculations for international assignments should also account for non-financial costs and benefits (McNulty & Tharenou, 2004, p. 71). Such factors can for instance be labor turnover, cross-cultural adjustment and performance, or more long-term aspects, like increased competitiveness, organizational knowledge and learning, or strategic aims (McNulty & Tharenou, 2004, p. 72-73). Furthermore, McNulty & Tharenou (2004) argue that return on investment calculations should be tailored to the company and to the individual international assignment. There is no "one best" formula for measuring ROI (McNulty & Tharenou, 2004, p. 74). With relation to HR activities, McNulty & Tharenou (2004) conclude that an effective HR system will contribute to reduce costs and increase benefits of international assignments, and thus increase expatriate return on investment. Such a system should comprise activities like planning, selection, administration of the relocation program, training and development, compensation, family support, performance management, repatriation and retention (McNulty & Tharenou, 2004, p. 88). As this shows, these are activities that Dowling et al. (2017) also emphasize.

## 2.3 Expanding the concept

Recent literature increasingly promotes an expansion of the concepts 'expatriate' and 'expatriate management'. Selmer (2019, p. 237) recognizes that the understanding of expatriate management needs to be broadened to also include a wider range of global workers and the challenges they

face. This needs to be seen in light of increased global mobility, and how people in today's global world can move, work and travel close to anywhere on the globe. He argues that expatriate management is becoming a much more varied field of study covering a wider ground (Selmer, 2019, p. 238). New phenomena within the field should therefore be recognized and researched in order to expand the concept of traditional expatriates to include nearly all workers on temporary assignments abroad (Selmer, 2019, p. 238). In the following, I will review and discuss two less traditional phenomena; short-term expatriate assignments and flexpatriate assignments. This study will draw on research on both of these phenomena.

## 2.3.1 Short-term assignments

The literature distinguishes between different types of international assignments. Tahvanainen et al. (2005, p. 663) distinguish between traditional or long-term expatriate assignments and non-standard international assignments, of which short-term assignments are the most common type. There are many factors influencing the choice of assignment. Tahvanainen et al. (2005, p. 664) highlight the purpose, nature, time needed and location of the assignment as the main factors influencing choice of assignment. In addition, organizational drivers, such as available staff, costs, and the company's strategy, will influence type of assignment. Tahvanainen et al. (2005) indicate two main differences between traditional and short-term expatriate assignments. The first difference is the duration. Whereas traditional assignments usually last one to three years, short-term assignments often have a duration of only 6-12 months (Tahvanainen et al., 2005, p. 669). Another key difference is related to the purpose of the assignment. The purpose of traditional assignments is often related to management or organizational development, or to fill a position or skill gap in the organization. Short-term assignments, on the other hand, are primarily used for skills transfer or to solve a specific problem, to manage specific operations, or to give people international experience (Tahvanainen et al., 2005, p. 665). These different types of assignments have different implications related to HR. Tahvanainen et al. (2005, p. 670-671) recommend that HR staff should broaden their focus from traditional expatriate management to develop specific policies that are adapted to a different type of assignment. This includes rethinking procedures related to selection, pre-departure training, compensation, performance management, and repatriation, and aligning these activities with the strategic objectives of short-term assignments.

A one-size-fits-all-model for expatriate assignments should be avoided (Tahvanainen et al., 2005, p. 670). This is a relevant perspective for this study.

Tahvanainen et al. (2005) not only request tailored HR practices, but also address the lack of involvement from HR for short-term assignments. Firstly, they found that formal selection procedures are rarely conducted for short-term assignments. The employees selected are often well known to those responsible for staffing international assignments, meaning that selection is mostly informal and unscientific. At the same time, they found that, from an HR perspective, the interviewees would prefer a more genuine selection process (Tahvanainen et al., 2005, p. 666). Furthermore, they found that pre-departure training, for instance country-specific or cross-cultural training, is in most cases not provided for employees leaving for short-term assignments. Such training was rather an exception reserved for employees leaving for countries with high cultural distance (Tahvanainen et al., 2005, p. 666). In terms of repatriation, Tahvanainen et al. (2005, p. 667) found that their respondents saw repatriation from short-term assignments as unproblematic. The data in their study is collected from interviews with HR managers. Starr (2009), on the other hand, interviewed employees that were currently on, or had recently completed a short-term assignment to explore their thoughts on repatriation. Her findings do not correspond with those of Tahvanainen et al. (2005). Starr (2009) found that there are individual differences in expectations for change and rewards after a short-term assignment, which corresponds with differences in expectations for repatriation often associated with long-term assignments. Therefore, HR needs to respond to the different types, objectives, and circumstances of short-term assignments. Repatriation from short-term assignments is not easy or unproblematic, and should therefore not be disregarded (Starr, 2009, p. 296). Starr (2009, p. 287) argues that repatriation after short-term assignments is highly neglected in the literature, but that it should receive more attention. Tahvanainen et al. (2005, p. 663) also claim that even though short-term assignments are increasingly being used, this change in practice is not reflected in the literature. Research on non-standard international assignments and related HRM challenges remains limited. Hopefully, this thesis can contribute towards filling this gap.

## 2.3.2 The flexpatriate

Another interesting term in the IHRM literature is the 'flexpatriate'. 'Flexpatriate' refers to the flexible expatriate, who undertakes global assignments frequently, without relocating (Mayerhofer et al., 2004, p. 1387). Although flexpatriates travel for brief assignments across cultural and national borders, the impact of successful assignments may be just as great and require as much skill, adaptability and resilience as longer-term placements (Mayerhofer et al., 2004, p. 1371). According to Mayerhofer et al. (2004, p. 1387), an increasing number of global staffing movements are flexpatriates. This provides greater flexibility to the organization in their international tasks, and requires less preparation and staffing changes (Mayerhofer et al., 2004, p. 1385). The use of such assignments also has implications for HR. Mayerhofer et al. (2004, p. 1385) found in their study that the lack of HR support provided for flexpatriates was notable. The burden of managing the work and adjusting to new contexts was largely left with the flexpatriate and their family. HR was only to some extent involved in preparations before the assignments through provision of general information about travel and safety issues (Mayerhofer et al., 2004, p. 1380). During the assignment, the flexpatriates receive little support from HR. Such support is mainly provided if the flexpatriate reaches out to HR with issues concerning travel organization, health, or security requirements (Mayerhofer et al., 2004, p. 1381). This means that more responsibility is left with the flexpatriate. Mayerhofer et al. (2004, p. 1385) criticize this, and highlight how the literature emphasizes the importance of support for expatriate assignments. This indicates that the HRM aspect should not be neglected even for more flexible international assignments.

## 2.4 The psychological contract

There are different definitions and conceptualizations of the psychological contract. Cullinane & Dundon (2006, p. 115) argue that there is a general consensus that the psychological contract deals with implicit reciprocal promises and obligations in an employment relationship. At the same time, there are different approaches as to which parties should be included when discussing the psychological contract (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006, p. 115). Rousseau (1989, p. 121) defines a psychological contract as "individual beliefs in a reciprocal obligation between the individual and the organization". This conceptualization focuses on the employee's experience, and Rousseau

(1989, p. 126) states that "individuals have psychological contracts, organizations do not". The organization, although being the other party in the relationship, cannot have psychological contracts with its members. The organization merely provides the context of where the psychological contract is created (Rousseau, 1989, p. 126). Guest & Conway (2002, p. 22), on the other hand, emphasize that the psychological contract is a two-way exchange, in which the organization also takes part. They define the psychological contract as "the perceptions of both parties to the employment relationship- organisation and individual- of the reciprocal promises and obligations implied in that relationship" (Guest & Conway, 2002, p. 22). Cullinane & Dundon (2006, p. 119) recognize both perceptions, and claim that the psychological contract should be understood as a social exchange interaction. The psychological contract is a term that allows for an alternative understanding of the employment relationship, which emphasizes the subjective and undefined aspects of employment relations and HRM, rather than the legal aspects of it (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006, p. 125). This is the understanding that will underpin the discussion in this thesis.

Another aspect of the psychological contract is the transactional-relational dimension (Fenwick, 2005). On one side, there are relational or loyalty-based contracts, that are driven by collective interests. On the other side, there are learning-oriented and project-based contracts that are mainly driven by self-interest (Fenwick, 2005, p. 505). Fenwick (2005, p. 505) argues that this perspective is important to explain workplace behavior, and the nature of the employment relationship. Cullinane & Dundon (2006, p. 114) emphasize that Rousseau's definition entails a perception of the psychological contract as more transactional, meaning that the employees do not expect a long-lasting relation with their organization based on loyalty and job security. Transactional psychological contracts therefore entail a belief that their employment is a transaction where work effort is provided in exchange for salary and training (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006, p. 114).

Guest (2004) and O'Donohue et al. (2018) share the notion that the psychological contract might be affected by contemporary and more flexible work arrangements. Increased variety of international assignment types has important implications for how expatriate employment relationships should be understood, and for the complexity and range of HRM functions required to support these relationships (O'Donohue et al., 2018, p. 1385). Rousseau (1989, p. 125) highlights that an employment relationship of longer duration, with constant reciprocal

contributions, usually will strengthen the psychological contract. Consistent patterns over time will develop trust and confidence in the organization and its management, which in turn will influence the individual's acceptance of the organization's values, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and desire to remain an employee (Rousseau, 1989, p. 125). An interesting question that arises is then how the psychological contract will be affected by short-term and more flexible assignments. Cullinane & Dundon (2006) also shed light on the implications of less traditional arrangements on the psychological contract. They discuss the implications of blurred organizational boundaries and multi-employer relationships on the construction of psychological contracts, organizational identity, and human resource management in general (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006). Cultivating and maintaining positive relationships with employees is crucial for any organization's success (O'Donohue et al., 2018, p. 1380). The psychological contract is therefore an important aspect of HRM, and could be an interesting perspective with regards to expatriate management of international humanitarian workers as well.

## 2.5 Beyond corporate expatriation

Another development within the IHRM literature is that nonprofit international organizations are increasingly given more attention. Fenwick (2005) has contributed to raise awareness and encourage inclusion of nonprofit multinationals in research on IHRM. She emphasizes that nonprofit multinationals should be investigated further due to their growing influence in both economic and socio-cultural ways (Fenwick, 2005, p. 497). In the same way as for-profit multinationals, the nonprofits face strategic and practical issues related to IHRM, although they might be confronted with different challenges as well. Extending the IHRM research to nonprofit multinationals could therefore generate valuable insights and knowledge for multinationals of all kinds (Fenwick, 2005, p. 498). This notion is also taken into account by McNulty & Brewster (2017), who advocate the use of 'business expatriates' rather than 'corporate expatriates'. This term is supposed to comprise all kinds of 'businesses' and all kinds of multinational enterprises, including the public sector and non-governmental organizations. On the same note, McNulty et al. (2017, p. 110) call for a broader conceptualization of expatriation. They emphasize that there is an extensive amount of research on corporate expatriation, but that other forms of expatriation is to a large extent missing from the literature. This leads to a narrow understanding of the concept of

expatriation, and a neglect of global mobility across nonprofit communities. McNulty et al. (2017, p. 111) stress that this is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, findings in a corporate expatriate setting might not be generalizable to the nonprofit sector, which means that existing theory and knowledge of non-corporate expatriate contexts might be flawed. Furthermore, valuable insights can be gained from research on non-corporate expatriate contexts, and could be applied to traditional expatriation as well (McNulty et al., 2017, p. 111). McNulty et al. (2017, p. 112) emphasize that international NGOs and other nonprofit organizations play an increasingly important role in the global economy, and in global sustainability efforts, advocacy and partnership building with local and international actors. Due to this strong global involvement, the expatriate literature should pay more attention to the unique characteristics, needs and activities of 'nonprofit expatriates' (McNulty et al., 2017, p. 112). This puts the topic of international humanitarian workers and management of these particular expatriates on the agenda. This thesis contributes to the literature on expatriation in the nonprofit sector. The following sections will review literature on nonprofit organizations, the international humanitarian environment, and related consequences for HRM.

## 2.5.1 Nonprofit organizations

Fenwick (2005, p. 499) defines a nonprofit enterprise as having a "primary vocation of providing relief and promoting development via transactions in or between two or more sovereign entities". Nonprofits are organizations between the private and the public sectors, and is a term that comprises several subsets of organizations (Fenwick, 2005, p. 498). The distinctions among these subsets, like aid agencies, NGOs and other nonprofits, are often blurred. Nevertheless, NGOs are perceived as one of the largest subsets of nonprofit organizations (Fenwick, 2005, p. 498). Joachim (2017, p. 348) conceptualizes NGOs as actors that operate independently from states, with the objective to work for the common good in societies rather than for their own profit. However, as NGOs frequently interact with states, international governmental organizations, and transnational corporations, it is difficult to separate NGOs completely from other actors in international relations (Joachim, 2017, p. 347).

From the 1960s the international environment saw the emergence of an international nonprofit sector. The catalyst for this growth was a shift in the perspectives of for-profit, corporate entities and nation states toward international relief and development activities (Fenwick, 2005, p. 500; Lindenberg & Dobel, 1999, p. 4). Joachim (2017, p. 356) explains that realist ideas and perspectives, like balance of power, central authority and anarchy, were dominant up until the last decades of the 1900s. The state was perceived as the primary actor on the international arena, and the influence of other actors was to a large extent neglected (Joachim, 2017, p. 356). However, the end of the cold war opened up for competing approaches. This period was characterized by a wave of democratization, and economic liberalization and privatization (Joachim, 2017, p. 356). A new global society emerged, and realist ideas like state sovereignty and anarchy were to a larger extent confronted by ideals from alternative approaches, like liberalist and constructivist branches. These approaches made it possible to discuss and understand the international environment in different terms (Joachim, 2017, p. 356). The position of other actors than the nation state was strengthened, and nonprofit organizations were given more space within the international environment. In light of this perspective, Mingst & Muldoon (2015) offer an alternative understanding of IR theories that to a larger extent recognizes the power held by other actors than the state, like NGOs. They argue that NGOs have the authority to pursue their own agendas as they often hold specialized expertise, and operate close to people which gives them access to valuable information. In addition, they often work in flexible and efficient ways, and have substantial credibility among other actors and in communities. This all gives NGOs power to influence transnational outcomes (Mingst & Muldoon, 2015, p. 75). Increased globalization has affected the environments of nonprofit organizations through the growth and proliferation of supra-territorial social relations, global corporations, global civil society, and global regimes (Lindenberg & Dobel, 1999). Globalization of multinational nonprofit organizations has largely increased diversity and distribution of their activities and staff, and thus their growing influence worldwide (Fenwick, 2005, p. 500). Fenwick (2005, p. 509) argues that the nonprofit sector, and in particular the humanitarian aid and development sector, is extending its influence economically and philosophically, as economic and socio-cultural boundaries become more interdependent. With this in mind, this thesis will extend the IR literature and explore the inside of independent humanitarian organizations with the aim to increase the understanding of their influence and relations in the international arena.

## 2.5.2 The international humanitarian context

Humanitarian action is by nature undertaken in insecure, complex, and rapidly changing environments. Operating in the face of various forms of violence is something humanitarian organizations continuously need to manage (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [UNOCHA], 2011, p. 11). Humanitarian organizations face a wide range of direct, external threats in their operating environment, such as kidnappings, use of heavy explosives, insurgencies, host government impediments to access, and lawless environments (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 13-15). At the same time, humanitarian organizations also need to deal with more intrinsic vulnerabilities related to the humanitarian community itself. This is often related to ensuring neutrality due to political and religious identities of some aid actors, or identity problems related to geographic origins and orientations (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 16). Furthermore, there are other, more indirect challenges to humanitarian action in complex security environments. These challenges are often created by political actors, including donor governments and host agencies. Due to their own strategic objectives, such actors can undermine good practices and operational measures of agencies to stay engaged in highly insecure contexts (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 34). Despite these risks and challenges, both governments and the public have heightened expectations that international humanitarian organizations will respond quickly to an emergency (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 3). Presence and proximity to affected populations is an essential requirement for effective humanitarian action. Humanitarian organizations therefore need to manage risk in a way that allows them to remain present and effective in their work. Many humanitarian organizations and UN agencies have followingly adopted a security approach that focuses on 'how to stay' as opposed to 'when to leave' (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 2).

Acceptance of humanitarian action in today's volatile operating environments requires sustained dialogue and engagement by non-state actors, political, military and religious leaders (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 3). One aspect of such engagement is support of the core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality. The undermining of these principles might lead to practical impediments to access, acceptance and security for humanitarian operations (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 49). Political and religious leaders everywhere should therefore better defend the humanitarian principles to decrease risk (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 46). In addition, states need to strengthen their commitment to uphold international humanitarian law and common principles (UNOCHA, 2011,

p. 4). This notion shows how nonprofit and humanitarian organizations cannot be separated from the rest of the international environment, like emphasized by Fenwick (2005) and Joachim (2017). Multinational nonprofit organizations are increasingly involved in collaborations and partnerships with each other, with governments and with for-profit organizations. Fenwick (2005, p. 508) emphasizes the importance of recognizing these networks and interrelationships between sectors, of understanding the role of the nonprofit sector in the public-policy process, and of examining the role of nonprofit leaders in managing these strategic relationships. This notion is highly relevant for the aims of this study.

As multinational nonprofit organizations increase in size, complexity and danger, they will face similar challenges related to HRM as for-profit organizations, like maintaining employee commitment, managing diverse workforces, and international staff transfers. In addition, they might face other challenges directly related to their nature, like a mix of contracted and permanent staff, or mix of volunteer and paid employees (Fenwick, 2005, p. 509). Globalization and organizational change are important environmental factors confronting any organization, including the nonprofits. This requires employees with the capacity to manage and encourage change. It is argued that the flexible and responsive HRM approaches in many nonprofit organizations are especially well-suited to meeting this requirement (Fenwick, 2005, p. 501). Mingst & Muldoon (2015, p. 75) also emphasized the flexibility of NGOs as one of their advantages. In order to manage volatile and complex security environments, humanitarian operations should also invest in developing specialized skill sets and ensure rigorous selection of staff to deploy to complex security environments. Such staff need to possess a sound understanding of humanitarian principles as they relate to practical operations (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 47). This shows that the particular operational setting of nonprofit, humanitarian organizations have certain implications for HRM, and that HRM is crucial for effective operations.

## 2.5.3 HRM in hostile environments

The relief and development sector rely heavily on the expertise and experience of people. Their staff and volunteers make the difference between effective humanitarian aid or development assistance, and inadequate fulfilment of an NGO's mission (People In Aid, 2003, p. 3). Staff and

volunteers from NGOs, UN agencies and other groups, place themselves in the frontline in the service of others every day (People In Aid, 2003, p. 2). The commitment to work for other people despite severe security conditions is an important characteristic of the humanitarian community. Proper support and management of staff is therefore a critical success factor in delivering humanitarian missions (People In Aid, 2003, p. 2). The "People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the management and support of aid personnel" is a tool to help relief and development agencies improve their human resource management practices (People In Aid, 2003, p. 26). The guiding principle and overarching approach is that "people are central to the achievement of our mission", and each of the seven principles in the framework assumes the centrality of people to the organizational mission (People In Aid, 2003, p. 7). These assumptions; that people are at heart of humanitarian operations, and that effective HRM is required to support them; are central to this study, and the recommendations in the Code of Good Practice are therefore highly relevant when discussing expatriate management in NORCAP. These assumptions also indicate the importance of exploring the inside of humanitarian organizations to better understand their international influence.

Bader, Schuster & Dickmann (2019) claim that security management and HRM in hostile environments have become increasingly more important for business leaders and HR professionals in all multinational companies. Many multinational companies operate in an international environment which is increasingly characterized by violence and instability due to for instance terrorism, ethnopolitical conflicts, civil unrest, civil war, and drug-related crime (Bader et al., 2019, p. 2810). This development influences the challenges related to HRM (Bader et al., 2019, p. 2811). However, Bader et al. (2019) emphasize that research on the role of HR in hostile environments is still limited. Their article distinguishes between three perspectives on managing people in hostile environments; micro-, meso- and macro-level (Bader et al., 2019, p. 2809). Research on the meso-level is concerned with the role of multinational companies and HR departments (Bader et al., 2019, p. 2813). This includes the development of HR strategies, policies and practices, which results in response mechanisms like security training, efforts to prepare the organization, and crisis management efforts (Bader et al., 2019, p. 2816). Bader et al. (2019, p. 2822) argue that there is a need to extend our knowledge on HR policies and practices, what companies are doing in order to protect their staff abroad, and what their role is in terms of duty

of care. This thesis aims to contribute to increase the understanding of HR's role in the work with expatriate security.

Another interesting view is proposed by Fee & McGrath-Champ (2017). Like Bader et al. (2019), they claim that multinational organizations across sectors are increasingly faced with security challenges. Ensuring the safety and security of international staff is therefore an important challenge (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017, p. 1960). In their research they explore how international non-governmental organizations manage the safety and security of their expatriate staff, and how HR practices support this (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017, p. 1961). Organizations operating in the international aid and development sector are often faced with high levels of insecurity, in combination with limited infrastructure and financial resources. This makes expatriate field staff very vulnerable, which means that security management is a crucial activity (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017, p. 1960). Insights from this sector on how to keep international operations and staff safe could therefore be valuable for multinational companies in the for-profit sector as well. One of Fee & McGrath-Champ's (2017) main findings was that an organization's efforts to build a safety and security culture is a prominent feature of NGOs' work and attitude towards security. A security culture should underpin practices at all stages of the expatriate life cycle, and for instance activities like selection, training, information services and communication (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017, p. 1967). Such a culture entails personal responsibility and empowerment, in that security and well-being of an individual, others and the organization is perceived as a shared responsibility (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017, p. 1973). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss security management approaches and strategies in detail. However, it is relevant to shed light on how HR could be involved in this work.

## 2.5.4 Duty of care

An important concept related to security management and HRM in hostile environments is duty of care. Duty of care is the organization's legal and moral responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of its employees (Bickley, 2017, p. 8). This responsibility involves assessment of risks and implementation of mitigation measures, as well as informing staff about these measures and perceived risks. Staff security is one of the biggest challenges in NGOs in the humanitarian and

development sectors, as they are faced with growing insecurity, threats and violence in their operations. To account for this development, the duty of care benchmark has risen significantly over the past decade (Bickley, 2017, p. 8). Duty of care is also at centre in the Code of Good Practice, and explicitly stated in the seventh principle concerning health, safety and security (People In Aid, 2003, p. 20). Even though stressful and risky situations are inevitable in relief and development work, each organization has a duty of care to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of its staff (People In Aid, 2003, p. 20). Duty of care is a central concept in this thesis, and I aim to show how HR is concerned with duty of care in their work, and how it influences HR activities and processes.

The responsibility of duty of care must be seen in relation to the expectations facing humanitarian organizations today. Despite the fact that these organizations operate in increasingly hostile environments, governments and the public have heightened expectations that humanitarian organizations will still be present at an early stage of a crisis, as previously mentioned (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 3). It is therefore crucial to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers in order to ensure timely and quality assistance. However, duty of care is not reserved for NGOs and the humanitarian sector, as emphasized by Fee & McGrath-Champ (2017) and Bader et al. (2019). Because of increased international business activity, employees across sectors and businesses face greater risks and threats to their health, safety and wellbeing, for instance related to terrorism or outbreaks of diseases. Any organization operating internationally must therefore take into consideration the ethical and legal implications of short and long term assignments abroad (International SOS Foundation, 2016, p. 1). Health and safety management is an important dimension of international human resource management in general, and something any employer needs to deal with to fulfill its duty of care (International SOS Foundation, 2016, p. 1).

This chapter has reviewed relevant literature and outlined the theoretical perspectives underpinning this thesis. Literature from the for-profit sector will be used as a starting point for reflection, but this thesis will also build on and extend the literature on more alternative forms of expatriation and related challenges. This thesis aims to contribute to the research on expatriate management in the nonprofit sector by linking IHRM and IR perspectives. Drawing on insights from both fields of research opens up for a holistic approach that not only accounts for HR related

processes, but also the contextual and environmental factors of expatriate management. Hopefully, this will contribute to expanding the conceptualization and understanding of expatriation as a phenomenon. In addition, this thesis will extend the IR literature by exploring the inside of humanitarian organizations from an HR perspective in order to increase the understanding of their influence in the international arena. Concepts, ideas, relations, and issues addressed in this chapter will guide the further analysis and discussion in chapter 4.

# 3.0 Research methods

This chapter will outline the research methods used in this study. The chapter starts by giving an account of the choice of doing a qualitative case study, and of the approaches to case study methods underpinning my own research. The next sections will describe the research design in detail, and outline the methodological choices related to sampling, data collection, and analysis. Then, the chapter will discuss possible limitations in this study. The main issues discussed are validity and reflexivity, and in particular possible weaknesses related to my lack of experience as a researcher. The final part of this chapter will discuss some ethical considerations when doing research, and the measures taken to address these issues.

## 3.1 Research design: The qualitative case study

The basic case study entails a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman, 2016, p. 60). Bryman (2016, p. 61) emphasizes that the case is an object of interest in its own right, and the researcher aims to provide an in-depth examination of its unique features. There are several different approaches to how a case study should be carried out. The researcher can therefore adapt and customize the case study approach in a way that best serves their own research purpose (Johannessen, Tufte & Christoffersen, 2016, p. 81). This study primarily draws on Robert Stake's (1995) and Sharan Merriam's (1998) conceptualizations of case study research because of their epistemological and ontological positions. They both have constructivist epistemological commitments and view knowledge as constructed through social interaction between people (Yazan, 2015, p. 137-138). Stake (1995, p. 9) argues that the researcher's own interpretations also

play an important role in understanding the complexity of a case. Furthermore, both Stake (1995, p. xi) and Merriam (1998, p. xiii) conceive the qualitative case study as "holistic". Holistic in this sense means that the researcher should consider the interrelationship between the phenomenon and its context (Yazan, 2015, p. 139). These perceptions are highly relevant to effectively address the research questions in this study, and they have therefore influenced the research design and choice of methods.

Stake (1995, p. xi) defines the case study as the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the specific circumstances and context related to the case (Stake, 1995, p. xi). Merriam (1998, p. xiii) defines case study research as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit". Merriam (1998, p. 27) furthermore understands a case as a phenomenon of some sort that occurs within a bounded context. Yazan (2015, p. 139) argues that Merriam's understanding of a case allows for more flexibility in what a case can be, as long as the phenomenon of interest is specified within certain boundaries. Drawing on these two definitions, and in particular following Merriam's (1998) understanding of a case, the case studied in my own research is expatriate management in NORCAP. Expatriate management is in that sense the phenomenon of interest, while NORCAP constitutes the bounded context in which this phenomenon will be researched. I seek to broaden the understanding of expatriate management in the nonprofit sector, but it is the specific circumstances in NORCAP where this phenomenon occurs that is of particular interest. I therefore adopt a holistic view on case study research, where my aim is to understand the interrelationship between expatriate management as a phenomenon and the context in which it finds place, NORCAP.

In light of the understanding of case study research as constructivist, interpretivist, and holistic, both Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) recommend a flexible research design. Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2012, p. 34) also claim that interpretive research requires a flexible and dynamic research design, because it draws on empirical engagements that cannot be fully anticipated beforehand. During the conduct of the research, the researcher will learn more about their research question, and can realize that the existing literature is missing adequate explanations (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 34). The research design in this study has followingly been dynamic and flexible,

with an abductive logic of inquiry. Abduction is a way of reasoning that goes back and forth between empirical materials and theoretical literature during the course of interpretive research (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 27). This way of thinking can be viewed as a middle ground between induction and deduction, with a constant exchange between puzzles and surprises, and interpretations and possible explanations. As such, abductive reasoning does not follow a linear process. It rather follows a more circular pattern, going back and forth between different elements (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 28). In this research, I started with some concepts and ideas guiding the literature review, which then revealed new concepts and logics. This informed the empirical research, but the empirical findings also introduced new elements of interest. This research has therefore been abductive in the way that it has gone back and forth between theoretical literature and the empirical findings from the interviews. The purpose of this has been to enable incorporation of unexpected elements, concepts and ideas along the research process.

A common criticism of case study research is related to its lack of ability to generalize results (Bryman, 2016, p. 62). However, generating findings that can be applied more generally to other cases is not the purpose of case studies. Instead, the aim is to generate an intensive examination of a single case, with the central issue of concern being the quality of theoretical reasoning (Bryman, 2016, p. 64). This is an important perception underpinning this study. The aim is not to generalize the conclusions to other cases, but to produce a thorough and comprehensive understanding of how expatriate management is practiced in NORCAP. By engaging in theoretical reasoning, the aim is to broaden the understanding of expatriation in the nonprofit sector, and the complexity and diversity of this particular phenomenon.

### 3.1.1 Sampling: A purposive approach

This study has undertaken a purposive sampling approach, as recommended by Merriam's approach to case studies (Yazan, 2015, p. 149). This means that the sampling is conducted with reference to the research question, and the unit of analysis is selected based on criteria that allows the research questions to be answered (Bryman, 2016, p. 410). The unit of analysis in this study is the Deployment Advisors in the Deployment Section in NORCAP. The selection criteria is their experience with managing international humanitarian workers. NORCAP is an organization that

is specialized on deploying humanitarian personnel to the field, and the Deployment Section is highly involved in the operational work related to the deployments. I work in NORCAP myself, and found this organization as a very interesting context for learning more about expatriate management in the nonprofit sector. I reached out to my supervisor in NORCAP for permission to contact all of the 12 Deployment Advisors to ask if they wanted to participate in the study. They were all contacted by email, and eight of them wanted to participate. The sample therefore consists of eight participants, who all work as Deployment Advisors in the Deployment Section in NORCAP. Their role is to operate the deployment of NORCAP experts to NORCAP's partner organizations' humanitarian operations in the field. I therefore consider their experiences as valuable to effectively address the research questions in this study. All of the participants' names will be kept anonymous, and I will refer to them as Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2 and so on, throughout this study.

## 3.1.2 Data collection: The semi-structured interview

According to Bryman (2016, p. 466), interviewing is the most employed method for data collection in qualitative research. Interviewing is also mentioned as a possible technique for gathering data in both Stake's and Merriam's approaches to case study research (Yazan, 2015, p. 149). I considered the qualitative interview as a useful method for data collection because of its flexibility. Edwards & Holland (2013, p. 3) highlight that qualitative interviews are flexible and without a fixed structure. They are characterized by an interactional exchange of dialogue between the participants, and often centered around certain topics, themes or issues. They also entail a notion of knowledge as situated and contextual, meaning that understandings are created through interaction (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 3). It is the interviewees' points of view and experiences that are in focus, and the goal is to reveal these aspects. Qualitative interviewing is a more open-ended approach that allows for improvisation and adjustments, which makes it possible to explore interesting perspectives and surprising responses and comments along the way (Bryman, 2016, p. 466-467). In this study, I have conducted semi-structured interviews. Such interviews are guided by some questions or fairly specific topics, but the questions should still be open-ended to avoid guiding the interviewees' responses (Bryman, 2016, p. 468). The interview guide in this study is developed in light of relevant literature and in dialogue with my supervisor. It operationalizes the

sub-research questions into some predefined questions structured in three main topics. These topics are the deployment process, duty of care and the employment relationship. In addition, the guide includes some open questions about challenges and strengths related to NORCAP's work. The guide is flexible, which allowed me to go back and forth between the topics, and to further explore surprising or unexpected answers. The open questions encouraged the respondents to talk quite freely about the topic. This was useful to reveal the interviewees' understandings and interpretations. At the same time, keeping some degree of structure in the guide made it possible to compare their answers and effectively address the research questions. The interview guide can be found in Annex 1.

The interviews were conducted personally in the participants' workplace. The context in which the research is conducted is very important for the results it generates (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 243). A natural context might induce natural and honest behavior. As the topic of the interviews was the interviewees' experiences related to their own work, conducting the interviews at their workplace was an obvious choice. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and I conducted eight interviews in total. I decided to stop after eight interviews, even though a few other participants indicated their availability at a later stage, as my perception was that further interviews would not generate any new information. This principle is called saturation, and is often used in qualitative research (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 193).

### 3.1.3 Data analysis

Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. These transcripts are the material for data analysis in this study. The transcripts are detailed, including indications of pauses, overlaps and response tokens, as recommended by Silverman (2017). This makes it possible for the researcher to analyze the context, and to understand that interviewees' answers are results of interaction between the researcher and the interviewee (Silverman, 2017, p. 151). In qualitative research there are no detailed analytic procedures, but rather some broad guidelines that the researcher can follow (Bryman, 2016, p. 570). According to Merriam (1998), data analysis is the process of making sense of the data. It involves "consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what

people have said, and what the researcher has seen and read- it is the process of making meaning" (Merriam, 1998, p. 178).

The data in this study was analyzed using thematic analysis that draws on the principles presented by Bryman (2016), and those of Malterud (2012). Malterud (2012, p. 796-800) recommends four steps when doing a thematic analysis; getting an overview of the data, systematically reviewing the transcripts sentence by sentence, identifying the underlying meanings, and synthesizing and reconceptualizing the contents. Bryman (2016, p. 587-588) presents a similar strategy, in which the researcher first obtains an overview of the material, codes the material, and then thematizes and critically reviews it. The data analysis has entailed searching for and identifying key themes in the interview transcripts. I have tried to reveal recurring themes by coding the material and interpreting the interviewees' statements. The first step of the data analysis entailed reading through all the transcripts in order to get an overview of the material. In this process, I also noted down initial thoughts about themes, and highlighted interesting quotes and statements supporting these themes. However, I tried to keep an open mind in order to not decide on a direction too early in the process. The next step was to identify meaning units (Malterud, 2012, p. 797). I went through each interview again, but this time more in detail to look for text fragments that contained information about the research questions. Eight interviews of a duration of almost one hour generated a lot of data, and this work was very overwhelming. I color-coded the transcripts with color markers and in that way grouped portions of text into codes. Next, I searched for common elements and underlying meanings in the codes in order to abstract meaning and place the codes into themes. I also searched for possible sub-themes and diversity among the codes. This work entailed combining text elements in different ways. I continued to work with the codes and themes throughout the writing process, and tried to place codes in different themes by regrouping and combining them in different ways. Some of the themes emerged straight away, while other themes arose later in the writing process. The main themes arising from the analysis related to the expatriation process were transparency, emphasis on preparations, a higher duty of care benchmark, shared responsibility, challenges related to monitoring performance, a different perception of repatriation, and a disintegrated approach to knowledge transfer. In relation to the characteristics of NORCAP assignments, the main themes revealed were distinct occupational stressors, a loose employment relationship, and issues of identity. The contents of these themes

are synthesized and conceptualized, as well as discussed in light of relevant literature, in chapter 4.

As previously mentioned, this research follows an abductive logic of inquiry, going back and forth between theoretical literature and empirical data. The themes and concepts identified are not solely results of the participants' words and perspectives, but it is also a result of my own sense-making of what they are saying. Therefore, the arguments in this thesis might not be true representations of the world as they see it. Rather, they are products of a combination of the participants' contributions, my interpretations and prior knowledge, and theoretical literature (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 39). I have provided extracts of interview data throughout the analysis and discussion to provide context and transparency to the reader, and to highlight the origins of my interpretations. However, I acknowledge that the results in this study only represent some ways of seeing things, and that others might have alternative views about the data and analysis.

## 3.2 Methodological reflections and limitations

The results in this study cannot be generalized beyond the sample. The sample is small, and the social setting in which the research is done is limited to one part of one single organization. However, as mentioned, external validity is not an aim in this study. Generalization to other cases is difficult to obtain in case study research, and is often not the aim (Bryman, 2016, p. 64). Instead, there are other criteria that can be used to evaluate the quality of the study. Trustworthiness is one such criteria, meaning that the researcher should consider how the research design and methods for data collection and data analysis may have influenced the results in the study (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 241). In this relation, it is relevant to consider my own role as researcher and the choices I have made throughout the research process. One central aspect related to this is that my behavior during the interviews might have influenced the results in this study. How I ask questions, what kind of questions I ask, and my reactions to the interviewees' answers might influence their responses. This is what Jacobsen (2015, p. 242) refers to as "interview effects". These effects are difficult to completely avoid in a study, but it is important to consider how they might influence it. Even though I did not deliberately try to impact the participants' views, my involvement in the

interviews might indirectly or directly have contributed to that. I as a researcher can make them think through new problems, reflect on new issues or become aware of new aspects, and through that generate new understandings. Interactions between individuals contribute to create the social world surrounding us (Bryman, 2016, p. 375). This means that I cannot separate myself entirely from the social processes in the interview, and the intersubjectivity between me and the interviewees will to some extent influence the knowledge produced in that interview. In line with the epistemological and ontological beliefs in this study, I do not see this as a weakness. I see the intersubjective aspects of this research as strengths that make it possible to develop interesting knowledge. However, a possible weakness related to this is that I primarily have revealed information about the topics I have asked about. Although many of the respondents talked freely about the topics I introduced, the questions have necessarily influenced the focus of the interviews. Therefore, there might be relevant information and concepts that I have not revealed but that would have been interesting to include.

Furthermore, as I am an employee in NORCAP myself, this might also have influenced the research process. I was an intern in NORCAP during the autumn 2019, and have worked there part time this spring, while doing this study. This is important to highlight, as it may have influenced the information I have gotten access to and how I interpret that information. I am part of the daily life in the organization, which gives me valuable information for instance related to pressing issues, relevant challenges or thematic discussions. I attend meetings, I talk to people, and I observe how my colleagues work. I observe organizational processes and interaction between people, and thus how they deal with daily tasks and challenges. This has been useful to contextualize the information from the interviews, and has added another dimension to my understanding of how NORCAP works with expatriate management. However, it might also have influenced my analysis and interpretations.

One possible limitation in this research is my own experience with doing qualitative research. I have little experience with conducting and analyzing interviews, which could be a weakness. Silverman (2017) argues that poorly conducted and analyzed interviews are very common, and will weaken the quality of the study. This is also emphasized by Jacobsen (2015, p. 245-246), who claims that inaccurate registration and analysis of data will weaken the trustworthiness of the study.

I have tried to mitigate some of these possible pitfalls, for instance by doing an extensive literature review, discussing the questions and interview guide with my supervisor, and rehearsing at home before the interviews. In addition, I have transcribed the interviews verbatim, which Silverman (2017, p. 149) and Jacobsen (2015, p. 245) recommend. This might have increased the chance of doing a good and thorough analysis, that also accounts for interactional features during the interviews. However, it is still likely that the results in this study have been influenced, and perhaps weakened, by my lack of experience.

Internal validity is another way of evaluating the quality of a qualitative study. Internal validity refers to whether the results are perceived as accurate (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 228). Bryman (2016, p. 384) and Johannessen et al. (2016, p. 232) refer to this aspect as credibility. In order to strengthen the credibility of a study, the researcher needs to "validate" the results to ensure correlation between reality and the researcher's description of this reality (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 228). There are several aspects that should be considered in order to validate the results. One of these is to critically consider whether the respondents actually convey true representations of reality. This is particularly important when doing qualitative interviews (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 229). The researcher should consider who the sources are and where the information comes from (Jacobsen, 2015). The respondents in this study can be considered primary sources, as they have direct experience with the phenomenon of expatriate management. Therefore, they should have reliable knowledge about the topic, which would strengthen the validity of the information they give. The closer the sources are to the phenomenon being studied, the more reliable the information usually is (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 230). In addition, a lot of the same issues and topics were addressed by several of the respondents, meaning that the information they gave was highly consistent. Information from several independent sources usually strengthens the validity of that information (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 231).

A related aspect that influences the validity of the data is the point in time when the data is collected (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 231). If the data is collected too early in the research process, the researcher might miss important information, as they learn more about the topic throughout the process. This means that one might encounter interesting aspects that one did not get the chance to explore. At the same time, the data should not be collected too late in the process, as the researcher's

knowledge might be blinded for new aspects and issues (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 232). In this study, I did an extensive literature review before collecting data, which was necessary to be able to ask the right questions. At the same time, I did not want to wait too long to conduct the interviews as I wanted to learn from the respondents, and let their knowledge guide the further process. One possible weakness in this study is that there might be some concepts and ideas that could have been interesting to explore further, that were not adequately captured in the interviews. However, I have tried to mitigate this risk by engaging with literature throughout the process of collecting data in order to reveal new and interesting aspects.

Another step in the validation process is to consider whether data is correctly represented by the researcher. The data analysis entails a simplification and systematization of raw data, which means that some details are removed, and other information and interpretations are added. The researcher should therefore critically review the results theirself, or confront the respondents with their interpretations and categories to find out to what extent this is meaningful to the respondents (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 233). In this study, I have done a critical review of themes and correlations myself. This work has consisted of considering alternative themes, splitting up themes, and placing codes in different themes to see how this may influence the results. The validation in this study has therefore mainly been done through my own critical thinking. The internal validity of this study could perhaps have been strengthened through applying respondent validation, as Jacobsen (2015) recommends.

Finally, the researcher should also ask to what extent the results represent a reality outside the researcher and the respondents. This can be done by considering how the results correspond with other research (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 236). I have found existing research to be useful to explain or illuminate the findings in this study. In addition, there are many aspects of the findings in this research that can build upon existing research. This does not necessarily mean that the results in this study is the truth, but it does strengthen the internal validity, or the credibility of this research.

## 3.3 Ethical considerations

Ethics refer to principles, rules and guidelines used to assess whether actions are right or wrong (Johannessen et al., 2016, p. 83). Ethical problems might arise when the research directly influences human beings, like through interviews (Johannessen et al., 2016, 84). It is therefore crucial to think through how these problems can be mitigated. I have taken several mitigating measures in this study. The research was reported to and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). All of the participants were provided with a letter prior to the interview, informing about the purpose of the study, how the data would be used, and possible consequences of participating. They were also given forms of consent that they signed before the interview stating that they had understood the information, and agreed to take part in the interview and to the interview being recorded. In addition, they were informed about their right to withdraw at any time in the research process, and that participation was voluntary and anonymous. They were also encouraged to ask any questions they might have had concerning the research process. This information was given both in the information letter and orally before the interview. Informed consent was given by all the participants, which is a fundamental precondition in any ethical study (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 47). No names or other personal information that makes it possible to identify the respondents is provided in this thesis. In addition, all personal information is handled and stored manually, and will be deleted upon completion of this study. I consider these steps as crucial in order to respect the rights, privacy and dignity of the research participants.


Correct representation of data is another crucial aspect of research ethics (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 51). This means that results should be presented in a complete way and in the correct context. Statements taken out of context might convey an entirely different meaning than the respondent intended. However, it is not possible to provide the whole context, as the researcher necessarily will need to reduce the data material (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 52). Nevertheless, the researcher should keep this issue in mind and should by no means falsify data by taking things out of context. The full context should be provided if necessary to ensure correct understanding of the results (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 52). This is taken into consideration in this study. As 6 of the 8 interviews were done in Norwegian, it has not been possible to use all statements verbatim. Some linguistic alterations have therefore been made when translating, but the essence in what has been said is

still conveyed. I have also tried to be transparent and provide context where necessary to understand the statements. Hopefully, these steps have contributed towards strengthening the transparency and ethical integrity of this study.

# 4.0 Expatriate management in NORCAP

This chapter will analyze the findings in the study, and discuss these in relation to the research questions. The findings are based on the interviewees' answers, explanations and perceptions. They will be illustrated through statements and quotes from the interviews, and analyzed and discussed in light of relevant literature as presented in chapter 3. The chapter is structured in two main sections, corresponding to the two sub-research questions. The first section followingly seeks to answer the first sub-question; "How is the expatriation process structured?". This section will map out the expatriation process in NORCAP by discussing central themes arising from the analysis. The aim is to provide an overview of the phases in the process, what challenges it entails, and how HR practices are used to support it. This will contribute to illuminate how expatriate management is practiced in NORCAP. The second section aims to answer the second sub-question; "How can humanitarian international assignments in NORCAP be characterized?". The discussion in this section will also be structured after key themes. It seeks to increase the understanding of the particular characteristics and circumstances of NORCAP assignments, and related challenges. Such contextual aspects are an important dimension of expatriation in NORCAP, which arguably influences how expatriate management is practiced.

## 4.1 The expatriation process and related challenges

In order to understand how expatriate management is practiced in NORCAP, it is important to understand how the expatriation process is built up, and what HR practices it entails. An international assignment in NORCAP is called a "deployment", and the expert undertaking the mission is called a "deployee". Each Deployment Advisor is usually responsible for between 20-25 deployees at all times, although this number varies. As previously stated, their role entails operating deployments to NORCAP's partners, which means managing the expatriation process

for each deployee. The expatriation process in NORCAP can be outlined in four phases; the pre-deployment phase, during mission, upon return, and in between missions. The next subsections will explore these phases further, and discuss emerging themes related to each phase.

## 4.1.1 Pre-departure

The pre-departure phase begins when NORCAP receives a request from a partner organization. The assigned Deployment Advisor then needs to consider whether they wish to propose candidates for that position. Interviewee 1 explained:

> We receive requests from our partners, mostly from the UN. They need an expert on a certain thematic or geographic area, and they need someone to either fill a gap or to strengthen their capacity. Then I need to consider whether that position is something we wish to support in light of our budgets and strategies. (Interview, February 20, 2020)

This indicates that the purpose of the missions is to fill a temporary gap in the partner organization's specific operations within a certain area, but also that NORCAP's strategic priorities are taken into account. The positions are short-term, and usually with a duration of 3-12 months. If NORCAP decides to support the position, the next step is to propose candidates for the mission. All of the experts are members of the NORCAP roster, and they have all gone through a recruitment process in which their qualifications and areas of expertise are mapped out and evaluated. Although they are already pre-qualified, the Deployment Advisors still need to match their qualifications with the particular mission, as explained by Interviewee 1: "We need to consider whether they would be a good fit or not" (Interview, February 20, 2020). Selection is therefore a central HR activity in the first phase.

*Transparency*

With regards to selection, the analysis revealed that interviewees were very consistent in how they evaluate and select experts. All of the interviewees emphasized that it is the terms of reference (TOR), meaning the job description, that guides the selection process. The TOR is crucial in order to understand what the partner organization is looking for and their particular needs. As Interviewee 1 stated; "The TOR is everything" (Interview, February 20, 2020). Similarly,

Interviewee 2 explained; "We need to find someone who matches the requirements on education and experience in the TOR" (Interview, February 28, 2020). A recurring theme therefore seems to be transparency in the sense that the selection process should be fair and based on relevant criteria. This can be further elaborated through the following statement by Interviewee 3:

> It's first and foremost professional qualifications, availability, and relevant experience, for instance with the same type of mission or from the same organization. In addition, we might have some information and feedback from previous missions. . . . The decision is made on a professional basis, not just that you are available. (Interview, February 20, 2020).

Even though availability is mentioned as one criteria in the selection process, the interviewees emphasized that they do not deploy experts just because they are available. They are selected because they are considered the right person for the mission, and because they have relevant experience and competencies. Although there will always be some constraints in the decision making process, like poor data or little knowledge about the experts, the Deployment Advisors should always strive to select the right person for the mission. This is important to ensure NORCAP's professionality and trustworthiness, as emphasized by Interviewee 1: "Humanitarian expertise is kind of NORCAP's product; sending expertise to the UN and other organizations. So it is very important to make sure that we send out the right person" (Interview, February 20, 2020). This indicates a perception among the interviewees that a thorough and fair selection process is necessary to deliver a product of good quality, and to gain trust among their partners. This aligns well with People In Aid's (2003, p. 16) Code of Good Practice which emphasizes that ensuring a fair, transparent and consistent selection process is key to make sure the most appropriate person is appointed, and to effectively fulfill the organization's objectives. When operating in hazardous environments, ensuring that there are no gaps in the field is an important goal that the HR function should strive for (Williamson & Darby, 2011, p. 19). NORCAP's selection procedures might therefore contribute towards this goal. This notion is also interesting in relation to the research by Tahvanainen et al. (2005) who found that formal selection procedures are rarely conducted for short-term assignments. Rather, the selection is mostly informal, and based on previous relationships and acquaintances (Tahvanainen et al., 2005, p. 666). A few of the interviewees touched upon this issue. Interviewee 4 emphasized that "Personal preferences as opposed to professional standards should not come into the evaluation" (Interview, February 28, 2020).

Furthermore, Interviewee 1 explained that even though you know some of the experts from previous missions, you cannot base the decision on that irrespectively of the criteria in the TOR:

> If you have worked here for years, you might know the people in the database very well. But I think that, even if this is the case, you can still make the wrong decision. The decision should not be based on whether you know the person or not, because then you might tend to rely on your gut feeling. It's not very scientific. (Interview, February 20, 2020)

This indicates that personal preferences are not, and should not, be given a lot of priority in the selection process. In light of this, the selection process in NORCAP appears more genuine and thorough than what one could perhaps expect from reading the literature on short-term assignments. It is part of the Deployment Advisors' responsibility to ensure a fair and transparent process. This largely corresponds with traditional international assignments, in which selection is an important activity. As Dowling et al. (2017, p. 128-132) emphasized, selection procedures have major influence on the success of an international assignment, and both technical ability and cultural competencies should be taken into consideration. This should perhaps be seen in light of the fact that NORCAP is a standby partner whose core activity is to deliver humanitarian expertise, as emphasized by Interviewee 1. They might therefore be more dependent on selecting the right person, not just to succeed with the specific assignments, but also to maintain NORCAP's "reputation" in the humanitarian community.

*Emphasis on preparations*

When the right person is selected, the interviewees explained that the next step is to prepare the expert for the mission. This phase seems to entail a divided focus between administrative and relational tasks. On the administrative side, there are many formal documents that need to be signed, and the expert needs to be medically cleared. The expert might also need to complete mandatory online courses prior to departure, usually on thematic, ethical or security related topics. In addition, the Deployment Advisor is responsible for arranging a "pre-deployment brief" which is often carried out through Skype. This brief is described in the following words by Interviewee 5:

> My role is to give them an impression of what is expected from them and to go through the conditions of appointment. I need to prepare them on what they will meet, whether it is certain hardship challenges or limited living conditions. (Interview, February 24, 2020)

The purpose of the brief therefore seems to be to prepare the deployee on what they can expect in their new job, and to provide them with necessary information. The brief can also be used to communicate clear work objectives and performance standards, as explained by Interviewee 7:

> I spend time talking about the performance evaluation report, and how they should start with it when they go into the country. They need to talk to their supervisor, and agree on the priorities, objectives, and deliverables that they will be evaluated on. I say so because if they miss that, they miss the focus of the mission. (Interview, February 24, 2020)

These statements indicate that the brief is crucial to set the focus of the mission, to prepare the deployee for the job, and to clarify expectations. Clear communication and good preparations can be considered important success factors for the deployee to carry out their role effectively (People In Aid, 2003, p. 12). As emphasized by Dowling et al. (2017, p. 184), pre-departure training is crucial to help the expatriate adjust to the demands of living and working in a foreign country. Williamson & Darby (2011, p. 20) also found that pre-assignment preparations is one of the single most important things an organization can do when sending personnel to hazardous environments. Nevertheless, such training and preparations are often not provided, in particular for short-term and other non-standard assignments (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 184). The same issue is also indicated by Tahvanainen et al. (2005, p. 666), who found that pre-departure training was the exception rather than the rule for short-term assignments. As the interviewees emphasized, the deployees often face complex environments and hardship living conditions, which demands a lot from them. Although the deployees often relocate for a shorter period of time, adaptation to a foreign context is not necessarily less challenging. The interviewees' reflections therefore indicate a common perception that it is necessary to invest in the pre-departure phase, despite the shorter duration of the assignments.

On the more relational side, an important aspect of the pre-deployment brief is to establish a relation with the deployee. This can be highlighted by the words of Interviewee 4:

> I try to make sure that he or she understands that I am approachable, and that they can liaise with me at any point in time. . . . It's about making them understand that we are here for

them, that they can trust that I will try to provide the best support within my capacity. (Interview, February 28, 2020)

This indicates that the purpose of the pre-deployment brief is not only to provide information, but also to invest in the relationship with the expert. The Deployment Advisors need to indicate their availability, and establish procedures for communication. Showing that they will be there for them throughout the mission seems important in order to build trust between NORCAP and the deployee. This could perhaps be interpreted in light of the psychological contract. Cullinane & Dundon (2006, p. 119) understand the psychological contract as a social exchange interaction. Guest (2004, p. 550) emphasizes that HR policies and practices will influence the implicit promises and obligations in an employment relationship. If viewing the psychological contract as a social exchange interaction influenced by HR practices, how NORCAP handles the pre-deployment phase could have a large impact on what the deployees expect from the missions and from NORCAP as their employer. The initial contact and communication through the briefing might influence how the deployees interpret their own role in relation to NORCAP and the partner organization. Not only could it influence expectations in terms of their actual tasks and thematic priorities, but also in terms of other deliverables, like for instance appearance or representation of NORCAP in the field. It might also shape what the deployees expect in return for their efforts, in terms of for instance support or rewards. In this sense, the pre-deployment phase in many ways lays the foundation for the mission. The expectations that are built throughout this phase will influence the success and performances of the deployees, like emphasized by Guest (2004) and Rousseau (1989). An important theme arising from the analysis is therefore how pre-deployment preparations are considered crucial for mission success because it builds trust and prepares the deployees.

## 4.1.2 During mission

The next phase in the expatriation process begins when the deployee leaves for the mission. The interviews revealed that the Deployment Advisors have a less prominent role during the mission than in the pre-departure phase. As explained by Interviewee 7: "During the mission the role drops somehow, because the day by day activities are done by the hosting agency" (Interview, February 24, 2020). It is the host organization that is responsible for the daily supervision, but the

Deployment Advisors still have a responsibility to support the deployees. Communication in this phase is mostly through e-mail or other communication technologies, although the Deployment Advisors aim to do a few field visits during the year. According to People In Aid's (2003, p. 12) Code of Good Practice, good support, management, and leadership of staff is a major contributor to programme success. This part of the analysis will explore how the Deployment Advisors provide support for the deployees during the mission, and related challenges. Particular attention will be given to the issues of security and duty of care.

## *A higher duty of care benchmark*

The interviewees emphasized that there are great variations in how much and what kind of support the deployees need during a mission. They explain that they often provide administrative and practical support, for instance related to technical systems, booking of plane tickets, or the conditions of appointment. In addition, an important aspect is to maintain the relationship with the deployees, and help them through challenges or sensitive issues during the mission. This can be illustrated through the following statement by Interviewee 3: "During the mission, my role is to be there for them. We try to keep an open dialogue to ensure that they can ask me anything, even things that are difficult" (Interview, February 20, 2020). Interviewee 6 shared this perception: "It is important for me that they know that I have their back. That they can come to me if they need to, and that I am someone they can trust, an anchor" (Interview, February 26, 2020). These statements indicate that the deployees' well-being and psychological health are important to NORCAP. As explained in chapter 3, duty of care is the organization's legal and moral responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of its employees (Bickley, 2017, p. 8). Promoting the employees' emotional well-being is an important part of this (People In Aid, 2003, p. 20). The Deployment Advisors' support can in that sense be seen as a crucial part of performing NORCAP's duty of care towards their staff. The deployees' work can often be challenging, and is often conducted in very difficult contexts. At the same time, it is expected that humanitarian workers continue to deliver their expertise irrespectively of these conditions (UNOCHA, 2011). Although stressful and risky situations are impossible to eliminate in relief and development work, the organization should ensure that the security, health and safety of their staff is appropriately protected as much as possible (People In Aid, 2003, p. 20). Through showing recognition and

sensitivity during the mission, the deployees in NORCAP might feel acknowledged and listened to, which could perhaps strengthen their opportunity to cope with challenging environments.

This aspect is also very interesting in light of Mayerhofer et al. 's (2004) finding that flexpatriate assignments often lack support from HR, especially during the assignment. Mayerhofer et al. (2004) argued that this is contradictory as flexpatriate assignments often require as much skill, adaptability and resilience as assignments with a longer duration. Even though the NORCAP missions are not flexpatriate assignments in the same sense as described by Mayerhofer et al. (2004), the missions are still shorter and more flexible than regular international assignments. At the same time, it is clear how these missions demand a lot from the deployees in different ways with regards to the international context. Based on Mayerhofer et al.'s (2004) research, one could therefore expect that the support from HR during the missions would be weak. On the contrary, it seems like NORCAP and the Deployment Advisors take the responsibility of following up their staff during missions very seriously. The Deployment Advisors are engaged throughout the missions, although the role during missions might be a bit more reactive than in the first phase. As the operating context is often volatile and fast-changing, support during missions might be even more important in a humanitarian context than in other forms of corporate expatriation. The lengths NORCAP has to go to fulfill their duty of care might be greater than what is expected from a regular for-profit corporation operating in a more stable international environment. As emphasized by Bickley (2017, p. 8), the duty of care benchmark in the humanitarian and development sector has risen significantly over the past decade due to growing insecurity and violence. This is something that seems to be taken into account in NORCAP's HR practices. An important theme in relation to this phase therefore seems to be that the requirements for duty of care are higher in the nonprofit, humanitarian sector than in the for-profit, corporate sector, and that HR plays an important role in this.

*Shared responsibility*

Although NORCAP has a duty to ensure their staff's safety and well-being, the main responsibility for security and follow-up lies with the partner organization for which the deployee works. NORCAP is a standby partner that deploys staff to support other organizations which influences the amount and kinds of support the deployees receive from NORCAP during a mission. The

interplay and shared responsibility between NORCAP and the host organizations is therefore another important theme. This dimension is explained by Interviewee 1 in the following words: "It is the host organizations who have the main responsibility. But, of course, we need to do our due diligence, we need to follow up that they are doing what they are supposed to do" (Interview, February 20, 2020). Interviewee 4 similarly expressed:

> I make sure that I push the UN agency as much as I can to provide what is entitled to them. . . . It's important that I am familiar with this so that I can make sure that they are doing what they are supposed to do. (Interview, February 28, 2020)

These statements show that the main responsibility for security lies with the partner organization. However, NORCAP is responsible for making sure that the partner organizations fulfil their duties, and for pushing them if they do not comply with those duties. Another interesting dimension is related to the type of security threats the deployees might face in the field. Bader et al. (2019) emphasize that research on the role of HR in managing people in hostile environments is still limited. They argue how international environments characterized by violence and instability, like terrorism, civil unrest and wars, require more from HR in terms of managing security risks than in a normal setting (Bader et al., 2019, p. 2811). Their primary focus when discussing HRM in hostile environments seems to be on physical acts of violence. In NORCAP's case, a more nuanced perception of threats might be necessary. NORCAP mainly delivers to the UN, and many UN agencies have a limited field presence. Followingly, Interviewee 3 explained, "The biggest challenge related to working in hostile environments is not necessarily kidnappings or physical violence, as this rarely happens" (Interview, February 20, 2020). Rather, it is much more common with psychological struggles due to for instance isolation or difficult working environments in NORCAP's case. Interviewee 3 clarified this notion: "Some might experience seeing people in need, but everyone experiences loneliness. . . . Although there will always be some risk related to conducting work in a war zone, the biggest challenge is that your actions get very limited" (Interview, February 20, 2020). In light of these statements, it seems important to recognize that security is a concept with different dimensions, which perhaps influences how HR should be involved with security management. Although training and security briefings are relevant, keeping an open dialogue throughout the mission might be equally important. In that sense, a central aspect of HRM in hostile environments might be to show compassion and presence throughout the international assignment. The reflections of Interviewee 7 are appropriate to describe this

approach: "You can't be a humanitarian worker without being human, so you have to have a heart that cares. . . . I think people who live and work in very insecure areas need to be listened to, more than anything" (Interview, February 24, 2020). Ensuring the deployees' psychological well-being therefore seems crucial in order to ensure their security. This is reflected in the Deployment Advisors' work and their continuous focus on clear communication and a listening attitude throughout the missions.

Furthermore, the interviews revealed that some of the responsibility lies with the deployees themselves in terms of support during mission. This is particularly important for NORCAP as they are not present in the field to observe and support. As explained by Interviewee 3, "We are completely dependent on the information they give us" (Interview, February 20, 2020). This means that, if the deployees need support or advice, they need to raise the issue with NORCAP themselves. This is also emphasized by Interviewee 8:

> I am very clear in this matter, I am in Oslo and not at the duty station. If you need my help, you need to let me know. If the person doesn't want to tell me things, then there is nothing I can do. (Interview, February 24, 2020)

The deployees need to inform NORCAP and be open about the challenges they face in their work. Although both NORCAP and the partner organization have responsibilities to ensure the security and well-being of the experts, the experts still need to be vigilant. As Interviewee 6 emphasized, "Security is, in the end, also their own responsibility" (Interview, February 26, 2020). This indicates that the deployees need to be both encouraged and empowered to take their share of the responsibility. As NORCAP is not present at the duty station, they need to be able to rely on their partners and deployees to prioritize security in the daily work. This aspect is very similar to what Fee and McGrath-Champ (2017) found in their study. They found that an organization's efforts to build a safety and security culture is a prominent feature of their work and attitude towards security. They further emphasized the importance of developing a collective sense of awareness and responsibility, and empowering staff to support such a culture (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017, p. 1973). In light of this, the Deployment Advisors in NORCAP might play an important role in strengthening a culture of security, and developing a collective sense of awareness and responsibility. Through clear communication and support before and during the missions, the Deployment Advisors might contribute to empower the deployees and thus enhance their security.

## 4.1.3 Upon return and in between missions

The last two phases in the expatriation process in NORCAP are upon return and in between missions. The majority of the NORCAP experts are part of the roster, which means that they might do several missions with NORCAP. In light of this, it is interesting to explore not only the process upon return from a mission, but also the process in between missions. This section will discuss three recurring themes related to these last two phases.

*The challenge of monitoring performance*

The interviews revealed that performance management is an activity that usually begins prior to mission start. Interviewee 7 said, "Performance management for me starts with the first briefing" (Interview, February 24, 2020). As previously mentioned, the Deployment Advisors usually spend some time going through the performance evaluation report (PER) during the first briefing. This is a report that entails criteria that the deployee will be evaluated on after the mission. The PER can be used as a tool to map out the tasks the deployee will have during the mission, and how these tasks should be carried out. As explained by Interviewee 6, "I think the PER is a good tool because it forces you to describe the main priorities and deliverables during the mission" (Interview, February 26, 2020). As NORCAP is not present at the duty station, the Deployment Advisors' ability to monitor the deployees' performance during the missions is limited. This means that performance evaluation primarily is done when a mission is completed. The interviewees explained that one of the main tasks upon return is to go through the performance evaluation report. The purpose is to evaluate how the deployee performed his or her tasks and responsibilities, and to extract learning from the missions. When asked to describe a successful mission, Interviewee 1 replied, "A perfect PER would be one thing!" (Interview, February 20, 2020). A good PER therefore seems to be important, and a valid indication of whether the assignment has been successful or not.

However, several of the interviewees emphasized that it often is difficult to know what the person they sent out actually delivered while they were on mission. Interviewee 2 recounted their experience:

> I think it is a problem that we don't always know what they actually have been doing and what they have achieved. Sometimes we don't know whether we sent out the right person for the right mission, or if it was just someone with a pulse. (Interview, February 28, 2020)

Interviewee 8 shared this perception, and described performance management in the following words:

> Performance management might be the biggest challenge in this job, to know how they actually do their work. If you visit them in the field, you get a chance to observe and to talk to their supervisor, and then I get a better feeling of how things really are. (Interview, February 24, 2020)

This shows that, because the Deployment Advisors are not present at the duty station, it is difficult to manage and evaluate the deployees' performance. As indicated by Interviewee 8, this is easier when they go on field visits. NORCAP has to rely on the information they get from the host organization and the deployee itself, which can be challenging. There could be many aspects that influence the deployees' performance during missions that the Deployment Advisors do not have much reliable information about. Dowling et al. (2017, p. 155) emphasize that there are several variables affecting expatriate performance, like the tasks, host environment, and cultural adjustments. These are factors that might be challenging for NORCAP to control. In addition, the quality of the work might be hard to measure, as emphasized by Interviewee 7: "The impact can come after five years. So it becomes even more difficult to evaluate somebody, because the impact will not come overnight" (Interview, February 24, 2020). Humanitarian work is often very qualitative, and it is difficult to measure short-term results. This is also noted by Fenwick (2005, p. 501), in that employee performance in nonprofit organizations might be hard to monitor and measure. This could be related to the lag between implementation of a development programme and its measurable outcomes, and that the direct relationship is difficult to evaluate (Fenwick, 2005, p. 501). In addition, considering the short duration of the missions, it might be even more challenging to see clear results as they might not appear when a single mission is completed. In light of this, there could possibly be several factors that NORCAP cannot directly control with regards to performance. This indicates that performance monitoring is a very complex activity which might be further complicated by NORCAP not being present to keep a finger on the pulse. This is an important theme related to the phase upon return.

*A different perception of repatriation*

When the deployees return to their home country after a mission, they are always debriefed through Skype. The objective with these debriefing sessions is to discuss challenges and achievements during the mission. Interviewee 5 explained that an important aspect of this debrief is to discuss the opportunities that the deployee has within NORCAP: "The debrief is both a personal debrief, and a discussion about career and capacity building" (Interview, February 24, 2020). Interviewee 5 argued that it is important to recognize the deployees' work after completing the assignment, and to show that they are valued in NORCAP. This might be particularly important as the deployees do not come back to a permanent position in NORCAP's headquarters, as is usually the case for traditional expatriate assignments (Dowling et al., 2017). However, many experts do take new missions with NORCAP. The phase in between missions is described by Interviewee 3 as challenging: "It is probably one of our biggest challenges, they are not permanently employed, so they don't have any employment with us in between missions" (Interview, February 20, 2020). Most of the interviewees explained that they have limited time to engage with the experts between missions, but that the deployees often reach out to them to indicate their availability and interest in taking a new mission. Interviewee 7 recounted their experience:

> It can be a priority, but often we don't have time for that. You focus on what is urgent, it is a matter of prioritizing needs. It is really hard to get time to reach out to people, however, they can reach out to you and indicate that they are available for deployment. (Interview, February 24, 2020)

Interviewee 4 shared this perception and explained the issue in the following words: "I have to admit, I don't do much. I can't, I would be overloaded. But when they reach out, I do reply" (Interview, February 28, 2020). This indicates that, in the time between missions, the relationship between NORCAP and the experts is relatively weak. However, the interviewees expressed an awareness that some experts are highly dependent on missions with NORCAP. Even though there might not be any available missions, they try to be sensitive and understanding when someone reaches out to them. This can be illustrated through the following statement by Interviewee 5:

> People are very different, some are very eager to take on new missions and contact us regularly, others have more opportunities elsewhere. The most important thing for us is to inform them about the opportunities they have with us, also including training and

seminars. They need to know that we care and that we invest in them. (Interview, February 24, 2020)

As indicated by Interviewee 5, NORCAP arranges induction training and staff care seminars in Norway, and even offers online training and seminars that the experts can attend when they are not on mission. Workplace is also a platform through which deployees can keep in touch, and stay updated on what is happening in NORCAP, as explained by Interviewee 2, "We flag training opportunities and seminars on Workplace, and people can show their interest there. Some deployees also engage in thematic discussions on Workplace, but this varies" (Interview, February 28, 2020). An interesting question that arises in light of these statements, is what successful repatriation means in NORCAP. In a regular, for-profit organization, successful repatriation would often entail avoiding expatriate turnover, as emphasized by Dowling et al. (2017, p. 191). However, this might not necessarily be the case for NORCAP. The deployees are not permanently employed, but they are known to NORCAP and go in and out of the organization to a varying extent. The aim is therefore not to facilitate a transfer home and to ensure that the expert stays in NORCAP. Rather, successful repatriation might be seen as retaining the experts in the NORCAP roster and making sure that they want to deploy again if needed. Dowling et al. (2017, p. 193) emphasize that how the expatriate is treated upon return is crucial in terms of whether the person decides to stay in the organization. As the previous statements show, even though the Deployment Advisors have limited time to engage with the experts outside of missions, it is important for NORCAP to show that they value the deployees' work and to visualize opportunities. Motivating the experts to return to NORCAP through networking and learning opportunities might therefore be an important aspect of ensuring successful repatriation in NORCAP. This might influence NORCAP's ability to retain experts in the roster and to deploy them in the future. In light of this, an important theme is that repatriation might be interpreted differently because of the particular circumstances and objectives in NORCAP.


*A disintegrated approach to knowledge transfer*

An important reason for wanting to retain staff after an international assignment is because expatriates play an important role in transferring knowledge and competence between various units in the organization (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 175). The organization should therefore invest in

efforts to extract and build upon knowledge from the expatriates' international experience (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 202). Some interviewees were under the impression that NORCAP at times struggles to transfer learning from one mission to another. Interviewee 1 expressed, "How knowledge is really captured? I think we have a long way to go" (Interview, February 20, 2020). Interviewee 8 had the same perception: "I think there are many lost opportunities" (Interview, February 24, 2020). These statements show that knowledge transfer might be a challenge in NORCAP. This should perhaps be seen in relation to that NORCAP deployees do not return to work for the headquarters when their international assignment is completed. Extracting and building upon the deployees' knowledge might therefore be even more challenging in NORCAP's case than for traditional expatriation. From a different point of view, Interviewee 7 emphasized that NORCAP does take learning from the debrief after a mission: "During the debriefs we learn what went wrong, and what went well. And that helps me to prepare others and to learn what I didn't know. So it is an ongoing learning process" (Interview, February 24, 2020). Furthermore, Interviewee 5 mentioned that dialogue and reports are important for knowledge transfer: "Based on the dialogue throughout the mission, and on the end of mission reports, I will consider how this is interesting for particular thematic areas or projects, and communicate this to different forums" (Interview, February 24, 2020). This indicates that the individual might take learning from a mission, and that some of the results are lifted upwards in the organization. However, several of the interviewees missed a more integrated approach to learning, and larger forums in which knowledge can be shared between the experts as well. Some emphasized that Workplace is such a forum, through which people can discuss thematic problems or connect between missions, while others were more in doubt whether and to what extent this is used. Training opportunities and seminars were also highlighted as arenas for knowledge transfer. These arenas bring the experts to the same location, which makes it possible for them to network, share experiences, and discuss their work. Interviewee 8 was under the impression that additional efforts to bring people together would be beneficial: "We should maybe create more arenas where people can connect. . . . I think it would be useful to create such networks and exchanges between the experts" (Interview, February 24, 2020). Interviewee 2 also reflected on this issue:

> We could have invested more in meeting people on missions, and to gather everyone we
> have on mission in a certain region, for a seminar or learning event. In that way they could

connect and learn from each other. And this might have a very positive effect. (Interview, February 28, 2020)

These statements show that, by connecting people through physical or even virtual seminars, they can learn from each other and share knowledge and experiences. This is interesting in light of the concept of return on investment (ROI). As emphasized by McNulty & Tharenou (2004, p. 72-73), measurements for ROI on international assignments need to appreciate non-financial costs and benefits, such as performance and cross-cultural adjustment, or more long term aspects like organizational knowledge and learning. As humanitarian expertise is NORCAP's product, good performances in itself is important for NORCAP's return on investment as it influences their reputation with partners and donors, as previously discussed. However, the missions could perhaps generate greater value for the organization as a whole if NORCAP facilitates and encourages more learning and knowledge transfer across specific missions. Williamson & Darby (2011, p. 13) revealed a risk that a lot of valuable knowledge from humanitarian international assignments is lost because of disintegrated approaches to transfer of knowledge. This can potentially lead to a waste of effort and resources as the organization ends up "re-inventing" the wheel for future projects (Williamson & Darby, 2011, p. 13). It might seem like NORCAP sometimes struggles with similar issues. This could perhaps be addressed by bringing people together more often, as suggested by some of the interviewees. In that way, it might be easier for the organization to take learning and aggregate knowledge from single missions. From the organization's point of view, this could potentially generate a lot of valuable information and synergies that can be used for future missions and projects. In light of this, stimulating knowledge transfer could perhaps increase NORCAP's ROI related to their international assignments.

### 4.1.4 Summary of the expatriation process

The previous analysis and discussion have revealed some recurring themes related to the expatriation process. In the first phase, transparency and emphasis on preparations are recurring themes. The interviewees seem to share an understanding of the importance of fair selection procedures and good pre-departure preparations for mission success. This finding corresponds with how traditional expatriate assignments are managed (Dowling et al., 2017). At the same time, this contradicts with literature on short-term- and flexpatriate assignments, which says that less

traditional expatriate assignments often rely on previous acquaintances in selection, and require less pre-departure preparations (Tahvanainen et al., 2005; Mayerhofer et al., 2004).

During missions, the first theme is that the duty of care benchmark is higher for a humanitarian organization than a regular one. This might be reflected in how the deployees receive both practical and personal support from their Deployment Advisor during their missions, and that this is considered an important activity by the interviewees. HR seems to be more involved during missions in comparison with for instance flexpatriate assignments (Mayerhofer et al., 2004). The second theme in this phase is related to the shared responsibility for security between NORCAP, the hosting agency, and the deployee. The main responsibility lies with the host organization, but NORCAP needs to do their due diligence in making sure that their partners comply with this duty. However, NORCAP is mainly involved in ensuring the deployees emotional well-being through supporting them in psychological struggles like isolation and loneliness. At the same time, the deployees need to be vigilant and openly share information and challenges with NORCAP. This shared responsibility for security thus influences the dynamics of the expatriation process and the involvement by HR to a large extent.

Upon return from the missions, the challenge of monitoring and evaluating performance is an important theme. As emphasized by Dowling et al. (2017), there are many factors influencing performance that NORCAP might miss as they are not present at the duty station. At the same time, humanitarian work is highly qualitative in the sense that it is difficult to measure short-term results. This is also noted by Fenwick (2005). With regards to repatriation, an important theme is that repatriation might have a different meaning for NORCAP missions than for traditional international assignments. Whereas Dowling et al. (2017) conceptualizes repatriation as the transfer back home, repatriation in NORCAP rather entails ensuring that the experts wish to stay in the NORCAP roster and take future missions. A central finding is therefore that the phase in between missions is important in terms of repatriation, but at the same time that maintaining the relation with the deployees in this phase is challenging. Another theme in the phase between missions is the disintegrated approach to knowledge transfer. The analysis revealed that a challenge in NORCAP is how knowledge is captured and transferred between missions and between deployees. Williamson & Darby (2011, p. 13) emphasized that this can lead to a waste of

effort and resources. A more integrated approach to knowledge transfer could potentially increase NORCAP's return on investment. The structure of the expatriation process and the activities in each phase are summarized in figure 4.1:
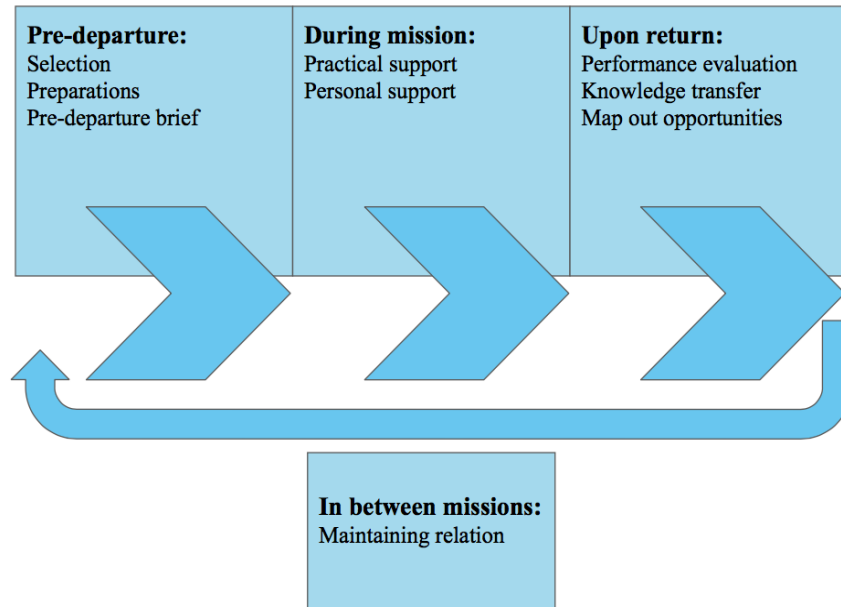


*Figure 4.1.* The expatriation process in NORCAP

## 4.2 Humanitarian international assignments in NORCAP

This section will explore central characteristics of humanitarian international assignments in NORCAP related to the international context and NORCAP's organizational structure. This section is structured in two main categories with related themes. It will first explore the specific international operating environment for NORCAP assignments, and what implications this has for the deployees. The section will then move on to addressing the particular employment relationship between NORCAP and the deployees with particular attention to the psychological contract.

### 4.2.1 The international context

The operating context is an important aspect of humanitarian international assignments. One central characteristic of the international environment in which NORCAP operates is related to the

structural side of the organization. Interviewee 1 explained that although NORCAP might be considered an NGO, it is important to recognize the interrelationship with other actors: "We are not detached from national governments and authorities. The Norwegian state and the European Union are among our largest donors" (Interview, February 20, 2020). This shows that NORCAP, as a standby partner, is not only highly involved with other humanitarian organizations or the UN, but also with donors and governments. These interrelationships have consequences for their sources of funding and reporting lines, as indicated by Interviewee 1. This is an example of how nonprofit organizations cannot be separated from other actors in the international environment, like emphasized by Fenwick (2005) and Joachim (2017). Fenwick (2005, p. 508) argued that multinational nonprofit organizations are increasingly involved in collaborations and partnerships with each other, with governments and with for-profit organizations. These networks and interrelationships between sectors are an important characteristic of the international operating environment for nonprofit organizations, including NORCAP.

*Distinct occupational stressors*

Another important characteristic of the operating environment mentioned by the interviewees is the cultural complexity. Interviewee 5 touched upon this issue: "Our people work in very different places and in highly complex cultural contexts. They need to have the necessary cultural competence to be able to coordinate humanitarian responses and handle cultural differences" (Interview, February 24, 2020). Cultural awareness and sensitivity is something that all international employees need to manage. When moving across national borders and different cultures, it is common to experience culture shocks (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 9). New environments require many adjustments in a relatively short period of time. This might challenge people's frames of reference and self-perceptions (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 9). However, as the statement by Interviewee 5 above shows, NORCAP deployees not only need to adjust to a culture in a new country. They also need to manage working together with a highly international workforce consisting of people with many different nationalities. In addition, NORCAP missions are often short-term, usually no longer than 3-12 months. This demands a lot from the deployees, who quickly need to understand their role and adapt to new cultures and environments. The following statement by Interviewee 2 illustrates this: "You might be in the field only for 6 months, but you

still need to deliver from day one" (Interview, February 28, 2020). This shows that even though the missions are short, the expectations are high from the beginning. In addition, some of the experts go from one mission to the next, which might require even more flexibility and readjustments.

The humanitarian operating environment is generally described in the literature as insecure, complex and rapidly changing, and with several threats to humanitarian workers' security (UNOCHA, 2011). This is also mentioned by several of the interviewees, who describe some of the contexts as very challenging and hostile, characterized by extreme pressure or bad working conditions. At the same time, some of the interviewees emphasized that there are big differences in a mission's security situation, with some being far more complex than others. Some contexts are more difficult because the mission might be a response to a very urgent crisis, whereas in other countries the situation might be more stabilized. These traits influence the deployees in different ways. Interviewee 1 reflected on this issue and explained that extreme situations might be very stressful and burdensome; "I think this is very particular for humanitarian work in general. It's another type of stress than you face in a normal office" (Interview, February 20, 2020). However, as previously emphasized, because NORCAP is a standby partner, the main challenge related to the operating context might be threats to the deployees psychological well-being. Most of NORCAP's partner organizations are UN agencies that have mostly office-based positions. Followingly, security restrictions and other impediments might isolate humanitarian workers in their offices or hotels, which might be a significant mental challenge. In the words of Interviewee 3: "When working in very hardship areas, it is very limited what you can actually do" (Interview, February 20, 2020). This indicates that the humanitarian operating environment is multidimensional in terms of challenges and security threats. The distinct occupational stressors in the humanitarian sector is followingly an important theme and characteristic of humanitarian international assignments in NORCAP. Such stressors are not only related to the complex security environment, but also to the expectations facing the deployees in their work. They need to adapt quickly, handle unpredictability, and navigate through complex cultural contexts.

## 4.2.2 A particular employment relationship

The interviews revealed that the particular employment relationship between NORCAP and the deployees influences the dynamics of the assignments in several ways. Exploring this relationship could therefore inform the understanding of humanitarian international assignments in NORCAP, and their characteristics. There are in particular two recurring themes rising from the analysis, and these will be discussed in the following. These themes are related to the flexibility of the NORCAP contracts and the blurred organizational boundaries between NORCAP and the host organization.

*Loose relationships*

The first theme is the loose and insecure employment relationship between NORCAP and the deployees. As NORCAP is a standby partner with an aim to fill gaps on short notice, the contracts are often short and flexible. This is similar to both short-term- and flexpatriate international assignments (Tahvanainen et al., 2005; Mayerhofer et al., 2004). These contracts involve a lot of insecurity for the deployees as they are not guaranteed a new mission with NORCAP in the future. Interviewee 6 explained, "After 6 or 12 months, you might lose your job without any rights for compensation" (Interview, February 26, 2020). Interviewee 3 had the same concern:

> They are not permanently employed, and they have no guarantees from us in between missions. At the same time, we expect a lot in return. They need to be active and available even between missions if we are to consider them. (Interview, February 20, 2020)

These statements indicate that if the experts want to deploy through NORCAP, they need to be alert and make themselves available when NORCAP needs them. In addition, they need to deliver good results in order to be considered for other missions, as emphasized by Interviewee 8, "They are very dependent on their reputation" (Interview, February 24, 2020). Their performance and appearance during a mission is therefore crucial for their future opportunities with NORCAP. However, several of the interviewees emphasized that there are differences in how dependent the experts are on missions with NORCAP. Whereas some take NORCAP missions on the side of their regular job, others are highly dependent on these missions as they might not have a permanent job elsewhere. Either way, this is interesting in light of the term "self-initiated assignments". According to Dowling et al. (2017, p. 118), self-initiated assignments are initiated by the individual, while standard expatriate assignments are initiated by the organization. The

assignments in NORCAP could therefore be seen as having both of these characteristics. It is the host organizations and NORCAP that announces the assignments, and the Deployment Advisors that propose relevant candidates. However, the experts need to indicate their availability and interest in order to be considered and proposed for a mission. This shows that their own initiative is an important characteristic of NORCAP assignments. The deployees need to make an effort to be considered for a mission, but they have no guarantees of actually getting one.

This dimension of the employment relationship indicates that there is a certain power imbalance between NORCAP and the deployees, which could negatively affect the experts that are highly dependent on taking missions with NORCAP. Several of the interviewees emphasized that the imbalance of power can make it difficult to build an honest and trusting relationship with the deployees. Interviewee 4 explained this: "They might not want to open up when they are facing difficult issues, because they may feel that they are being too difficult, and that they may not be selected for another mission" (Interview, February 28, 2020). The fear of being a burden thus seems like something that could hinder the deployees from being honest and raising challenges they face in their work. This notion is supported by Interviewee 2, who said, "Many of them don't want to be perceived as difficult because they need to be deployed again in the future" (Interview, February 28, 2020). Interviewee 3 also touched upon this issue and expressed the following: "The worst scenario is if someone is very lonely and sad, and doesn't have the courage to tell us, because we have a certain power over them in terms of the very loose contract" (Interview, February 20, 2020). These statements show a tendency that many of the deployees might be reluctant to raise difficult issues or problems they face during their missions. As the interviewees explained, this is largely because they are afraid that they might not be selected in the future.

From a different point of view, a few interviewees were under the impression that the deployees most of the time will raise difficult issues they face. In the words of Interviewee 5: "I feel like people, in most cases, will reach out to me if something is wrong" (Interview, February 24, 2020). Interviewee 6 agreed and stated,

> I do feel like people come to me. They have addressed different challenges, like problems with their supervisor, colleagues, or if the working environment is bad. They know that we

care just as much about their psychological health, as the work they are doing. (Interview, February 26, 2020)

Interviewee 6 emphasized that by working with the same people over time, it gets easier to build the necessary trust. You get the chance to build a more long-term connection with them, and they might feel more comfortable raising sensitive issues with you. This perspective is also clear in the following statement by Interviewee 2: "It might be easier to have that kind of relationship if you know the person, or if you have met him or her before, or deployed him or her before" (Interview, February 28, 2020). In light of this, an interesting question that arises is how the psychological contract is affected by the short-term, flexible and somewhat unpredictable international assignments in NORCAP. One aspect is the duration of the contract, which is generally much shorter than for traditional international assignments. Rousseau (1989, p. 125) emphasizes that an employment relationship of longer duration, with constant reciprocal contributions, usually will strengthen the psychological contract between the parties. Arguably, it might therefore be more challenging to build and maintain the psychological contract when the employment is short, which usually is the case in NORCAP. The short duration and unpredictability of the contracts creates a loose employment relationship and possibly weaker psychological contract between NORCAP and the deployees. This might have consequences for the Deployment Advisors ability to build a trusting relation with the deployees. It is arguably easier to gain trust from someone you know from previous deployments, than from someone you deploy for the first time. The loose employment relationship is therefore an important theme and characteristic of NORCAP assignments.

*Identity*

The relationship between NORCAP and each partner organization is regulated through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The deployees are formally employed by NORCAP, but the work is conducted at the duty station for one of NORCAP's partner organizations. This resembles the structure of a staffing agency, and entails a dual employment relationship that at times can pose certain challenges in terms of identity and commitment towards NORCAP. Several of the interviewees mentioned that the experts at times are confused and struggle to understand how the responsibilities are divided. Interviewee 1 expressed, "Some feel like they don't belong

anywhere" (Interview, February 20, 2020). Similarly, Interviewee 2 stated, "They might fall between two stools" (Interview, February 28, 2020). This weak sense of belonging was also emphasized by Interviewee 6: "They might experience that they don't belong anywhere, because their employer is not present, and they report to someone who doesn't pay their salary. This might lead to some sort of identity crisis" (Interview, February 26, 2020). Identity and belonging thus seem like two very important aspects related to the employment relationship that might be weakened because of how NORCAP is organized. The deployees need to juggle expectations from two organizations, and handle different routines and systems. However, the interviewees emphasized that although this might apply to some experts, they are not under the impression that this is a widespread problem. Interviewee 6 said, "A lot of people enjoy the flexibility that we offer" (Interview, February 26, 2020). From the Deployment Advisors' perspective, most of the experts seem to appreciate the different opportunities and breadth in experiences that NORCAP missions offer.

Having dual employers might influence the psychological contract, as discussed by Cullinane & Dundon (2006). As the literature review revealed, the blurring of organizational boundaries and the development of multi-employer relationships might have implications on the construction of psychological contracts. Cullinane & Dundon (2006, p.118) argue that if an employee is legally employed by someone other than who they work for, this might have consequences for who they identify with. Whereas some NORCAP deployees might experience an identity crisis and weak sense of belonging anywhere, others might identify more with the partner organization. This issue was mentioned by Interviewee 6: "Some deployees might use NORCAP as a stepping stone into the UN system, which is difficult to get into" (Interview, February 26, 2020). Furthermore, Interviewee 5 explained that: "Some might be very committed to certain thematic areas in a specific organization" (Interview, February 24, 2020). These statements show that the sense of belonging to NORCAP might be weakened because the deployees rather identify with other organizations because of their specific work, or because they might see an opportunity for future employment with them. However, this lack of commitment towards NORCAP is not necessarily a problem. Interviewee 5 explained that it depends on the specific position:

> There are many positions that NORCAP only staff on behalf of an organization, and in
> which our thematic ownership doesn't necessarily have to be that strong. In other cases,

the position is more connected to the partner organization's mandate, and NORCAP functions as a partner that simply holds the contract. (Interview, February 24, 2020)

On the other hand, Interviewee 5 added, "There are other situations in which we want to be the organization that drives the thematic development and strategically contribute to the different projects" (Interview, February 24, 2020). This indicates that, depending on the position, NORCAP has different needs as to how committed the deployees should be to NORCAP's mandate and priorities. In this relation, Interviewee 5 also argued that the multi-employer relationship might even be an advantage because it can ". . .strengthen how humanitarian operations are conducted" as the deployees can lean on NORCAP whenever they need to challenge the partner organization (Interview, February 24, 2020). This notion clearly shows how less traditional international assignments, in the form of standby partnerships, have implications for how expatriate employment relationships should be understood, like emphasized by O'Donohue et al. (2018, p. 1385).

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the commitment towards NORCAP might grow stronger over time. Interviewee 3 explained that, even though having a strong NORCAP identity might not be possible or necessary for individual missions, this might develop if they are deployed several times: "I think that over time, they will become a "NORCAPer", they will necessarily adopt some of our values, and develop a common language" (Interview, February 20, 2020). This resonates well with Rousseau's (1989) argument that time is a crucial factor in building a psychological contract. Interviewee 7 also argued that bringing people to headquarters for debriefing sessions or seminars might support the construction of a common NORCAP culture: "You can't build an organizational culture if you don't create a spirit of belonging. Let them feel belonging to this organization, bring them here, meet the HQ colleagues, put a name to the face, that is very important" (Interview, February 24, 2020). These statements could indicate that more frequent interaction between the deployees, and between the deployees and headquarters, could be necessary to build trust and identity considering the specific organizational structure in NORCAP. In the end, this could perhaps strengthen the employment relationship and psychological contract between the organization and the deployees. This discussion shows that identity and organizational commitment is a central theme in relation to humanitarian international assignments in NORCAP.

### 4.2.3 Summary of assignment characteristics

The above analysis and discussion have revealed some recurring themes related to the characteristics of NORCAP assignments. The first theme is related to the distinct occupational stressors separating humanitarian assignments from regular international assignments. The operating context is often culturally complex, insecure and volatile (UNOCHA, 2011). The deployees are often exposed to dangerous work environments, which influences humanitarian international assignments and how they should be managed. However, in NORCAP's case, an important characteristic is that the main occupational stressors might be related to psychological struggles like isolation and loneliness. This is because their partner organizations often have a limited field presence. Related to the employment relationship, an important theme is the loose relationship between NORCAP and the deployees. The flexible contracts entail a high degree of unpredictability, which could be challenging for experts who are highly dependent on NORCAP missions. This also requires a lot from the deployees, who need to be alert and take initiative for their own deployments. The loose relationship creates a certain power imbalance, which could be problematic in terms of building a trusting relationship. This could be reinforced by short contracts, as the interviewees emphasized that the relation often grows stronger when a person is deployed several times. This is supported in the literature on psychological contracts, as time is considered a crucial aspect in building such contracts (Rousseau, 1989). Another theme related to the employment relationship is identity. The analysis revealed that it might be difficult to create a sense of belonging to NORCAP because of the multi-employer relationship between NORCAP, the host organization and the deployee. This is also supported in the literature, as blurred organizational boundaries might influence organizational identity, and weaken the psychological contract (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006). Whereas some NORCAP deployees might not identify with any of the organizations, others might feel more committed to the host organization's mandate and thematic priorities. At the same time, the NORCAP identity could grow stronger over time, and could also be important for NORCAP's thematic ownership for certain missions. These characteristics related to the contextual and organizational circumstances surround the whole expatriation process, and are important to take into account when discussing how expatriate management is practiced in NORCAP. Figure 4.2 below illustrates the interrelationship between the expatriation process, and the international environment and employment relationship.
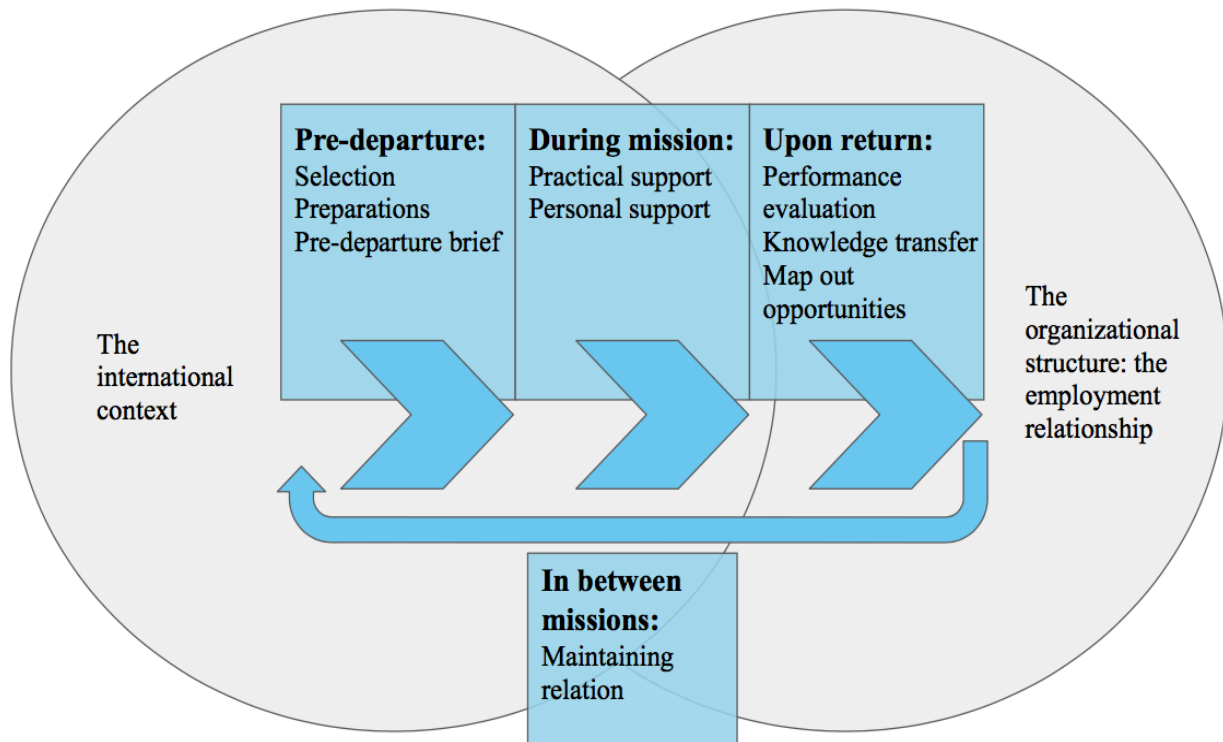
*Figure 4.2.* The interrelationship between the context and the expatriation process

# 5.0 Conclusion

This chapter will first present the conclusions derived from the previous analysis and discussion, and thus answer the overall research question; "How is expatriate management practiced in NORCAP?". The chapter will then demonstrate the main contributions of this study, before indicating limitations and suggestions for further research.

*"The deployment assignment": a mixture of different assignments*

NORCAP missions seem to be a mix of different types of international assignments already addressed in the IHRM literature. They have characteristics that are similar to short-term assignments, in that their duration is often less than one year. They are also similar to flexpatriate assignments, in that they entail shorter and frequent assignments abroad, but without relocation in

the same way as traditional expatriate assignments. NORCAP assignments even resemble self-initiated assignments because the experts are expected to be active and take initiative themselves. With regards to the purpose of the assignments, NORCAP missions are supposed to strengthen the capacity of their partners in the field, or to fill a gap in their operations. This is similar to the purpose of the use of short-term assignments, which is often to transfer skills, solve specific problems, or manage specific operations (Tahvanainen et al., 2005, p. 665). Although the assignments have characteristics that are similar to non-standard international assignments, they are still to a large extent supported like long-term, traditional international assignments. The expatriation process is well-structured and supported throughout, and the Deployment Advisors are engaged in all phases of the mission. This should be seen in relation to the international context and NORCAP's organizational structure. The complex and volatile operating environment demands a lot in terms of duty of care and support. Furthermore, the interrelationship between NORCAP and the partner organizations requires visibility and engagement from NORCAP's side to ensure a sense of belonging to NORCAP. All of the above characteristics are captured in the term "deployment", which is a crucial concept with regards to expatriate management in NORCAP. This is illustrated in figure 5.1 below:
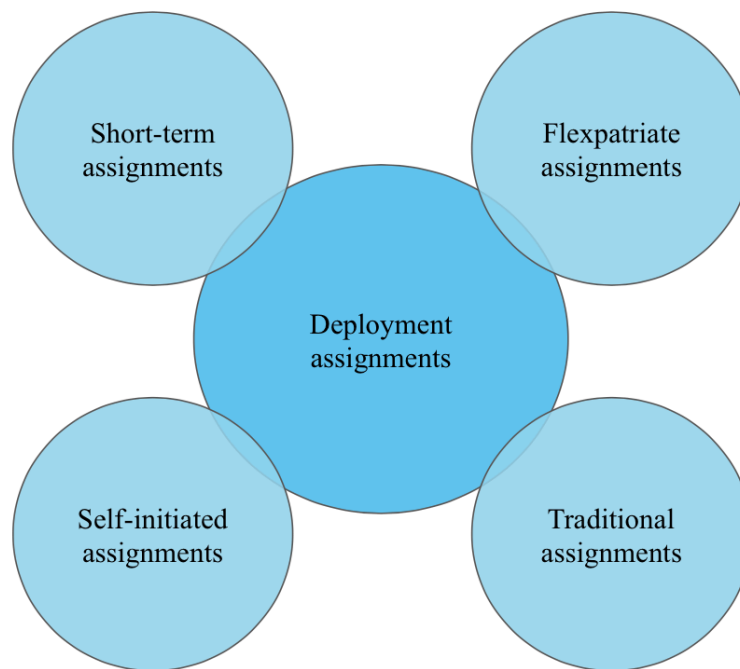


*Figure 5.1.* The deployment assignment

"Deployment" is a term that in many ways permeates how NORCAP works with expatriate management. When looking up the term "deployment", it both refers to "the movement of soldiers or equipment to a place where they can be used when they are needed", and to "the use of something or someone in an effective way" ("Deployment," n.d.). The first meaning of the term is thus sending military personnel into service. This could possibly inform how expatriate management is understood in NORCAP, with regards to the disruptive nature of military assignments, and the hazardous environments in which they are undertaken. This has certain consequences for how such assignments should be managed. The second meaning of the term "deployment" is the use of something or someone, for instance people or staff, especially in order to achieve a particular effect ("Deployment," n.d.). Deployment could in this sense be understood as moving human resources to where they are needed in a flexible and effective manner. This corresponds to a large extent with how international assignments are perceived in NORCAP. Deployment assignments are short-term, flexible and responsive, with the aim to fill gaps or strengthen humanitarian capacity on a relatively short notice. At the same time, they need to be treated with the same intensity as traditional international assignments because of the complex operating context. The unique context, structures and dynamics of the deployment assignment makes it different from other expatriate assignments. Followingly, it needs to be treated differently, which is reflected in how expatriate management is practiced in NORCAP and their focus on transparency, support, duty of care, and accountability.

*Towards a relational psychological contract*

The psychological contract is a crucial dimension of expatriate management in NORCAP. There are some indications that the particular employment relationship between NORCAP and the deployees entails a rather transactional psychological contract. The employments are short and the relations between NORCAP and the deployees are volatile. This has practical challenges related to for instance knowledge transfer, performance management and repatriation, and more substantial challenges related to organizational commitment and identity. The deployees might not expect a long-lasting relation based on loyalty and job security, but merely use NORCAP as a stepping stone into other organizations. The motivation for joining NORCAP might in these cases be driven by the experts' own self-interest and career perspectives, which indicates a transactional psychological contract (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006; Fenwick, 2005). In that sense, the relationship

with NORCAP might be more administrative and contractual. For other deployments, the psychological contract might be more relational as NORCAP is more involved in the missions, and their values and strategic objectives are more prominent. Furthermore, there are some indications that the psychological contract might grow more relational over time if an expert undertakes several missions and the commitment to NORCAP followingly grows stronger. The experts are part of the NORCAP roster, which means that the connection to NORCAP does not necessarily disappear once the mission is completed. As indicated in the discussion, the Deployment Advisors also find it easier to build trust with people they have deployed before. In addition, NORCAP seems to encourage a more relational understanding of the employment relationship through providing support throughout the expatriation process. This might be necessary in light of security and duty of care, and to be able to reveal difficult issues and challenges during the assignments. However, and as explained, NORCAP might at times also be satisfied with a more contractual, transactional relation. The interrelationship between the employment relationship, the psychological contract and HR practices is therefore a crucial aspect of how expatriate management is practiced in NORCAP.

## *A way of strengthening humanitarian operations*

As NORCAP is a standby partner, expatriate management is practiced in close cooperation with other actors and entities in the international community. These interrelationships could contribute to strengthen humanitarian operations. The flexibility and responsiveness in how deployment assignments are structured and managed allow NORCAP to respond on a short notice. As emphasized by UNOCHA (2011, p. 3), governments and the public have heightened expectations of quick responses to humanitarian crises. NORCAP, in cooperation with their partners, can quickly respond to emergencies through filling gaps in a humanitarian operation or strengthening its capacity. In addition, the assignments in NORCAP often need to be aligned with other organizations' aims and strategic objectives. This could be seen as an effective way of encouraging interaction and dialogue between different actors in the international humanitarian community. This is important to strengthen humanitarian action in general (UNOCHA, 2011, p. 3). The need for dialogue and cooperation is reflected in the shared responsibility for support and security between NORCAP and its partners throughout the missions. This shared responsibility could perhaps strengthen the accountability of the actors involved in a humanitarian operation. NORCAP

is not only the legal employer, but could also take the role as a watch-dog that pushes their partners when necessary, and exposes possible weaknesses. The particular interrelationship between NORCAP and its partners permeates the expatriation process and how expatriate management is practiced. In the end, it could also be seen as a way of unifying actors in the humanitarian community through ensuring communication and liability.

Furthermore, how NORCAP deals with the security environment facing their deployment assignments, could also contribute to strengthen humanitarian operations. Humanitarian workers often face a volatile and hazardous working environment, with several threats to their well-being and security. As emphasized by the People In Aid's (2003, p. 2), Code of Good Practice staff in the relief- and development sector place themselves in the frontline in the service of others every day, and often face living and security conditions that most people would try to avoid. In NORCAP's case, the most prominent security risks are related to issues like isolation or loneliness, as many of their partners have a limited field presence. This is a particular characteristic of NORCAP's operating environment that influences how expatriate management is practiced. The Deployment Advisors in NORCAP have a duty to care for and support the deployees' psychological well-being throughout the missions. This responsibility could be interpreted as a way to mitigate the security risks facing NORCAP deployees, to ensure that they stay in the field and continue to deliver humanitarian aid even through difficult times. UNOCHA (2011, p. 2) emphasizes that the objective for humanitarian actors in complex security environments is to manage risk in a way that allows them to maintain effective presence. The whole expatriation process in NORCAP, through selection, preparation, and support, is constructed with the aim to ensure that the NORCAP deployees stay and deliver, even in complex and volatile working environments. Avoiding expatriate failure, in the sense of premature return, is therefore not only beneficial for NORCAP as an organization, but also crucial to maintain effective humanitarian operations.

## 5.1 Contributions

This study has increased the understanding of expatriate management in the nonprofit sector through exploring how humanitarian international assignments are managed in NORCAP. As

such, it has also contributed to expand the conceptualization of expatriation in general by drawing on IHRM and IR literature. Through a qualitative case study approach, this study has investigated how the expatriation process in NORCAP is structured and what HR practices it entails. It has also explored the particular characteristics of humanitarian international assignments in NORCAP, with particular attention to the international environment and organizational structures. A lesson learned for IHRM in general is the importance of adapting the HR practices to the particular structures, needs and aims of the international assignment. One of NORCAP's strengths is their strong HR apparatus, and that they are flexible and able to act quickly. Their way of practicing expatriate management is particularly adapted to their specific international and structural context. Another lesson learned is how professional and transparent HRM practices are crucial even for non-standard and short-term international assignments. This study has highlighted the importance of HR support throughout international assignments, despite their flexibility and shorter duration, and in particular in a nonprofit, humanitarian context. Finally, organizations across sectors could also benefit from looking to NORCAP and how HR is involved with security. Increased international business activity leads to greater risks to employees' health, safety and security across sectors and businesses (Bader et al., 2019; Fee & McGrath Champ, 2017; International SOS Foundation, 2016). This might require more active involvement from HR in mitigating these risks and supporting employees on international assignments. Continuous focus on duty of care is therefore something other organizations could possibly learn from NORCAP.

This study has extended the IR literature by exploring the inside of humanitarian organizations from an HR perspective. As such, it proposes an alternative understanding and different analytic approach to humanitarian organizations and NGOs. It promotes a more comprehensive understanding appreciating both the contextuality and external influences, and internal structures and social processes. This approach has increased the understanding of the authority, knowledge and origins of change in humanitarian organizations and NGOs, and has illuminated how they are engaged in transnational networks and uphold relations with other entities and actors. As such, an important contribution of this study is increased understanding of the importance of IHRM for humanitarian organizations. Jan Egeland, NRC's Secretary General, emphasizes that "At the heart of NORCAP are our excellent roster members" (NRC, 2020a). NORCAP's inner force and global influence lies in their human resources and how these are managed, as well as in the interplay with

other actors in the international environment. Having the right personnel and expertise is therefore crucial not only to ensure effective humanitarian operations, but also to ensure continued influence by humanitarian actors in the international environment. Followingly, effective IHRM and good systems of support could arguably strengthen the role of humanitarian organizations and NGOs in the international arena. Another lesson learned from looking at how expatriate management is practiced in NORCAP, is the importance of the interrelationships between different actors and sectors. The Standby Partnership that NORCAP is a part of arguably encourages dialogue and cooperation between international actors. This particular structure might contribute to ensure coordinated action and thus strengthen the role of humanitarian organizations and NGOs. In light of this, this thesis has contributed to increased understanding of the role and position of humanitarian organizations and NGOs in IR, and the origins of their influence in the international arena.

## 5.2 Limitations of study and further research

One possible limitation of this study is that no experts in the NORCAP roster have been interviewed or consulted. The themes discussed and conclusions drawn do therefore not convey the voice of the deployees themselves, and how they experience being on contract with NORCAP. This means that the results do not account for their motivations for joining the NORCAP roster, nor how they perceive HR's role in the expatriation process. Inclusion of the deployees in this study could have been interesting to illuminate other dimensions of humanitarian international assignments, and how HR best can support them. Another limitation could be that the standby partnership is a very limited part of the nonprofit humanitarian sector. There is probably much more to be learned about nonprofit expatriation by exploring other types of organizations. However, this study did not aim to be exhaustive in its attempt to explain expatriation in the nonprofit sector. Rather, it has aimed to contribute towards increasing the understanding of it, from an HR point of view. In light of this, further research could benefit from looking at the deployee perspective, and to explore expatriate management in different types of nonprofit organizations. It would also be interesting to investigate the interrelationships between NORCAP and their partners and donors more in-depth. This shows that there is still much to be learned about nonprofit expatriation and about humanitarian international assignments.

# Bibliography

Bader, B., Schuster, T. & Dickmann, M. (2019). Managing people in hostile environments: lessons learned and new grounds in HR research. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 30*(20), 2809-2830. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1548499

Bickley, S. (2017). *Security Risk Management: a basic guide for smaller NGOs.* European Interagency Security Forum (EISF). https://www.eisf.eu/library/security-risk-management-a-basic-guide-for-smaller-ngos/

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods*. (5ᵗʰedn). New York: Oxford University Press.

Cullinane, N. & Dundon, T. (2006). The psychological contract: A critical review. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 8*(2), 113-129. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2006.00123.x

Deployment. (n.d.). In Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved from: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/deployment

Dowling, P.J., Festing, M. & Engle, A.D. (2017). *International Human Resource Management.* (7ᵗʰedn). Hampshire, UK: Cengage Learning.

Edwards, R. & Holland, J. (2013). *What is Qualitative Interviewing?* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Fee, A. & McGrath-Champ, S. (2017). The role of human resources in protecting expatriates: insights from the international aid and development sector. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 28*(14), 1960-1985. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1137617

Fenwick, M. (2005). Extending strategic international human resource management research and pedagogy to the non-profit multinational. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 16*(4), 497-512. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190500051480

Guest, D.E. (2004). The Psychology of the Employment Relationship: An Analysis Based on the Psychological Contract. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 53*(4), 541-555. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2004.00187.x

Guest, D.E. & Conway, N. (2002). Communicating the psychological contract: an employer perspective. *Human Resource Management Journal, 12*(2), 22-38. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2002.tb00062.x

International SOS Foundation. (2016). *The responsibility of Norwegian companies for their employees travelling on business and overseas assignments: a legal perspective* [White paper]. Retrieved February 5, 2020 from International SOS Foundation:

www.internationalsosfoundation.org › norwayThe responsibility of Norwegian companies for their ...

Jacobsen, D. I. (2015). *Hvordan gjennomføre undersøkelser? Innføring i samfunnsvitenskapelig metode* [How to conduct research? Introduction to social science methods]. (3$^{rd}$ edn). Oslo: Cappelen Damm AS.

Joachim, J. (2017). NGOs in world politics. In J. Baylis, S. Smith & P. Owens (Eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics* (p. 347-362). UK: Oxford University Press

Johannessen, A., Tufte, P.A. & Christoffersen, L. (2016). *Introduksjon til Samfunnsvitenskapelig Metode* [Introduction to Social Science Methods]. (5$^{th}$edn). Oslo: Abstrakt Forlag.

Lindenberg, M. & Dobel, J. P. (1999). The challenges of Globalization for Northern International Relief and Development NGOs. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 28*(4), 4-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/089976499773746401

Malterud, K. (2012). Systematic text condensation: A strategy for qualitative analysis. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health, 40*(8)*,* 795-805. https://doi.org/10.1177/1403494812465030

Mayerhofer, H., Hartmann, L. C., Michelitsch-Riedl, G. & Kollinger, I. (2004). Flexpatriate assignments: a neglected issue in global staffing. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 15*(8), 1371-1389. https://doi.org/10.1080/0958519042000257986

McNulty, Y. & Brewster, C. (2017). Theorizing the meaning(s) of 'expatriate': establishing boundary conditions for business expatriates. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 28*(1), 27-61. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1243567

McNulty, Y. M. & Tharenou, P. (2004). Expatriation Return on Investment: A Definition and Antecedents. *International Studies of Management & Organization, 34*(3), 68-95. https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.2004.11043710

McNulty, Y., Vance, C. M. & Fisher, K. (2017). Beyond corporate expatriation- global mobility in the sports, religious, education, and non-profit sectors. *Journal of Global Mobility, 5*(2), 110-122. https://doi.org/10.1108/JGM-04-2017-0014

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mingst, K. A. & Muldoon J. P., Jr. (2015). Global governance and NGOs. Reconceptualizing international relations for the twenty-first century. In W. E. DeMars & D. Dijkzeul (Eds.), *The NGO Challenge for International Relations Theory* (p. 65-81). New York: Routledge.

Norwegian Refugee Council. (2020a). About NORCAP. Retrieved 24 May 2020  from: https://www.nrc.no/expert-deployment/aboutnorcap/

Norwegian Refugee Council. (2020b). About us. Retrieved 24 May 2020 from: https://www.nrc.no/who-we-are/about-us/

Norwegian Refugee Council. (2020c). Our expertise. Retrieved 24 May 2020 from: https://www.nrc.no/expert-deployment/our-rosters/

Norwegian Refugee Council. (2018). Our story. Retrieved 24 May 2020 from: https://www.nrc.no/expert-deployment/our-story/

Norwegian Refugee Council. (2020d). Partners and donors. Retrieved from 24 May 2020: https://www.nrc.no/expert-deployment/norcap-donors/

O'Donohue, W., Hutchings, K. & Hansen, S.D. (2018). Psychological contracts: enhancing understanding of the expatriation experience. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 29*(8), 1379-1401. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2017.1278828

People in Aid (2003). *Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel.* Retrieved from: https://reliefweb.int/report/world/people-aid-code-good-practice-management-and-support-aid-personnel

Rousseau, D.M. (1989). Psychological and Implied Contracts in Organizations. *Employee Responsibilities & Rights Journal, 2*(2), 121-139. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01384942

Schwartz-Shea, P. & Yanow, D. (2012). *Interpretive Research Design. Concepts and Processes.* New York: Routledge.

Selmer, J. (2019). What is expatriate management?. *Journal of Global Mobility, 7*(3), 237-238. https://doi.org/10.1108/JGM-09-2019-073

Silverman, D. (2017). How was it for you? The Interview Society and the irresistible rise of the (poorly analyzed) interview. *Qualitative Research, 17*(2), 144-158. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794116668231

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Standby Partnership. (2017). About us. Retrieved from: https://www.standbypartnership.org/about

Starr, T. L. (2009). Repatriation and short-term assignments: an exploration into expectations, change and dilemmas. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 20*(2), 286-200. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190802670557

Tahvanainen, M., Welch, D. & Worm, V. (2005). Implications of Short-term International Assignments. *European Management Journal, 23*(6), 663-673. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2005.10.011

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2011). *To Stay and Deliver: Good practice for humanitarians in complex security environments.* https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Stay_and_Deliver.pdf

Williamson, C. & Darby, R. (2011). *The importance of HR management in supporting staff working in hazardous environments.* People In Aid. Retrieved from: https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/the-role-of-hrm-with-org-support-in-hazardous-environments.pdf

Yazan, B. (2015). Three Approaches to Case Study Methods in Education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(2), 134-152. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss2/12

# Appendix 1: Interview guide

## Introduction
- Inform about purpose and structure of interview, use of data, possible consequences, right to withdraw, anonymity.
- Do you have any questions before we start?
- Signing of statement of consent

**Your role in NORCAP**
- What is your position in NORCAP? What does this role entail, in brief?
- How long have you been a deployment advisor?
- How many deployees do you have under your responsibility?
- How do you understand the term expatriate management?

## Main part
**HR activities:**
- What evaluations do you do when selecting experts for missions?
- How do you prepare a deployee for a mission?
- Can you describe your role during the mission?
- What is your role after the end of the mission?
- How do you manage the deployees' performance?
- What is being done to ensure knowledge transfer from specific projects/deployments to the organization as a whole?
- How do you maintain relationships with staff for future work?

**Duty of care:**
- How do you understand the role of duty of care in your work?
- What role does the deployees' security play in your work?
- What do you see as major challenges with regards to managing people working in hostile environments?
- What kind of responsibilities do you have to keep your deployees safe?

**Employment relationship:**
- How would you describe the employment relationship between NORCAP and the deployees?
- Can you describe the relationship between NORCAP and the host agencies?
- How does the divided responsibility influence NORCAP's relationship with the deployees?

- How do you understand the importance of different cultures in your daily work with the deployees?

**Overall challenges/strengths:**
- What would you say is working particularly well in NORCAP in relation to operating deployments? Why is this working well, you think?
- In your experience, what is most challenging in your daily work? What makes this challenging? How do you handle these challenges?

# Concluding part
- Is there anything you think is important that we have not yet covered?
- Is there anything else you want to add?
- Do you have any questions?