



Review of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies recovery operations

Summary report

The International Federation's Global Agenda (2006-2010)

Over the next five years, the collective focus of the Federation will be on achieving the following goals and priorities:

Our goals

Goal 1: Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.

Goal 2: Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.

Goal 3: Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.

Goal 4: Promote respect for diversity and human dignity, and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion.

Our priorities

Improving our local, regional and international capacity to respond to disasters and public health emergencies.

Scaling up our actions with vulnerable communities in health promotion, disease prevention and disaster risk reduction.

Increasing significantly our HIV/AIDS programming and advocacy.

Renewing our advocacy on priority humanitarian issues, especially fighting intolerance, stigma and discrimination, and promoting disaster risk reduction.

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Foreword

When a major natural disaster strikes, not only does it cause serious loss of life and property, it also often takes away or threatens the livelihoods and future of those who have survived. As the recent Asian tsunamis and earthquakes have shown, providing support to communities to rebuild their homes, services and lives is a complex undertaking that takes time to do well. However, it is an essential process to assist those who have already suffered to recover from these hardships and to help strengthen the resilience of communities to future disasters.

For this reason, in 2005, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies commissioned a comprehensive review of its experiences from a number of its past and ongoing natural disaster recovery operations. We wanted to learn what has worked well and what could have been done better so that we can continuously improve the quality of our present and future recovery programming in countries hit by natural disasters.

The review has highlighted many important lessons for the International Federation, drawn from the candid reflections of our National Societies and operational personnel. A number of areas of better practice from the International Federation's operations have been documented, and a number of areas have been identified where improvement is needed.

Strengthening our recovery responses will be a challenging process, but the International Federation is committed to making these improvements. The findings and recommendations from this recovery review will be shared and discussed widely with our National Societies, so that we can identify the most effective plan of action to put the lessons we have learned into practice.



Johan Schaar
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Introduction

The nature and scale of some disasters require a special response. Hurricane Mitch in 1998 affected five countries simultaneously. The earthquake in Mexico City in 1985 occurred in a densely populated urban environment. In Armenia, the political situation dominated relief efforts following the earthquake in 1988. In Mozambique, the floods came in two waves in 2000 and struck again a year later. And in one of the worst disasters of recent times, the Asian tsunamis in December 2004 devastated communities across several countries on two continents.

The International Federation responds to natural disasters both big and small, some predictable, others not. While conducting operations in small- and medium-scale disasters is familiar territory for the International Federation, it is still feeling its way in the complex environment of large-scale disasters, especially with regard to the extent and nature of its involvement once the emergency phase is over.

A renewed desire to systematize the International Federation's approach to recovery operations was triggered by the 2004 Asian tsunamis, in recognition of the need to set policies and procedures in place for dealing with major natural disasters of this kind. It therefore commissioned a review of recovery operations in selected contexts over the past 20 years in order to identify recurring patterns and good practices and to make recommendations for future operations. "Recovery operations" in the International Federation context means those programmes which go beyond the provision of immediate relief to assist those who have suffered the full impact of a disaster to rebuild their homes, lives and services and to strengthen their capacity to cope with future disasters.

The International Federation's recovery operations in the six contexts reviewed were all quite different, providing insights from a wide range of experiences. In Honduras, one of the five countries affected by Hurricane Mitch, the International Federation mounted housing reconstruction programmes. In Turkey, the earthquake prompted a major urban disaster recovery programme, involving the rebuilding of social infrastructure and bolstering disaster preparedness. After the earthquake in Iran, the International Federation focused its recovery work on schools. In response to a series of cyclones in Viet Nam, the International Federation developed a cyclone-resistant construction programme to meet shelter needs, as well as revitalizing mangrove plantation. Following floods in Mozambique, International Federation efforts were concentrated on public health and shelter. In Swaziland, the focus was on drought recovery and food security.

The review covered different aspects of the International Federation's approach to and conduct of past recovery operations and, on the basis of its findings, came up with a number of specific recommendations. The present document is a summary of the key findings and recommendations.

The review identified many shortcomings in the International Federation's past recovery operations. It also found examples of successful interventions which could serve as the basis for future International Federation recovery strategy. These too have been documented.



Aims and methodology

The primary aim of the review was to draw lessons from past experience to benefit operations in tsunami-affected countries. With the strong likelihood that the International Federation will continue to become involved in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction programmes in the future, a second objective was to collect, review and analyse its experiences as an institution in responding to large-scale disasters and to use the conclusions as the basis for formulating future policy and guidelines.

The review was carried out by an external consultant between October 2005 and March 2006. Field studies were conducted in six countries on four continents representing different types of disasters: Hurricane Mitch (Honduras, 1998), the Marmara earthquake (Turkey, 1999), floods (Mozambique, 2000 and 2001), the Bam earthquake (Iran, 2003), various cyclones and floods (Viet Nam) and prolonged drought (Swaziland, ongoing). In addition, desk studies of the earthquakes in Armenia, Gujarat (India) and Mexico provided a longer-term perspective on the International Federation's recovery operations. While it was not possible to carry out a review in tsunami-affected countries, evaluations and mission reports produced to date provided useful reference material.

The field studies included documentary research and interviews with relevant staff of the International Federation Secretariat, both in the field and the Geneva office, Host National Societies and external partners. A number of Partner National Societies gave their position on recovery operations and provided information on their programmes in the countries under review.¹

The review concentrated specifically on the International Federation's recovery operations in large-scale disasters. It was not intended as an evaluation of each country operation nor the performance of the National Society in the contexts concerned. Nor did it attempt to make a thorough assessment of programme impact on the beneficiaries.

1. A Host National Society refers to the Red Cross Red Crescent Society in the country where a disaster has occurred. A Partner National Society refers to a Red Cross Red Crescent Society from another country that comes to assist the Host National Society in responding to the disaster.



Policy and approaches to recovery

The question of whether, and under what conditions, the International Federation should get involved in post-disaster rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction has been the subject of numerous studies since the mid-1970s. After each large-scale disaster in which the International Federation was involved in longer-term recovery and reconstruction programmes, the National Societies and the International Federation Secretariat took some initiative to establish a more systematic approach to such operations. However, there was never any continuity in these initiatives, perhaps because disasters of such magnitude happen only intermittently. All of the efforts to create a position, each time triggered by a major natural disaster, were not systematically brought together or followed up, and the International Federation continued to engage in recovery in an ad hoc fashion.

As a result, it was hard for the review to gain a clear picture of the International Federation's position with respect to post-disaster recovery. There was no agreed definition, active policy or terms of engagement in a recovery operation. Many interviewees, especially in the field, preferred to use such terms as "rehabilitation" and "reconstruction" rather than "recovery", as these represented more tangible operational steps and identifiable activities. Generally speaking, rehabilitation was seen as a natural extension of relief activities and did not necessarily imply getting involved in major reconstruction work. Recovery was regarded as synonymous with construction, particularly of housing, which is a complex and time-consuming undertaking, but the area to which most funds tended to be allocated.

Opinions among interviewees were divided as to how far the International Federation should engage in "recovery" activities. Some believed that extending programmes beyond relief was inevitable; others were more sceptical of the organization's capacity to deliver. There was also genuine concern as to whether recovery could simply be treated as an extension of relief activities or if it was closer to long-term development, requiring a different organizational approach.

Some National Societies wanted to engage in a limited short-term recovery operation, others wanted to take their time to develop integrated programmes, to plan with the communities and to build up National Society capacities. At one end of the spectrum were those who put the emphasis on a restricted humanitarian mandate; at the other end were those who wanted to see the International Federation broaden its scope to go even beyond recovery towards development.

Recognizing that governments are responsible for rehabilitation and reconstruction plans and National Societies are only auxiliary to their governments, participants at the International Federation's XVII Inter-Americas Conference in Santiago, Chile in 2003 proposed a number of strategic guidelines for involvement in rehabilitation and reconstruction including that:

- a) National Society rehabilitation and reconstruction actions should be based on vulnerability and risk assessment;
- b) Rehabilitation projects should be designed as a precursor to mitigation, prevention and development actions, and should be developed in such a way as to improve the living conditions of the beneficiaries;
- c) Community participation in the design and execution of rehabilitation activities should be promoted;
- d) Strategic partnerships that facilitate intervention in rehabilitation and reconstruction processes which lead to development should be established.²

These are probably the most comprehensive guidelines and recommendations for rehabilitation and reconstruction that exist within the International Federation. Unfortunately they have not been systematically disseminated, followed up or implemented.

Recommendations

- Determine the limits of International Federation engagement in recovery for different situations and scenarios.
- Develop a formal policy for rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction operations, building on, revising and updating existing policies and procedures and taking into account National Societies' own positions and policies in these fields.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the International Federation Secretariat, regional delegations, National Societies and regional hubs in different disaster situations and recovery scenarios.

2. Federation,
XVII Inter-Americas
Conference report, 2003.

Engagement in recovery activities

The operational philosophy of linking relief, recovery and development has been around since the 1970s. According to the Tansley Report, the “Red Cross also recognizes the trend in thinking about disasters now prevalent in international circles, namely that disaster relief is an integral part of development assistance and must be planned in a continuum from the pre-disaster stage through the emergency to the rehabilitation and reconstruction phases bearing in mind its developmental impact”.³ As it is, International Federation operations are seldom planned with recovery objectives from the start. Rather, recovery has become a response to the availability of relief funds.

The International Federation engages in recovery operations in a number of ways:

- a) In **seasonal and predictable disasters**, such as cyclones, there is some anticipation of the needs and level of external support required. In such cases, some rehabilitation activities are carried out, mostly as an extension of relief programmes, but no major recovery and reconstruction work is undertaken. Cyclones in Bangladesh, hurricanes in the Caribbean and moderate floods in China would fall into this category. International Federation and Host National Society systems in place are adequate to handle such operations effectively, which in general span six to twelve months.
- b) In **slow-onset disasters**, such as drought, relief and longer-term programmes intermingle, making it hard to distinguish what constitutes longer-term capacity-building and what constitutes relief. Such disasters are recurring and often cyclical. However, some funding agencies may not allow relief funds to be used for longer-term recovery programmes, which could begin to address the underlying causes of the disaster. Chronic issues do not fit well into relief appeals, nor does the International Federation seem to sell these issues very well, particularly in terms of accessing development funding. As a result, the organization may be carrying out food distributions when the appropriate intervention would be bolstering food security.
- c) In **large-scale rapid-onset disasters**, such as earthquakes, media attention is high and public donations can be significant. Yet relief needs are covered rapidly, leaving the International Federation with large amounts of unspent funds. Ideas on how the money could best be spent to aid recovery are limited, and quick decisions are often made to use the available funds on reconstruction, particularly housing. When public donations are involved, there is also a tendency to select projects that are visible and conform to public perceptions of humanitarian assistance.

In most affected countries, disasters reveal the underlying social and economic problems that existed before the disaster and which rendered the population more vulnerable to its effects. These can only begin to be addressed through longer-term recovery and reconstruction programmes. Yet, while most within the humanitarian community are aware of this, it is not openly explained to the public and governments nor identified in funding appeals.

Most Partner National Societies said that their main source of funding for recovery work was unspent relief monies and that development funds were rarely made available for this purpose. This put them under pressure to spend the funds quickly, making it difficult to adopt a longer-term and developmental approach to recovery.

From the Host National Societies, it was clear that where there were large amounts of funds available, they would like more to be spent on building their capacities to respond to future disasters and on strengthening their regular programmes. This is happening increasingly, as National Society capacity building is becoming a standard component of International Federation appeals. In fact, National Society capacity building was emphasized in the tsunami appeal as being an integral part of the relief operations.

3. Tansley, D., *Final Report, An Agenda for Red Cross, 1975*, p. 74.

Recommendations

- Establish guidelines and standard operating procedures for operations beyond emergency response, taking into account different recovery scenarios.
- In chronic and seasonal disasters, promote opportunities to focus the response on long-term needs and on addressing recurring problems.
- Develop a good communication strategy targeting the public, donors and beneficiaries on the reasons for and benefits of spending funds on programmes with a longer-term perspective.
- Develop a strategy, guided by National Societies that are successful at it, to access development funds for post-disaster recovery.



Assessment and planning

The International Federation can not design strategies and set standards in a vacuum. The organization and coordination of recovery assessment and planning, in strategic terms, is clearly a national government responsibility. In reality, however, the national system can become overwhelmed in the wake of a disaster unless the government is very strong and experienced. In theory, the International Federation should fit into the “big picture”, while drawing on a wide range of sources to build its own picture of what needs to be done and how best to do it. However, the International Federation Secretariat and individual Partner National Societies are under pressure from donors and governments to allocate quickly the large sums that are not spent on the emergency response to recovery activities. The tendency is then for the International Federation and Partner National Societies, individually or collectively, to seek out specific projects for rapid allocation of funds, mostly construction work, rather than pursuing an overall strategy. Planning thus becomes more of an exercise in allocating funds and less a continuous strategic planning dialogue with the national authorities and the Host National Society.

The lessons of the past several recovery operations suggest that the International Federation is not well equipped to make reliable assessments of recovery needs. Until the tsunami operation, there was no systematic assessment of recovery needs from the start of an operation. Recovery teams were assembled as and when the operation was felt to have moved beyond relief. Sometimes recovery needs would be added to the emergency appeal, other times a special appeal would be made.

Most National Societies act under pressure from their governments and the public to be on the scene as early as possible. In almost all operations, while the International Federation Secretariat would assemble a needs assessment team, several Partner National Societies would also send out their own teams to carry out independent assessments. The review found that the rapid deployment of a joint Secretariat/Partner National Society Recovery Assessment Team (RAT) after the tsunami helped to discourage Partner National Societies from acting in an uncoordinated, unilateral way and gave the International Federation a better standing with aid donors and the national authorities. At the same time, a full technical assessment of recovery needs cannot be determined in the heat of an emergency as neither the affected population nor the authorities and the Host National Society would be able to determine the long-term needs accurately at that stage.

Taking adequate time at the beginning to consult with the affected population and other stakeholders can make things faster later and can improve the quality of the outcomes. In Honduras, those Partner National Societies that planned and consulted more thoroughly delivered more appropriate and sustainable housing than their counterparts that moved to implementation too quickly.

Needs assessment is also a continuous affair, especially in the fluid circumstances faced by people who have lost their homes, incomes and/or family members. One-off assessment cannot capture the changing pattern of needs of affected populations over time. In most operations, the initial assessment that shaped recovery programming was not followed up by systematic assessments to determine changing needs and beneficiary perceptions. In all situations, despite assessment of broader needs, the resulting plans were supply and donor driven rather than needs driven, although ultimately programmes met some of the affected population’s needs.

Assessment teams often operate with no established guidelines, methods or operating procedures. How the process is conducted seems to depend on political and media pressure, as well as the personalities and expertise of the members of the assessment team.

Introduction of the RAT concept is a clear recognition of the difference between emergency and recovery assessment and planning, but it is not yet supported by the necessary tools.

Recommendations

- Strengthen assessment and planning procedures and tools for more predictable and effective recovery operations; in major disasters, carry out periodic needs and situation assessments and adjust recovery strategies accordingly.
- Develop guidelines on the composition, skills and expectations required for recovery assessment; strengthen the input of local expertise in the process and consider the development of a roster of recovery expertise, as well as RAT training.



Coordination and external partnerships

Cooperation within the Movement

An area frequently cited in the interviews as a weakness was coordination between the different components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement).

The Framework for International Cooperation defines the options for international cooperation within the International Federation. Coordination of cooperation in a specific context is primarily the role of the Host National Society, but it is the International Federation Secretariat that is expected to ensure compliance by Partner National Societies with the agreed modalities and to support the Host National Society in assuming its role.

In practice, fulfilling this role can have its contradictions. The majority of the National Societies consulted preferred the International Federation Secretariat to be non-operational and play a facilitating and coordinating role. At the same time, in complex operational environments, the Host National Societies expected the International Federation to take a leadership and decision-making role, including being firm with Partner National Societies that acted independently. In Honduras, Iran and Turkey, planning, coordination and provision of technical advice were seen as the most critical functions of the International Federation Secretariat in the midst of a large-scale disaster. The Partner National Societies interviewed believed strongly that the International Federation Secretariat should refrain from an operational role. The issue of whether the International Federation should run operations or stick to a coordinating role continues to be a source of debate within the Secretariat.

Despite repeated experiences with the issue of coordination in previous large-scale disasters, it was evident in the early stages of the tsunami operations that the International Federation Secretariat could not come up with a coordination mechanism sufficiently appealing for the National Societies to buy into until the Movement Coordination Framework⁴ was introduced. According to the Sri Lanka Real Time Evaluation (RTE), the Framework was felt to be well thought through and was generally accepted with enthusiasm.⁵ However, Partner National Societies interviewed said that the role of some of the task forces was unclear, that the procedures could at times be cumbersome and that too much time was spent in coordination meetings to the detriment of action.

Coordination at the Host National Society branch level and coordination between the branches and the Host National Society headquarters were also mentioned among the problems encountered in the tsunami operation. Branch-level coordination is desirable where the operation takes place, but as branches vary in capacity, it is difficult to generalize. In countries where the national system is decentralized to the provincial or district level, branches are likely to be strong and able to coordinate operations. This was the case in Viet Nam. It was evident in all cases reviewed that where the branches were engaged in the recovery programmes and assumed some coordination or operational cooperation role they became stronger in the process.

Cooperation with others

Generally, the International Federation had good relations with and was well respected by national and local authorities, although their perception of the International Federation as a rich organization inclined them to steer it towards infrastructure investment rather than strategy development. There was confusion too about the differences between the various Movement components.

4. *The Movement Coordination Framework includes Host National Societies, Participating National Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC.*

5. *A. Bhattacharjee, Real Time Evaluation of Tsunami Response in Asia and East Africa for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Second Round, December 2005.*



Coordination with other organizations and strategic partners is another area in need of strengthening. At times, the International Federation limits external coordination to United Nations (UN) agencies. During an emergency response, this is understandable. For longer-term recovery, the coordination and effective technical leadership provided by the UN system can be limited. Much of the international assistance for recovery happens through bilateral government donors, and coordination moves to the national system or specially created recovery/reconstruction agencies. In large-scale disasters, it is increasingly the international financial institutions rather than the UN that define the recovery and reconstruction framework with the national system. Operationally, recovery action shifts to national government agencies, the private sector and international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Yet International Federation cooperation and coordination with these key players in establishing policies, standards and action are limited. Many tsunami donors felt that the International Federation was “punching beneath its weight” and not using its organizational strengths to influence policy.⁶

In Swaziland, as the food security problem persisted, assistance decreased over the years owing to “donor fatigue”. The evaluation of the food security pilot projects in 2005 indicated that the population had resorted to helping themselves as assistance was lacking. Pooling of resources between various agencies and organizations was identified clearly as a need, with coordinated assessments and activities to aim for common goals. This would result in better assistance and utilization of resources.⁷ The National Society participates in a number of initiatives for this purpose, such as the Coordinated Association of NGOs (CANGO), which aims to facilitate coordination in relation to food security responses through common assessments and response strategies.

The International Federation should develop more strategic partnerships in areas where there is technical, policy or advocacy added value and not limit itself to funding or implementing the UN’s work and ideas.

6. C. Burton, *Report from mission to Indonesia and Sri Lanka, 22 August–11 September 2005*, p. 1.

7. P. Fox, *Recovery Study on Food Security Incident, Swaziland, December 2005*, p. 5.



Yoshi Shimizu/International Federation

Recommendations

- Establish a clear balance between coordination and recovery implementation roles, maintaining a flexible approach according to the nature of recovery operations.
- Strengthen coordination of policy and action with the international financial institutions, bilateral donors and NGOs.

Combining strengths

For the UN and its agencies, the International Federation's added value is its capacity to implement projects at the field level, its volunteer base and its national and local connections. In light of this, operational partnerships with UN agencies – and to a lesser extent with other international and national actors – are becoming increasingly common.

After the earthquake, the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran cooperated with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in providing psychosocial support to the victims. Also in Iran, the Federation and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) worked together to rebuild an educational facility, whereby UNESCO provided the expertise and the Federation covered the construction costs of two buildings. In Viet Nam, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) funded a number of disaster preparedness projects run by the National Society.

In Honduras, the Canadian Red Cross Society joined forces with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the latter supporting housing construction and the former running a health programme and supporting local National Society branch development. Following Hurricane Mitch, the American Red Cross worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia to produce a baseline study on health in all the affected areas. Because of this work, the impact of programmes to reduce diarrhoea incidence by building latrines and improving hygiene could easily be shown to the donors.

The scope and scale of the Asian tsunami operations eventually led to a number of new partnerships with local and international NGOs. In Aceh, the Federation is working closely with several major international and national NGOs, including CARE, MuslimAid and GenAssist, to implement its extensive Transitional Shelter Programme. In Sri Lanka, a sustainable livelihoods and risk reduction programme is being undertaken in partnership with the Stockholm Environment Institute and Practical Partners.

Human resources

Crucial to the success of a recovery operation is the use of appropriate human resources. The skills required for recovery are quite different from those for relief. Yet, use of delegates primarily with relief experience and skills for recovery operations is a common phenomenon. As the pool of people qualified to do recovery work is small within the International Federation and it takes time to recruit suitable candidates, the tendency is to fill some positions on the basis of who is available, rather than who is appropriate for the task.

Delegates for recovery are usually required for longer-term assignments than relief positions. High turnover of recovery delegates in the field leads to continuity problems and delays in programme implementation. While it is easier to make arrangements for relief delegates to take temporary release from their other responsibilities to carry out short-term missions, recovery delegates (particularly in specialist areas) may have to leave their current jobs.

More tightly targeted position descriptions and advertising in a selection of development-oriented web sites and journals would yield a greater range of good candidates. Moreover, the International Federation would need to offer competitive salaries and benefits, and some anticipation of future employment with the organization. Maintaining a core group of professionals for recovery operations would not be easily sustainable for the International Federation, however, as recovery is an ad hoc and intermittent activity.

Local recruitment is also a weakness of the International Federation. In all the countries reviewed, the skills required for recovery work were available at local rates and to a high standard in the country, but other than sub-contracting to construction companies, the International Federation did not regularly seek out qualified local staff. Where local technical expertise is employed, such as in the Pakistan earthquake operation, a support system needs to be in place and familiarization of individuals recruited with the International Federation's rules and policies.

The size and composition of delegations is also an issue. In Indonesia, Iran, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, sensitivities regarding the large numbers of international staff were expressed. In the tsunami operation, the size of the delegation was, and remains, beyond requirements and the structure top heavy. One possible alternative to the problem of too many expatriate delegates and to the shortage of qualified staff could be the sharing of delegates by the International Federation Secretariat and Partner National Societies across individual programmes in various sectors. This would help reduce the overall number of staff required and contribute to increased coordination between the Partner National Societies.

Recommendations

- Map the skills and experiences relevant for recovery within the International Federation's membership and what the membership can access; determine what critical skills and experience are missing and what human resource strategies and partnerships should be developed to fill these gaps.
- Establish a better system for sharing human resources between the International Federation and National Societies and create a pool of qualified professionals, particularly in areas where the necessary skills are relatively scarce (e.g. in shelter, livelihoods, recovery planning, community negotiation).
- In consultation with National Societies, develop a human resource strategy for recovery operations, including greater use of non-traditional sources of recruitment.
- Where they are available, make greater effort to engage competent local human resources in recovery programmes.

Accountability

Procedures and mechanisms for accountability to donors are good in all cases. According to the Host National Societies, however, there is less transparency and accountability towards them, especially where projects are bilateral⁸ or directly agreed with the authorities or other partners. Accountability to the beneficiaries is at the heart of the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief, yet its implementation by the International Federation seems inadequate. There are not enough systematic efforts to ensure regular accountability to the beneficiaries. This was highlighted in almost every evaluation, including the RTE Second Round.⁹

To date, there has been little systematic evaluation, sharing of experiences or learning to the extent that the process and outcome of recovery operations could not be fully analysed in this review. To begin with, documentation of operations beyond relief is too thin. Each component of the Movement had its own documentation, but there were no consolidated reports or reviews, nor was there a single repository of information. Second, available information was mostly descriptive and quantitative. Evaluations and qualitative analysis were rare. In most operations, the process of decision-making was not recorded, and International Federation appeals seldom covered recovery. What information existed from the Partner National Societies on their programmes was mostly quantified outputs and not outcomes. Documentation rarely gave insight into why certain choices were made; how the relationships among various parts of the organization worked; why certain partnerships were pursued; why decisions were changed; and how changing needs were assessed and accommodated.

The International Federation uses a number of quality and accountability tools such as the Code of Conduct and Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. Further, the International Federation is increasingly participating in joint agency monitoring and evaluation exercises such as United Kingdom-based Disasters Emergency Committee. However, most of these tools and standards, as well as monitoring and evaluation exercises, fall short of recovery and tend to focus only on emergency response or, at most, on the transition phase or specific sectors. There is no mechanism to ensure that these standards are incorporated into programming and implementation. Lastly, there are no minimum indicators or benchmarks agreed upon by the organization to know and measure “success”. It is assumed that what exists as standards is mainstreamed.

8. Bilateral in this context means between a Host National Society and a Partner National Society; multilateral refers to activities run with or through the Secretariat and/or more than one Partner National Society.

9. A. Bhattacharjee, Real Time Evaluation of Tsunami Response in Asia and East Africa for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Second Round, December 2005.

Recommendations

- Institutionalize the regular review of progress and performance of the overall recovery operation, including the long-term impact of the operation on the Host National Society and the beneficiary communities to inform future policy and action.
- Review existing International Federation and Partner National Society tools for accountability, particularly to the affected populations; expand existing or develop new “codes” and benchmarks that define “good practice” in recovery.
- Create a repository of information and documentation on recovery that exist in the National Societies and make it accessible to the membership.

Quality and accountability

The International Federation Secretariat has recently engaged Quality and Accountability (Q&A) staff for the tsunami operations. The Movement Platform in Sri Lanka has formed a Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group to streamline and rationalize their systems. The Q&A technical personnel are assisting the operation in developing a Q&A framework that is focused on accountability to beneficiaries. Work is also in progress to develop Q&A frameworks in the Maldives and Indonesia. This work is linked to the updating and strengthening of regional and country recovery strategies. The Federation Secretariat is monitoring the experience closely, with a view to using the lessons learned to further develop Q&A mechanisms for the Federation.

Construction

The International Federation has been involved in major construction programmes over the past 20 years, spending considerable sums on mainly housing and social infrastructure. Some Host National Societies are interested in getting involved in such programmes. It offers high visibility among the public and the government, attracts donor interest – particularly public donations – and responds to a need. Others are more reluctant to get involved in areas which require specialist knowledge and expertise, such as national legislation, land ownership, compliance with building standards, selection of beneficiaries, handling large sums of money and dealing with contractors.

Construction is a complex and non-traditional area of work for most National Societies, and there is little currently in place to guide them in the process. The International Federation Secretariat has, on the whole, been weak in providing support for many aspects of this kind of work. The valuable knowledge gained by individual desk officers from previous operations has not been systematically shared, exchanged or consolidated into practical documents. Those interviewed for the review did not know of or could not remember of the basic introduction to the building process contained in the *Handbook for delegates*.¹⁰ As for Partner National Societies, some prefer to maintain a fundraising and monitoring role in support of Host National Society and International Federation operations and not become operationally involved themselves in construction work. Others have more expertise and experience in reconstruction and believe their domestic funding necessitates a more operational role for national visibility.

The specific issues that relate to construction are the composition of assessment teams and their selection of what to build or rebuild. Interviews pointed to knowledge gaps in the assessment teams regarding construction work. In Iran, where the main activity turned out to be physical reconstruction, there was no one with the necessary expertise in the Secretariat assessment team. Where construction expertise was present in the team, such as in Turkey, this was limited to civil engineering. This is a repeating pattern in International Federation assessments and implementation, where determining needs that have a building as the output – whether it is a social centre, housing or a hospital – is seen as the job of an engineer. Yet, very few of the decisions on the nature of what to build require engineering knowledge.

The review identified a number of areas in the field of construction that require improvement. These include assessment of the needs, agreements among the stakeholders, procurement, contracts, tendering and quality of construction.

Recommendation

- Develop standards and procedures for construction programmes – covering model memorandums of understanding, procurement, contracts, tendering and quality control – drawing on the relevant sections of the Handbook for delegates, desk officer and delegate experiences and existing National Society material.

10. Federation, *Handbook for delegates*, CD-ROM, June 2002.

Managing a longer transition

In Honduras, in the wake of Hurricane Mitch, the Ministry of Internal Cooperation asked the Honduran Red Cross to administer transitional camps, a task it took on in cooperation with the IOM. Given the scale and extent of the damage, the weak national and local systems in place and the limited access of the poor to land in the first place, reconstruction took much longer than anticipated and people stayed in the “transitional” camps for an average of three to four years. This meant that the Honduran Red Cross had to run the camps for an unexpectedly long period, a difficult undertaking as the camp residents were marginal urban dwellers with social problems that had only worsened in the camp. The Honduran Red Cross handled the situation remarkably well and managed to avoid the potential pitfalls.

Shelter and housing

Over the last two decades, the Movement has been involved in numerous shelter and housing programmes. The most significant of these were in Armenia, the Balkans, Mexico, Viet Nam, Hurricane Mitch-affected countries and now in tsunami-affected countries. In between, there have been many smaller-scale programmes, as well as the provision of emergency and transitional shelter.

Housing appears to be an area where the International Federation has much room for improvement. There are great variations in speed, quality and approach across the programmes even in the same country. The International Federation also lacks a strategic approach to shelter and housing, from emergency shelter to long-term permanent housing for affected communities, although this is beginning to be addressed through the planned creation of a Shelter Department. Usually, International Federation engagement in housing provision happens incrementally as funds permit; therefore it is not always easy to have a coherent policy from the start.

In almost every case studied, the International Federation did not make a realistic assessment of the time it would take to build permanent housing. It appears from most examples that the International Federation has a limited understanding of how long it takes to resolve issues such as rubble clearance, access to land, property rights, beneficiary selection, negotiations with communities and the authorities and structural risk reduction.

Tight time scales and the pressure to spend large sums of money on visible outputs severely undermine processes to facilitate social development and community organization. The living conditions of the affected population, combined with donor and government expectations create pressure to act quickly as in other aspects of recovery. Yet it is well recognized that “condensed” interventions can result in more harm than good. This was evident in the range of housing interventions in Honduras, where those housing programmes that were delivered too quickly lacked quality infrastructure, participation and community organization compared with the outcomes of those programmes where more time was taken for planning.



In addition to unrealistic schedules for reconstruction, the RTE report on the Asia earthquake and tsunamis pointed out that “involvement of the affected community in planning and design of the response or integrating a ‘beneficiary-perspective’ into the Movement’s response, as well as other humanitarian organizations, has been conspicuously lacking throughout the operation so far”.¹¹ This was also observed in Mozambique during recovery from the floods, in which reconstruction of some houses, although flexible in meeting potential future expansions, was built for rather than with users and slow in completion. The differences between the many ways of participation need to be better understood. For example, it is clear that not everyone can build their own houses and that their time might be better used to generate income.

Community consultation and participation take time and require facilitation of the process, which can conflict with speed of delivery. Donors, officials and the population itself may get impatient with delays, especially if other interventions that deliver aid without much participation produce results more quickly. Joint consultations within the Movement but also with others should be considered. Where there is a decision to move into the construction of permanent housing, it is also useful to be involved in the same communities during transition, whether it is for livelihoods, transitional shelter or camp management. It is also critical, in relation to donors, UN agencies and NGOs, to pursue one consistent approach to participation so as to avoid sending mixed signals to communities about the future orientation of the housing programmes.

11. M. Herson, A Fine Balance: Asia Earthquake and Tsunamis: Real Time Evaluation Report for the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, March 2005.

Recommendations

- Make use of past experiences to make realistic assessments of the time it takes to rebuild and develop a good communication strategy to convey this to all stakeholders.
- Within the context of the establishment of a shelter department, capture the housing experiences within the National Societies; explore different options, including housing finance, and develop a coherent strategy that addresses the whole spectrum of shelter and housing provision.
- Look into expanding Sphere or develop minimum standards for housing.
- Strengthen the International Federation’s capacities to engage in community-based processes, including in housing provision.

An integrated approach yields better results

In Honduras, the programmes of the Swiss Red Cross, the Amarteca resettlement township project of the Spanish Red Cross and the integrated health and housing project of the Canadian Red Cross Society are all good examples of a comprehensive and developmental approach.

In the Swiss Red Cross programme, community volunteers were trained in basic health care and then went on to train others in their communities. Nearby settlements that were not affected by Hurricane Mitch also benefited as an integral part of the Swiss Red Cross’s “house improvement” programme for the non-affected poor. This created equity in health inputs in the immediate area where Mitch-affected people were relocated, and increased their acceptance by the resident population.

Availability of water was also essential for the success of the housing programmes in Honduras as the population was urban in origin and was used to having access to water. Both the Spanish and Swiss Red Cross Societies ensured that water and sanitation elements – latrines and hygiene education – were included in their housing programmes.

Both the Swiss and Spanish Red Cross Societies owed a great deal of their success to their field staff who were, above all, excellent development workers with a profound understanding of the country as well as how to work in the communities.

The Secretary General of the Honduran Red Cross initially had concerns about the length of time it took these programmes to get started. But, having seen the difference in results, she now appreciates the time taken to work through the details of the programme with communities and with the Honduran Red Cross branches involved.

Livelihoods

It is well known that the provision of seeds and tools, food vouchers and cash and food for work are better ways of revitalizing livelihoods in the aftermath of disasters than straightforward relief distributions. Work opportunities arise in rubble clearance and materials recycling after rapid-onset disasters, as do income-earning opportunities in reconstruction. Other ways in which livelihoods are supported by recovery interventions include vocational training to strengthen individuals' capacities to provide for the household and/or enabling a community to develop skills in reconstruction or other areas.

Many livelihood support programmes are used to replace distribution of commodities (e.g. food aid, etc.) in situations where goods are available at reasonably stable prices in local markets but where access is an issue for some groups. On the whole, the International Federation Secretariat and Partner National Society experiences with such programmes have been positive and effective. However, there have been cases where inappropriate livelihood support has been provided, such as an oversupply of fishing boats and nets in Sri Lanka (by several organizations). Coordination with others is equally important in livelihood programmes. Where a National Society does not have much livelihood experience, liaison or partnership with more experienced organizations is advisable.

In livelihood programmes, there is a tendency to target rural rather than urban livelihoods. Models for urban contexts are rare, yet major future disasters, particularly in Asia, are expected to impact urban residents and their livelihoods. In addition, most agencies focus on the restoration of previous livelihoods, without checking whether the activity is still viable (e.g. a market still exists for the product or services; a suitable place to carry out the activity exists, etc.). Doing so would be in line with the International Federation's policy of supporting risk reduction and creating more resilient communities.

Livelihood programmes need to make the transition from humanitarian responses, such as food vouchers and cash for work, into longer-term rehabilitation – asset renewal, giving the poor access to credit, and training and skills development to meet reconstruction and other needs. These are areas where the International Federation has limited or poor experience.

Recommendation

- Formulate livelihood strategies appropriate for different recovery circumstances; as it is a relatively new area of involvement, familiarize International Federation staff with the key concepts, principles and implications of livelihood programming.



Organizational development and capacity building

Involving the National Society of the country, particularly the branches, provides the best opportunity for visibility and learning by doing. Just as in other aspects of recovery, building the capacity of a National Society needs a common strategy that involves all the partners.

If you want to build capacities, “do not go against the grain of the National Society”, as one delegate put it. Developing a programme that builds on existing Host National Society capacities prior to the disaster may yield better results. For example, in Mozambique and India, building clinics helped the National Societies to strengthen their capacities in the field of health. Services provided during rehabilitation and recovery that are replicable by their own means, such as psychosocial support or community-based first aid, may help National Societies develop services along the same lines.

Despite tensions at times and reservations about the speed or quality of certain programmes, on the whole all the Host National Societies visited expressed gratitude for the solidarity and support they received from the International Federation for their development. Through recovery operations, the profile and organizational capacities of the Host National Societies had been improved, which in turn had strengthened some of their programmes and partnerships with their governments and the public.

Recommendations

- Put greater emphasis in any recovery strategy on human resource development and capacity building of National Societies.
- Include National Society capacity building in International Federation appeals and communications on its strategies and activities and openly explain the justification for it.
- Develop organizational tools specific to recovery operations, including to equip staff and volunteers to work with communities.

Building stronger National Societies

In Mozambique, the National Society’s capacities – in terms of both coordination and implementation – were considerably strengthened as a result of the floods. The government, which had dismantled its own logistic capacity following the end of the conflict, asked the National Society to provide logistical support for its relief operations. The Mozambique Red Cross Society thus became a key partner of the government in the flood response and is today a permanent member of the national response capacity board.

For the Indian Red Cross Society, the main spin-offs from operations following the earthquake in Gujarat were visibility and good positioning with the government, showing that the National Society was not just a blood service. Health work is the strongest programme area and moving the experience to other state branches, where there were other risks, was one of the best institutional development outcomes. Within the state branches, community-based first aid was initiated through the post-Gujarat earthquake programme in other states, such as Rajasthan, and has now moved to Tamil Nadu after the tsunami. In Kerala, as it is a richer state, a nursing programme was established. A public health in emergencies training module was also created that is used in various states.

In Turkey, engagement in construction work helped the Turkish Red Crescent Society to develop expertise that has served it well in its international work, such as current post-tsunami construction programmes in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. It also found that branches in the affected area found it easier to attract volunteers after the earthquake, although their sustainability in the longer term remains to be seen.

Health

Health care is a core area for the International Federation and an inevitable part of all recovery programmes. In this review, other than some information on health facilities, it was only possible to observe health care programmes where they were an integrated part of housing programmes in Latin America. According to the feedback from the delegates in the field, the International Federation Secretariat has very good policies and technical materials, but they are not well promoted in the field so the “wheel is invented and reinvented”. There were competing approaches and methods in health, especially in mother and child care. Like in many other areas of recovery, the International Federation Secretariat needs to coordinate inputs in health. It needs to bring coherence to the various programmes introduced by the National Societies to ensure that they do not contradict each other and that they fit in with the health strategies and policies of the country.

Many countries that are affected by disasters have compromised health situations to begin with, so that providing only emergency medical support puts them back where they were before the disaster occurred. A disaster could be an opportunity to create partnerships and build the capacities of Host National Societies to deliver sustainable health programmes for the long term, such as psychosocial support and HIV/AIDS peer education. There is also room for partnership with other local or international organizations in meeting long-term health needs.

Following a disaster there is a lot of “rushing in” and little thought given to a health strategy or an integrated approach to recovery, whereby health could be an excellent programme area to develop within the communities. Delegates are under pressure to find high-visibility projects. According to the regional health delegate for Central America and the Caribbean: “There is a need to move away from the ‘easy’ alternative of buildings that are visible and hence desirable, and use recovery as an opportunity to address people’s real health needs.” Most health inputs in recovery are too short term to achieve impact and sustainability.

One area where the International Federation has had considerable impact is in providing psychosocial support in post-disaster situations. This was an area of work much appreciated by the Host National Societies. It was recognized that the need for psychosocial assistance after a major disaster is likely to persist over a much longer time than the usual intervention period of emergency services.

Recommendations

- Disseminate better the good policies and technical material on health available in the International Federation Secretariat; introduce coherence in policies and standards in health programmes during recovery.
- For reasons of equity, use recovery as an opportunity to improve basic health conditions where it is a mandate of the National Society and aim to benefit all those in need in the same area rather than just the disaster-affected.
- Consider making psychosocial support programmes a core area for the International Federation in recovery; encourage mutual support for psychosocial support programmes among National Societies from the same region.

Psychosocial support – a success story

Its simplicity, limited time frame, ease of sustainability and usefulness to the affected communities make psychosocial support an excellent area for National Society capacity building and implementation of post-disaster recovery programmes.



Daniel Cima/American Red Cross

Officials of the Turkish Red Crescent Society and the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran cited psychosocial support as the most beneficial of all inputs after the Marmara and Bam earthquakes respectively. Both National Societies were able to easily learn and implement the programme and create the necessary structures to replicate it.

In Turkey, psychosocial support teams have been created in several Red Crescent branches and deployed in disaster situations, for the first time following the Bingol earthquake in 2003. The National Society has also invested in the construction and refurbishment of “community centres” in six branches, where support from social workers is on offer. On the international front, just a few years after being on the receiving end of such support, the Turkish Red Crescent Society was able to provide psychosocial support to Iran and tsunami-affected countries.

The programme in Iran consisted of psychological counselling combined with activities to reactivate social networks. Play activities were also organized for children, while adults could participate in classes such as sewing, knitting and computer literacy. An important component of the project was to reduce public anxiety and keep beneficiaries involved in projects and to provide them with access to up-to-date information on rehabilitation. Through this activity, more than 20,000 people have been reached.

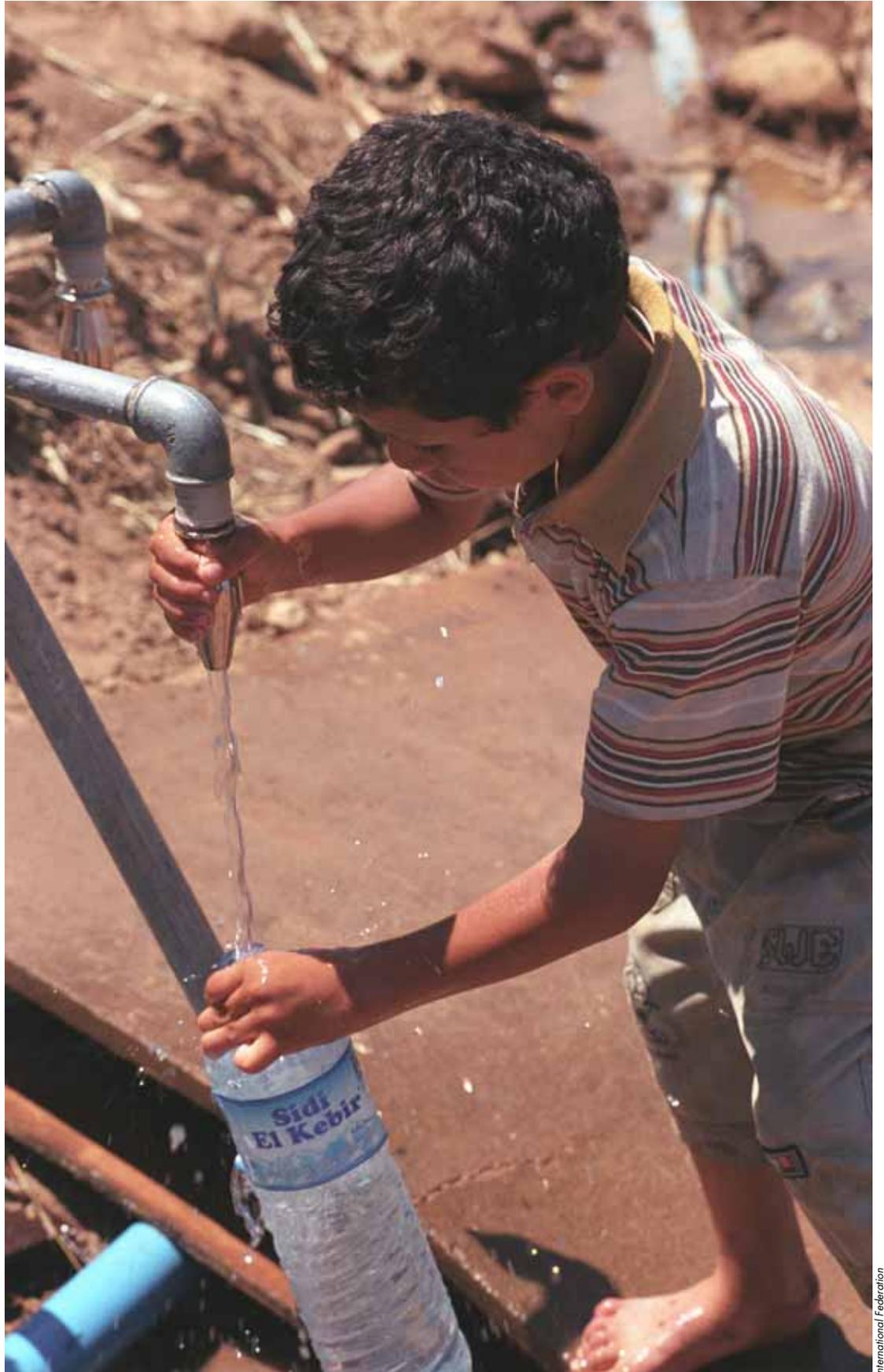
Following Hurricane Ivan, the Jamaica Red Cross helped the Grenada Red Cross Society to develop psychosocial support programmes. The Grenada Red Cross Society was able to put what it had learned into practice during Hurricanes Denis and Emily in 2005. Similar support was extended by the Costa Rican Red Cross to the National Society of the Cayman Islands following Hurricane Ivan.

Conclusion

Past and recent experiences have shown that the International Federation tends to manage better its response to medium- and small-scale disasters where there is a limited need for rehabilitation activities. When it comes to large-scale disasters, it has handled the response less well, sometimes leading to a waste of resources and unsustainable projects that may not meet the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries.

In the wake of a major natural disaster, funds pour in, creating unprecedented opportunities but also a greater need for accountability. Moreover, the scale of human tragedy attracts intense media and public interest, putting aid organizations like the International Federation under increased scrutiny. It is important, therefore, that the International Federation respond in a way that allows it to maintain its profile and visibility without jeopardizing its reputation.

What is evident from the review is that, at the very least, the International Federation needs to define in advance what is an appropriate and manageable scope or limit to its engagement in activities that go beyond the provision of relief – rather than taking on such activities as an afterthought and making programming choices that may be difficult to deliver. It further needs to systematically and seriously apply the lessons learned from its past experiences – and those of others – for more reliable and effective recovery responses in the future.



The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary Service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.



The *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies* promotes the humanitarian activities of National Societies among vulnerable people.

By coordinating international disaster relief and encouraging development support it seeks to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

The International Federation, the National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross together constitute the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.