

CAPTURING COORDINATION LEARNING IN THE TSUNAMI DISASTER



**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES**

**Movement Cooperation Unit
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1. Introduction

On 26 December 2004, an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale struck the western coast of northern Sumatra in Indonesia, triggering tsunamis that hit several countries located in the Indian Ocean. Among the worst hit countries were Indonesia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The enormity and scale of the devastation generated an unprecedented outpouring of generosity across the globe, never seen before in the history of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the International Federation). Collectively, more than 100 national societies in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) raised more than three billion Swiss francs for the response to the disaster. The tsunami also resulted in an influx of about thirty partner national societies operating in Indonesia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

In March 2005, at the Red Cross and Red Crescent Tsunami Response Forum held in Hong Kong, the Movement developed a regional strategy and operational framework for the tsunami, a document that sets the strategic direction for the Movement's response to the tsunami. The regional strategy and operational framework clearly defined ways of working together collectively to ensure a coherent and integrated response as a Movement. It is also in this context that the Movement established a Movement coordination framework to ensure a principled and coherent action, and effective collaboration between the components of the Movement, as well as ensuring effective coordination with external partners. This structure has been put in place in both Sri Lanka and Indonesia, where a large number of partner national societies are fully operational. Coordination and collaboration in different forms (for example consortia and memoranda of understanding) also exist and have been established in other tsunami-affected countries where the Movement coordination framework was not put in place.

To some extent, the coordination mechanism and structure that we collectively agreed to operate within during the tsunami operations, has also been a birthing ground for partnerships and consortia both internal and external to the Movement. The vastness and uniqueness of the situation has allowed some Movement partners to explore new ways of working together, under the umbrella of the Movement coordination framework.

In the early days of the implementation of the Movement coordination framework in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, when large numbers of project concept papers were being developed and submitted for approval by partner national societies operating in country, there were a lot of consortia being formed internally. In countries where there is no Movement coordination framework, such as Thailand and the Maldives, so-called consortia were also being established. One noticeable feature, one year after the tsunami, is that the word "consortium" was loosely used and its meaning in the field was loosely defined. Sixteen months down the road in the tsunami recovery operations, whilst some consortia had become firmly established, the majority of the consortia either had not materialised, with some partners opting out and looking for other projects, and other proposed consortia ended up as integrated approaches rather than consortia. An example is in the Maldives, where the International Federation was responsible for housing, American Red Cross the water and sanitation component and German Red Cross health construction – this is basically a complementing approach rather than a consortium. In informal discussions with Movement partners, external partnerships were also discussed. Issues such as how we ensure that the integrity of the Movement is not compromised in any way when we partner with organisations external to the Movement were constantly raised. Moreover, because of the huge amount of funds that some partner national societies generated in their tsunami appeals, the need to find ways of expending the funds quickly without sacrificing integrity, quality and efficiency in the delivery of services to beneficiaries, was an additional reason leading to partnerships evolving and taking place.

Given the complexities of the tsunami operations and the evolving ways of how internal and external coordination and cooperation happens within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, there is a growing need for the Movement to document coordination and cooperation in the tsunami, build case studies or stories out of it, distil the learning, and ensure that these documents will develop our institutional learning and strengthen our institutional memory, so that when the next large scale disaster happens, we are much better equipped to deal with complex situations and evolving humanitarian crises.

It is therefore under this premise that this study was undertaken with the aim of documenting good coordination stories in the tsunami, but also extracting the learning, and sharing it with the membership of the International Federation. These stories will provide a picture of what elements have to be considered when going into a partnership, and whilst there have been several types of partnership in the past, these stories provide a grounds for analysis on how we ensure alignment of our values, objectives and principles, with those we partner.

2. Background to the Study and Methodology

In the early recovery phase of the tsunami operations, there is a need to look into current practice in coordination, specifically focusing on the initial stages of the operations or the emergency phase, to find out and document:

- a. the range of coordination approaches,
- b. the rationale for choosing and selecting a particular approach,
- c. the elements that have worked and those that have not worked and
- d. the standards set by those involved in the process.

The information collected through this process will feed into a larger dimension, and will enable the Movement to build some standards, guidelines and/or models and elements to encourage successful implementation of coordination in the future.

This research, and the development and analysis of coordination stories, was initiated and carried out simultaneously with a study on the implementation and working of the Movement coordination framework in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The research was carried out in two phases.

The first phase involved identifying potential coordination stories. This was carried out by visiting Indonesia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Initial focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews were also conducted during this phase, to establish how to go about the development of the stories. The story identification was done through discussions with partner national societies, and with International Federation delegates who recommended good partnerships which had been established during the tsunami, and which would make good stories or case studies.

The second phase was the interview process, as well as the development of a questionnaire so as to have a common template for analysis. Interviews were carried out involving delegates in the field who are responsible for implementation, as well as with the decision makers at headquarters level. The stories or case studies were then written by the researcher, based on the facts gathered in the interviews, and were sent out for validation to all those involved in the interview process. The exception to this was the Austrian Red Cross – Swiss Red Cross consortium research, which was carried out using a questionnaire due to the limited time available for travel, the questionnaire was utilized by the researcher as a basis for developing the story, and the story was then validated by the headquarters of both national societies.

Three stories / case studies were thus developed. The first two case studies are about internal partnerships – the Australian Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross partnership in the Maldives, and the Austrian Red Cross and Swiss Red Cross cooperation consortium in Sri Lanka. The third case study is about external partnerships – the American Red Cross Tsunami Expansive Team Mechanism.

3. Tsunami Coordination Case Studies

3.1 Internal Partnerships

3.1.1 The Australian Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross Partnership in the Maldives

The Post Tsunami Country Situation

On 26 December 2004, the Maldives were hit by tsunami waves, ranging from 4 to 24 feet high. Of all the countries affected by the tsunami, the Maldives has been assessed as the most severely affected country in terms of population displacement and destruction of property per capita. Two thirds of the total population was affected while one third of the population has been identified as the worst affected. Many people were displaced and had to be evacuated from their home islands. Basic community infrastructure such as power supplies, rainwater tanks, schools, health centres, jetties and harbours were either rendered out of commission or destroyed as an effect of the tsunami, making life more difficult for the affected population.

To addition, as a result of the tsunami, a widespread accumulation of waste including vegetation, coral sand and rock, municipal waste from dump sites, health care waste, human excreta from damaged septic tanks, oil, asbestos, batteries, and demolition waste (concrete, coral fragments and timber) from tsunami destroyed buildings compounded the problem, posing a health risk to the affected population, including to nearby atolls. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) estimates that the tsunami created approximately 290,000m³ of waste debris in the Maldives. This vast volume of waste combined with approximately 50,000m³ of existing household and other waste dispersed over the 70 tsunami affected atolls, amounted to a huge volume of waste that needed to be disposed of in order to prevent health and environmental risks.

The Movement Context

There was no national society existing in the Maldives prior to the tsunami. When the tsunami hit the Maldives, no national disaster preparedness plan existed. Despite the absence of a national society, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement extended relief assistance to the affected people in the Maldives. A total of six partner national societies arrived in the Maldives to provide assistance; the American Red Cross, Australian Red Cross, British Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, French Red Cross and German Red Cross. The International Federation established a country delegation not only to provide support to the partner national societies operating in the country, but also to prepare the ground work for the possibility of creating a Maldives Red Crescent Society. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is seen as one of the major humanitarian actors in the tsunami response in the Maldives.

The Birth and Opportunity of the Partnership

Unlike the situation in Indonesia and Sri Lanka where a rapid assessment team was deployed by the International Federation, in the case of the Maldives, as there was no host national society, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement had to rely on existing information from other humanitarian actors and the government, and conduct their own assessments to come up with their own rehabilitation and recovery interventions in the Maldives. Whilst the International Federation established its presence in the Maldives immediately after the tsunami, no coordinated recovery plan was put in place in the early stages, which led to the partner national societies having discussions directly with the government concerning their projects, rather than having a collective Movement approach. However, in the case of the Australian Red Cross (ARC) - Canadian Red Cross (CRC) tsunami waste management consortium, both worked with the International Federation in identifying the needs. It was the International Federation which identified waste management as a priority area, and gave the information to both ARC and CRC delegates. Immediately thereafter, delegates from both ARC and CRC were then deployed to further research the needs and put the project proposal together.

This situation then paved the way for the forging of the partnership or consortium between the Australian Red Cross and the Canadian Red Cross in the Maldives. The Australian Red Cross country delegation

early on, using the report of UNEP and the International Federation's recommendation, identified waste management of the tsunami debris to be one of their priority programmes in the Maldives. The Canadian Red Cross country delegation, which earlier on sent a delegate to conduct an assessment in the country, also identified the same priority.

Having the same interest early in the planning stages, the Canadian Red Cross and Australian Red Cross in country delegates worked together on the development of a project proposal, rather than competing with one another on two different proposals. Both the ARC and CRC representatives developed the project proposal and forwarded the draft proposal to their respective headquarters. Acknowledging that both national societies had common project interests, the initial plan for the tsunami debris waste management programme was to divide the atolls equally between them in a north and south divide. However, after a thorough discussion by the representatives of both national societies during the implementation planning phase, as part of the requirement of the Government of the Maldives in the memorandum of understanding, it was agreed that instead of dividing the atolls among themselves, they would solidify their operations by working together to have a uniform way of implementing the programme. It was also due to the availability of companies in the Maldives to undertake the work which occurred only after ARC and CRC delegates were in the field. After the project proposal was developed, it was sent to both the headquarters of the Australian Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross. Both headquarters in turn requested their own due diligence requirements as set up by their respective policy making bodies. A series of discussions took place between the headquarters of both partner national societies in relation to the respective due diligence requirements that each undertook. As soon as this was done, the memorandum of understanding formalizing the consortium or partnership was signed in October 2005, and subsequently forwarded to the Government of Maldives for project approval.

Asked as to what motivated the partnership, both the ARC and CRC country representatives said that both national societies had common interest in the project and since both had no previous experience in running this type of project, it made sense to join forces so that each national society would have the opportunity to learn from each others perspectives and complement their skills.

From a series of interviews conducted with the key people involved in the consortium from both the headquarters of the ARC and CRC, almost everyone pointed out that there were circumstantial factors that provided the foundation for the partnership to emerge. Among them was that both ARC and CRC arrived in the Maldives for an assessment just when the UNEP report was released and the International Federation had identified waste management as a priority. The CRC assessment delegate strongly recommended in his report, that CRC should work closely with the Australian Red Cross on the project. In addition, the absence of emergency response units also prevented the "gold rush" tsunami environment (which existed in Sri Lanka and Indonesia), and which lessened if not eliminated the intra-Movement aggressive competitiveness, which has existed in other countries. There were also few partner national societies who came in and the International Federation did not develop a country tsunami recovery strategic plan in the early stages, only later on. According to the people interviewed in the headquarters, all of these factors provided a non-competitive environment to find ways of working together towards achieving a similar goal. On top of that, there was a political commitment and willingness by both partner national societies to find ways of working together despite disparities in due diligence procedures, reporting requirements and financial systems. While the exact figure or percentage of funds saved as a result of the consortium or partnership will be difficult to quantify, however, certainly the partnership saved a huge amount of money, effort, human resources and other resources needed to carry out the project.

"Partnership involves mutual ownership of a venture, from the assessment to the implementation, sourcing and building and maintaining the relationship needed with the local actors and authorities. We have managed to achieve this environment of mutual ownership with the Australian Red Cross in the Maldives" Jose Garcia Lozano, CRC headquarters.

The Consortium Agreement

In the consortium agreement both partners agreed to jointly fund and implement the project. All project costs were divided equally among the two national societies including the hiring of the local staff needed for the project. The only exception is funding of delegates, as each national society separately covers the

costs of their own respective delegates involved in the project for the reason that each has different salary scales and benefit packages. Only the CRC finance administration delegate costs are shared to a certain degree for the waste management project. Overall the resources are shared 50/50.

The consortium agreement was not only limited to programme implementation but it went as far as having an external audit for the project, as well as joint monitoring and evaluation, which is part of the programme implementation plan. It also includes dispute resolution if such may arise.

Asked to highlight the trigger point of the partnership, both the country representatives of Australian Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross said that the evolution of the partnership was a result of the following events:

- a. both national societies had the same or joint interest,
- b. both the national societies shared a similar culture,
- c. both delegates knew each other very well from their previous work and they had already established trust and confidence with one another early on, thus lessening the extreme competitiveness that is often found when there is more than one national society operating in a country,
- d. joint funding.

The Partnership Details that Both National Societies Investigated

Both ARC and CRC headquarters carried out their respective due diligence process to determine the soundness of the project partnership or consortium. The due diligence process that both national societies looked into were the financial, beneficiary and reputation areas. The process took some time for both national societies given their previous experience (ARC in the Bali bombing disaster and CRC in its blood programme), however, according to people involved in the project it was worth the delay.

Apart from the partnership, the project proposal itself underwent a thorough due diligence process. The proposal was reviewed by the respective tsunami response teams in headquarters. In the case of the Australian Red Cross, apart from the review done by the headquarters tsunami response team, it was further reviewed by an external person and appraised according to a number of areas including appeal intent, impact on beneficiaries, organizational risk, and value for money, before it was approved using their own structure. CRC, on the other hand, made use of their internal system by involving their legal and finance departments to look into the financial soundness, beneficiary impact and reputation risks. Beneficiary benchmarking for CRC ensures that there is a timely, effective and sustainable response.

The Challenges of the Consortium

In the early stages of the project implementation, there was a debate as to who would be the lead national society for the project. In the end, both national society country representatives supported by their respective headquarters, agreed that they were equal, which literally means joint decision making, and thus there was no need to appoint among them who would be the lead national society in the programme implementation. However, both national societies also acknowledge that while they are equal, each partner must have a clear responsibility and task to focus on, and this must be based on the strengths and experience not only of their existing country representatives, but to some extent their previous international work experience as a national society. As a result, and on the basis of what they perceived as their strengths and competencies as a national society, the country representatives agreed that the Canadian Red Cross take the lead on the administration, finance and human resource needs of the programme, while the Australian Red Cross take the lead on the operations and contract.

The turnover of staff involved in the project also poses a challenge to the consortium. With the ARC and CRC delegates leaving the country in mid 2006, making sure that the future team is complementary is essential.

As the project progresses, more challenges have been experienced by both national societies in the consortium, such as delays in project implementation. There have been frustrations resulting from differing approval processes and timelines for each national society, and the need to coordinate these

differences. However, this did not affect the degree of partnership; in fact it has made the partnership more cohesive than ever, as both national societies address the issues collectively.

The next step is ensuring that ARC and CRC will have a joint vision regarding the parameters of an exit strategy and to continue to work together to resolve any tricky contract management issues. This will involve a level of consciousness to negotiate any differing views as to how best to resolve problems especially if they in any way involve revisiting the original implementation plan and scope of the project.

However, the biggest challenge is “will the ARC - CRC take on the challenge of binding or creating conditions for another consortium somewhere else?”

Linking the Partnership to External Agencies or Partners

The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) undertook the initial assessment of the debris and waste caused by the tsunami and the idea of conducting a clean up was put forward by them. The study was presented to other humanitarian actors who were operating in the Maldives as a result of the tsunami. The same study was presented to the Maldives Government.

After the study was presented UNEP opted to go into the hazardous waste clean up component, and, in turn, the ARC-CRC tsunami waste debris management project undertook clean up activities on 74 atolls. The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Water (MEEW) of the government of the Maldives is the major link for the ARC-CRC consortium. From June 2005 to December 2005 bi-weekly tsunami waste management meetings have been organized by the MEEW, and in 2006 these meetings were reduced to every 3 to 4 weeks.

Linking the ARC-CRC Consortium to the Movement

The British Red Cross and French Red Cross are carrying out major housing/infrastructure reconstruction projects in several of the atolls where ARC-CRC are working, and there have been several consultations with the two partner national societies regarding the scheduling of the implementation of the tsunami waste management project, keeping in mind that the reconstruction projects will also produce waste materials that will need to be collected.

Partnership Learning From the Field Perspective

Some of the most significant learnings highlighted during the series of interviews by people involved in the project implementation in the field are the following:

- a. The consortium agreement could have been drafted before the arrival of the delegates as information given to both delegates from their respective headquarters differed from each other.
- b. The partnership provided an opportunity to learn from each others perspectives.
- c. Signing of the memorandum of understanding took some time, which created some frustration from the people in the field, particularly in relation to the differing approval processes of the two national societies.
- d. The International Federation could have provided the coordination role early on even prior to the development of the project proposal, so that cross-cutting themes and an integrated holistic recovery programme could have been developed. As a good example, the project consortium between ARC-CRC could have been optimally utilized by all the Movement partners, particularly those that are engaged in reconstruction...i.e. the barge that collects debris in the atolls could have also been utilized to deliver construction materials on its way... this could have provided a maximum utilization of resources available within the Movement.
- e. The partnership afforded maximum utilization of resources in the project while at the same time saved costs for both partners.

“The partnership provides an opportunity to learn from each national society” Donna Chandra, CRC, and Rachael Siddall, ARC, country representatives in the Maldives.

“What is missing is linking the partnership with other partner national societies in the Maldives to see areas where resources can be utilized to the best possible...” Kerry Gartland, ARC ex-community liaison delegate in the Maldives.

Partnership Learning From the Headquarters Perspective

- a. Constant communication with your partners is essential in any consortium both in the field and at headquarters levels. While communication is done using the latest technology available (phone and internet) the partnership could benefit from face to face meetings especially to carry out reviews and forward planning sessions.
- b. The degree of openness not only to those in the field but also from the headquarters to the partnership makes the difference for the success or failure of the consortium.
- c. Headquarters openness to practicalities on what makes more sense in the field so that implementation is less bureaucratic and more efficient.
- d. Clearly define roles and responsibilities at the outset and the basis must be the area of core expertise. In addition, both partners must be open to reviewing roles and responsibilities and provide feedback to each other in this area, in order to allow the partnership to evolve.
- e. Choose a national society with lots of complementary skills so that both national societies complement each other in their strengths and weaknesses.
- f. The importance of understanding each others differing approval processes and other procedures; this is particularly the case if one of the national societies has longer approval processes than the other, or requires differing levels or sorts of information in order to gain approvals, as such demands impact both national societies.
- g. Being conscious of the need to negotiate any differing views as to how best to resolve problems.

“...overall I think we’ve worked well together on this front, but it involves being conscious of the need to negotiate any differing views as to how best to resolve problems...” Jo Sanson, ARC headquarters.

The Future

The ARC-CRC tsunami waste management consortium aims to complete the 3 components of the project in the 74 islands, and as necessary to revamp the community education component including the waste management consortium guideline manuals to effect more positive behaviour changes. Whilst in the early stages, the consortium did not have a clear exit strategy; however, this will be developed as part of the consortium/partnership. Upon completion of the work, a final evaluation of the project will be undertaken, including a financial audit. Assets related to the project will be transferred to the new Maldives Red Crescent Society or the Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Water.

Both the headquarters of the Australian Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross also expressed their desires to work and embark on the same partnership in the future, not only after a disaster but also in long term capacity building activities.

3.1.2 The Austrian Red Cross and Swiss Red Cross Cooperation Consortium in Sri Lanka

The Cooperation Consortium Development Stage

The tsunami cooperation consortium of the Austrian Red Cross and Swiss Red Cross started in the early recovery phase of the Movement’s response to the 2004 Tsunami. The Austrian Red Cross and Swiss Red Cross, in a common approach, decided to come up with a cooperation consortium as a result of a long history of cooperation together in other regions. The primary motivation behind the creation of the consortium was to achieve optimum efficiency in the delivery of services to the tsunami victims, and since both national societies have common/similar programme interests and reconstruction objectives, it was decided to form the consortium rather than work individually. The core principles and values underpinning the consortium are that both have a common approach to reconstruction programmes in Sri Lanka. Costs were shared based on tsunami funds available in both countries following the defined coordination and communication rules. The operational aspects of the consortium are led by the Swiss Red Cross, with its headquarters in Berne.

The Initial Steps of the Consortium

The consortium was formalised by a cooperation agreement signed between the Austrian Red Cross and the Swiss Red Cross. Decisions on concerned projects, budgets, and cost sharing arrangements are based on exchange of information and mutual agreements between the two partner national societies. The consortium started with a discussion on operational and financial intentions from both sides, that paved the way for the development of a letter of understanding. Instead of creating one country office for each partner national society in Sri Lanka, both agreed in their respective headquarters that they will only post one country representative representing their consortium. This arrangement is intended to save costs for both national societies in terms of administration and pool of human resources.

The consortium was built through exchange of information between the tsunami desks in the respective national society headquarters in Berne and Vienna. Each national society analysed the available funds and potential donors; and worked on the elaboration of cooperation mechanisms, agreement on set-up and the recruitment of the first delegates for the field for the recovery and reconstruction phase, in combination with the ongoing relief operations in the field.

Delineation of Roles

Decision-making takes place at the respective headquarters of the Austrian Red Cross and the Swiss Red Cross international cooperation divisions. Both tsunami desk officers in Berne and Vienna are involved in the decision-making process in consultation with delegates based in Sri Lanka. Equity in the consortium is addressed by ensuring that there is a coherent approach to the programmes, continuous dialogue and agreement of common objectives and distribution of responsibilities. The consortium participates as one partner national society in the Movement coordination framework and works with other Movement partners.

In the project planning stage the consortium made sure that the major objectives were clarified and details defined (strategy, operational priorities, and areas of interventions such as housing, health and livelihoods), preparation of project proposals, negotiation with donors in country, co-financing agreements etc.

According to commonly established coordination and communication rules at the headquarters level, the field level addressed operational issues through the Movement coordination framework at Colombo level and towards the two headquarters. Major financial and control issues are dealt with at headquarters level. This, however, is done in close cooperation with the field where a permanent finance delegate is based in Colombo.

The tangible outcomes of the consortium in the initial stage were the approval of project documents and budgets, major donors in both countries, the setting up of organisational structures in Colombo and at district level, employment and deployment of the first three or four international consortium delegates (logistics, health, finance and administration.)

The Project Implementation Stage

In the implementation stage the consortium had undertaken assessments of additional reconstruction, relocation and health project ideas, coordination of the ongoing programme planning process and negotiation with new potential donors. The consortium also strengthened the capacity of its main delegation in Colombo by extending human resources at desk level and taking part in the Movement coordination mechanism in Colombo, which paved the way for the implementation of the first approved reconstruction projects.

At this stage the Swiss Red Cross tsunami desk in Berne was mandated by both national society headquarters to take the lead role in the operations while both headquarters jointly addressed coordination issues.

At field level the consortium is managed by one country representative. Currently, the ARC/SRC consortium delegation is fully operational in Sri Lanka, and qualified personnel in each of the approved projects were put in place (with a total of nine international staff plus national staff). There are eight projects that were agreed by the consortium and approved in the Movement coordination platform, and

which are all economic both in terms of manpower and utilisation of resources. These projects are in the areas of housing with reconstruction and relocation projects, two smaller school rehabilitation projects, a health programme and additional livelihood components, to have an integrated and holistic approach. The implementation of the projects is currently ongoing.

The programme and project management capacity in the field is fully guaranteed until 2008. A regular coordination and information sharing mechanism at headquarters level is assured and as the project implementation evolves so does the relationship between the two partner national societies. The consortium also intends to conduct an assessment and evaluation of the projects which they have jointly undertaken, with the aim of documenting the lessons learnt and the best practices of the cooperation between the two national societies.

The consortium made use of local resources and capacities by employing local staff and by becoming an active participant in the Movement coordination framework.

Taking into account the differing reporting requirements of each national society the consortium adapted a financial accounting setup that would accommodate their different reporting requirements.

Strengthening the Consortium and Addressing Accountability in the Cooperation

The consortium was reviewed and further developed through regular exchange of information either by phone or e-mail and regular coordination meetings. The effectiveness and impact of the consortium is assessed through the reports as well as constant monitoring and supervision, audit reports and joint/common field visits. In addition, specific evaluations of the different project approaches, as well as of the consortium itself are being planned.

The accountability of the initiative is always gauged on the agreed cooperation, planning, implementing and financing procedures by the established teams both in the field and the respective headquarters.

Resources

The consortium optimized the availability and use of financial resources of both national societies by trying to combine the earmarking and requirements of individual funding sources in the most effective way. In addition, the joint delegation and staff setup reduced administrative costs and the risk of duplicity.

The Challenges of the Consortium

Besides the challenges that each partner national society as well as the International Federation encountered in the course of the tsunami operation, the consortium faced some special challenges: the harmonization of the two partner national societies' operational approaches, and their approaches towards Movement coordination at field and Geneva level; the harmonization and adoption of administrative and financial/control procedures in order to fulfil the internal requirements of both partner national societies; the search for best utilization and matching of the different funding sources due to specific earmarking; to ensure proper communication between the two involved headquarters and with the field etc.

The challenges were addressed by both partners using a pragmatic approach, a step by step evolution rather than addressing all the issues at the same time.

At present the major challenge of the consortium corresponds to the challenges of any implementing partner national societies: how to maintain or even fast track the implementation pace while at the same time maintaining the best possible quality of work in the field and whilst working in a conflict area. The consortium also has to develop additional tools in monitoring, administration, finance and control.

Asked about what they would do differently next time... ***“more extensive discussion on strategic issues at the beginning such as key areas of intervention, competencies, project approaches as well as a deeper analysis of expected implications due to earmarked funds in both countries.”***

The Learning

A consortium is possible between two partner national societies with common interests in the same operational context.

The challenge is to be aware of the cost of cooperation and the advantages that are gained by synergy of action and combined efforts. Even though Austrian Red Cross and Swiss Red Cross have cooperated in a consortium manner before, the above described cooperation is the largest and most complex venture up to now. At this point of time, both partner national societies are convinced that the cooperation was the better and more effective option, compared to individual partner national society operations. It will need in depth evaluation to verify positive, negative and learning aspects in detail.

3.2 External Partnerships

3.2.1 The American Red Cross Tsunami Expansive Assistance Mechanism (TEAM)

The Context

After the devastating tsunami of 26 December 2004, the American Red Cross (ARC) launched an appeal to assist people in tsunami-affected areas. The outpouring of generosity for the victims of the tsunami was so significant that the American Red Cross generated more than half a billion US dollars, a historic precedent for an international disaster response. The funds presented an opportunity for the American Red Cross to substantially participate in immediate disaster relief activities, as well as in the longer-term recovery and reconstruction of tsunami-affected countries. The tsunami funding is a clear indicator of the enormous trust the American people have in the American Red Cross. The generosity of the American public also imposes a significant burden of responsibility for the American Red Cross to work in an accountable and effective manner.

Given the vast scale and diversity of destruction caused by the tsunami, the American Red Cross made the strategic decision to seek technical expertise and operational capacity beyond the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In some cases, the host national societies were inundated with funding from many different partner national societies. In Indonesia, for example, over 30 partner national societies worked through Pelang Merah Indonesia (the Indonesian Red Cross) at one point. In other cases, members of the Movement lacked the organizational capacity to respond to key needs identified by the communities. In Sri Lanka, for example, livelihood recovery is reiterated by communities as an essential component of recovery. Housing is another sector where the Movement has not been traditionally engaged.

The TEAM

To leverage its financial resources and relationships, the American Red Cross developed the Tsunami Expansive Assistance Mechanism (TEAM) with the aim of fostering partnerships with International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs) to ensure that critical recovery needs will be met. The work of TEAM partners will complement and strengthen the efforts of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement working in tsunami recovery.

Developing value-added partnerships is one of the core strengths of the American Red Cross. Bringing together disparate entities to work together around a common vision is one of the powers of the Red Cross. The tsunami has provided the American Red Cross with an opportunity to lead sustainable recovery and reconstruction programmes in a collaborative manner, allowing the comparative advantages of organizations to be maximized for greater community-level impact.

“TEAM broke the barriers in partnership...an example of what operational alliance should be” Apu Patel, American Red Cross.

The goal of the TEAM partnerships is to achieve comprehensive assistance for tsunami-affected populations through improved cooperation and integration of essential programme activities. Under TEAM, the American Red Cross develops operational partnerships with US-based NGOs with relevant skills and experience in critical recovery and reconstruction activities, with the following results:

- Increased programmatic coverage by partners who fill sectoral gaps;
- Increased geographic coverage by partners who work in areas not served by the Movement;
- Higher number of beneficiaries;
- Increased efficiency through information sharing and coordination;
- Enhanced quality of programmes through expanded technical capacity;
- Development of a partnership model which can be leveraged in other, non-tsunami contexts.

Additionally, the relationships developed under TEAM will help to improve the profile of the American Red Cross International Services in the wider humanitarian community.

The American Red Cross believes that through TEAM, the organisation will be able to learn from the experiences and expertise of other skilled NGOs. External partnerships of the American Red Cross will add tremendous value to ongoing activities through information and technical knowledge sharing, while also enhancing the capacity of the American Red Cross in the recovery phase of tsunami response.

Selecting the TEAM Partners

“The Movement needs to focus on what we do best and make the best use of resources. We need to recognize that in order to achieve we need to link our programmes with the whole” Luke Greeves, American Red Cross.

The following selection criteria were used as a basis for determining viable partners under TEAM:

- Geographic presence in the tsunami-affected countries;
- Significant implementation capacity in the tsunami-affected countries;
- Technical expertise in sectors which are complementary to ARC and Movement activities;
- Commitment to community-based programmes, including a participatory process of design and implementation;
- Financial controls, including external audits;
- Membership in InterAction, a consortium of NGOs whose members adhere to recognized NGO standards;
- Minimal overhead rate for programmatic activities;
- Strong reputation in the development community and
- Future partnership potential beyond the tsunami-related activities.

In addition to the requirements identified, possible TEAM partners underwent a “due diligence process” established by the American Red Cross. The due diligence includes an analysis of a potential partner’s reputation, internal controls, financial health, mission, programmatic experience, and operational capacity. Additionally, the due diligence process includes analyzing any proposed activity with its alignment to the American Red Cross mission, core activities and strategic plan. The due diligence analysis is performed to ensure that a partner organisation is an appropriate recipient and is capable of meeting the programmatic and compliance requirements associated with the grant funds.

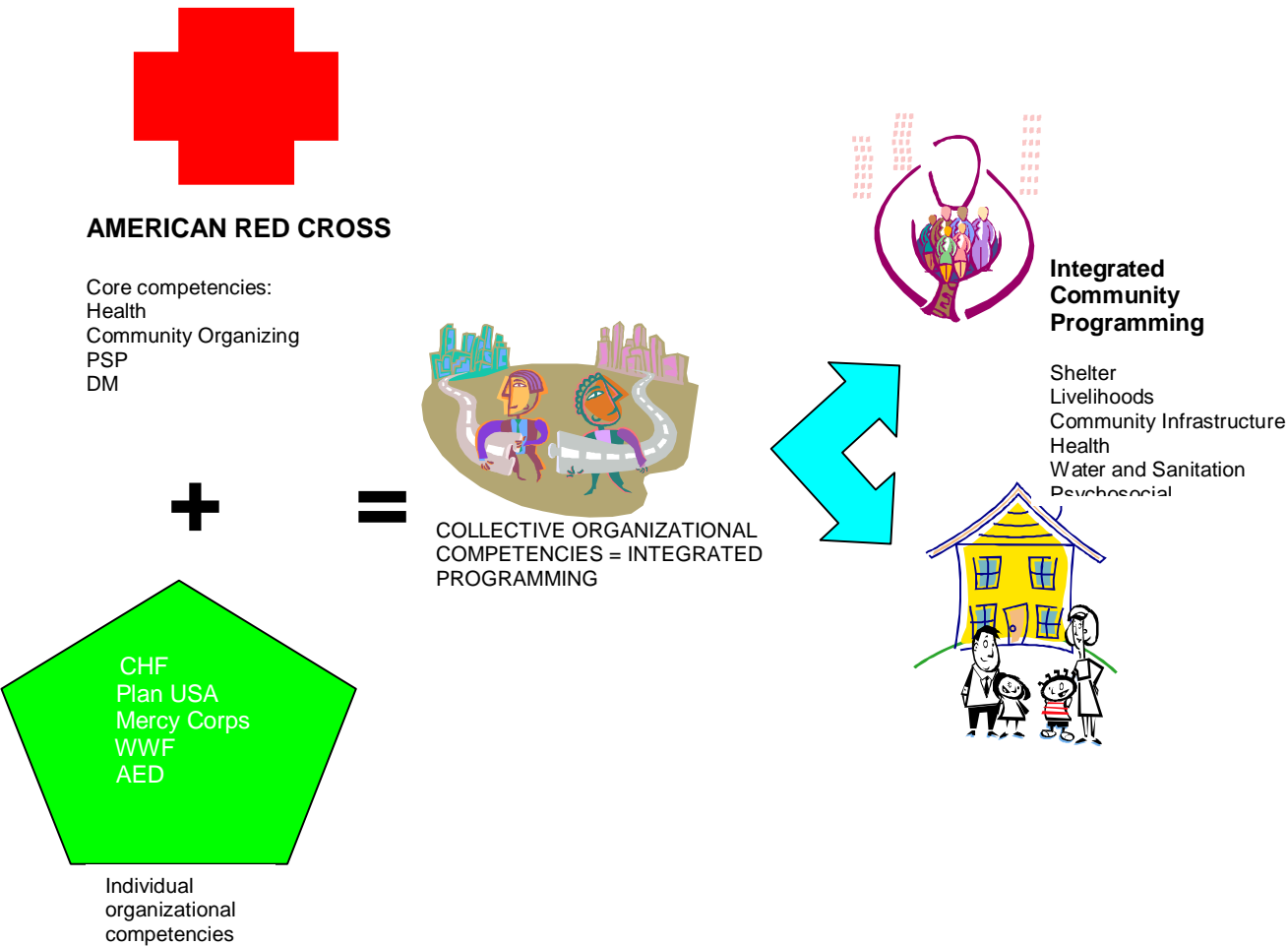
When the TEAM concept was launched, a deluge of interest and unsolicited proposals was received from US-based, international NGOs. The American Red Cross used the selection criteria to pro-actively identify a short-list of potential partners. After a short list was determined, potential partner organisations were evaluated using the due diligence process. The following organisations were selected as TEAM partners:

- Academy for Educational Development (AED)
- Community, Habitat and Finance International (CHF)
- Mercy Corps
- Plan USA
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

It is also worthy to note that the external partnerships developed by the American Red Cross were not solely limited to the international NGOs. The American Red Cross also actively sought other non-Movement partnerships, in particular with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the United Nations Foundation (UNF), and the World Food Programme (WFP), with the last two partnerships building from pre-tsunami programmes with the American Red Cross. Critically, the American Red Cross has also developed operational alliances with other partner national societies for the purpose of tsunami response.

The Activities of the TEAM Partnership

Early on in the conceptualisation of the TEAM, activities with partners had already been identified by the American Red Cross, on the basis of their complementarity with the existing project activities of the American Red Cross. The TEAM partnerships were geared towards identifying and utilizing the experience, skills and competencies of the partners to complement the American Red Cross intervention in a given area.



Among the activities identified for the TEAM partnership are the following:

- Rebuilding
 - Shelter (immediate, transitional, permanent)
 - Health infrastructure
- Restoring Livelihoods
 - Seed grants for entrepreneurs
 - Rehabilitation of physical assets
 - Access to business development services

All of these activities are not within the core competency of the American Red Cross but are considered essential and basic elements for rebuilding the lives of those affected by the tsunami. The target activities for TEAM partners complement the work of the American Red Cross and other Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners.

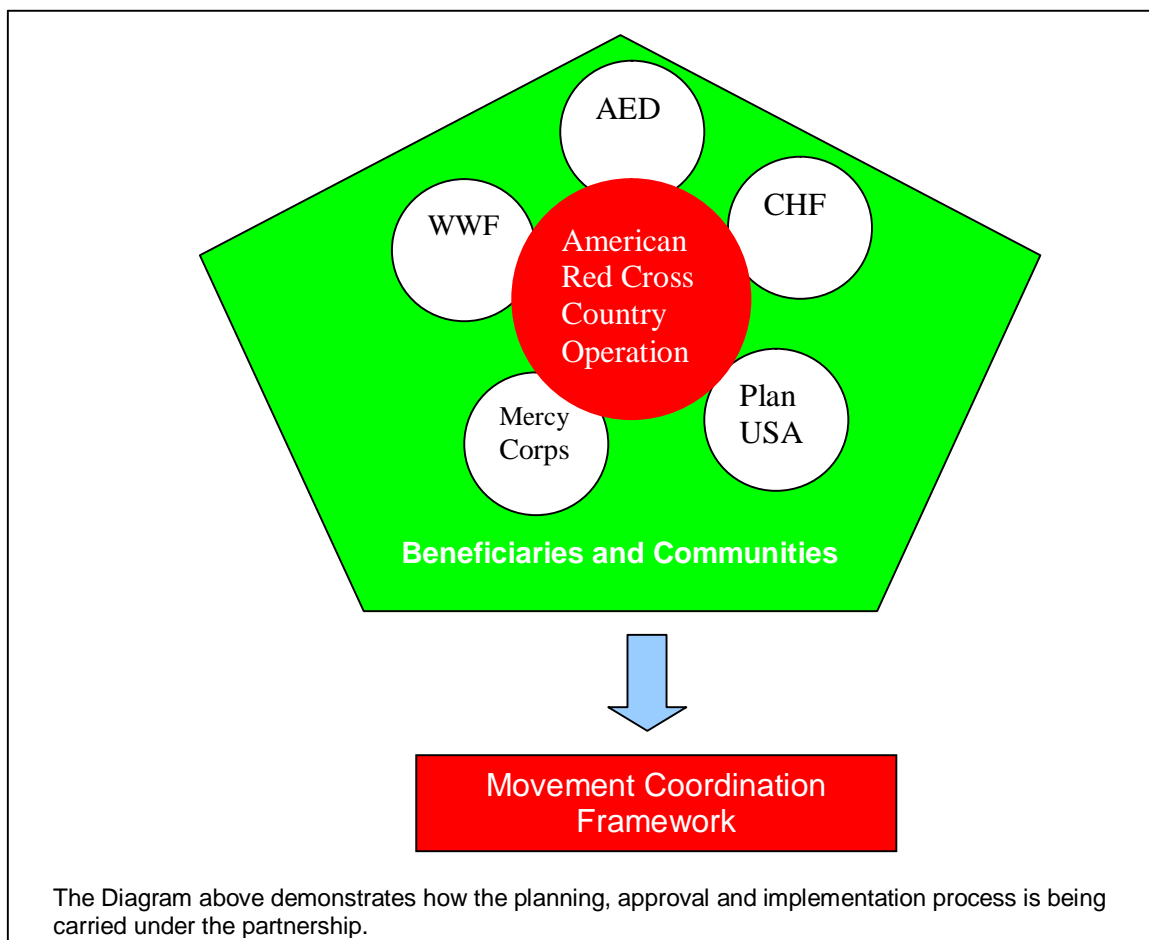
“Our allegiance first and foremost is to the imperative of humanity. This means working through our Movement partners but also actively seeking external partners, when these organisations can best meet critical needs” Christopher Herink, American Red Cross.

The rationale for choosing to work with US-based international NGOs rather than with local NGOs is based on a number of factors. One critical reason is that the primary local counterpart of the American Red Cross, in any country, is the host national society. Second, many of the US-based international NGOs actually conduct their work through local NGOs. Third, partnerships with US-based international NGOs are smoother from a contractual and compliance perspective.

The Project Planning Process of the TEAM

The initial stage of project development with a partner is to identify a sector and geographic area which will complement the tsunami interventions of the American Red Cross as well as other Movement partners in a specific tsunami hit area. This means that TEAM partners need to ensure that any prospective project is well coordinated with the American Red Cross field units. A full-time partnership delegate was hired in each core tsunami-affected country, to ensure that coordination within the American Red Cross and with other Movement members is achieved during project design and implementation.

Projects proposed by TEAM members undergo a rigorous internal review by the American Red Cross, including appraisal by technical experts. A project will then be subjected to the approval process of the Movement, as agreed in the Movement coordination framework.



Establishing Common Standards

In any external partnership, it is always a given that some common standards must be established to ensure coherence in programming. Acknowledging that the selected partners have their own standards and systems in carrying out projects, certain parameters and standards were presented and agreed on from the very start of TEAM. For example, the American Red Cross has clear “beneficiary selection criteria” to ensure that funds are directly linked with needs arising from the tsunami. A log-frame with measurable indicators is another standard required of each TEAM partner. The guidelines for developing the log-frame are part of a larger set of proposal guidelines which have been developed for TEAM. Another example is a standardized budgeting and financial reporting template, which is followed by all partners. Additionally, there are principles of quality programming which are emphasized with each partner, including:

- a holistic, context-specific approach to programme development for communities affected by the tsunami;
- community participation in all aspects of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation;
- increased efficiency by harnessing comparative advantages;
- greater operational impact by cost-sharing of operational and planning costs;
- innovative, comprehensive and sustainable strategies to solve community-wide problems.

The Current Status of the Partnership

A memorandum of understanding has been signed by each TEAM partner, which communicates the intent to collaborate with the American Red Cross on recovery and reconstruction activities. The memorandum of understanding covers a time period of five years.

Coordination with and between TEAM members is taking place in the field, to identify opportunities which are appropriate. There is also regular communication with the headquarters staff of TEAM

members. Guidelines for concept papers and proposals have been developed and conveyed to TEAM partners.

ARC partnership coordinators are actively supporting projects in both Indonesia and Sri Lanka. A fully-dedicated partnership coordinator is actively supporting TEAM from the American Red Cross headquarters. The partnership coordinators link the American Red Cross to both TEAM members as well as Movement partners.

Numerous concept papers and proposals have been developed as a result of the close collaboration of TEAM members. The proposals are reviewed against programmatic and financial standards, before being approved. Currently, each TEAM partner has one or more projects being implemented.

While more often than not, external partnerships are borne out of a desire to operate outside the Movement coordination framework, in the case of the American Red Cross TEAM partners, early on in the screening stages they were informed of the Movement processes. In the memorandum of understanding that the TEAM partners have signed with the American Red Cross, “working with Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners” is noted and is being practiced on the ground.

The Challenges Encountered in the Partnership

Some of the challenges that were mentioned during the interview of key people involved in the development and implementation of TEAM include the following:

- a. How can we make the partners feel equal – like true partners and not just recipients of funds?
- b. Slowness in the project approval process.
- c. Advocating for the partners within the Movement and within the American Red Cross.
- d. Educating internal stakeholders of the concept – changing mindsets and shifting paradigms (legal, finance, insurance).
- e. Selecting the five TEAM partners: the American Red Cross headquarters started with a small number of TEAM partners, despite the numerous requests received, for the practical reason that the TEAM concept was never done before.
- f. Linking the partnership with the Movement approval process.
- g. Linking the capacity of TEAM members to Movement partners.
- h. Contracting.
- i. Definition of costs (indirect/direct).
- j. Programme and financial reporting systems.

The Partnership Learning

Some of the crucial learnings as a result of the TEAM partnerships are:

- a. Work to gain early buy-in of key stakeholders and decision makers within the organization, in order to lessen future bureaucracy.
- b. Foster improved relationships with the US NGO community for future operations, not only in the tsunami.
- c. Partnership is about trust and commitment.
- d. A single point of contact for each organization helps to streamline and simplify communications.
- e. Gain a better understanding of how external partners work internationally and conduct their long-term programming.
- f. Partnerships can provide an avenue to do things that we as a Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement do not usually do.
- g. Partners can help to leverage financial and technical resources to assist more people more effectively and comprehensively.
- h. Develop alliances which can continue beyond a particular event.
- i. External partnerships can help us break out of our Movement insularity to explore and learn things which can be used to the benefit of the Movement.
- j. Focus on what we do best as a Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, while at the same time recognizing that in order to achieve our goal, we also need to recognize our weaknesses.
- k. Partnering is a way of good stewardship of the funding.

Applying the TEAM Concept: The Implementation in Indonesia

Out of the five US-based international NGOs that are members of the American Red Cross TEAM, four are currently operating in Indonesia: Community, Habitat and Finance International, Mercy Corps International, World Wildlife Fund and Plan International. All of these organisations have offices in Naggroe Aceh Darussalam Province.

While TEAM was established in Indonesia during the early relief phase, the activities proposed by the partners were to be implemented in the recovery phase. Projects were developed, including budgets, and implemented by partner organisations. The role of the American Red Cross was to review and approve proposals and budgets, while assuring adequate coordination and the prospect for project impact.

To ensure coordination, cooperation, coherence, good communication and follow through, the American Red Cross hired a full-time partnership coordinator in Indonesia. The role of the partnership coordinator is to coordinate partner organisations' activities with the ongoing and planned Red Cross activities, while at the same time facilitating the development and review of partner project proposals. The review of proposals involves soliciting feedback from the American Red Cross, Movement partners (including Indonesian Red Cross at provincial and headquarters levels), and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement task force.

The American Red Cross senior country representative complements the role of the partnership coordinator by informing the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners, including Indonesian Red Cross headquarters, about the external partner initiatives which will be funded by American Red Cross, while seeking their feedback.

“We build the partnership through constant communication with partner organisations and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement actors, including the International Federation and Indonesian Red Cross. Transparent communication and keeping all involved parties informed were key elements in moving these partnerships forward” Elzat Mamutalieva, American Red Cross.

The local TEAM partners maintain regular communication with the Indonesian Red Cross provincial branch and have sought ways of enhancing Indonesian Red Cross capacity. On top of these efforts, involvement of the beneficiary communities in the project planning process was accomplished. All proposed activities were communicated to, discussed with and sought the approval of local relevant governmental agencies. This process and approach led to the development of comprehensive, community-based projects.

Currently some partner organisations such as Community, Habitat and Finance International, and Mercy Corps, have started implementing project activities in Naggroe Aceh Darussalam Province. The Community, Habitat and Finance International project will build 17 market stalls to promote fish and vegetable trading, while also offering grants to 900 people to further develop their small businesses. The Mercy Corps project will focus on community-based infrastructure which will help communities increase their income, while also building the long-term capacity of local micro-finance institutions.

All project activities are being managed by partner organisations in cooperation with the local government agencies, to ensure sustainable development of local capacities. Project activities are expected to address the existing identified needs of the communities in Aceh. Activities in Naggroe Aceh Darussalam Province are at the early stage of implementation and tangible results are being tracked through quarterly programme reporting.

The Future

There are tremendous opportunities for TEAM expansion, given the five-year timeframe of the tsunami recovery programme, the substantial capacities of NGOs, and the continued needs on the ground. With this in mind, the American Red Cross will continue to search for viable US-based NGOs who have complementary programming capacity. In particular, the American Red Cross would like to be more responsive to one of the most often-cited needs by affected communities – namely, the need for increased livelihood support. The American Red Cross will look for partner organisations with an established

record of success in livelihood activities. These organisations are likely to provide access to capital, access to productive physical assets, and/or business development services to local entrepreneurs.

4. Analysis and Conclusion

Partnership is a project in itself and, like any project, it entails an amount of thorough assessment, careful planning, integration of systems and standards, and development of an implementation plan and exit strategy. Its evolution, development and success, while largely dependent on how carefully the assessment and plan was thought through and carried out, at the same time is also influenced by the behaviour of the people engaged in its implementation and the external environment in which they are operating. As such it is not enough to forge a memorandum of understanding and create some guidelines and rules; the important element, which is often missed out and not taken into consideration, is that it also involves changing of mindsets, behaviours and our way of thinking and working, as demonstrated in the case study of the American Red Cross TEAM, and the Australian Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross partnership in the Maldives.

The case of the Australian Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross partnership in the Maldives shows that there were several frustrations in the partnership particularly in the differing systems and views on looking at certain aspects of the operation, but that did not deter or greatly affect the degree of commitment to the partnership. One reason cited was the organisational culture and historical culture that both national societies shared. On top of that, the complexities and challenges in the field implementation were resolved quickly and fairly because the two delegates knew each other from previous missions. One can surmise that the degree of openness and trust, and the relationship that they had developed in the past, had somehow influenced their way of working together.

On the other hand, the American Red Cross TEAM was a very new concept which had never been tested or carried out before by the organisation. People involved in the conceptualization realised that since it was a new idea, the concept needed to be constantly marketed internally in house, to influence behaviours and mindsets, as to how people think and work. From the beginning this was a constant challenge, but this was addressed through constant advocacy to internal stakeholders such as the finance, legal and insurance departments.

In the case of the Austrian Red Cross – Swiss Red Cross cooperation consortium, this was not a problem as they have had experience of working together in previous operations and so the acceptance of the concept and idea of working together was not new to them. In addition, it also helped that the implementation was carried out under one roof, in a shared office, so any potential clashes of personality and thinking were avoided.

The case studies highlighted in this document also show that it is not enough to agree to work together in a specific project or towards a certain goal. Memoranda of understanding and cooperation agreements are basically only tools to guide each partner, and are references or frameworks to which partners refer in order to assess and gauge the progress of the partnership and the work. The real piece of work is on continuously building the relationship through open dialogue, constant communication and ensuring that the goals and objectives of each partner are aligned with each other all throughout the process. This also means that partners should be constantly conscious to negotiate any differing views as to how best to resolve issues and problems as they progress in the project, and accepting the possibility that the original terms of reference or agreement might undergo changes in order to address the changing realities in the field.

It is also important to note that in the case studies presented in this research, certain steps were undertaken by those involved before the partnerships were forged. We opted to call these steps “elements” to be looked into before forging a partnership. On the basis of the case studies the following key elements were identified as critical factors to consider in a partnership:

a. Alignment of objectives and goals:

Each organisation, each partner national society, has its own goals and objectives in undertaking a project or programme. In the case of an internal Movement partnership, while we all work under the same fundamental principles of the Movement, it is still necessary to evaluate whether such activity or programme is aligned with our own national society's objectives and goals. It is not enough that both organisations and/or national societies have common interests, but what is important is for them to ascertain their goals and objectives, and aligning them to ensure coherence in systems and programming. The advantage in forging partnerships within the Movement is that we are all guided by the same Movement principles and global agenda which make alignment easier. In the case of an external partnership, this becomes more difficult and requires a large degree of scrutiny and procedural evaluation, like the case of the American Red Cross TEAM, as each of the five institutions which they partner with each have different organisational missions, visions, principles and values. However, this challenge was overcome by the American Red Cross by developing tools and frameworks in assessing this specific element.

The alignment of objectives and goals also ensures that the seven fundamental principles of the Movement are never compromised in any way.

b. Due Diligence Processes

This is essential especially when the partnership involves working with other actors. In the case of the Australian Red Cross – Canadian Red Cross consortium, they have carried this out to the extent of individually conducting due diligence on the contractors involved in the project. For the American Red Cross, the due diligence process is extensive as it involves multiple partners. One thing is clear though, having a ready due diligence framework and conducting a due diligence process in assessing partners, will assist in determining the capability of the partner in sustaining and adhering to what is stipulated in the memorandum of understanding. In addition, it can be the area where the integrity issue will be taken into account.

c. Roles and Responsibilities

Identifying who is responsible for what at an early stage in a partnership is essential. In the case of the Australian Red Cross – Canadian Red Cross partnership, early on they agreed that it will be shared responsibility, but as the implementation progressed, it became clear to both national societies that there is a need to identify who is in charge of what. In the case of the Austrian Red Cross – Swiss Red Cross cooperation consortium in Sri Lanka, early on they had already identified who would take the lead in project implementation.

d. Establishing Common Standards and Approach at an Early Stage

Organisations have their own sets of rules, standards and approaches in implementing a specific programme or activity. In the Movement, while we are all guided by the same fundamental principles, it is not an assurance that we have the same approach to a specific activity. The difference in approach and standards are primarily due to different experiences in the field and different points of view. For example a host national society may have a different approach in identifying beneficiaries from that of a partner national society. Another example is standards and benchmarks. These differences do not imply that one is not guided by the Movement principles, but rather it is a result of the realities of the context which they come from. This becomes more prominent in external partnerships and will become an obstacle in the partnership if parameters are not set early on. In the case of the American Red Cross TEAM, at an early stage the American Red Cross developed some guidelines for their partners, such as beneficiary selection, project proposal development and costing codes. This makes the project approval process of the TEAM easier.

e. Establishing Regular Communication

Regular communication at field and headquarters level is necessary to sustain a partnership. Engaging partners in regular discussion and updates in the operational area provides an avenue to constantly address burning issues and other related issues which will have an impact on the partnership. Communication between the field implementers and those at the headquarters must be constant, as the field is where the challenges and issues arise. In all the case studies presented, in all the partnerships good communication links had been clearly established between the partners. The American Red Cross TEAM created or established a specific coordination position in the field to ensure linkage with the TEAM partners operating in the field, as well as with the Movement partners. In the case of the Australian Red Cross – Canadian Red Cross cooperation, communication between both national society headquarters was established, for example between the two respective finance departments. In addition, joint headquarters visits to the field were also carried out. The Austrian Red Cross – Swiss Red Cross consortium, on the other hand, maintains good communication between the two headquarters, as they only have one office and head of office in Sri Lanka.

The case studies presented in this study clearly show that despite the intra-Movement competitiveness which can exist, there is, however, definitely space for forging partnerships in a complex and challenging operation, such as the tsunami. One aspect is very clear, partnering does not only save costs and provide synergy of action, like the cases of the Australian Red Cross - Canadian Red Cross partnership and the Austrian Red Cross – Swiss Red Cross cooperation consortium, but it also provides an opportunity to learn and increase organisational effectiveness and capacity, as manifested in all the case studies presented. In some cases, partnership is born out of the desire to come up with an integrated and holistic approach to our community intervention, by acknowledging that as an organization we do not have all the skills and capabilities to implement all the programmes that are essential for addressing the needs of the beneficiaries. In the case of the American Red Cross, they did not only achieve an integrated programme approach, but the partnership afforded them the opportunity to harness their skills and capacity as an organisation, by learning from the respective expertise of their partners.

Finally, all those interviewed during the course of this study, unanimously agreed that coordination and cooperation are two essential elements that need to be strengthened, while at the same time advocated for within the Movement, not only to lessen competition within the Movement, but also to ensure a coherent integrated approach in our humanitarian work.