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# “Tunis DREF (MDRTN008)”

## Lessons Learned Workshop Report

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# 1. Purpose of the Lessons Learned Report

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Throughout each project life cycle, lessons are learned and opportunities for improvement are discovered. As part of a continuous improvement process, documenting lessons learned helps project teams discover the root causes of problems and bottlenecks that occurred and mitigate their occurrence in later project stages or in future projects. Data for this report was gathered during the Lessons Learned Workshop held in Hammamet, Tunisia on 23-24 February 2019.

The objective of this report is to gather all relevant information for better planning for future projects or similar events, improving implementation of new projects, and preventing or minimizing risks for future similar projects.

Ultimately, the goals of the lessons learned report are:

- ✓ List successes to document what went right;
- ✓ Document what can be improved upon;
- ✓ Streamline processes based on this information;
- ✓ Avoiding making the same erroneous actions;
- ✓ Improving on current delivery standards by adopting proven good practice;
- ✓ Contributing to organisational growth and maturity by effecting long term improvements in the way an organisation embeds and shares Project Management best practice;
- ✓ Communicate this information to project management and appropriate stakeholders.

## 2. Introduction

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**M**ore than 6,000 families have been affected by the floods that hit Nabeul province in Tunisia on September 22, 2018. Some of them fled their homes seeking shelter in neighbouring high-ground houses and villages, while other chose to stay in their damaged houses, moving to rooftops rather than risking crossing flooded areas to reach evacuation points. Consequently, a **DREF** has been launched to cover the immediate needs of the most affected families (2,000 HH). The DREF operations were implemented between 03 October 2018 – 28 February 2019.

As “First Responders”, the Tunisian Red Crescent (**TRCS**) in coordination with the local authorities and several organisations have deployed its volunteers to help the affected families in providing FAPSS, clean the flooded area of debris and mud, drain the flood waters, as well as mobilising some pre-positioned stocks from TRCS main warehouse and distributing them to the affected families.

Throughout the DREF operation, TRCS staff and volunteers have faced many challenges leading to many unfortunate results and delay in response. As such, following to the extension of the DREF, and for better preparedness and response for future similar events, a Lessons Learned Workshop has been conducted on 23-24 February 2019 with the presence and participation of volunteers from different levels: branches, provincial, and headquarters.

**In terms of objectives, the Lessons Learned report is intended to provide qualitative recommendations based on the DREF operation previous experience:**

- i) on how to improve future programming in terms of preparedness or for other future similar events.**
- ii) on the actions that should be avoided if the initiative were to be replicated.**

## 3. Methodology

**R**iver of Life is a group facilitation technique using visual narratives to help people tell stories of the past, present and future. By imagining that people or projects were a river, participants can articulate, using the landscape, water, boats etc., the major events and milestones in their lives or the lives of their projects. The method enables bringing several perspectives together and immediately offers to show the big pictures.



Through the visualization the River can become a compass, a guide as it captures the milestones, failures and successes over time. Also, it offers participants to identify their roles, where they fit in the big picture and where they can make the most impact.

There were 26 participants (10 volunteers from 10 branches, 10 head of branches/representatives, two from the provincial branch, one from HQ representing the TRCS President, and three representatives from the IFRC) who provided their feedback to the DREF through the exercise of river of life.

For this exercise, the participants were divided into five groups, two groups of volunteers, two groups of Head of branches, and one group including IFRC-TRCS representatives and Head of Nabeul Province.

All of the groups have started drawing their river life in different stages:

- 1- Drawing the shape of the river of life, from the beginning of the DREF (or even before), showing where and why the most of activities took place;
- 2- Putting in the resources in terms of staff, finance, and information;
- 3- Posting the challenges that they have faced throughout the DREF and linking those challenges with proposed solutions and recommendations.

For this exercise, the groups were asked to place their drawings on the walls in the room and took turns presenting the learning they represent and sharing their observations.

### Drawing the Shape of The River of Life

In this phase, the groups were asked to share and explain their drawings and to point out the significant elements that have contributed to shaping their River of Life the way it is now.

Most of the groups pointed out that the last event hasn't only affected one area, but all neighbouring areas and subsequently the TRCS branches. While many activities took place in a specific period of time, the groups mentioned that for quite some time few to no activities have been conducted, prior receiving the local and international donations through DREF.

Most of the activities that have been carried out by the TRCS, and based on what has been presented by the five groups, the immediate response following the event included:

- Needs assessment;
- Field visits;
- Distribution of in-kind donations;
- Trainings for the volunteers;
- Flood damaged homes and schools cleaning;
- Assistance in improving the accessibility of rural access roads to communities.

Throughout this first phase, some challenges have been highlighted by most of the groups, as follows:

- No emergency response plan in place;
- Limited availability of the volunteers;
- Lack of timely flow of information;
- Mismanagement of the floodgates;
- Safety and security of the volunteers;
- Lack of equipment's and resources (finance, staff...);
- Lack and delay of the local and international donations through DREF;
- Lack of communication among the branches, provincial branch, and HQ;
- Constraints in warehousing, storage and distribution;
- Adequate inspection on the quality of the delivered in-kind contributions is not performed;
- Lack of structured assessment to ensure timely response.

#### **Tips for future in-kind donations**

- 🔍 To assess the quality of the in-kind donations and to claim for unsatisfactory quality items.
- 🔍 To have a proper inventory for the in-kind donations.

## Introduction of Other Elements to the River (HR; Finance; Data)

During this stage, the participants were asked to include where appropriate and according to the timeline of the river: i) Human resources ii) Financial resources; iii) Information/data.



The volunteers, along with the beneficiaries, local authorities, local communities; local organisations; head of procurement were included in all drawings.



Local and international donations through the DREF; in-kind donations; relief items.



Surveys from the field trips; volunteers capacity development and trainings; database and records on the affected families; needs assessment; DREF extension; DREF Operations Update; record of donations.

## Strengths, Opportunities and Challenges

The last phase of the river exercise was about identifying the strengths and the challenges.

For this exercise, the groups wrote the challenges they have faced on the orange coloured post-it notes and the strengths and opportunities on the green post-it notes and placed them on the river, in respect of the DREF timeline.

The strengths and opportunities identified by the five groups were:

- Staff and volunteers' dedication;
- Team spirit;
- Cooperation of the local authorities;
- Local and international donations;
- Positive image of the Tunisian Red Crescent Society to the donors and stakeholders;
- Staff and volunteers' competencies;
- Acceptance of the local communities;
- Mobilizing existing resources from other areas;
- Internal coordination between the branches;
- Structured analysis (strengths and weaknesses) and needs assessment.



volunteers were threatened to give away the available goods from the nearby Warehouse;

- Lack of cooperation from the beneficiaries;
- Limited availability of the volunteers (available on weekends only);
- Complexity of IFRC procedures;
- Lack of internal communication between the branches and the provincial branches;
- Lack of preparedness/ information;
- Lack of security;
- Complicated logistics policies and procedures;
- Lack of warehouse management;
- Lack of human resources (HR/ Admin staff);
- Quality of the in-kind donations;
- Lack of lists of the affected/ vulnerable families.

After presenting the strengths, opportunities and challenges, the groups were asked to choose the **Top 5 challenges** and post them on a blank paper and to find solutions to those challenges considered as problems.



## 4. Top 10 Challenges and Recommendations

Out of the 25 challenges, the following table highlights the Top 10 challenges agreed by the groups and recommendations shared by the different group representatives whom were engaged in the Tunis DREF. Please note that ranking has not been carried out by order of importance, as all of these recommendations are important for the working groups.

 <b>Challenges</b>	 <b>LEVEL</b> (On what level the challenges have been identified)	 <b>Recommendations</b>
Volunteers safety and security	Volunteers/ branches/ Field Level	To strengthen the protection of volunteers To ensure that the volunteers are ensured To provide the volunteers with safety equipment To ensure proper coordination with local authorities for volunteer's security
Lack of transportation/ vehicles	Provincial branches	To provide the branches with vehicles to facilitate their work
Significant lack of premises of local branches	Field level	To secure premises for the local branches
Difficulties in ensuring transportation	Field level	To exploit the headquarters' vehicles and charging the maintenance expenses to the branches; To ensure the provision of vehicles for the use of the branches
Lack of financial resources	Field level	To implement a permanent project(s) to generate income for the TRCS
Lack of resources	Provincial Branch	To supply the branches with large-sized warehouse, ambulance, vehicle to transport the goods, and to secure sufficient financial resources
Storage and Distribution	Provincial Branch	To ensure proper storage and warehouse management To avoid distribution directly from the warehouse or near it
Non-utilization of existing resources	Strategic level	To identify the existing resources, re-equip them, activate them and prepare them to be used when needed

<p>Lack of communication and coordination between the provincial branch and the Headquarters</p> <p>Excluding the provincial branch when setting up the response plan</p>	<p>Strategic level</p>	<p>To establish a coordination and communication mechanism to ensure the participation of all stakeholders</p>
<p>Lack of information, planning and mitigating problems and challenges</p>	<p>Strategic level</p>	<p>To work on a preparedness strategy for the National Society and local communities</p>

## 5. Captured Lessons from the DREF Operation

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### Successful aspects to replicate

Conducting Structured analysis (strengths and weaknesses) and needs assessment

Internal coordination between the branches

Mobilizing resources from other areas

Cooperating and coordinating with the local authorities

Maintaining the good image of the National Society

Developing Staff and volunteers' competencies

Acceptance of the local communities

### Challenges to avoid

Lack of structured assessment, timely flow of information, planning and mitigating problems and challenges

Lack of communication and coordination between the provincial branch and the Headquarters

Non-utilization of existing resources

Lack of transportation/ vehicles availability

Lack of proper inventory and quality assessment of the in-kind donations

Safety and security of the volunteers

Limited availability of the volunteers

Poor warehouse management (warehousing, storage and distribution)

## 6. Workshop Photos

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Looking at the various recommendations proposed by the five groups, interestingly there is a desire for a change, and for improvement for better and timely response to future events.

Moreover, the challenges identified from this paper will be of value to those involved in developing response measures and to strategic responses to man-made or natural disasters, or to meet unforeseen events.

By offering insight into the controlling stage in the disaster response in particularly in the Middle East and North Africa region, a real-world example is unravelled from which other countries and disaster management professionals can take advantage.

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