
“Lebanon DREF (MDRLB006)”

Lessons Learned Workshop Report



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1. Purpose of the Lessons Learned Report

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 in Lebanon.

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

At least 66 refugee camps heavily impacted by the winter storm dubbed “Norma” that hit Lebanon on January 5, 2019. On 6 January, strong wind and heavy rainfall downed trees and power lines in the Sidon Area. Heavy rainfall caused flooding and rockslides in Batroun and roads were closed on 6 January in many areas of Lebanon. The storm has caused damage to infrastructure in some areas, while many parts of the country were severely inundated, resulting in paralysed transportation due to damaged streets and roads. Tens of thousands of Syrian refugees were among the affected population, particularly those living in informal tent settlements (ITS).

Consequently, a **DREF** has been launched to cover the immediate needs of the most affected families (700 HH).

As “First Responders”, the **Lebanese Red Cross** (LRC) in coordination with the authorities and other active humanitarian actors, have deployed its volunteers to help and evacuate the storm/ flood-affected population. 702 storm-affected Syrian refugees have been evacuated from five flooded Informal Tent Settlements (ITS).

Mattresses, blankets and tarpaulins were distributed to the refugees relocated to the schools. Tarpaulins have been distributed to the refugee camps in in the Bekaa Valley, to cover the tents damaged by heavy rainfall.

Delegated by the Governor, the **LRC** was the only leading agency to assess the needs, response and alleviate the suffering of the most flood-affected families.

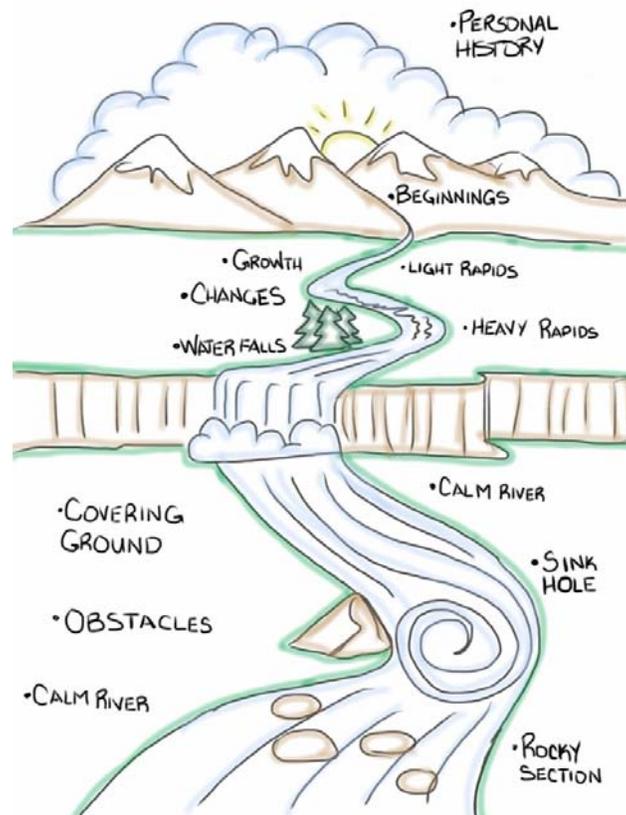
Throughout the DREF operation, LRC staff and volunteers have faced many challenges leading to many unfortunate results and delay in response. As such, a Lessons Learned Workshop has been conducted with the presence and participation of volunteers from different levels: branches and headquarters.

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

River 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 15 participants from different departments at branches and Headquarters levels (Disaster Management, Blood Transfusion Services, Logistics, Response Preparedness, LDM, Water Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion, Youth, Programmes Management and Finance in addition to 2 representatives from the IFRC) who provided their feedback to the DREF through the exercise of river of life.

The participants 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- Posting the challenges that they have faced throughout the DREF and linking those challenges with proposed solutions and recommendations.

Drawing the Shape of The River of Life: Strengths and opportunities

In this phase, the group introduced the DREF operation strengths and opportunities, highlighted by most of the group members, as follows:

- Commitment of trained volunteers;
- Good relationship with communities and LRC's high acceptance;
- Proper networking with all external stakeholders;
- Empowering the community members who supported the intervention;
- Connection with suppliers, credibility and trust;
- Coordination with authorities and other agencies built on trust;
- Availability and proper use of contingency plans and SOPs;
- LRC well-positioned as the leading agency for emergencies and as first responder;
- Alert system in place and smooth communication between the departments, branches and the headquarters;
- Good internal communication within areas and inter-sector communication.

Those above-mentioned were considered as positive factors to the success of the operation led by the LRC in response to the floods caused by the winter storm.

The immediate response following the event included:

- Needs assessment;
- Evacuation of the flood-affected families;

- Distribution of in-kind donations;
- Distribution of blankets and mattresses;
- Food distribution;
- River cleaning;
- Assistance in improving the accessibility of rural access roads to communities.

Introduction of Other Elements to the River: **Challenges**

Throughout the exercise, some challenges have been highlighted by most of the participants, converged towards the delay in launching the DREF due to:

- Numerous data resources and absence of a dedicated PMER personnel to gather and consolidate the data;
- Slowness in sharing needed documentation;
- Delays from IFRC to ask for the needed corrections (e.g. to remove volunteers per diems from the report);
- Absence of guidelines /guidance/ follow up by the IFRC MENA RO;
- Delays in drafting the DREF.

Added to:

- **Logistic setbacks** (LRC lack for adapted vehicles, equipment, lights, generators, communication kits/poor quality of distributed food/absence of safety officers);
- **Context setbacks** (access and road safety, storm intensity, flooded-schools);
- **Dependency on other partners** (e.g. UNHCR at the field level – not working on weekends, sharing incorrect data about stock of mattresses).

4. Top Challenges, Suggested Solutions and Recommendations

Out of the listed challenges, the following table highlights the Top 5 challenges agreed by the group and recommendations shared by the different group representatives whom were engaged in the Lebanon 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.

After presenting the strengths, opportunities and challenges, the working group was asked to choose the **Top 5 challenges** and to suggest solutions to those challenges considered as problems.

| TOP 5 Challenges | Suggested Solutions |
|--|---|
| Delay in DREF | A written commitment or a pre-agreement could be considered as an official document awaiting the launching of the DREF in order to respond fast in future similar events |
| Dedicated reporting person / process in emergencies (IM) | To set-up a PMER unit for LRC; Until the unit is set-up, to assign and train a focal person for DREF reporting |
| Emergency protocol (fast track procedures) | Under process: project tasked to the response preparedness unit |
| Emergency Stocks (not to depend on other agencies) | Pre-disaster agreements with suppliers IFRC to advocate for unearmarked funding |
| Lack of relevant operations equipment (vehicles, lights, generators, communication kits) | To explore the possibility of including such equipment(s) in the DREF To check if there is any possibility to shift the remaining funds in Norma DREF to procure equipment |

Recommendations

- ✓ LRC should include volunteers' costs in the DREF budget
- ✓ Data collection and consolidation should be systemized
- ✓ Fast track procedures for Finance & Procurement should be in place (emergency protocol)
- ✓ Commitment agreement with IFRC regarding emergency funds or emergency funding agreement should be explored

5. Relationship with Stakeholders

The stakeholders are crucial to the successful delivery of any organisational activity. Successful activities are those whose important stakeholders perceive them to be successful. The identification of the right stakeholders and the development of targeted communication to meet the needs of the activity and the expectations of stakeholders, will lead to a higher level of commitment and support from these stakeholders.

Therefore, it is essential to build and maintain robust relationships and maintain an appropriate level of communication to stakeholders. If key stakeholders are committed to the success of the activity and fulfil their responsibilities to contribute to its success, the organisation will achieve additional value through:

- ✓ higher chance of on time/on budget delivery;
- ✓ ability to achieve business strategies more effectively.

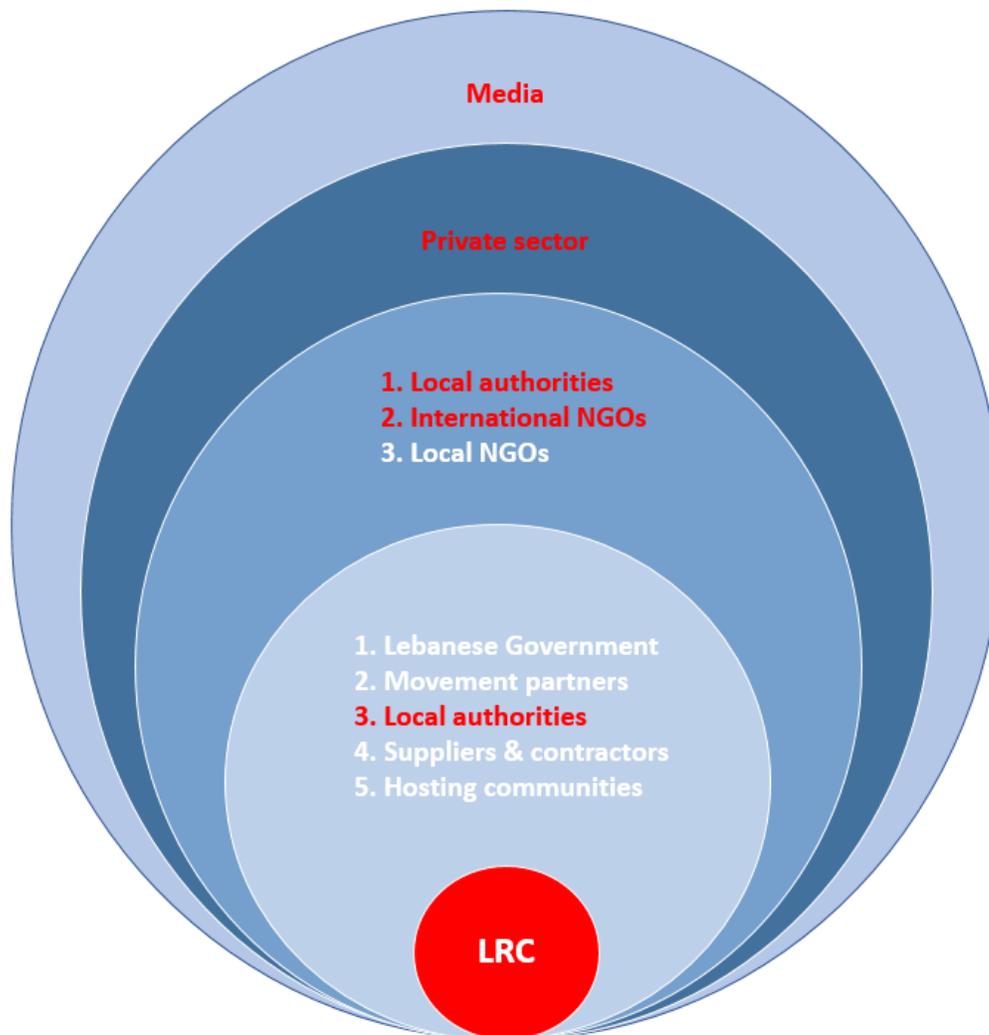
On Time/on Budget Delivery

Delays to implementation of activities usually occur through:

- essential senior management approvals being delayed;
- sponsor advocacy not provided when it is needed;
- promised resources not supplied when needed;
- supplier delivery promises not met; other people-related issues.

During the stakeholder's exercise, few stakeholders have been identified. The group was asked to place the stakeholders in the circles as per the *below graph*. The ones placed close to the centre are the ones that they consider having a strong relationship with, some on personal level and others on business level.

The stakeholders **in red** are the ones with whom it was recommended to consider enhancing and repositioning the existing relationship.



Few recommendations were put forward for improvement as follows:

- ✓ To enhance existing relationship with certain stakeholders by having more scheduled regular visits (local authorities);
- ✓ To explore the possibility of signing proper agreements with existing and new suppliers/ contractors in order to have them systematic and not just relying on personal connections (local authorities)
- ✓ To enhance and better organise the cluster/ coordination meetings
- ✓ To boost the relationship with private sector through agreements
- ✓ For better impact, relationship with Media should be improved.

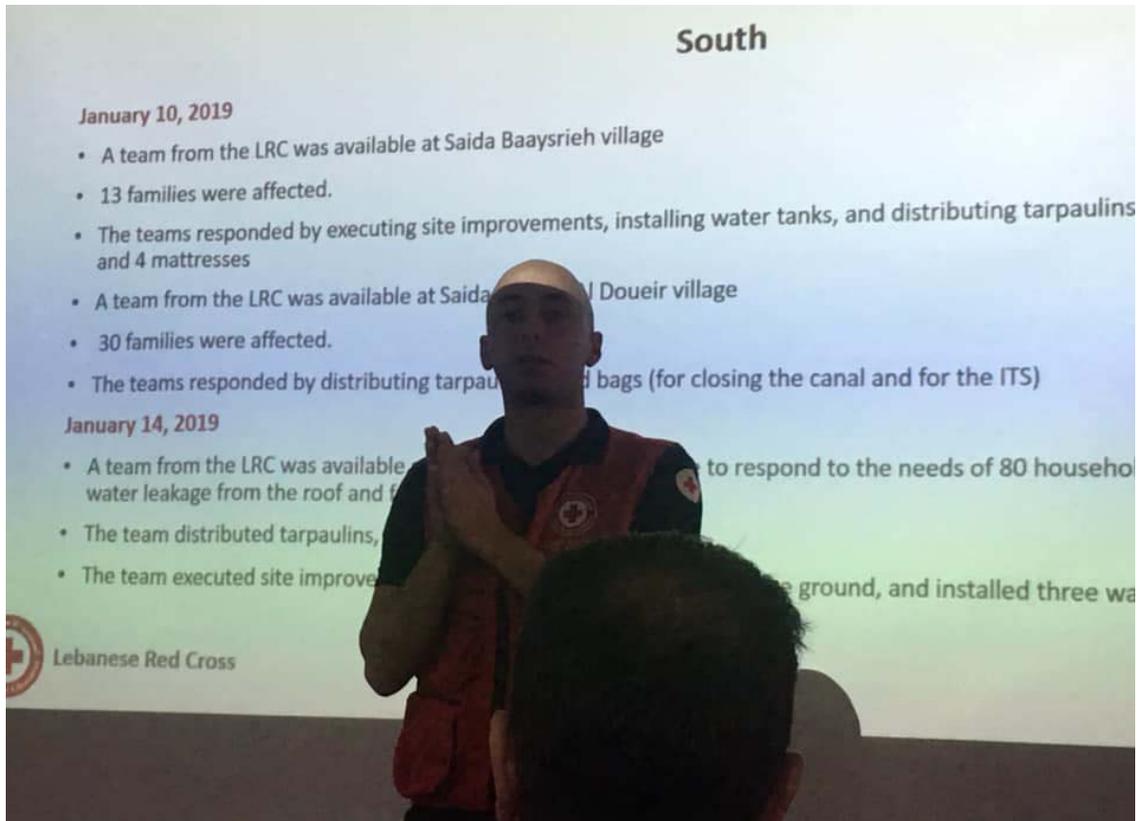
In conclusion, if stakeholders are more engaged, and committed to a particular activity, there is less chance that these issues will negatively impact progress of the activity. Delays to the work will incur additional expenditure, and impact the budget

6. Captured Lessons from the DREF Operation

| <u>Successful aspects to replicate</u> | <u>Challenges to avoid</u> |
|--|--|
| Internal coordination between the branches and the Headquarters | Lack of timely flow of information |
| Cooperating and coordinating with the local authorities | Lack of transportation/ vehicles availability |
| Maintaining the good image of the National Society, well-positioned as first responder | Lack of proper inventory and assessment of the in-kind donations |
| Acceptance of the local communities | Lack of agreements with stakeholders |

7. Workshop Photos







Looking at the various recommendations proposed by the participants, interestingly there is a desire for a change, and for improvement for better 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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