

Final External Evaluation

The Bahamas: Hurricane Dorian Recovery Operation

Submitted by:

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Photos on cover page:

People assisted by small business support from IFRC in Grand Bahama after Hurricane Dorian.

Photo credit: Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021.

Acronyms

ARC - American Red Cross

BRCS – Bahamas Red Cross Society

CDEMA – Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Association

CEA – Community Engagement and Accountability

CORE – Community Organized Relief Effort

CCRIF – Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility

DRA – Disaster Reconstruction Authority

DRM – Disaster risk management

EPA – Emergency Plan of Action

ERAP - Early Recovery Assessment and Plan

FGD – Focus group discussion

GB – Grand Bahama

GBPA – Grand Bahama Port Authority

IDB – Inter-American Development Bank

IFRC – International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IOM – International Organization for Migration

KII – Key informant interview

NEMA – National Emergency Management Authority

ODK – Open Data Kit

PMER – Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

PSS – Psychosocial support

RC – Red Cross

RMS – Resource Mobilization System

SOP – standard operating procedures

UNECLAC – United Nations’ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

WASH – Water, sanitation and health

Annexes

1. List of key informants interviewed
2. Participants in focus group discussions and verification visits
3. Results from online survey with BCRS volunteers

1 Executive Summary

Hurricane Dorian was a category 5 cyclone, and considered the most destructive hurricane ever to make landfall in the Caribbean, in the history of recorded hurricanes. It directly hit the Bahamas and unleashed its full wrath on the island of Abaco, with the island of Grand Bahama also extensively impacted. The Abaco Islands were the hardest hit, suffering 87% of the damage, with approximately 75% of homes either damaged or destroyed, according to the assessment of damages and losses conducted by the Inter-American Development bank (IDB) and the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC)¹. The Bahamas Red Cross Society (BRCS) and IFRC moved swiftly to support the affected populations with field-tested response and recovery activities, as well as innovative approaches. It must be noted that this operation was undertaken at a very difficult time, with the unforeseen irruption of the COVID-19 pandemic a few months into the operation, imposing movement restrictions and requiring an overhaul of methods.

To assess this operation, from 1-30 July 2021 the evaluation team consulted with 9 IFRC staff, 2 staff from other Red Cross National Societies (Canada and United States), 6 BRCS staff and executives, 6 partners, 45 BRCS volunteers and 49 beneficiaries (full details are in Annexes 1 and 2). Given that the number of beneficiaries was not large, a random sampling method was applied, to obtain results that could be generalized. Information was also gleaned from a range of relevant internal and public documents (details in Section 5 of this report). The lead evaluator travelled to Bahamas from July 18 to 26, to conduct focus group discussions and several in-person interviews.

A workshop with key stakeholders from IFRC and BRCS was held via Zoom on 3 August 2021. The consultant team presented their initial findings by PowerPoint, and discussion ensued regarding concerns and questions. This workshop was recorded with the consent of all present.

The team found that overall, the recovery operation was well designed and effectively implemented, as summarized in Figure 3 below. All information and opinions gathered indicated that the operation was comprehensive, integrated, and adapted well to the unforeseen COVID-19 realities. The national and international Red Cross (RC) staff and volunteers were perceived as competent, compassionate, reliable and clear communicators. The operation's effectiveness was apparent in the site visits undertaken by the lead evaluator to a number of small businesses, which were operating and receiving clients, and visits to the damaged homes supported by Red Cross, which were found to be largely repaired and all liveable. The vast majority of beneficiaries consulted expressed their gratitude and appreciation for timely support from the Red Cross, which had significantly enabled their families' return to normalcy.

The approaches taken by IFRC and BRCS in this operation proved to be appropriate and well chosen. Owner-driven home repair empowered the homeowners to determine the best way to use the limited resources allocated, and they assumed the accountability for the quality of the repairs. This in turn minimized the administrative workload for IFRC. Selection criteria and vetting processes for applicants for the home repair and small business support were transparent and agreed on collaboratively with partners. Rental assistance provided a necessary bridge into recovery, alleviating the post-disaster hardship in particular for the lower income population.

¹ IDB, [Assessment of the Effects and Impacts of Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas](#), p. 15.

When the pandemic arrived, IFRC showed its adaptability by switching to socially-distanced communications methods, and transferring savings from curtailed planned travel to increase funds allocated to beneficiaries.



Figure 1. Overview of evaluation findings

At the same time, while the Dorian recovery operation was assessed as generally highly relevant, effective and efficient, there were also aspects of concern found, and areas requiring improvement. Aspects of concern included data management systems, coverage and social inclusion, and overly centralized bureaucratic processes. Also, the capacity building dimension was unfortunately undermined by frequent turnover and rotation of staff, both in IFRC and BRCS. These concerns are outlined and analyzed in the full report, with recommendations for improvement offered.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

Hurricane Dorian took many lives and unleashed extensive destruction in the Bahamas in September 2019, as a Category 5 hurricane and the strongest landfalling Atlantic hurricane on record. Total damages and losses were estimated at \$3.4 billion USD² – approximately 25% of the country’s GDP – with enormous impacts on livelihoods, housing and basic needs of the affected communities. An estimated 74 persons were tragically killed in this disaster, with an additional 245 classified as missing, as their bodies have still not been found within 2 years after the hurricane. The IFRC distributed over \$30 million USD to affected households for various uses during the response and recovery phases³.

The overall objective of the IFRC emergency operation was to provide immediate life-saving and longer-term support for recovery to 3,735 households (14,940 people) affected by Hurricane Dorian focused in the areas of Shelter (including distribution of household items); Health; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion; Livelihoods and Basic Needs through multi-purpose cash grants; Protection, Gender and Inclusion; Disaster Risk Reduction; and National Society Capacity Strengthening.

² Zegarra et al, Impact of Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas : A View from the Sky, p. 1

³ Infographic from IFRC website.

Over 60% of the operation's \$27 million USD budget was spent during the emergency phase, with \$11.7 USD provided in cash grants to 12,000 people. It is estimated that Dorian impacted approximately 15,000 to 17,000 people in country.⁴

This final evaluation assesses the IFRC recovery operation in the Bahamas following Hurricane Dorian. The majority of the operation (94% in terms of finances) was implemented from September 2019 through June 2021, and funded through the [MDRBS003 Emergency Appeal](#). The appeal was subsequently extended from July 1 through December 31 2021, to complete the Grand Bahama Branch building construction, but that falls outside the scope of this evaluation. The document highlights the achievements of the operation, and determines the quality of the programmes and services delivered to the affected population. The evaluation aims to provide valuable insights on key lessons learned that can be applied in future operations, with a particular focus on the relevance and effectiveness of livelihoods and shelter programming, in transition from the emergency to recovery phases, and through the recovery process.

A team of two independent consultants were hired to conduct this evaluation, with the following goals in mind: 1) to obtain information that will help improve service delivery and accountability to beneficiaries, donors and other stakeholders and 2) to build lessons for the improvement of the IFRC disaster response and recovery system. The team did not look at value for money, as that was not within our scope, and we were not privy to overall budgets. The findings provide inputs to support recovery planning and recommendations for future operational responses in the region.

This final evaluation considered all decisive factors during the operation (i.e., what went well and what requires improvement) taking into consideration the context and capacities of the National Society and other IFRC Movement components. The evaluation team endeavoured to provide an independent, objective perspective as well as technical experience in evaluations, and serve as the primary authors of the evaluation report. The evaluation process was structured in accordance with standard evaluation criteria, including relevance, appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness and the sustainability of benefits deriving from the operation's activities.

Attention was paid in particular to the transition between the emergency response and the recovery phase after Hurricane Dorian, and to what extent that worked well or could be managed better in future post-hurricane programmes.



Figure 2. Two years after Hurricane Dorian, the level of destruction is still evident in Abaco. Photo by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021.

⁴ Data provided by James Bellamy, IFRC Operations Manager for the Dorian operation.

2.2 Methodology

The evaluation applied was mainly qualitative, while drawing on available quantitative information from internal reports and publicly available documents. It upheld high standards of ethics and sensitivity towards women and vulnerable individuals and communities. The emphasis was on understanding the intervention in terms of the design, relevance and appropriateness of the assistance, and the efficiency and effectiveness of IFRC's response. The needs of the participating population were considered, in terms of coverage and targeting. Overall coordination and sustainability were reviewed in consultation with other development actors. All of this required carefully selecting communities and individuals, as well as governmental and non-governmental institutions, and ensuring constructive interactions with them in order to obtain their perspectives on the project.

The specific **evaluation methodology** was determined in close consultation between the evaluation consultants and the IFRC evaluation management team, drawing upon the following primary methods:

1. **Desktop review** of operation's background documents, relevant organizational background and history, and relevant sources of secondary data, such as findings from previous surveys and evaluations.
2. **Field visits/observations** to selected sites in The Bahamas, where the majority of the operation's activities were conducted. These included short verification visits to homes repaired and businesses supported under the operation.
3. **Key informant interviews:** beneficiaries, community leaders, government representatives, Red Cross Movement, institutional and private sector.
4. **Focus group discussions** with beneficiaries, to inform recommendations and collect lessons learned from the operations.
5. **Participatory workshop** with key personnel from BRCS, IFRC and Movement partners to present results from the evaluation and garner inputs.

Due to the 25-day time frame for this evaluation, there was not sufficient time allocated to undertake quantitative data collection and analysis. The consultants worked throughout the process as a team, reviewing together the list of respondents and questions, as well as conferring on key findings.

During the field visits, the lead evaluator complied strictly with all measures established by government for the prevention of COVID-19 transmission, including curfews, distancing of 6 feet, mask wearing, hand washing and other protocols.



Figure 3. Participants in focus group discussions. Photos by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021.

2.2.1. Sampling Community Participants

It was essential to establish from the outset a clear sampling frame, based on a comprehensive listing of the communities reached under the project, indicating the specific types of interventions carried out in each community and the relevant beneficiaries. However, the evaluation team encountered some challenges in obtaining the beneficiary lists in a timely fashion, and with the complete information on each beneficiary.

The first stage of sampling was to select communities to visit and from which to draw respondents. The community sampling approach included a combination of purposive and random criteria. The purposive criteria were oriented towards including communities that demonstrate the range of implementation success, to enable drawing insights from communities where the interventions and results were considered to be more successful, and those where there were more challenges. From this list, the evaluators selected approximately 4 communities. This approach enabled a thoughtful consideration of both the success factors and the blind spots, and led to findings that will assist in the better project formulation and implementation for upcoming similar projects.

Randomization criteria were also applied. From the lists provided, the evaluation consultants randomly selected beneficiaries from each category. This randomization helped ensure objectivity and a lack of bias in the evaluation.

Within each sampled community, the evaluation consultants interviewed a range of affected people served under this emergency operation. With all respondents, the interview protocol included filling out an interview consent form, which was subsequently deposited with the IFRC evaluation manager for the files. Recording of interviews was preferred, to ensure more accurate findings, and the consultants discussed with IFRC the best way to balance their information needs with confidentiality concerns. Transcripts were made of the recorded interviews, using a transcription software.

Focus groups discussions (FGDs) were used as a means of obtaining inputs from larger numbers of people, and to generate discussions that stimulated each participant to recall and be encouraged to bring forward

their opinions. At times, FGDs may inhibit frank expression of views, and the evaluators need to be aware of and manage a potential problem of dominance by certain individuals, or topics that are sensitive for discussion in open public fora. FGDs must be balanced with individual interviews, to allow individual respondents to speak openly and take more time to consider their own views. Groups of women, youth, and other vulnerable categories were combined to explore topics of relevance to them.

Despite best efforts by BRCS staff to diligently set up and confirm attendance in the focus groups, in some cases the persons selected through randomization were not available, as they were off the island or out of the country. Therefore, in coordination with the evaluation team, the BRCS staff had to improvise and convene additional participants. For one FDG, only 4 of the 10 persons invited showed up to participate. This may be attributable to lack of motivation as the activity was over, people were moving on to other priorities. Given this dynamic, the number of beneficiaries consulted was lower than planned -- 55 in total - but the evaluation team knew that their target numbers were on the ambitious side and that response might be low for a number of reasons.



Figure 4. Beneficiaries of support to small business recovery. Photos by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021

3 Findings

3.1 Results

The main reported results were as follows, and show that the program had achieved or in some cases exceeded its targets:

GRAND BAHAMA	Target #	GRAND BAHAMA	Amount BSD provided
Rental assistance	235 households	232 households ⁵	\$700/month ⁶
Home repair	500 in both locations	220 households ⁷	\$6000 average
Additional home repair funds to households with disabilities (mobility impairments)		2 households	\$2400 in both
Small business support	80 businesses ⁸	78 businesses ⁹	\$3000, \$4500 or \$6000
ABACO	Target #	Actual #	Amount provided
Home repair	500 in both locations	347 households ¹⁰	\$6000 average
Additional home repair funds to households with disabilities (mobility impairments)		11 households	\$2400 in both
Small business support	50 businesses ¹¹	70 businesses ¹²	\$3000, \$4500 or \$6000

There was not a single, clear logframe for the program, and it would have been expected that this had been formulated at one or more moments, attached to the budget for its implementation. The American Red Cross (ARC) raised funds and provided additional funding, and there were also savings from travel due to COVID-19 restrictions, so it was reported that this led to additional beneficiaries. Key IFRC staff explained that the targets were established by March 2020, however the evaluation team questioned whether the targets had been revised when additional funds were received, or savings were realized. It was not clear if this was expected or was done.

One additional observation about the numbers of beneficiaries is that there were many additional Bahamians who met the criteria and could have participated in the Red Cross program, but they were not included due to limited resources. This is always the tension in such programs, but it makes it more urgent to demonstrate clearly that the program had maximized the reach within its constrained means.

⁵ Initially 238 households were supported, but 6 were then disqualified after one month, for not meeting eligibility criteria. Source: BRCS and IFRC, *The Bahamas: Rental Assistance: Post Distribution Monitoring Report 2020*, p. 5

⁶ Duration of the rental assistance was 6 months, and then 20 of the most vulnerable beneficiaries received an additional 3 months' support. BRCS and IFRC, *The Bahamas: Rental Assistance: Post Distribution Monitoring Report 2020*, pp. 5-6

⁷ IFRC, *Bahamas Hurricane Dorian Responses: Shelter and Settlements*, p. 19

⁸ IFRC, *Baseline and Endline Final Report*, p. 1

⁹ IFRC, *Baseline and Endline Final Report*, p. 2

¹⁰ IFRC, *Bahamas Hurricane Dorian Responses: Shelter and Settlements*, p.19

¹¹ IFRC, *Abaco Livelihoods Recovery for Small Businesses Final Report*, pp. 1-2

¹² Ten of these were covered by Templeton's donation, IFRC, *Abaco Livelihoods Recovery for Small Businesses Final Report*, pp. 1-2

In broad terms, the evaluation team was impressed with the range of interventions that Red Cross was able to implement, in a timely way, despite significant obstacles created by the massive aftereffects of Hurricane Dorian and the subsequent limitations imposed by COVID-19.

Recommendations

For the IFRC

Establish a clear project logical framework (logframe) for every recovery operation, showing baseline, targets, indicators, and accommodating flexibility as needed, but also clearly showing if and when formal revisions were done.

If additional funds are made available, reflect these clearly in an increased target, unless costs are higher than expected.

Consider having goals and indicators formulated in a participatory manner, to supplement those institutionally mandated. Volunteers could help develop these, in line with new Volunteering Development Strategy just approved by BRCS.

3.2 Design, Relevance and Appropriateness

Following on the large emergency response efforts, the recovery phase featured a range of programs and interventions that were generally well-suited to the needs of affected communities in the Bahamas.

The Multipurpose Cash Grant was a necessary immediate form of assistance during the emergency phase, and the form of cash payment was appropriate and efficient. It was highly desirable to have this assistance that could include all categories of potential participants, including apparently the undocumented Haitians, although the evaluation team did not have data about how many Haitians benefited as they were not identified in beneficiary lists or in any other way. The fact that this cash assistance did not require beneficiaries to have a bank account helped to extend it to more vulnerable households. One respondent also added that it would have been good in the very early days to have straight cash disbursements. Given that this evaluation was focused on the recovery operation, it did not go into further details on the response activities.

The housing repair program was much needed, in fact there were far more needs than The Red Cross could address. It was unfortunate that those whose homes were structurally unsound could not be assisted, and while this was an understandable feature of this program, it still raised the question of whether the Red Cross has a role to advocate for those whose needs exceed its capacity.

The household-centred approach seemed very appropriate, as it empowered people to use the funds and combine with other resources and capacities they may have, and this allowed the Red Cross to disburse

“Another donor supported me as well. But they had very strict requirements, for example, you had to submit 5 years of bank statements. If you need a document to be created because it was lost, you need to pay for that. It was like taking a CPA exam.”

Beneficiary of support for small business recovery

resources without needing to engage in time-consuming procurements of building materials. The approach was discussed extensively with Red Cross partners, and a pilot was done to test both the cash-based and materials-based approaches. Though the evaluation team did not review the results of this pilot, respondents stated that it was clear that the cash-disbursement worked better. The Red Cross maintained a list of approved contractors, but some of the beneficiaries had other family members or materials they could use and this seemed to be adequately accommodated.

The Red Cross intervention included a key partnership with CORE, who did the gutting and provided additional technical inputs, as well as doubling the funds available to individual respondents. Jointly, the agencies considered that given the high costs of construction materials and craftsmen in Bahamas, many of the houses required a larger disbursement (one stated that \$10,000 USD was a minimum) in order to secure a basic level of safety in construction. The evaluation team questioned if there was a housing repair standard that Red Cross would aim for, a minimum to achieve a meaningful impact, but also a maximum to avoid concentrating resources in individual households while acknowledging that other households did not receive any assistance.

Some respondents questioned whether the Haitians could have been included in the house repair program, and while this is a question that should not be dismissed, the evaluation team understood the complexities for the Red Cross and agreed that the program was well-directed. Housing repairs for informal or unregistered houses raise too many issues, which may have required significant additional work to operationalize in this context, not least because of the attitudes of politicians and the population towards Haitians. The question of formality and residency for this group of migrants is quite difficult, as in theory it is possible for them to formally migrate to Bahamas, but it is difficult in practice because of the high cost of paperwork (estimated at \$2,000 USD).

The rental assistance program was extremely beneficial for people whose houses were destroyed, or who were renting prior to the hurricane. It required that beneficiaries had bank accounts, and initially some people could not benefit because they only had credit union accounts, but this was sorted out promptly. The evaluation team thought that this program could have been modified to accommodate a wider pool, though again the needs exceeded the resources available, and the Red Cross probably did the best it could under the circumstances.

The small business support program was relatively simple and very much appreciated, and the fact that it helped re-establish many local businesses was an important component of rebuilding the economy and encouraging others to reinvest and rebuild their communities. There were no observations about how it might have been made more relevant. Businesses that are informal and not licensed can still be essential to the households that operate them and the communities that are served by them. This part of the program should be more seriously considered for future emergency programs, in terms of possibly including migrant populations or other informal target groups.

The issues regarding inclusion of Haitians migrants are further detailed below. For the discussion of the appropriateness of the intervention, on the whole the evaluation team agrees with the approach of the Dorian recovery phase. At the same time, it would be highly desirable for future programs to take longer-term and possibly regional/global approaches to supporting the rights of migrants in emergency operations. The recent adoption of the Global Compact for Migration is helping to raise the bar on what support should be extended to migrants. The IFRC and BRCS could have attempted to develop some programs to specifically focus on the Haitian community during the recovery phase after Hurricane Dorian.

“We had to continually fight against the perception in Abaco that the Red Cross was only supporting Haitians and not Abaconians.”

IFRC staffperson

One overarching comment about these programs is that some of the selection criteria were not very clear. There is a reference to special groups, but the criteria do not specify what that means. There was a reference to different age groups and household compositions, but without specifying which groups would be included and which would be excluded. There was no mention of migrants, and ideally in the future they can be specifically included. Perhaps this was operationalized effectively and understood by all, but the documentation reviewed did raise those questions. The rental program selection criteria could have been improved through a more substantial vulnerability scoring criteria. The home repair program took note of this and included the Washington group of questions and an associated scoring criterion. This was especially useful in Abaco, as there were 390 applicants, so the selection was made based on the vulnerability score

A final comment about the operation is that while the recovery phase did build effectively on the emergency response, more attention to emergency preparedness is needed in the Bahamas. The massive impact of Hurricane Dorian in terms of human fatalities and missing persons suggests that Bahamas must be better prepared for future emergencies, and given climate change tendencies it is reasonable to expect that more extreme events are on their way. Discussions with CDEMA and other respondents confirmed the need to strengthen disaster preparedness in Bahamas, and indicate a possible role for BRCS in strengthening preparedness systems. Fortunately, Canadian Red Cross is bilaterally implementing a program on Preparedness for Emergency Response, and will continue this program through to March 2022. The IFRC subsequently did not focus on this area, apart from the Branch construction in Grand Bahama, prepositioning of stock in Nassau for distribution to family islands and digitalization of BRCS to support connectedness between Nassau and all branches and Island leaders.

3.3 Efficiency and effectiveness

3.3.1 Efficiency

The criteria of efficiency was assessed based on comments from staff and beneficiaries, combined with the consultants’ reading of the situation, taking into consideration their own management experiences. Efficiency is taken here to imply the timely delivery of services, with staff and volunteers carrying out their assigned tasks and operations as well. This is in contrast to effectiveness, discussed below, which implies choosing and undertaking the most productive actions, so as to optimally reach immediate and long-term desired objectives. We will start with efficiency in terms of service delivery to the beneficiaries, and then

“The Red Cross staff and volunteers were good, very patient and understanding ... the information was good, they kept calling you.... they were cordial, and tried to see what they could have done”

“I would give Red Cross a 5 out of 5, because they kept their word. I could go to the bank and get the funds, no delay. Not a long wait, they were on target”

“Communications were clear, very much so. I like that kind of communication, if they say they going to do something, they just go ahead and do it”

beneficiaries of home repair support

look at dimensions of internal organization. It should be noted that the evaluation team was not provided with full financial information nor tasked to compare these with the results.

3.3.1.1 Coping with COVID-19

After the initial response phase, in early 2020, the Red Cross was weighed down by the multiple restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which compounded the challenges of recovering from Hurricane Dorian. This was a major obstacle which affected service delivery and ongoing assessment and monitoring, and in general terms, the program did well to reach its targets in a timely manner, despite these obstacles.

But the COVID-19 pandemic also was a long-term stress that affected all staff and actors involved. For Bahamian staff and volunteers, they were coping with the overwhelming effects of Hurricane disaster on homes and communities. As was clear during interviews with volunteers, the Red Cross was able to

benefit from the motivation of these individuals who wished to help its operations to work effectively for the benefit of those most in need. Some international team members barely had time to get to know the communities, before they were shut in to working locations in Nassau, and the limitations that this imposed have been taken into account when reviewing the efficiency of operations.

3.3.1.2 Timeliness of deliveries to beneficiaries

All parties consulted concurred that payments to beneficiaries were timely, and the fact that funds were disbursed within weeks rather than months, which is a positive indication.

Communication was clear and constant, as well as timely, despite the limitations of the emergency-generated chaos and later the pandemic. Keeping beneficiaries informed during the different stages of an emergency project is never easy, and BRCS staff and volunteers did well in this regard. Comments from many respondents suggest that other agencies providing support at the time were less clear about their timelines, or made promises that were not always fulfilled.



Figure 4. Bahamas Red Cross staff in Abaco (left) and Grand Bahama (right).
Photo by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021.

3.3.1.3 Efficiency in Staff and Volunteer Management

Getting staff and volunteers quickly into position is a key requirement of an emergency operation, and in one sense the Red Cross had to have done this fairly well, to broadly achieve the program targets. Despite having a number of quality volunteers and staff on hand, BRCS was limited in its capacity and initially there was no offices and staff in place in Abaco, yet the response effort moved quickly to get people on the ground and begin work throughout the response and recovery period. Thus, the response effort was efficient, but it raises the question of the limitations of BRCS and IFRC preparedness (discussed further in section 3.4.1.2).

At the height of the Dorian emergency the Bahamas Red Cross had 16 staff members and approximately 200 active volunteers, with its head office in Nassau and branch offices in Grand Bahama and Abaco. The office in Abaco had a total of 4 staff. Now, 2 years after the hurricane, as this unprecedented recovery operation has concluded, staffing will be reduced considerably, and most likely the Abaco office will be closed down.

Under the IFRC Surge response system, a total of 55 experts were deployed to Bahamas throughout the Dorian emergency response and recovery phases. Of these, 12 were based in Grand Bahama, 9 in Abaco and 34 in the capital city, Nassau. The majority of these experts were involved in the emergency response period over the first 4 months, between September and December 2019. Several of the persons consulted shared their viewpoint that the large numbers of international experts coming in was overwhelming for the BRCS, and that integrating these persons into the teamwork, attending to their logistics, and developing working relationships with them consumed considerable time and energy.

Numerous comments were made that these IFRC experts were coming in on short rotations, in particular those working on the cash and shelter components of the operation. This resulted in insufficiently elaborated or tested systems, that then needed to be revised; this was burdensome in that it required additional time for nationals to orient them. The rotation of Surge cash staff occurred mainly in the first

4 months of the operation. While it is normal in an emergency situation for new people to come in and have their own ideas, this has to be moderated when people come in for short-term assignments. It was not always apparent that short-term staff were building on the efforts of others. While it is admirable to bring in quality individuals and it can be valuable for capacity-building of those who provide these short-term inputs, it may create more work for local staff and ultimately impinge on the success of the operation. BRCS staff and partners recommended that it would be optimal for international collaborators to stay for 6 months, some even preferred 2 years for this scale of emergency.

“In Bahamas, I will say that there were too many people. I would really love to have the count of how many experts passed through. There needs to be some continuity. Because someone come in for two weeks and then go, and some things are not handed over properly, some commitments are not fully closed, some things are left hanging. Some problems remain and are found out later on. It can be hectic.”

IFRC staffperson

People generally had high opinions of the IFRC delegates and their inputs. There were no reports of negative behaviour from IFRC staff. Several of the delegates who stayed in country longer stated that they had gone to great lengths to cultivate and maintain good working relationships with their BRCS counterparts, as they recognized that this is fundamental to the success of every disaster recovery operation. At the same time, the delegates understood that an important part of their mandate was to build capacity in the National Society, so they dedicated substantial time to mentor local BRCS staff and volunteers, who had never before been involved in an operation of that magnitude, nor the type of program activities

that it entailed. In interviews and the online survey, BRCS staff and volunteers overwhelmingly reported that through this sustained engagement with the IFRC experts in the Dorian operation, they had learned a great deal about how to become humanitarian professionals in all senses, including adherence to the organizational values.

3.3.1.4 Administrative operations

Efficient execution of core administrative processes is a mainstay for a major humanitarian operation, and presumably there is limited time to experiment or revise procedures. One of the biggest issues raised by respondents, which reportedly undermined the efficiency and effectiveness of the Dorian operation were delays caused by the centralization of key procedures at the IFRC Country Cluster Delegation in Trinidad. This was especially evident in terms of staff recruitment and procurement procedures.

In the view of a key IFRC staffperson, emergency response human resources worked effectively with both long-term Operations and Deputy Operation managers being in place 10 weeks after the Dorian, and local staff hire become more challenging once the delegate completed his mission and responsibilities transferred to the Cluster office.

3.3.1.5 Recruitment

The timing of recruitment of key staff was a major challenge raised by almost all IFRC staff interviewed. These delays affected in particular the hiring of staff and consultants, both national and international. There was a delay, for example, in recruiting a shelter delegate, even while the intervention had to proceed. There was a significant time gap between the work of the two initial PGI (Protection, Gender and Inclusion) experts in 2019, and the eventual arrival of the third PGI delegate, who arrived as the pandemic was starting - despite the fact that this incoming delegate was already an IFRC staff member who had been managing the inputs of the previous PGI experts. It was noted that many Surge delegates had left intentionally in the leadup to Christmas and then many new delegates did not expect to start their assignment until late January or early February 2020.

Given the vast experience of IFRC in humanitarian operations, this core function of rapid staff deployment would be expected to work more smoothly than it did. This would particularly be expected when these experts are persons who have already worked with IFRC, so are known and vetted.

There were similar issues with local hires. One example was the attempt to hire a local carpenter to repair damaged homes. This position was advertised internationally, apparently following standard “peacetime” human resources processes, while a local person had been quickly found who was one of the few skilled tradespersons who could do this job. As the international hiring process took many weeks, by the time the hiring decision was made in this case, that tradesperson was no longer available. In a disaster recovery situation, human resources for local hires should be managed in country, and not through the regional office with standard procedures.

It may be that there are safeguards that are put in place which lead to more lengthy recruitment procedures, but the perspective obtained from this evaluation was that there are negative consequences of these procedures in a post-disaster context.

3.3.1.6 Procurement

“Imagine I was trying to recruit some carpenter on the ground. He was even asked questions in an interview, like, tell us about three occasions on which your personality influenced the decision-making process. He can barely speak English, and the guy’s a great carpenter, they made these hiring processes so cumbersome. I found that to be frustrating and very detrimental to our program.”

IFRC staffperson

In addition to hiring processes, similar observations were made in regard to procurements, as even in small amounts those were also handled by the Regional Logistic Unit, causing frustration in the Bahamas-based team and slowing down the activities unnecessarily.

3.3.1.7 Management of Beneficiary and Volunteer Databases

The organization of beneficiary lists is another critical administrative process that is crucial to the success of an emergency operation. A robust monitoring system or database is not only crucial to efficient operations, but it is also crucial for maintaining transparency and accountability. In general, the system that was established was adequate to facilitate the timely execution of the program, however, several concerns and questions did arise.

As the evaluation team was conducting its work, it proved difficult to bring the needed information on beneficiaries together, and there was some uncertainty about which were the correct beneficiary lists, owing partly to the scale down of staff in the final weeks before the evaluation. Ideally, however, this type of information should be very clearly combined and stored in an easily-accessible location. It is true that sometimes the challenges are just around the mundane issue of having agreed places to store and update documents on a shared server or cloud server, but these challenges must be addressed. These lists, which are maintained as separate Excel sheets, did not have standardized formats between program areas (i.e. house repair, rental, small business support) and between Grand Bahamas and Abaco. Addresses were in some cases not complete (town names missing), or there were not details of businesses assisted. There was uncertainty about who was managing the database, and who could access it. While this is a difficult area for any operation, it is somewhat surprising that there were these types of uncertainties within Red Cross - which is a preeminent global humanitarian organization. Apparently, the original lists that were compiled for the emergency response served as the basis of the recovery phase, and it may be those lists were somewhat hampered by the hurried and suboptimal conditions of the early months. If this was the case, however, it would be ideal to be able to comprehensively renovate the lists for the recovery programming.

The inconsistencies in the lists created several difficulties for the evaluation, to select beneficiaries to participate in FGDs and KIIs. The consultant team needed to obtain a random selection and optimal cross-section of beneficiaries to talk to and obtain an objective view of the program, which presumably would be a normal procedure for an evaluation. The lack of consistency in geographical information made it more difficult to group participants in FGDs, leading to a lower number of beneficiaries contacted than had been the objective. The lead consultant had just a few days allocated for field visits, and the inaccuracies in the beneficiary lists that were provided compromised the best use of her time. For example, in one verification visit to a small business which had supposedly been assisted for recovery by the Red Cross, on arrival at the business the owner reported that in fact he had not received any funds from Red Cross (although he had applied). In another instance, one of the beneficiaries attending the FGD on home repair explained that in fact she had not proceeded to repair her home with the funds provided by Red Cross, as it was declared structurally unsound. Red Cross staff explain that these cases were in fact accounted for and adjustments were made, nonetheless these incidents gave the impression that the beneficiaries were not sufficiently monitored and verified by Red Cross staff.

The consultants certainly acknowledge that some of the benefits had already been paid out many months before the evaluation, and there was more mobility and instability among the participants than would normally have been the case. There was not, however, a clear round of monitoring that took place in recent months, which would have helped to verify situations of beneficiaries, update the list, and provide any comments needed for closing out the project.

These inconsistencies are significant, because a lack of full transparency and accountability -- which would be ensured by a strong database and other systems -- can unwittingly create space for sub-optimal resource allocation or even corruption. This is not to say that any instance of corruption was detected, because this was not the case; still, these examples show that there may be confusion or inconsistent monitoring, and those who wished to abuse the system could see themselves less constrained from taking advantage. It was noted that American Red Cross, as the primary funder for all the shelter programs, commissioned an external audit of all shelter beneficiaries. This was carried out by Ernst and Young accounting firm, and all issues raised were then followed up on and clarified, including collecting missing information or data.

There were similar issues with volunteer lists, as those provided were incomplete. Some had just the names and phone numbers of the volunteers, and the one provided as a master list did not include the volunteers from Abaco. Given that the volunteers are the backbone of the Red Cross in Bahamas as in any country, and that now that the Dorian operation is concluding the staffing in country will be much reduced, it is vital at this time to establish and maintain a robust database of volunteers. Also, as the recently approved BRCS Volunteering Development Strategy aims to diversify volunteers, demographic data on the volunteers is needed as a baseline for this imminent diversification.

These questions raise the subject of the most appropriate format of databases to use. It was encouraging to hear that one of the very active volunteers in Grand Bahamas is currently using a cloud-based database platform called Airtable to input volunteer lists (<https://www.airtable.com/downloads>). That was reported to be working well.

When Dorian hit the Bahamas the volunteering section of the BRCS was apparently very weak. There was no unified database on the volunteers, including the member groups in the Family Islands. For this reason, as part of the National Society Development Program this activity, the BRCS began to use the RMS system promoted by the IFRC. All volunteers will be in the same database, and their training will be recorded there as well.

As for the crucial beneficiary lists, the evaluation team did not have a strong view about the efficiency of the Excel spreadsheets used. Data was generally inputted using PDAs/tablets and ODK software, and this does allow for some efficiency. There seemed to be some autonomy and tailoring of the sheets to each of the programs in each island, with a certain degree of variability in how they were filled out. From respondent accounts, there was often inconsistent access to the internet and there may have been limitations in storing all information in the cloud in a unified file. The format used benefits from a relative simplicity, and it presumably functioned fairly well to have facilitated the generally efficient program implementation. Respondents did raise the possible issue of a beneficiary who may register once in Grand Bahama and once in Abaco, because the stand-alone lists would not detect any duplication of names. Volunteers and staff also did mention cases of people claiming benefits twice or more for individual households (this may have been more frequent during the response period) and it is acknowledged that it is only possible to completely eliminate this if there are many human resources to verify and investigate each case, which was not the case in Bahamas.

Incorporating and aggregating beneficiary lists into a database with clear access permissions and handovers from one staff member to another is always important. The consultants questioned whether Excel is the best program to use for this, or whether other systems could be applicable. There have been

examples among international developing agencies, and one good example is the database used by ACDI/VOCA in 2014:

[Information System for Management, Analysis & Reporting Timeliness \(I-SMART\) 2.0 | Food Security and Nutrition Network \(fsnnetwork.org\)](#)

Red Cross in Central America had developed a database, but it was unclear why this was not used. The consultants spoke about this issue with numerous staff who participated in the operation, but some key individuals were not available. Again, a more complex database might have provided complex for the response, but it could have been desirable to incorporate during the recovery period.

3.3.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness here was taken to mean selecting and planning interventions to best fit the needs and opportunities of the situation, and carrying them out in such a way to have quality results for beneficiaries with lasting impact. To some extent, this concept fits between efficiency and appropriateness of the operation, and looks at whether the inputs translated into meaningful outputs.

3.3.2.1 Effectiveness of Management Arrangements and Coordination within Red Cross

We start with a look at the effectiveness of the management and coordination in terms of setting up a system for timely, cost-effective operations – while at the same time contributing towards capacity-building. The project in general was quite comprehensive, integrated and adapted well to the unforeseen COVID realities. Many international experts provided inputs, working closely with local staff and volunteers.

The first internal Red Cross coordination mandate was to balance the BRCS and IFRC roles. On the one hand, it is important for the National Society to have ownership, and for local staff to utilize and apply their expertise and knowledge of the population, in everything from program design to beneficiary selection. Their involvement was positive, and their motivation to ensure compliance with the criteria, avoid cheating and ensure optimal use of the resources was admirable. At the same time, the IFRC has a duty to ensure accountability and compliance with its highest international standards, and bring the expertise of its staff to bear on any aspect of the program operation. The way that decisions are made should be harmonized to accommodate both of these sets of requirements, with operating procedures that provide a reference point to help to depersonalize any problems that may need to be sorted out. Of course, “local” and “international” are never single points of view, and the challenge of a project is always to attempt a broad representation of and contribution from both locals and internationals while maintaining an efficient operation.

The evaluation team found it challenging to understand the management system within the Red Cross family in the Bahamas, despite the relatively small geographic area and the wealth and capacity in the country. The operation was coordinated by IFRC, but American Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross had direct involvement as well, and the coordination of the various delegates and coordinators appeared to be a challenge in the fast-moving and multi-sector recovery operation. One respondent emphasized that there were multiple meetings, sessions, trainings and draft documents, much of which were aiming to develop the capacity of the National Society. They questioned whether it was appropriate to address long-term programmatic development in the midst of this disaster response, though they also acknowledged that it worked out reasonably well.

One type of situation encountered was that a BRCS field officer would directly and privately contact senior BRCS officials to lobby a particular point, while other IFRC colleagues were attempting to coordinate

overall operations. The evaluators consider it vital that emergency responses ensure full participation of a range of local participants and that the operations contribute to building local capacity, but there should be an equally strong emphasis on accountability with clear documentation of roles, responsibilities and operating procedures. This relates to issues discussed below under selection mechanisms.

Another source of difficulty was that, as normally occurs, there was a certain number of rumours and misinformation among the population at large. The IFRC Early Recovery Assessment had highlighted this as a key point under Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), referring to “lots of rumours. Information in received by word of mouth.”¹³ This can easily feed into management processes and cause complications, although it is important to take account of local concerns. In the Emergency Plan of Action, IFRC indicated that it would establish a “rumours and misinformation logbook,”¹⁴ and it is laudable that it was taking them seriously. Again, it would be rare for any one rumour to represent the concerns of all the local people and the procedures of participation and accountability should go beyond any one complaint or concern that had been expressed.

Several of the respondents emphasized the importance of developing a range of relationships in order to consult with BRCS and other local actors, and to get things done. It was difficult to assess whether there was optimal balancing of the different roles and coordination among the operational staff, as at times the staff did not explain their inputs in terms of a well-coordinated process but more as separated initiatives.

There were also inevitable comments about some staff who considered that their own roles were not what they expected or that there were insufficiencies in some parts of the operation, and this was not considered to be a serious issue nor was it particularly an area that the evaluation aimed to explore. It could be, however, that delays in hiring and turnover of delegates and supervisors did contribute to these challenges.

A final comment of the effectiveness of management systems is just to extend the above discussion of efficiency. Most respondents felt that there should be more local autonomy to approve hiring and procurements, and the evaluators could see this rationale in some of the situations cited. Consideration of this request should, however, be balanced with the accountability concerns that accompanied the establishment of these administrative systems. There was no apparent attempt to raise these issues with regional headquarters during the Dorian operation, but this could be a next step following the program evaluation.

3.3.2.2 Quality of results

Beneficiaries interviewed for the evaluation were universally very appreciative of the assistance received, and expressed satisfaction with the results achieved. Businesses were operating effectively, with clients returning and the economy returning to some normalcy. The lead evaluator interviewed a random sample of these business beneficiaries and could verify the positive results, though the evaluation did not extend to a full business evaluation. The houses were repaired and generally liveable, though some repairs were ongoing. Housing repairs had inspections done by the IFRC and CORE staff, with a particular and experienced engineer doing verifications or inspections. The owner-driven approach effectively transferred the risk to owners, but it was crucial that Red Cross does its utmost to ensure safe and quality construction results. The quality of works was considered adequate to the lead evaluator who visited a sample of them, though this did not constitute a technical review.

¹³ IFRC, Hurricane Dorian Early Recovery Assessment and Plan, 30 November 2019, p. 9.

¹⁴ IFRC, Emergency Plan of Action, The Bahamas: Hurricane Dorian, 24 September 2019, p. 46.

As mentioned above, there had been some instances of uncertainty about the benefit received vis a vis the name on a list. One FGD participant said she was on the list, had been invited to the evaluation FGD, but hadn't received the funding because their house was deemed structurally unsound and therefore ineligible for the assistance.

3.3.2.3 Selection Mechanism

A number of respondents felt that the criteria for the recovery phase programs were clear and transparent, advertised to people publicly and through the lists of response beneficiaries. Several questions were raised about the selection and vetting procedures, and the roles of different IFRC and BRCS staff and volunteers, and the evaluation team did not find a specific guideline on how to balance international and local inputs into selection.

As discussed above, both international and local staff should be involved in making decisions, documenting their reasons and working out any differences of opinion. One issue that was mentioned was the screening and vetting of applicants which was done, and though this was helpful to verify the veracity of applicants information, this may have been excessive when it got to the point of checking banking and mortgage information. The evaluators questioned whether several cases of disqualification were really merited, such as one example where a house repair applicant was residing in the house but was not the titled owner, as the owner was travelling abroad. Some cases of misunderstanding or people not being "upfront" could be adequately handled with through counselling and warnings, rather than complete disqualifications.

Another issue that was raised by a respondent was a purported tendency for local staff/volunteers to be more willing to provide project benefits to "their people", whether relatives, friends, or whatever other category. Several respondents referred to this as an understandable tendency which was difficult to address, that made it essential for international staff to be involved in guarding against misuse or misapplication of selection mechanisms. It might be helpful to describe any such tendency as nepotism, and to make the conversation move more towards ensuring integrity and guarding against corruption. Though the evaluation did not detect any instances of corruption, the way that respondents discussed this did not provide reassurance of stringency in compliance with integrity procedures. IFRC should be very strong on this point, even if it becomes difficult to apply in practice and if there may be different cultural perspectives on it. One respondent stated that the National Society has the local word on procedures, and if there are concerns there should be more of an effort to ensure that all RC stakeholders are satisfied with how the system is operating. Certainly, donors expect IFRC and National RC Societies to be a guarantee of accountability, but this concern goes beyond individual donors and speaks to the core values of integrity and the hard-won international reputation of Red Cross. The evaluators did not perceive that the culture of accountability was as well-developed and disseminated as it could have been, in this regard.

When it comes to the evaluation, any key local or international staff in an operation should be aware that they can facilitate an evaluation but should not become too much involved such as to risk tainting the objectivity of the evaluation or hamper access to any beneficiaries or other actors. This returns to the importance of beneficiary lists, which should be available in a safeguarded place which no one can tamper with, so that the evaluation team can randomly select any beneficiary.

3.3.2.4 Participation of Beneficiaries

The general openness to consultation with beneficiaries appeared positive, from the FGDs and KIIs, and with the help of the strong participation of BRCS staff and volunteers. Feedback showed that RC was seen as straightforward, fulfilling its promises and maintaining communication, which compared favourably with other organizations. This extended to highly participatory and empowering procedures with the household responsibility for reconstruction.

What the evaluation team observed, however, is that the consultation mechanisms with beneficiaries could have been more visible and formalized. There was no evidence of any systematic participation of beneficiaries in the design of the interventions, and there were no reports of engagement of local populations in program monitoring or reviews. A higher standard seems to be envisioned in documents such as the Red Cross guide to community engagement and accountability (CEA)¹⁵, and the OCHA statements on accountability¹⁶. It is crucial to note that no one local person can be an adequate representation of the locality, and the participation procedures should allow for a diversity of views to come forward. Given that participation in BRCS has evolved over time, it would be beneficial to consider how different types of local actors participate in BRCS work, from residents and community leaders to government agencies and others such as media or academic institutions.

3.3.2.5 Lesson Learning

Some of the above comments about operating systems and procedures extend naturally to a discussion of systematic learning from the Dorian recovery program. Red Cross did hold a lessons learned workshop, and that is more than is often done for many projects, so this is a very positive step. The evaluation team did feel that there were signs that there could be more effective learning from international experiences to bring to bear in a given emergency response, such as:

- Uncertainty in the beneficiary lists and databases
- Hiring and procurement procedures that were difficult to apply in practice
- Uncertainty about how evaluations should be conducted, the need for clear beneficiary lists and unhindered access to beneficiaries, etc

One of the questions the evaluators had was whether there was much sharing of learning across the program areas and between Abaco and Grand Bahama. Some forms of lessons-learned workshop held at an earlier stage could have helped to deepen the learning that was taking place. Admittedly, COVID-19 restrictions made this more difficult, but virtual meetings can still partly accomplish this.

One of the key captures of learning should be through the delegate end-of-mission handover reports. The evaluation team was unsuccessful in gaining access to any of these, so it was difficult to assess or even sample how their experience was conveyed to the ongoing operation and how their recommendations were followed. This relates to the earlier concern about the optimal way for international experts to pass on their knowledge and contribute to coherent overall management.

Recommendations For the IFRC

¹⁵ [IFRC-CEA-GUIDE-0612-LR-1.pdf \(communityengagementhub.org\)](#)

¹⁶ [Accountability to Affected People | Global Humanitarian Overview \(unocha.org\)](#)

Efficiency

Increase the use of the human resources fast track process that allows delegates to be appointed for 3 to 6 months. This helps significantly to mitigate gaps in staffing between the emergency and recovery operations.

Increase delegation of authority to locally-based IFRC operations manager for local hires and for purchasing thresholds: The Fast Track Authorization process used by UNDP for emergency response and recovery may be an relevant example to follow.

From a programmatic perspective, consider longer assignments for IFRC delegates in this level of emergency, to avoid excessive turnover and related host National Society fatigue, except in a limited number of cases for key technical or training inputs such as interventions like house repair that require more time. If current administrative procedures make this unrealistic, these should be reviewed in terms of whether and how they can be modified to best support program and national capacity-building

Consider systems to improve handover between delegates when they come in for short missions, and promote more complementarity in their Terms of Reference and – if possible – in their skills, so that their inputs are synergistic

Review and strengthen the approach to building a beneficiary database, with a view to making it more comprehensive and accessible, while maintaining ease of use. The database of project beneficiaries should be designed to extract reports to facilitate routine monitoring by project staff, as well as an endline survey.

For the Bahamas Red Cross Society (BRCS)

Build upon the newly implemented Resource Mobilization System (RMS) software, currently in use to track all Nassau-based volunteers. Increase efforts to ensure that volunteers based on the Family Islands, especially Grand Bahama, are fully documented and tracked.

Include in the RMS a range of demographic variables, and at a minimum the following fields: name, gender, age, location (town and island); ethnicity, phone number, email, profession, training completed, last date of volunteer activity and any other variable that the BRCS deems relevant.

As Airtable is already being used to track volunteers in Grand Bahamas, assess this platform to determine how it can be best applied.

Outline Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as to who in BRCS is responsible for inputting data on beneficiaries, updating it, and who has access to the data. This SOP should be published and circulated widely.

Effectiveness

For the IFRC

Give further thought to the ways that accountability and capacity-building are balanced in the roles of National Societies, IFRC and international organizations that participate in an emergency operation.

Ensure that the quality of house repair and business support interventions continue to be adequately technically assessed, as was done in the case of the house repairs. Support to small businesses could

require additional technical reviews in terms of the viability of businesses and/or desirability of additional training or assistance.

Reinforce systems and awareness-raising of the need to prevent undue local influence over the selection and de-selection of project beneficiaries, while taking into account local perceptions of beneficiary selection processes.

Communicate to the general public even more extensively about the selection criteria for projects.

Delegate greater authority to IFRC delegates in country, for local hires and purchases. Authorization level of \$50,000 USD is recommended, in a post-disaster context.

Involve Caribbean academics as advisors, to help support programs and more quickly understand local cultural dynamics, to improve the quality of PGI activities.

For better continuity between staff coming in and out on rotation, ensure a high standard of handover report, to be stored by IFRC and made available as needed to incoming staff and to evaluators.

Ensure that the IFRC Assessment Lead remains in country long enough to support the formulation of the EPA, so that valuable information is not lost between the Surge rotations, and to better align the EPA with the ERAP

3.4 Coverage and Inclusion

The Red Cross Movement is widely known to excel at the identification of, and support to, the most vulnerable groups in a given country context. In fact, this is one of its strongest comparative advantages, compared to other humanitarian actors, and is grounded in its reliance on the National Societies for their deep local knowledge and on-the-ground approach. Those who are most vulnerable differ may vary from country to country, and even within the country in different locations, thus it is imperative to conduct a country-specific vulnerability assessment in each operation.

This section examines the coverage and inclusion of various population groups in the Hurricane Dorian recovery operation in Bahamas. While overall the coverage was adequate, there are some concerns about a bias towards relative exclusion of the Haitian migrant population, and also the lowest income groups.

3.4.1 Overall Coverage

3.4.1.1 Exclusion through prerequisites for applicants

Inevitably, resources for any disaster recovery operation are limited, and decisions have to be made about the most impactful use of these limited resources. In the Dorian operation, a series of design decisions for the recovery phase tended to favour the middle class or lower middle class, in terms of the requirements to apply for the various recovery activities. These design decisions are outlined below:

The rental assistance program required applicants to have a local bank account, which presumably excluded undocumented migrants.

The home repair program required person to be homeowners, skewing toward the middle class. It excluded persons whose houses had sustained major structural damage during the hurricane, who were in a more vulnerable situation for that reason. Home ownership, and again the requirement to have a bank account, automatically excluded undocumented migrants.

The small business recovery support was available and in fact targeted to lower income groups, as it focused on small and micro businesses, with from 0 to 5 employees, and annual revenues of not more than \$100,000 BDS. However, it required applicants to hold a business licence or vendor's permit, which excluded the most precarious poor, even some of the working poor, and once again excluded undocumented migrants.

It can be argued that it falls to the government to support the most vulnerable and impoverished sectors of the disaster-affected population, and that IFRC did not have the magnitude of funds and services that these groups would have required for their recovery. This is certainly understandable, and in line with seeking the most efficient and effective use of limited resources. One informant noted that the exclusion of houses with significant structural damage was based on lessons learned the hard way in previous IFRC recovery interventions.

3.4.1.2 Consideration of Haitian migrant population

The Haitian migrant population in Bahamas is estimated at 39,000 as per the 2010 government census, comprising roughly 10 percent of the population¹⁷. According to a government survey conducted in 2018, they made up the majority of residents in The Mudd and The Pea shantytowns in Abaco, which were completely demolished shortly after Hurricane Dorian hit¹⁸. Haitian migrants have been coming to the Bahamas for decades seeking work, often working for minimum wage or lower, which amounts to 10 times the wage rate they would earn in Haiti, enabling them to send much needed remittances back home to their families. They work in jobs that most Bahamians disdain, with Haitian men often working as carpenters, agriculture or construction laborers, and in landscaping, while Haitian women work in small shops or selling items at the roadside¹⁹. Bahamian

“The team in Abaco knew the migrants were fearful, because they're illegal so they figured immigration would round them up and send them off back to their country. So they moved into a wooded area, and we had to go into that wooded area to give them food and make sure they had whatever they needed. Once they saw the Red Cross, they were okay to come out of the wooded area to receive the items. Anybody else that came, they didn't come out because they feared, but as I said, we are a strong brand, a known brand. They know what the Red Cross is all about, what we do. So they felt comforted to come out, because we did so much work with them in their community before Dorian. “

Terez Curry, President of BRCS

¹⁷ Bertin M. Louis, “Haitian migrants face deportation and stigma in hurricane-ravaged Bahamas,” The Conversation, 3 December 2019, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/116721/discussions/5491566/haitian-migrants-face-deportation-and-stigma-hurricane-ravaged>

¹⁸ Ava Turnquest, “IOM: Deported Haitians traumatized, cannot make a living,” 6 November 2019, <https://ewnews.com/iom-deported-haitians-traumatized-cannot-make-a-living>

¹⁹ Bertin M. Louis, *ibid.*

traffickers reportedly charge \$1,000 BSD to bring each person into the country. Obtaining a work permit in Bahamas is a difficult and costly legal process, which requires an employer sponsor, and accordingly most do not manage to obtain a work permit.

When Dorian battered Abaco, the shantytowns were virtually decimated, then completely razed under government orders after the hurricane. Haitians in the Bahamas are subject to frequent discrimination and ongoing hostility, as happens in many countries with immigrant workers from neighboring countries. A nationalist group called “Operation Sovereign Bahamas” demanded that the government evict hundreds of Haitians from a gymnasium used as a shelter for hurricane victims in Nassau, with flag-waving protesters shouting, “we want you out of our country.”²⁰ The IOM reported that more than 340 Haitians were deported after the storm, and many reported physical and sexual abuse at the hands of immigration authorities. The majority returned to the slums in northern Haiti, plagued by food scarcity, unemployment and gang violence.²¹

The Early Recovery Assessment and Plan (ERAP) carried out by the IFRC Surge team in Bahamas clearly identifies the undocumented Haitian migrant population as among the most vulnerable in the aftermath



Figure 5. Haitian pastor interviewed in Abaco. Photo by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021

of Hurricane Dorian, with need for support from IFRC for WASH, shelter and protection. The ERAP notes that the key point for the PGI sector in this operation was “evidence of xenophobia in the Bahamian population towards Haitian community”²² It also noted the sharp divisions between many Bahamians and Haitians, the political sensitivity of their presence in the country, and recommended IFRC advocate for improvement in their status and treatment. While the ERAP had numerous valuable observations and recommendations, unfortunately it was not delivered by the consultants to IFRC in a timely fashion, as it was submitted only in April 2020, 7 months after the hurricane.

The poverty rate among Haitians living in Bahamas is 28%, which is 3 times higher than the Bahamian average, according the latest Household Income and Expenditure Report produced by Bahamas’ Ministry of Finance. This

is one indicator of this group’s vulnerability to the shocks brought on by major disasters such as this one.

After conferring with various informants, based on anecdotal comments, the evaluation team noted that during the emergency phase an estimated 50% of the unconditional cash assistance was provided to the Haitian community in Bahamas²³. There were also concerted efforts by BRCS staff and volunteers to reach

²⁰ Bertin M. Louis, *ibid.*

²¹ Ava Turnquest, *ibid.*

²² IFRC, Hurricane Dorian Early Recovery Assessment and Plan, 30 November 2019, p. 8.

²³ As explained by James Bellamy, IFRC Operations Manager for Hurricane Dorian.

out to them through Creole-speaking outreach workers, and information materials provided in Creole language. The two Haitian priests interviewed stated that the Haitians were very thankful for the support received from the Red Cross. However, despite these efforts many Haitians were still fearful to come forward and receive assistance, due to the omnipresent threat of deportation.

However, in the recovery activities that this evaluation is reporting on, there was no data collected or evidence found of any Haitian migrants benefitting from any of these programs: rental assistance, home repair and small business recovery. This is partly because the demographic variables of ethnic origin and immigration status simply were not tracked, which meant that the level of participation of migrants in this program was not visible. As a proxy measure, the evaluation team scanned the beneficiary lists provided for any francophone names, but found none. Our conclusion is that no Haitian migrants were able to benefit from those programs. This is a shortcoming in the coverage of the recovery operation.

Also of concern is a generalized animosity noted from many Bahamians towards the Haitian migrants. One of the IFRC staff referred to this as “bad blood,” and noted that it leads to recurring discriminatory treatment. This is commonly found in many countries which have significant migrant populations arriving from countries with comparatively worse economic prospects and lower incomes. These negative sentiments should be brought to the surface and addressed through advocacy efforts, given that the Haitian migrants are an integral part of the society and the economy in Bahamas – clearly many Bahamians employ them – so it would be reasonable to accept them as such, and acknowledge that they have exactly the same human rights as Bahamian citizens.

“CDEMA has already indicated that migrant populations, and particularly undocumented migrants, need to be viewed as a category of the vulnerable persons group, because there are very special considerations related to them. They generally show a reluctance to come forward. This is an area that needs specific attention and focus in the whole disaster management discussion.”

Elizabeth Riley, Executive Director, CDEMA

The lead evaluator interviewed 2 pastors in Abaco who work with the Haitian community, to learn about any issues of concern among the Haitians, in terms of the post-hurricane recovery. The issues mentioned were the difficulty in securing legal immigrant status and the risk of deportation, as well as the same losses and hardships experienced by many Bahamians due to the destructive impact of the hurricane. While in Abaco, the lead

evaluator also visited a remote area known as The Farm, where Haitians were told by government to settle after their previous shanty towns were demolished. This new settlement is not a shanty town, rather the houses are small but well-built and adequately spaced. The Farm is located many kilometres outside the town of Marsh Harbour, but close to the Treasure Cay, an upscale residential neighbourhood which is source of employment for members of the Haitian community.

Recommendations

For the IFRC

Develop a Caribbean-wide policy and standards on inclusion of undocumented migrants in post-disaster support projects, indicating linkages to Red Cross core principles. Also develop associated advocacy plan and generate debate on this issue.

Promote a moratorium on deporting migrants, in keeping with international agreements and conventions. There should be a special effort to accommodate migrants and not use an emergency to tighten controls on them, as they are more vulnerable.

For future disaster recovery operations, include specific activities to target beneficiaries who are undocumented migrants.

3.4.1.3 Other vulnerable groups

The Emergency Plan of Action indicates that the following vulnerability criteria will be used to select the beneficiaries:

- Single headed households
- Pregnant member in the family
- Families with children
- Older adults
- People with disabilities
- Vulnerable groups (with special needs, injured members, minority communities)
- Severely affected by the disaster

A positive innovation was the use of the “Washington Group Questions” to determine disability status, which is considered best practice as a quick and low-cost way to collect data, allowing disaggregation by disability status. These are a series of concrete questions developed by the United Nations Statistical Commission which do not use the term “disability,” therefore they are specific enough to be effective, but tend to maintain the dignity of the beneficiaries by not labelling them “disabled.”

However, as the evaluation team encountered difficulties in obtaining data, it was not possible for them to learn how many of the applicants and beneficiaries met these vulnerability criteria. Some internal folders created by previous delegates could not be accessed by the Operations Manager once all the delegates had left the country.

For the small business recovery program, the [Baseline and Endline Final Report](#) indicates that applicants were scored in part based on the vulnerability characteristics of the household, as follows:

- Size of household
- Gender/age composition
- Special needs of household

However, the evaluation team was not able to obtain information about how many of the beneficiaries selected met these criteria. Nor were these criteria explained in greater detail, and they are not self-evident. It was not entirely clear who is interpreting these criteria, who double checks that beneficiaries meet them, and if there is documentation of this interpretation.

3.4.1.4 Protection, gender and inclusion

A number of challenges interfered with the extent of the work on protection, gender and inclusion (PGI) undertaken during the Dorian recovery program. Firstly, there was a succession of three PGI delegates who each stayed for a short time – the first one for 2 months, the second one for 2 months, and then the third one for 5 months. Unfortunately, there was a 3-month gap between the second and third delegates, due to the length of time that the human resources processes took. As the nature of PGI work requires in-depth analysis and promoting behaviour change over time, in order to be effective, it would be preferable to have a single person who remains for an extended time in the country, to build relationships and gain trust and influence. Ideally, this person would have previous experience in the Caribbean, or familiarity with the local culture, as it takes time in any context to understand the complex cultural dynamics around gender and inclusion.

The second challenge was the COVID pandemic. When the third PGI delegate arrived, she was able to quickly visit Abaco and Grand Bahama, and then was under COVID-19 lockdown for the remainder of her time in country. This made it difficult to visit the evacuation shelters, where typically many of the gender and protection issues are most acute in the post-disaster situation. Also, she was based in the capital city, Nassau, rather than on one of the most affected islands. She completed the final month of her assignment at IFRC headquarters in Geneva. At the same time, there appear to be different perspectives on the reasons for the lack of mobility of the delegate. It is understandable that operating procedures in the pandemic may have caused some uncertainty, but a clearly stated policy may have created clarity about expectations and responsibilities in this context.

IFRC decided not to conduct a gender analysis of the post-disaster situation in Bahamas, as CARE had already completed a rapid gender analysis. However, the analysis done by CARE was conducted remotely and based only on secondary data, therefore the IFRC could have built on that substantially with additional analysis based on its ongoing presence in Bahamas, which implied access to much more information, interaction and observation.

The third PGI delegate recounted that she spent most of her time conducting online training with BRCS staff and volunteer and mainstreaming PGI considerations into the various activities, as well as holding confidential one-on-one conversations with BRCS staff and volunteers in an effort to address and discuss gender stereotypes and discriminatory views of the Haitian migrant population. It was not possible for the evaluation team to obtain any reports prepared by the PGI delegates.

3.4.1.5 Gender strategy

It is good practice for any international organization to include a gender strategy in its post-disaster recovery program or operation, as that enables it to be more effective in supporting the affected population, in particular women, who are normally at a disadvantage and comprise approximately 50% of the population in any location. A solid gender strategy must be based on disaggregated data and also gender data (slightly different data categories) and should include both quantitative and qualitative analysis, exploring aspects such as intra-household dynamics, prevalence and patterns of gender-based violence and the relative vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups of women through an intersectional lens. In addition, as part of the “build back better” approach, the recovery activities provide an opportunity to make visible and increase women’s leadership in the recovery process.

In the Dorian recovery operation, based on the information made available to the consulting team, unfortunately there was no apparent gender strategy, nor gender analysis undertaken by IFRC staff or delegates. IFRC decided to use the Rapid Gender Analysis undertaken by CARE rather than develop its own gender analysis. In addition to being conducted remotely, the CARE analysis focuses on the macro

level and does not provide enough detail to guide recovery activities for IFRC. With a succession of 3 PGI delegates in Bahamas during this operation, for a combined total of 9 months, it was a missed opportunity for IFRC in that they could have developed a much more tailored and nuanced gender analysis for this operation, to inform its recovery strategy and program. Even though the 3rd delegate unfortunately was under lockdown in Nassau for most of her time, nevertheless she could have arranged Zoom interviews with key informants, community leaders, women's NGOs and others, to build an analysis of the gender inequalities and dynamics in the Bahamas after Dorian.

There did not seem to be any written report on the PGI considerations in this operation, and the handover report from the final PGI delegate in this operation was not made available to the evaluation team. The difficulty in obtaining this report, and the lack of clarity on who in IFRC has it, raises question about how much it was in fact used. No information whatsoever was reported on the LGBTQ+ population, which may have specific issues and vulnerabilities.

According to the data provided, the Dorian recovery operation did benefit women to a great extent, as 81% of the rental assistance funds were provided to female-headed households, and 64% of the home repair support provided to female-headed households. This is appropriate, as women are more likely to be poor than men in Bahamas: poverty rates for women are 9.7%, while they are 7.9% for men (Ministry of Finance). However, it would also be important to have additional details on the women, such as age, migrant or not, and other demographic data to ensure that the beneficiaries selected are the most vulnerable among women.

Recommendations

For IFRC Caribbean

For any future IFRC disaster recovery operation in the Caribbean, consider hiring experts from the University of the West Indies (UWI) Gender Studies department, to prepare a gender analysis and provide recommendations.

Ensure that future disaster recovery operations have a clear gender analysis and strategy tailored to the context, which can be adjusted and updated as needed. This gender strategy should include attention to intersectional aspects of gender identity and status, intra-household dynamics, and the situation of the LGBTQ+ community.

Review internally UNDP's "8-point agenda: practical, positive outcomes for women and girls in crisis" for a succinct overview of the main gender considerations in a post-disaster situation.

3.4.2 The elderly

Arriving in Bahamas two years after the hurricane, the evaluation team found that the recovery was to some extent ongoing and also uneven, in that some affected families had managed to advance more rapidly than others, due to a number of factors. In the course of the focus group discussions and the verification visits to recipients of the home repair support, it was noted that elderly couples living on their own are often struggling at present, in order to complete their home repair and recover their livelihoods. In any funding proposals aiming at completing of the post-hurricane recovery, this group should be taken into consideration as presently among the most vulnerable.



Figure 7. Elderly beneficiary struggling to recover his farm in Abaco. Photo by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021.

Recommendations

For the IFRC

Take a systematic approach to implementing actions determined under the Early Recovery Assessment and Plan, and reporting against that Plan

Analyse and document the factors as to why the OSCAR case management system did not work in the case of this operation and the Bahamas context. Consider alternative case management systems which may be more suitable.

Advocate with the government and donors for support to those with houses completely destroyed

Ensure longer duration and continuity of the PGI work for greater effectiveness, ideally one expert to stay in country for one year in this scale of operation

3.4.2.1 Sustainability

The evaluation finds that the recovery activities in the Dorian operation did in fact provide a substantial level of sustainable benefits for the affected population.

Rental assistance alleviated financial hardship and related anxieties for those who received this assistance, and gave them some time to reorganize their lives and income sources, in order to obtain longer term stable housing. It allowed these families to focus on the path forward for establishing a sustainable living situation.



Figure 8. Beneficiaries of home repair support. Photos by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021.

In the focus groups held in Grand Bahama and Abaco on the home repair, recipients of this support invariably expressed their gratitude and satisfaction with the timely Red Cross support. Verification visits to randomly selected homes that were repaired under this program revealed that all these homes were now liveable, with the roofs repaired and sanitation facilities functioning well. There was of course, variation in the extent to which each home was entirely fixed up and restored to its former state, depending on the range of personal and other resources available to each family. Several families had on hand construction materials, such as sheetrock, plywood, or new windows, which had not yet been installed due to difficulty in finding available laborers on their island. Compared to the cost of construction materials and labour in Bahamas, and the severe damage to many homes, the amount provided to homeowners by IFRC – ranging from \$6,000 to \$10,000 – was not expected to cover the full repair costs, but rather focused on the basics for liveability: at least one watertight room, and functioning kitchen and bathroom facilities. To complement the modest Red Cross contribution, many homeowners also received funds from CORE, and assistance from other NGOs such as Samaritan’s Purse, which installed some zinc roofs.

Beneficiaries noted that the prices of most construction materials had tripled in cost since the hurricane, and had remained at that high level. There was also some scarcity of materials, in part because many hardware stores were looted in the immediate aftermath of Dorian. Given these limitations on the availability of funds, IFRC’s choice of owner-driven home repair was very appropriate, as homeowners would clearly be the most motivated to make the optimal use of all available resources – including labour by family members in some cases - to fix as much of the damage as possible on their home.

The support to small business recovery was decisive for a number of recipients in enabling them to keep their businesses open and operating. Again, the modest amount provided by IFRC – ranging from \$4,500 to \$6,000 – was not sufficient cover absolutely all of the required costs, so business owners had to supplement the IFRC contribution with savings or bank loans. Beneficiaries of these grants reported that they spent the IFRC funds on replacing furniture and equipment destroyed by the hurricane, restocking goods and supplies, paying staff salaries, and repairing damage to their premises. All of the businesses visited for verification in Abaco and Grand Bahamas were found to be operating and receiving at least

small numbers of clients. On consultation, were across the board the business owners were all optimistic that these businesses would remain sustainable over the medium term.

Beneficiaries stated that the online training on small business management as part of this operation was hugely valuable to them, covering aspects that they had been unaware of, and which will be decisive for keeping their businesses viable and on track. All concurred that the trainer hired by RC was highly engaging and dynamic, and that her pedagogical approach was effective.

“the course on livelihoods was an eye-opener, it served for the good in so many ways. All who participated came out the better. It was an absolute necessary tool for any business, the team was excellent, and it was methodologically laid out, not done willy nilly”

“the livelihoods training was amazing, the instructor was very, very lively, she made it exciting”

comments from beneficiaries of support for small business recovery

Of course, the overwhelming factor undermining the full recovery of small businesses, and even the viability of covering the costs of home ownership, is the severe impact of the COVID pandemic on the economy of the Bahamas. As with many small Caribbean Island countries, Bahamas is heavily dependent on tourism, with 28% of the country’s GDP coming from this sector in 2019 prior to Hurricane Dorian (IDB).

At the time of this evaluation, Bahamas had recently re-opened cautiously to international tourists, and some were trickling into the country. The well-

designed Bahamas Health Visa system had been established to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission, while allowing tourists in to provide some oxygen to the struggling local economy.

Given the colossal damage to the country’s economy from Hurricane Dorian – estimated by IDB at \$35 million USD in losses and damages -- and the consequent multi-year time frame for achieving recovery, the support that IFRC provided to some of the most vulnerable was a strategic use of modest resources with a definite boost to sustainability.



Figure 9. Owner of restaurant destroyed by hurricane Dorian, in previous location and rebuilding in new site. Photos by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021.

3.4.3 Preparedness Capacities

This evaluation did not dwell on the emergency response, and yet there are aspects that relate to the recovery program. In the focus groups discussions, stories were shared about water reaching the ceilings of the houses, and several persons having to escape by swimming, or in boats due to the extensive flooding and storm surge. With these situations recounted, it is apparent that not all of the population in the hurricane’s path was evacuated prior to the hurricane’s landfall. Consultation with CDEMA, the regional disaster management agency, indicated that not all had been willing to evacuate when requested to do so, even when transportation was provided by the government, and that the official messaging may not have been effective in conveying clearly to them the magnitude of the hazard. There may have also been other factors which undermined effective evacuation in this case. The high death toll from Hurricane Dorian in Bahamas – 74 persons dead and 232 missing – is unusual in the Caribbean region and begs for redoubling efforts to improve the country’s preparedness capacities. Early warning systems are a weakness in the country’s disaster preparedness, as CDEMA has also noted.

“The water was over the roof, we had to swim out during the hurricane.”

“It was a very scary time, so much water, we had to break a hole and escape through the roof.”

Participants in focus group discussion on home repair in Abaco

CDEMA assisted NEMA in conducting a thorough After-Action Review following hurricane Dorian, which no doubt was instrumental for Bahamas as it seeks to bolster its preparedness capacities in light of the lessons learned from the Hurricane Dorian experience. IFRC and Bahamas Red Cross should also seek to support this work and help secure resources to invest in some crucial aspects of preparedness so that Bahamas is in a better position in the face of the next incoming hurricane.

Disaster recovery encompasses the concept of “building back better” on many levels, and therefore feeds into disaster preparedness as part of the ongoing disaster risk management cycle.

During the field visit to Bahamas for this evaluation, the evaluation team also observed significant debris piles still found scattered around, especially in Abaco, along with houses destroyed beyond repair and seemingly abandoned. To complete the post-Dorian recovery, this debris should be collected, and the ruined houses demolished, otherwise these materials will become dangerous projectiles caught up in the wind of the next hurricane to hit the country. This is one example of the overlap between recovery and preparedness. In this context, it is acknowledged that this was not the responsibility of Red Cross to clear debris, and other actors (principally the Bahamas government) probably had not been able to fulfil this function as agreed. Still, this gap affects the viability of Red Cross inputs, and there should be some agreement or mechanism in place to draw attention to any such gaps.

The Emergency Plan of Action had suggested a “Waste to Work” program as conducted in the small Eastern Caribbean islands following Hurricane Irma, which recycled debris into construction materials for rebuilding. Given the persistent high levels of unemployment in Bahamas due to the combination of the hurricane impacts and the pandemic, such a program could have been timely and helped to generate

temporary income, in addition to facilitating the rebuilding. In this sense, it could have been a triple win: improved preparedness, environmental protection through recycling, and local income generation.

Recommendations

For the IFRC

Support capacity-building on disaster preparedness with CDEMA, NEMA and other stakeholders, and help BRCS incorporate this as a major part of their mandate and brand moving forward.

Assist Bahamas Red Cross and NEMA to develop a funding proposal focusing on strengthening the country's disaster preparedness, in key aspects including early warning systems, evacuation drills and plans, completion of debris clearance and other aspects as detected in the After-Action Review.

Advocate with Bahamas government to focus resources on debris clearance as a top priority among preparedness activities.

Consider implementation of a Waste to Work program in future disaster recovery operations, based on the best practice from the Hurricane Irma recovery program.

3.4.4 Transition from Emergency to Recovery

3.4.6.1 Working definitions

It is worth noting here the difference between the disaster response and disaster recovery phases. The response or emergency phase initiates immediately after the disaster hits, and focuses primarily on life-saving actions, temporary arrangements, and repair of essential infrastructure. The next phase following the response is disaster recovery, which focuses on a return to normalcy in all areas of individual and social life, including housing, schooling, and income-generating activities. In reality there is always some overlap between these two phases, as planning for recovery must begin during the response phase, and there are inevitably some residual unmet needs from the response phase which linger into the recovery. It is widely acknowledged in the international humanitarian community that recovery should be undertaken with a view to “building back better,” which in turn feeds into the subsequent phase of the disaster risk management cycle, which is disaster preparedness.



Figure 10. Recipients of support for small business recovery. Photos by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021.

3.4.5 National BRCS Capacity

The evaluation team considered the aspirational concept of one Red Cross, encompassing coordination between the IFRC staff and delegates, the National Society, and the other National Societies present for the operation. Viewpoints were gathered through KIIs with BRCS staff and the survey with volunteers.

“Yes, capacity of BRCS improved. Persons are now trained, they could go anywhere. They are educated on what type of program can be done, and how to do it efficiently”

BRCS staffperson

Prior to Hurricane Dorian, the BRCS was a small welfare-based organization, primarily undertaking activities such as Meals on Wheels and first aid training. Suddenly, with the onslaught of the very powerful Hurricane Dorian the BRCS was required to dramatically shift its work to a level of higher urgency and quickly learn many new programming approaches. This was both empowering and overwhelming for BRCS staff and volunteers. The main challenge at present is how to retain the capacity acquired by BRCS during the Dorian operation.

3.4.5.1 Role of BRCS volunteers

With the imminent downsizing of BRCS staff and office presence due to the conclusion of the Dorian recovery operation, the role of volunteers – who always form the backbone of every Red Cross National Society – will inevitably become even more prominent in Bahamas. Taking into account these circumstances, the BRCS approved in 2020 a Volunteering Development Strategy. Two of the main threads of this strategy, which are relevant to this evaluation, entail getting volunteers to undertake more meaningful and high level work, and diversifying the volunteer base in Bahamas.



Figure 11. Volunteer in Abaco office (left), staff in Grand Bahama office (right).
Photos by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, July 2021.

In order to hear the viewpoints and obtain a better understanding of the current situation of the BRCs volunteers, the evaluation team held a Zoom meeting with volunteers (10 participated), and conducted a brief online survey with volunteers (35 participated). For the online survey, 82% of respondents were women, the majority having volunteered with BRCs from between 1 to 5 years, and the majority in the 45 to 60 year age range. In the focus group, 100% of participants were women. The activities that they had been involved in during the operation were mainly distribution of relief items and cash, provision of psycho-social support, and various low-level administrative tasks.

The key findings of these two consultation methods include:

- 70% stated that they had very much gained greater capacity by participation in the Dorian operation, and another 14% had somewhat gained more capacity
- 96% of volunteers surveyed reported that as a result of the experience with the Hurricane Dorian recovery operation, Bahamas is now in a better position to face the next hurricane
- Volunteers' capacity was built in terms of systems (use of ODK and distribution systems) and programming approaches (cash-based assistance and owner-driven home repair)
- They also reported that many of the new skills they learned in the Dorian operation related to humanitarian professional ethics, including: ability to work with a variety of managers; dealing with different personalities; how to assist persons and listen to their experience; confidentiality; the importance of teamwork and showing respect for all
- Some concerns were expressed about how to retain and practice this capacity

Some volunteers were converted to staff during the emergency and recovery phase, which is a logical progression for the top performing volunteers, and which brings a change in status that must be duly acknowledged.

An incident was recounted with one of the international staff, in which there was an ongoing conflict with a local volunteer which was escalated to the Director General level. This situation shows that when a person is acting in a role with authority over decisions regarding distribution of resources, there must be a clear handover and responsibility arrangements.

Another issue was noted between BRCS and IFRC, in terms of how much authority BRCS should have over final decisions on matters such as vulnerability criteria and beneficiary selection. BRCS are of course familiar with local communities and individuals, whereas the IFRC staff are largely accountable for the use of donor funds. Any diverging opinions and proposals on such matters should be discussed openly and transparently in committee meetings, with documented minutes from these meetings. This should then translate into clear guidelines and procedures, and failure to adhere to those should be highlighted and again discussed.

Recommendations

For the IFRC

Support BRCS to develop an action plan for development of volunteers, to support the recently approved strategy for volunteer development. This should be developed in a highly consultative manner, and especially to reinforce specific skills and capacities gained in the Dorian operation, including: psychosocial support, management of dead bodies, use of ODK system, cash-based assistance program modalities, and owner-driven housing repair

Seek opportunities to deploy BRCS staff and volunteers in other emergency recovery operations throughout the Caribbean in the near future, to practice new skills learned in the Dorian operation.

When COVID-19 related travel restrictions are lifted, seek opportunities to deploy BRCS staff and volunteers in Pacific SIDS emergencies (with proper cultural briefings beforehand).

Clarify in written instructions who is in charge of specific decisions and resources. These instructions should be signed by both the Director General of BRCS and the appropriate IFRC official, and should be updated every time a new person is designated to that role.

3.5 Coordination

3.5.1 Setting the design and goals

National and international partners were closely involved in perfecting the program design. The coordination with CORE was complementary to the IFRC support and resulted in larger amounts funding, as was the case also with the Grand Bahama Port Authority. The IFRC worked closely with CORE in this operation, but activities and duties were segregated. The evaluation team was not sure if there had been a systematic process for engaging and vetting potential partners. This is important especially given the turnover of staff, as it becomes less clear who made critical decision – such as selection of partner organizations - at specific point in time. It was not clear if Red Cross has a procedure for this, refer to example from Save the Children: [Partnership engagement guide per 7Dec2012 \(savethechildren.net\)](https://www.savethechildren.net/publications/partnership-engagement-guide-per-7Dec2012)

3.5.2 Interagency Coordination

The coordination was found to be generally harmonious, within the constellation of RC movement partners, national authorities and NGOs partners on the ground in Dorian's aftermath and through the recovery. For the IFRC staff and delegates who remained in country for a longer term, strong relationships were built. This partly depended on the personalities, most of whom were very professional and well-liked. Key individuals had worked together previously in Haiti, which helped to quickly establish and consolidate the partnerships. This was fortuitous and facilitated the success of the Dorian operation,

however clear written partnership agreements are nonetheless necessary, as this may not always be the case in subsequent operations.

There was a minor concern, as a partnership agreement was not in place with CORE. IFRC worked closely with CORE, but activities and duties were segregated. Ultimately the collaboration between IFRC and CORE worked smoothly, however there was no MOU between the two agencies, even though there was one between IFRC and Port Authority.

3.5.3 Coherence with National Strategies and Standards

Coordination with government was adequate, although the RC's main partners during the recovery phase were non-governmental. It is not apparent whether RC did everything possible to strengthen the working relationship with government.

The RC worked within policy frameworks and adhered to building codes and national procurement processes.

Disaster response and preparedness overall is an area that Red Cross should be concerned about and continue to strengthen in Bahamas.

“It seemingly went well, we had multiple coordination meetings, lengthy coordination meetings. But never, in my experience, was there anything that came across that was either insurmountable or which led to any kind of responses on the part of National Society in particular, to say they felt as if it was an affront to their sovereignty, or anything like that. It seemed as if it was an opportunity for them to learn, so they would have allowed for the Federation to coordinate the system as best they could. I think normally, that's how it ought to be once the Federation is in country, through the National Society.”

staffperson from RC movement

Recommendations

For IFRC Caribbean

Ensure that MOUs are signed promptly with all implementation partners.

4 Conclusions

This external evaluation was conducted, as much as possible, on the basis of information and data, observations on the ground and triangulation among the various opinions and explanations offered by the range of persons consulted. The timing of this evaluation, two years after the hurricane, is ideal for assessing the lasting impact of the operation, and the durability of the results over time.

In conclusion, the evaluation team finds that the Hurricane Dorian Recovery Operation led by IFRC and BRCS was highly efficient and effective, and showed agility in adapting to the unexpected complications of the COVID-19 pandemic. The contributions to beneficiaries were well used and appear sustainable, however lamentably the ongoing global pandemic threatens that sustainability into the future. The design

was largely relevant and appropriate, and indeed can serve as a model for other agencies in terms of post-disaster recovery programming. Coordination was harmonious and effective, although this is in part due to the synergies obtained through the constellation of several key persons who have worked together smoothly in previous emergencies. At the same time, much of the coordination's success can be attributed to the professionalism, emotional intelligence and skillfulness of the RC movement staff.

At the same time, this evaluation has detected some shortcoming and offers specific recommendations for addressing these, in particular in the areas of data management, better inclusion of vulnerable groups, and the need for an explicit gender strategy.

Finally, it was found that policy and advocacy from IFRC are needed on some key issues going forward, so that Bahamas is better positioned for the inevitable next major hurricane, and so that on a sub-regional level lessons can be learned and practices and approaches refined. This evaluation can be used as a discussion point with Bahamas government and in any relevant sub-regional discussion fora or meetings.

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Annex 1
List of key informants interviewed

Name	Detail	Organization
James Bellamy	Deputy Operations Manager	IFRC
Roxana Trigo	CVA/Livelihoods Delegate	IFRC
Aengus Ryan	Shelter Delegate	IFRC
Adrian Ferrandis	Livelihoods Delegate	IFRC
Laxman Chhetry	Construction Advisor	IFRC
Hamid Khan	Shelter Delegate	IFRC
Carter Stone	Field Coordinator	IFRC
Kaisa Laitila	PGI Delegate	IFRC
Dante Moses	CVA RIT	IFRC/Dominica Red Cross
Brandon McFarlane	Country representative	Canadian Red Cross
Amy Bruin	Country representative	American Red Cross
Stephanie Barr	Branch Administrator, Grand Bahama	Bahamas Red Cross
Christine Lightbourne	Branch Administrator, Abaco	Bahamas Red Cross
Angelique Saunders	Livelihoods officer	Bahamas Red Cross
Misty Adderley	Operations Manager (national)	Bahamas Red Cross
Terez Curry	President	Bahamas Red Cross
Renaldi Forbes	Branch President Grand Bahama	Bahamas Red Cross
Mathew Chandy	Construction Advisor	CORE
Lashawn Dames	Businesses Services Manager	Grand Bahama Port Authority
Pastor Henry Cantun	Abaco	Haitian priest – key informant
Pastor Charles	Abaco – near The Farm	Haitian priest – key informant
Elizabeth Riley	Executive Director	CDEMA
People reached in Grand Bahama	Focus groups and verification visits	31 persons
People reached in Abaco	Focus groups and verification visits	24 persons
BRCS Volunteers	Online survey	35 persons
BRCS Volunteers	Zoom discussion	10 persons

Annex 2
Participants in focus group discussions and verification visits

GRAND BAHAMA	
Focus Group on Rental Assistance	Participants
	Antionette Lightbourne Beulah Cooper Brendalee Fowler Lionel Sweeting
Focus Group on Home Repair	
	Junior William Brown Mary Brown Osharra Dean Kathlene Babbs Chamara Taylor Vanderlyne Johnson Tynia Roberts
Focus Group on Small Business Recovery	
	Wycliffe Barnett, Superior Cuts Tamica Knowles, Take off Deli Shonnell Bootle, Pro Business Office Solutions Dierdre Rose, Admin Business and Careerlife Patrice Flowers, T-Shon's Eatery Linda Burrows, Linda's Authentic Crafts
Verification visits to repaired homes	
	William and Ronica Natalia Garland Chamara Taylor Vantenlyne Johnson
Verification visits to small business supported	
	Renu Day Spa Island Yogurt Superior Cuts Laing's Shell, Wood and Straw Style 101 The Gentleman's Club Barbershop Doc's Conch Stand

ABACO	
Focus Group on Home Repair	Participants
	Deborah Williams Paula Simonette Joy Davis Centine Sawyer Ronnalee Ferguson Edward Williams Lottie Williams Beatrice Moxey Craig Cornish
Focus Group on Small Business Recovery	Lenora Black, Mother Merle's restaurant Anthony Curry, Abacar Jasmine Curry, Scented Rumours Mary and Derrick Bain, Island Boyz Restaurant Cleopatra Rolle, Cleo's Business Services
Verification visits to repaired homes	Mary Bain Ronalee Ferguson Deborah Williams Craig Cornish Lealon Simms
Verification visits to small business supported	Mother Merle's restaurant Private farm (Frederick Whyly) Abacar J'Dour Cosmetics Island Boyz Restaurant

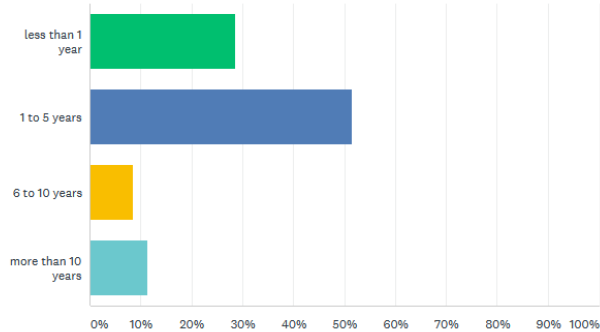
Annex 3

Results from online survey with BCRS volunteers

Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

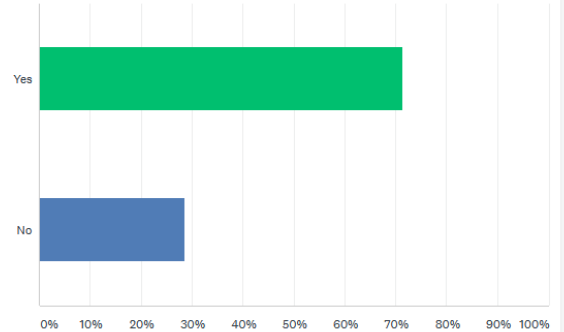
How long have you been a volunteer with Red Cross?

Answered: 35 Skipped: 0



Did you assist as a volunteer in the Hurricane Dorian recovery prog...

Answered: 35 Skipped: 0



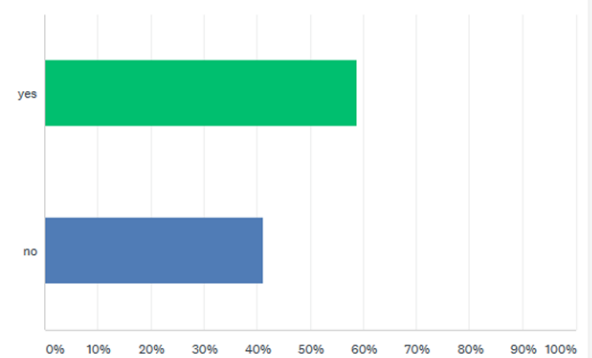
If yes, what type of volunteer tasks did you engage in?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 8

- Distribution of Items and Psychosocial Support
 - I engaged in psychosocial support and financial distribution
 - ODK and distribution
 - Translate (creole), case management, rental, livelihood, shelter program, helped in the wharehouse. Basically wherever assistance was needed I assisted
 - PSS
 - Distribution of Items and distribution of the visa cards
 - Giving out donated Items.assist in setting up tents, driving cargo
 - Packing the relief supplies at the main Red Cross headquarters
 - Relief, Financial Assistance (CTP) Shelter (Repairs and Rental)
- Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

Did you work alongside international Red Cross staff?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 1



Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

If yes, what type of volunteer tasks did you engage in?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 8

Recorded donations received from general public in record book. Drive two members of the international Red Cross delegation to the airport to catch a flight to Grand Bahama. Greeted hurricane survivors at front desk and forwarded their request for food and clothing to Red Cross personnel.

Cpr classes and food packaging

Food packing

N/A

distributing items

Multiple task, registering, warehouse, distribution of food and clothing

Food Drive

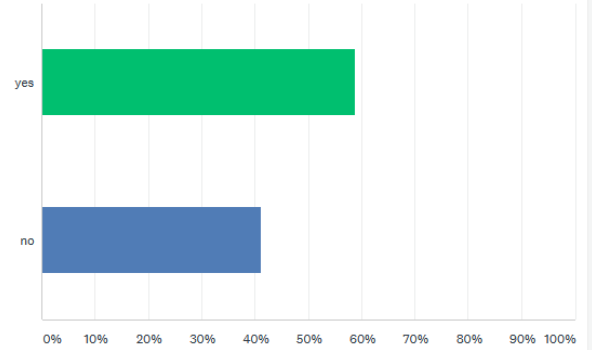
Emergency Medical Services

Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

0

Did you work alongside international Red Cross staff?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 1



Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

0

If yes, what type of volunteer tasks did you engage in?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 8

Emergency Medical Services

Volunteer first as a Shelter Manager, then employed as Operations Officer

N/A

SHELTER PROGRAMME - HOME REPAIR PROGRAMME

distribution of care packages etc.

Small home repair program

At the distribution center

Cash distribution

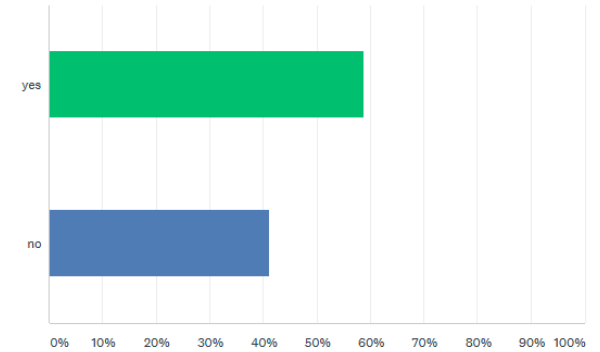
Take names to help person to start rebuilding

Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

0

Did you work alongside international Red Cross staff?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 1



Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

0

If yes, what type of volunteer tasks did you engage in?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 8

N/A

SHELTER PROGRAMME - HOME REPAIR PROGRAMME

distribution of care packages etc.

Small home repair program

At the distribution center

Cash distribution

Take names to help person to start rebuilding

Gas

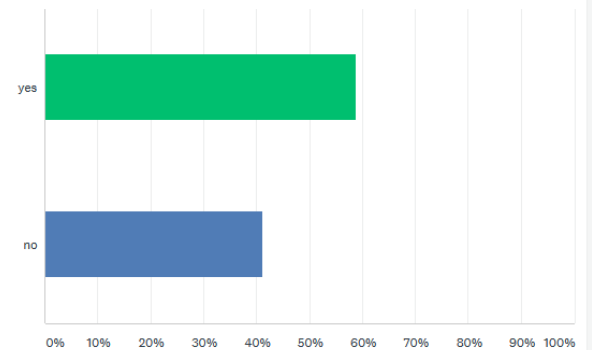
Helping hand cleaning up the place and handing out items

Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

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Did you work alongside international Red Cross staff?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 1

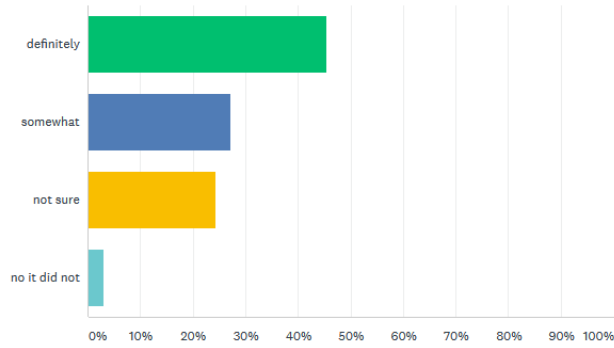


Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

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Do you consider that the Hurricane Dorian recovery operation achi...

Answered: 33 Skipped: 2

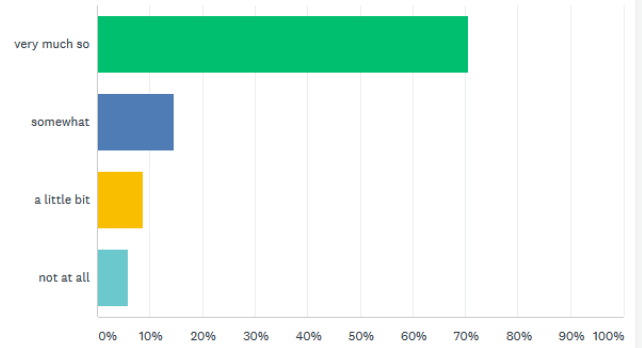


Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

0

Did you gain greater capacity from this experience?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 1



Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

0

What was the most important new skill that you gained from your ...

Answered: 26 Skipped: 9

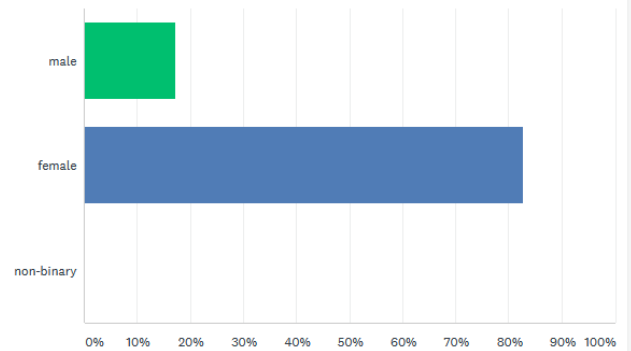
- Patience
- To provide hope, help and care for victims of disaster. Ability to work with a variety of managers
- Dealing with different persons personalities and learning the ways red cross do things
- I worked in Urban Renewal so I was basically doing the same thing at Redcross
- Assisted with training in psychosocial support
- I learn how to assist persons and listen to there experiences
- Help set up water treatment system
- Altruism and also what items are better to give to someone in need
- Development of need based assessment and program planning

Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

0

Are you male or female?

Answered: 35 Skipped: 0



Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

0

What was the most important new skill that you gained from your ...

Answered: 26 Skipped: 9

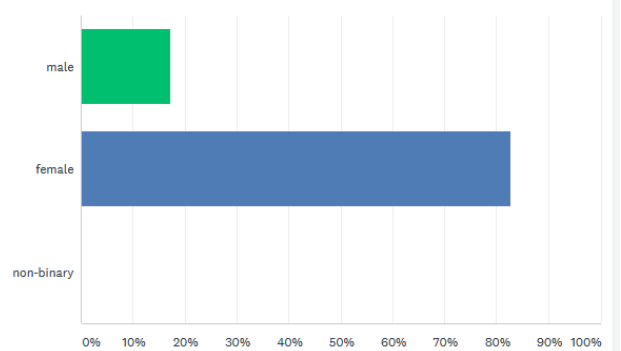
- I learnt the importance of professionalism, compassion and confidentiality.
- Learning how to be preparing for worldwide nation
- Compassion
- N/A
- preparation off survival skills
- Interviews and hope to register Hurricane victims for assistance
- Just helping Individuals gave me a warm heart. See another person smile through the Tragedy
- N/A
- The importance of team work, trying to assist the most vulnerable and showing respect for all

Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

0

Are you male or female?

Answered: 35 Skipped: 0



Brief Red Cross volunteer survey on Hurricane Dorian recovery

0

