

# IRAQ DREF

## (MDRIQ011-Tayaran Square Explosions)

### Lessons Learned Workshop Report



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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

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<b>CEA</b>	Community Engagement and Accountability
<b>DM</b>	Disaster Management
<b>DREF</b>	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund
<b>HHs</b>	Households
<b>HQs</b>	Headquarters
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>IRCS</b>	Iraqi Red Crescent Society
<b>LLW</b>	Lessons Learned Workshop
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>NS</b>	National Society
<b>PER</b>	Preparedness for effective response
<b>PSS</b>	Psychosocial Support

# Purpose of the Lessons Learned Report

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Throughout each project life cycle, lessons are learned and opportunities for improvement are identified. As part of a continuous improvement process, documenting lessons learned helps project teams identify the root causes of problems and bottlenecks that occurred and mitigate their occurrence in later project stages or in future projects. The ultimate purpose of documented lessons learned is to provide future project teams with information that can increase effectiveness and efficiency and to build on the experience that has been earned by each completed project.

Data for this report was gathered during the virtual Lessons Learned Workshop.

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

Ultimately, the goals of the lessons learned report are:

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

## Introduction

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In response to the double suicide bombing incident that occurred on 21 January 2021, in a crowded market at Tayaran Square in central Baghdad, killing 32 people and injuring more than 100, the Iraqi Red Crescent (IRCS) in coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), as well as the Movement and non-Movement Partners, has decided to assist 242 affected households (HHs).

Consequently, a **Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)** has been launched to cover the immediate needs of those affected families (242 HHs).

Following the event, the IRCS, through its volunteers and staff, carried out the following activities:

The IRCS deployed its Emergency Medical Teams at the site of the explosion and has set up triage and first aid stations to ensure that people with non-critical injuries can be treated and comforted while the worst-affected survivors are being taken to hospital by the Ministry of Health MoH, and civil defence ambulances.

The IRCS has deployed Emergency Medical Teams and its fleet of seven ambulances to the site of the explosion, where nine staff and seven trained volunteers were engaged for response activities, to provide any potential support to the MoH in transferring the injured and providing first aid at triage stations.

IRCS national headquarters (HQs) engaged its local branches and mobilized the staff and volunteers to reach out to the affected families based on the list provided by relevant government authorities in different governorates.

The **Lessons Learned Workshop (LLW)** has been conducted with the presence and participation of IRCS staff and volunteers from three levels: field, branches and HQs.

It intended to assess key achievements and challenges, and provide an opportunity to capture the lessons learned surrounding the operation from the involved staff and volunteers of the IRCS.

This workshop was also an opportunity to provide recommendations for future DREF operations and contribute with information to the DREF final report.

In this context, the main objectives are to provide qualitative recommendations based on the DREF operation previous experience on:

- 🔍 **How to improve future programming in terms of preparedness or for other future similar events, while adapting the preparedness for effective response (PER) approach**
- 🔍 **The Actions that should be avoided if the initiative were to be replicated.**

## Methodology

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**Desk review:** A document review was conducted to better understand the overall DREF operation and related documents, as well as the background and logistics required for this virtual lessons learned.

**Capacity-building:** Participants in the workshop received remote refresher training on DREF processes and procedures. The goal of this refresher was to provide useful

information to participants who were unfamiliar with those processes. A follow-up training could be held if the national society requests it.

**Survey on PER:** The survey was circulated among the attendees. It consists of 34 questions around four PER elements:

1) Analysis and Planning for the emergency operation; 2) Operational capacity of IRCS; 3) Coordination; 4) Operations' functioning of support services.

The survey was made available in both languages: English and Arabic.

**Data collection:** For this exercise, the participants were divided into four groups. Four sessions were held to identify learning elements related to positive factors, challenges, and coordination, as well as make recommendations.

As the PER guiding questions capture the milestones, failures, and successes over time, they served as a compass and a guide.

All relevant project participants were brought together to review the development process of the DREF operation together in the form of a virtual workshop.

The exercise included 24 participants from various departments at the field, branch, and HQs levels (Psychosocial Support (PSS), preparedness and distribution committee, victims committee, survey committee, auditing, and quality assurance committee, and two representatives from the IFRC).

## Strengths and opportunities

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During this session, the four groups presented the DREF operation's strengths and opportunities in several areas, which were highlighted by the majority of the group members, as follows:

### Information

- Support is provided by the branches and the HQs to the community-level responders;
- Authorities' information sharing enabled timely distribution of CASH assistance to the targeted families.

### Coordination

- Good community relations and widespread acceptance of the IRCS;
- Trust-based coordination with authorities and other agencies;
- Support from the Movement Partners;

## Human Resources

- Rapid deployment of trained staff volunteers;
- Strong and experienced Disaster Management (DM) team with prior experience;
- Involvement and engagement of IRCS departments and units as one team;

The following are the top five positive factors highlighted and agreed upon by the participants: 1) Internal and external coordination with the IFRC. 2) The availability of trained personnel and volunteers who can be quickly deployed in an emergency. 3) Coordination of preparedness and response planning with the government and local authorities. 4) Facilitation of cash assistance from donors to affected families. 5) Community acceptance and trust in the Iraqi red crescent.

Coordination with authorities at all levels was deemed extremely successful. Learning about how relationships with the local government authorities were built and sustained over time, in particular, should be well captured for future replication.

The capacity of the trained IRCS volunteers involved in the emergency, as well as the trust and acceptance of the National Society (NS), were critical factors in the success of the DREF interventions.

Engagement with local authorities at the national and district levels aided in enhancing the NS's image and public perception. Another key success factor is the IRCS' image, preparedness, and response capacity.

Those mentioned above were regarded as positive factors in the success of the IRCS-led operation in response to the Tayaran Explosions.

## Challenges

The team members were able to identify key challenges from various perspectives throughout the exercise and process, viewing it as an opportunity for the IRCS to concretely plan for areas for strengthening their NS more broadly.

Participants stated that despite the challenges encountered in implementing the DREF, the IRCS assumed its role and undertook the humanitarian range of activities despite the obstacles.

Some of these challenges have been highlighted by the participants, converged towards different areas, namely logistics and context and were due to:

- Financial risks during the operation (financial reconciliation);
- Lack of resources, means of communication and means of transportation such as mobile phones and fleet;

- Failure to provide funds to facilitate transportation and questionnaire administration;
- Lack of information regarding the contact information of the targeted families;
- Absence of family members during the distribution of cash grants;
- Difficulties in determining who is the primary beneficiary: the mother or the spouse;
- The risks and challenges associated with money transfer;
- Many organizations made false promises, causing some families to take a backseat;
- The community-level responder was spending money out of his own pocket to cover these expenses due to a lack of pre-paid mobile cards to facilitate communication;
- The amount of money given to the beneficiary is insufficient to cover the magnitude of the disaster's losses;
- Hot weather and short working hours are associated with the holy month of Ramadan.

The key points surrounding the operation's timeframe were diverse. Some would be considered obstacles to avoid in future similar events related to operational areas, while others should be remembered when planning for future similar operations. Especially when it comes to the CASH component.

## Top Challenges, Suggested Solutions and Recommendations

The following table highlights the **top five challenges** agreed upon by the group and recommendations shared by the various group representatives involved in the MDRIR011 DREF Operation. Please note that ranking has not been carried out by order of importance, as all of these recommendations are important for the working groups.

TOP 5 Challenges	Suggested Solutions
False promises made by some organizations	It is strongly advised that the IRCS and external donors do <b>not make any promises.</b>
The government imposed restrictions, lockdowns, and curfews in response to the <b>COVID-19 pandemic</b> , making it difficult for IRCS to reach the beneficiaries.	<b>To apply social distancing and follow preventive measures.</b>
There is a <b>lack of information</b> on the targeted families because they come from different	<b>To use the primary sources of data.</b> <b>To apply the Safer Access</b> emergency preparedness and development approach.



governorates. Even data from the government is devoid of addresses and phone numbers.	
Logistics setbacks (insufficient fleet, transportation fees, pre-paid mobile cards, fleet not properly equipped with air condition, etc...)	<b>Future DREFs should budget for logistics</b> , such as renting vehicles and purchasing pre-paid cards.
Financial Settlement	<b>To hold a working group meeting</b> between the IFRC and IRCS operations teams, finance and procurement.

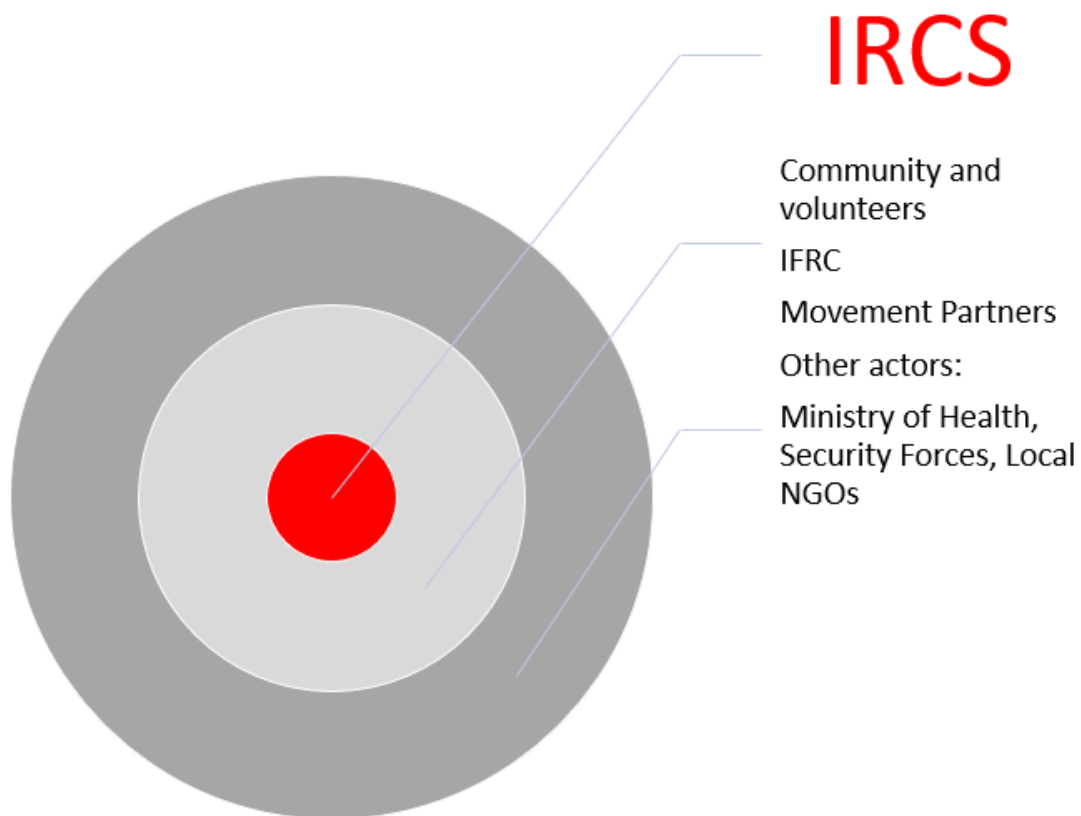
### Recommendations

- ✓ To train IRCS staff and volunteers on a variety of topics, including psychosocial support, safer access, cash transfers, and contingency planning.
- ✓ Coordination of efforts with partners both inside and outside the International Movement to avoid duplication of work.
- ✓ Adherence to the Iraqi Red Crescent's financial regulations and coordination with partners in this area.
- ✓ Internal systems for finance/procurement/proposals to be aligned with IFRC standards.
- ✓ Rapid transfer of all funds in one shot. This should be included in the contract.
- ✓ Constantly ensure the safety and dignity of both staff and volunteers, as well as beneficiaries.

## Relationship with Stakeholders

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

Therefore, it is essential to build and maintain robust relationships and maintain an appropriate level of communication with stakeholders.



**The following is one of the recommendations for improvement:**

- ✓ To enhance and better organize the coordination meetings.

In conclusion, if stakeholders are more engaged, and the roles and responsibilities are well defined, there is less chance that some related issues will negatively impact the progress of the activity. Delays to the work will incur additional expenditure and impact the budget.

# Captured Lessons from the DREF Operation

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<u>Successful aspects to replicate</u>	<u>Challenges to avoid</u>
Internal coordination among all the departments and external coordination with the IFRC	Logistics setbacks (insufficient fleet, transportation fees, pre-paid mobile cards, fleet not properly equipped with air condition, etc...)
The availability of trained personnel and volunteers who can be quickly deployed in an emergency	The amount of money given to the beneficiary is insufficient to cover the magnitude of the disaster's losses
Coordination of preparedness and response planning with the government and local authorities	Lack of trained staff and volunteers ready for deployment
Maintaining the good image of the NS, well-positioned as first responder	Un-alignment of Internal systems for finance/ procurement/ proposals with IFRC standards
Community acceptance and trust in the Iraqi red crescent	Lack of information regarding the contact information of the targeted families
Facilitation of cash assistance from donors to affected families	The risks and challenges associated to money transfer

# Workshop Photos



# Annex

## Survey

### What is your location of work?

- Branch
- National Office/ Headquarters

### Please specify your area of work

- Disaster
- Health
- Youth
- Communications
- Admin
- Finance
- Logistics
- Others

### Analysis and Planning for the emergency operation

1. Was any pre-existing background and risk information of the affected areas available to use in the planning the response?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes, .....
2. Did Iraq Red Crescent Society (IRCS) monitor and analyse these risks and other secondary risks (e.g. COVID-19) throughout the operation?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes, .....
3. Did the IRCS use existing scenario and/or contingency plans to inform the operation plan?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes, .....
4. Were pre-disaster arrangements/agreements with stakeholders and other agencies used to support operation planning and implementation?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes, .....
5. Was decision-making between leadership and operations management clear? How were decisions made and communicated?
6. Were SOPs used at headquarter, division and branch levels?
  - No
  - Yes, please specify.....
7. Were decision-making and responsibilities clear between HQ, division and branch?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes
8. Did the IRCS encounter any reputational or financial risks during the operation?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes. How was it dealt?.....

**Operational capacity of IRCS**

- 9. Were there an existing IRCS mapping of resources and capacities (database of active response volunteers, equipment, pre-positioned stock) and were they enough to cover operational needs?
  - No
  - Yes,.....
- 10. Did IRCS conduct emergency needs assessment? If the answer is no, skip to question 15
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes, .....
- 11. Did the assessments ensure participation of men, women, boys, girls and persons with disability to understand their needs?
  - No
  - Yes, .....
- 12. Did the assessments collect all the necessary information?
  - No
  - Yes, .....
- 13. Was information from assessments done by other organisations used in planning the response?
  - No
  - Yes, please specify which organisation?.....
- 14. Has IRCS been able to collect, analyse and manage information for timely decision-making?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes
- 15. Was the Emergency Operations Centre activated?
  - No
  - Do not know
  - Yes
- 16. How was the Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA) developed (who was involved, what were the timelines, how did it align with the work of authorities, etc)?
- 17. Was the proportion of affected population to be reached appropriate and realistic?
  - No
  - Yes
- 18. What information is being provided to communities on the operation (e.g. selection criteria, planned activities)?
- 19. Was the feasibility and capacity to implement cash voucher assistance assessed?
  - No
  - Yes. If so, when?.....
- 20. Was the cash assistance relevant to the affected population?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes
- 21. What preparedness actions would have helped in the current operation?

**Coordination**

- 22. To what extent has the Movement Partners supported the IRCS? What more could be done?
- 23. How well did HQ and branch staff support community level responders? (rate from 1-5, 1 being not well and 5 being really well)
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
- 24. How did IRCS coordinate with the authorities?

**Operations' functioning of support services**

- 25. Were there any previous lessons learnt conducted for the same response?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes
- 26. Were the staff and volunteers able to fulfil their duties? What additional training would improve their capacities?
- 27. Was it possible to recruit, train, onboard and supervise adequate staff and volunteers to support the operation in a timely manner?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes
  
- 28. How did the IRCS ensure that volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities?
- 29. Were there any security incidents and how were they managed?
  - No security incidents
  - Yes,.....
- 30. Were special procedures in place to allow for speeding approval for delivering services in the response?
  - No
  - Yes. If so which ones?.....
- 31. Were finance and admin procedures for transferring money in a timely manner in place?
  - No
  - Yes
- 32. Were there any challenges related to the communication technologies (Internet, wireless network, mobile phones, radios and others)?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes. Which ones?
- 33. Were official spokespersons identified to manage media? Was key messaging and public awareness information available and updated regularly?
- 34. Was social media tracked? Were inaccurate or negative reports corrected?
  - No
  - Not sure
  - Yes. How?.....

Looking at the various recommendations proposed by the participants, interestingly show the desire for improvement for better response to future events.

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

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

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