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# Lessons Learned Workshop

Bangladesh Floods and Landslides 2012  
SE Cash Transfer Project Review

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commissioned by  
the International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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## Contents

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<b>AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP PROCESS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Background .....	3
Workshop overview .....	3
Retrospective analysis of the early recovery operation .....	3
Looking forward: risk management in future operations .....	3
The framework used for the workshop .....	4
A note about lessons ' <i>learned</i> ' .....	4
<b>THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
The expectations of the facilitator:.....	5
The expectations of the participants: .....	5
<b>RETROSPECTIVE: ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE RESPONSE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Approach .....	6
Issues identified .....	6
Resultant discussions.....	9
<b>LOOKING FORWARD: IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO RISKS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Approach .....	11
Scores for likelihood .....	11
Scores for severity .....	12
The resultant risk matrix.....	13
Exploring the risks in more detail .....	14
Risk: inappropriate cash transfer mechanism .....	15
Risk: weak participation, involvement and accountability of beneficiaries.....	16
Risk: inadequate resource mobilisation.....	17
Risk: SOP is not fit for purpose .....	18
Risk: monitoring is not fit for purpose .....	19
Risk: political interference and influence .....	20
Risk: staff competency, technical skills and experience, are inadequate .....	21
Risk: unclear roles and responsibilities .....	22
Risk: slow movement of funds and reporting.....	23
Risk: corruption in targeting and/or distributions .....	24
<b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>ANNEX: WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>28</b>

### List of figures and tables

Figure 1: the framework used for the workshop.....	4
Table 1: allocating scores for likelihood of risks .....	11
Table 2: scores for the likelihood of the selected risks.....	12
Table 3: allocating scores for severity of risks .....	12
Table 4: scores for the likelihood of the selected risks.....	13
Table 5: the completed risk matrix.....	13
Table 6: exploring a risk area in more detail.....	14

## An overview of the workshop process

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### Background

The Lessons Learned workshop took place within the context of a programmatic review of the 2012 floods and landslides operation. The emphasis of the review was the cash transfer project that took place in the SE of the country. Key stakeholders to the operation participated in the one-day workshop, which took place on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

The programme, which was part-funded by ECHO, had struggled with slow implementation, poor reporting, and weak communication. It was recognised by stakeholders prior to the workshop that this had improved in recent months, and that the final phase of programme implementation had been swift.

However, in the light of the previous challenges, and given the importance of the global relationship between ECHO and IFRC, IFRC proposed a review process and a lessons-learned workshop. This document is the report of that workshop.

### Workshop overview

The one-day workshop provided an opportunity for stakeholders to present feedback and observations about the operation, in an environment where the casual factors could be isolated and explored, and different perceptions could be shared and challenged. The workshop approach fell into two parts. In the morning, a retrospective approach was taken to examine issues arising within the floods and landslides operation, to identify challenges and ensure a common understanding. In the afternoon a forward-looking approach was adopted to consider what could be done to ensure that future operations were of high quality, using a risk management model.

### Retrospective analysis of the early recovery operation

After a welcome by the Secretary General of BDRCS, time was taken to explore the expectations of all the participant stakeholders.

Participants were then invited to document their concerns using two frameworks provided by the facilitator. Issues were sorted and key perspectives presented and discussed.

The facilitator – now in the role of the leader of the review team – then presented his perspectives of the operation to the group, for further discussion.

### Looking forward: risk management in future operations

After a break for lunch, the stakeholder participants were asked to consider a future hypothetical programme and analyse it for risks, using the same framework as before. A long-list of potential risks was drawn up and ten of these risks were prioritised. These were then subjected to more detailed analysis in terms of likelihood and potential severity through a participatory process, and a resultant risk register matrix was developed.

Finally, the participants were invited to consider each of the risks in more detail, to understand the causes and triggers, and identify strategies for mitigation. Several of the risk areas were then presented back to the plenary.

It was not intended that an exhaustive risk register and scenario analysis be completed in a large and disparate group in a single afternoon: this would not be realistic. The intention was to encourage the start of a process and provide a model. The incomplete results of the afternoon are presented below, together with some commentary from the facilitator.

At the end of the report there is a narrative summary of the issues, which includes a number of recommendations to strengthen planning, management, implementation, monitoring, and communication.

## The framework used for the workshop

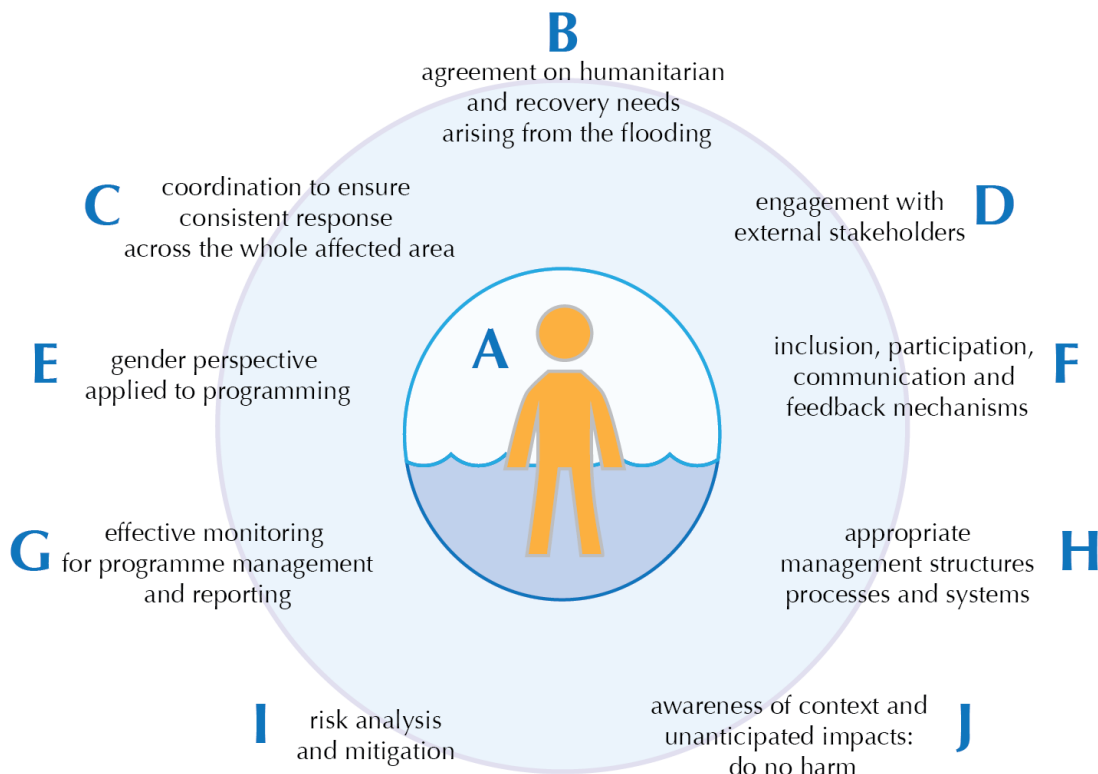
To aid the process of sorting the various opinions and perspectives, the following model was used throughout the workshop.

At the centre of the model stands the flood-affected population – both beneficiary and non-beneficiary. Their experience is the central measure of the quality of the response.

Around this are a number of elements that are considered to be good practice in humanitarian and early-recovery programming, and which combine to provide confidence that the resultant programme will be of high quality.

The letters in the diagram were used for clustering findings and observations during the workshop processes.

Figure 1: the framework used for the workshop



### A note about lessons '*learned*'

It is common parlance for evaluations and reviews to talk confidently about lessons learned, and it is deeply misleading: it is equally common for such '*lessons*' to be forgotten on a shelf while the same mistakes are repeated in the next emergency.

It was made explicit during the workshop that the expectation was that the issues identified through the workshop processes, and the recommendations of the independently led review team, would need to be considered by the management teams of each major stakeholder. Individual recommendations could be accepted or rejected, but the decisions should be documented and the implementation of such recommendations that have been accepted should be followed up.

In short, **lessons can only be considered to have been learned, once they have been consistently applied to the management of future operations.**

## The expectations of the participants

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### The expectations of the facilitator:

- To identify potential learning from the strengths and weaknesses of the response
- To understand the perspectives of others
- To seek ways to apply these opportunities in future responses

### The expectations of the participants:

- Find ways to be more focused to provide support to the beneficiaries
- Identify potential lessons which could be beneficial for further project implementation
- Provide better humanitarian support to the vulnerable people by BDRCS with the collaboration of ECHO
- Identify what type of policy implication could enhance the quality of the program
- Explore how well BDRCS could implement cash based programs
- Find ways in which BDRCS could ensure quality implementation of cash based interventions
- Identify the gaps and needs of the implemented cash transfer programme
- Identify partners for the future interventions
- Enhance knowledge through active participation and sharing personal experiences related to cash transfer project

## Retrospective: issues identified in the response

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### Approach

#### Method

Participants worked individually for the initial exercise, identifying issues that they had directly observed or become aware of through other means. Each item was written onto an A5 size coloured card. Those working in Bangla had their cards translated to English for the plenary.

The facilitator collected the cards from tables as they were written, and stuck them on the wall. In this manner, the issues raised were largely disconnected from the people who identified them.

Each card was classified in two different ways. The participant identified the grouping (from Figure 1) to which the item belonged, which facilitated rapid sorting and clustering of the issues arising. In addition, the colour of the card indicated the nature of item in terms of its origin:

- Pink cards indicate issues arising from perceived problems
- Yellow cards indicate neutral situations
- Green cards indicate possible learning arising from good practice

Once the cards were all written, participants took time to read and consider them, and the whole group then gathered around the cards for plenary discussion.

The numbers and colours of cards under each heading provided a clear visual signal about the 'health' of that area of discussion.

Participants then selected priority items, and various perspectives were put forward for each of these.

#### Constraints

Given the constraints of time and working in a plenary group at this stage, it was not possible to give all the issues a complete airing. This was addressed in part in the following stages.

### Issues identified.

The list of issues raised on the cards is as follows, using the headings from the framework in Figure 1.

In a few cases, comments have been slightly edited for clarity, or additional comments added *in italics*. Some comments have been moved from their original locations, to the cluster where they fit best. Note that the comments are both positive and negative, and that some of the comments are at odds with others.

#### A. Beneficiary experience

- Beneficiaries received humanitarian support
- Cash should be transferred into the beneficiaries through bank instead of cash distribution
- Proper care should be taken in beneficiary selection
- Smiling face of the beneficiaries after getting assistance
- Expectation is high in respect to resource availability
- Beneficiaries received full assistance
- Local community has appreciated RCRC support
- Cash assistance has improved basic living condition
- Cash for training and unconditional cash transfer went well
- CFT and UCG were successful
- Provide more income generating support to beneficiaries (let them be able to work)

## **B. Agreement on humanitarian and recovery needs arising from the flooding**

- There was agreement on humanitarian and recovery needs
- Cash package was determined by Joint Need Assessment
- Humanitarian and recovery needs could have targeted earlier (timely assessment, funding mechanism, timely implement)
- Quick presence in the field for needs assessment
- Local influence in geographical area and beneficiary selection

## **C. Coordination to ensure consistent response across the whole affected area**

- Able to extend support in hard-to-reach areas
- Could have been better coordinated with agencies ensuring better targeting and resource distribution
- Implementation could be equally over the month
- Coordination initiated by IFRC at district/division level, but didn't share the issues between agencies with ECHO
- Coordination and communication could be better with all level of stakeholders
- Support could be harmonized
- Good coordination during JNA and proposal development stage

## **D. Engagement with external stakeholders**

- Lack of deliverables at the end of project (*assume this refers to reporting*)
- Transparency with the donors (ECHO) – information on issues coming late – coordination with external stakeholders was not properly in place
- Engagement with external stakeholders should be in place
- Effective communications (response to press reporter)
- Consulted with community, involved local government during cash for work, donors representative visited the area, local RC Unit collected information from government office
- Evaluation and transparency on the things which are not going well
- In line with JNA and in-country coordination structure

## **E. Gender perspective applied to programming**

- Female staff should be engaged in decision-making process
- Prepare gender segregated beneficiary list
- Recruit more female staffs in the project and gender specific cash based interventions
- Women's participation was remarkable in the program

## **F. Inclusion, participation, communication and feedback mechanisms**

- Area and beneficiary selection was satisfactory
- Communication and feedback mechanism should be more open and regular
- Community people developed infrastructure by themselves
- Cash Transfer Programme (CTP) includes huge awareness on many environmental issues (like land slide, hill cutting and deforestation)
- Feedback mechanism was not in 70% of the project area
- Beneficiary communication was not in proper place
- Complaint mechanism could be better – establishment and functional

#### **G. Effective monitoring for programme management and reporting**

- Weak oversight of project performance and progress
- Effective monitoring should be in place from the beginning to the end of the project
- Monitoring and reporting should be better
- Step by step picturing documentation (pink card)
- Disconnection between project and reality
- Selection of appropriate beneficiary through specific criteria (pink card)
- Real time report and lesson learned workshop

#### **H. Appropriate management structures, systems and processes**

- Lack of appropriate management structure
- More careful management steps
- IFRC monitoring report could be shared with BDRCS in time
- Lack of appropriate management
- Clear and adequate communication from HQ to Unit
- Coordination and communication between the Federation and BDRCS could be better
- Technical support to BDRCS (cash transfer)
- Inclusion of accounts person from inception of this program
- Lack of clear understanding among the stakeholders regarding management process
- Lack of proper HR structure
- Lack of understanding the role of Federation and BDRCS in the program
- Management structure process and systems (pink card)

#### **I. Risk analysis and mitigation**

- Quick decision taken for changing intervention area to avoid risk
- Risk analysis could have been done more carefully before embankment upon the progress
- Mode of payment of UCG – cheque
- Risk management (pink card)
- Targeting/delivery UCG coming at the end after completion (pink card)
- Transfer money through the bank – cash grant ID and photos of the beneficiaries
- Sometimes IFRC role as implementation
- Use banks to minimize cash transfer risk

#### **J. Awareness of context and unanticipated impacts: do no harm**

- Consider flood and tidal height during road and embankment protection
- Volunteers were involved to resolve problems
- Close monitoring for Do No Harm principle



## Resultant discussions

The discussion began by exploring the process by which beneficiaries were selected. BDRCS staff explained that beneficiary selection was quite comprehensive as NHQ deployed National Disaster Response Team (NDRT) members in the project intervention areas. NDRT members, supported by Unit Executive Committee (UEC) and local RCY (Red Crescent Youth), undertook household selection during house-to-house visits. However, some BDRCS staff also mentioned that Local Government Institution (Union) Chairmen were involved in the beneficiary selection process, although the final decisions rested with BDRCS. It was noted that the local authorities do have the primary responsibility for emergency response, and BDRCS should be working with them while maintaining their independence. It was evident that there were slightly different descriptions of the selection process for beneficiaries even amongst BDRCS staff.

Looking at the selection of target areas, and specifically at the choice of PM Khali, ECHO suggested that IFRC were late in informing ECHO about the change of location: the change was made in February 2013 whereas BDRCS/IFRC informed it in May 2013. This point was generalised: it was recognised that all changes and issues arising in the programme should be well disseminated and communicated with the stakeholders and valid reason should be provided for any changes.

However, the BDRCS/IFRC explained that the PM Khali area was not an initial priority and had been considered when the Cox's Bazar branch raised concerns. Areas chosen for implementation were the areas selected for the assessment, but they were only ever supposed to be indicative of the wider situation. The JNA sampling process morphed into a targeting mechanism. PM Khali was badly affected but had not been selected for the JNA, and had thus dropped off the radar for implementation, and the Cox's Bazar branch wanted it reinstated. In the event, PM Khali was not included in the final list, as a result of a combination of factors, including the unfortunate events and newspaper stories. While it was agreed that BDRCS had not been involved in these events, the different perceptions of the various parties over the selection and de-selection of PM Khali were not completely resolved as a result of these discussions.

The discussion moved on to communication and information flow. Here, BDRCS and IFRC admitted that this had been weak, and had only recently improved. Informal communication was very rare, except during specific field visits. Formal reporting was not of the expected standard. Commitments were made to improve this, and it was acknowledged that the lessons learned workshop was a helpful initiative in this regard.

The need to channel information through the AP Zone was seen as part of the issue here, although it was recognised that informal, in-country channels also exist and should be used. The formal channel through AP Zone is designed to ensure quality: however, it did not appear to have had this effect in the proposal or the reporting, which both showed some serious weaknesses.

On issues of monitoring, it was accepted that the technical monitoring aspects of the programme were weak, and that management supervision was not sufficiently in place. This problem began in the proposal, which had missing targets and inappropriate means of verification. These were not picked up by IFRC or by ECHO, which suggests weak processes. The weak monitoring framework then becomes a factor in the poor reporting and in the slow communication on important issues. It is not clear that the timeframes outlined in the monitoring framework were ever applied in practice.

When reporting is weak, this can lead to concerns that issues are being deliberately hidden, even if this is not the intention. This led to concerns about compliance issues: both those imposed by the donors, and those inherent in the RC Movement. While there is no evidence that such issues arose, the absence of an effective system to track them was agreed to be a concern for all parties.

The reasons for the delays in the cash distributions were explored. Various factors were discussed, including the staffing problems and changes in BDRCS in the field and at director level, delay in posting of Bandarban ULO (Unit Level Officer), review of the beneficiary list, delay of getting the supporting funding from Hong Kong Red Cross. It was noted that higher levels of management attention in the early days could have prevented many of these issues from becoming problems.

At the end of the project, the rate of implementation increased dramatically: 63% of the cash distributions were completed within 6 weeks. It was recognised that if the reasons behind this transformation could be identified, then the means to avoid future problems would also be known. Again, a number of factors were identified: first amongst them the undivided attention of senior managers and leadership both in BDRCS and IFRC. In addition, the scaling up of support such as

BDRCS staff and NDRT and RCY to the operational area, and supporting staff deployed from IFRC were another major factor. Some existing procedures (such as delaying the UCG grants, or single-shift CFW) were also changed to accelerate implementation.

The nature of the relationship between BDRCS and the Government of Bangladesh was also discussed, with some concerns raised that ECHO had not fully appreciated the nature of BDRCS' *auxiliary* status, the ways of working through a volunteer base that are fundamentally different from the ways that NGOs work, and the nature of the relationship between the IFRC and ECHO, which is that of an International Organisation, not an NGO. The value of BDRCS being able to work without (in most cases) a separate approval from the authorities was well understood and appreciated by all parties.

## Looking forward: identifying and responding to risks

### Approach

The afternoon of the workshop was spent looking ahead to a hypothetical future cash programme with ECHO funding. The intention was to move beyond the retrospective and potentially negative approach of the morning and to concentrate on finding ways in which the issues arising in the 2012 response could be avoided, mitigated, or even turned into opportunities.

### Method

The process took place in four steps.

In the first step a long-list of potential risks was drawn up by brainstorming in plenary, and ten of these risks were prioritised by the whole group. *The letters used during the workshop have been changed to avoid confusion with those used in Figure 1.*

Participants then worked in mixed pairs to allocate a score for each of these risks in terms of the likelihood of the risks, and their severity. The twenty participants generated ten scores for each: these were entered into a matrix and the average determined.

The ten risks were then entered into a standard risk matrix, and in a final step, participants then tried to explore the risk in more detail. Working in a larger group of 4, with 2 risks each, participants completed a report in each risk, to understand the causes and triggers, and identify strategies for mitigation. Several of the risk areas were then presented back to the plenary.

### Constraints

It was not the intention to produce a completed list of all the possible risks in such a short time. The intention was to build on the open discussions of the morning with a prioritised set of key issues, and provide a methodology for future work to be taken forwards. It is suggested that this be done within the programme team, presented at the forthcoming pre-disaster meeting, and completed thereafter.

The process by which the risks are scored and averaged produces an effect called *regression towards the mean*, which tends to reduce high scores and increase low scores. The result is that the scores cluster towards the centre. A revised exercise done in a small group, with additional time for discussion, would probably result in a better and more realistic distribution.

### Scores for likelihood

Working in pairs, participants considered and scored the risks for likelihood, using the following indicators:

**Table 1: allocating scores for likelihood of risks**

Score	Description of likelihood, frequency		
1	Rare	<10%	Event may occur only in exceptional circumstances
2	Unlikely	10% - 30%	Event could occur at some time
3	Possible	30% - 50%	Event should occur at sometime
4	Likely	50% - 90%	Event could occur probably in most circumstances
5	Almost certain	>90%	Event can be expected to occur in most circumstances

The table below shows the results from the exercise.

**Table 2: scores for the likelihood of the selected risks**

Risk	Individual scores											Total	Average	Rank
Q Inadequate resource mobilisation	4	4	3	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	36	3.6	2
R Inappropriate cash transfer mechanism	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	27	2.7	8
S SOPs are not fit for purpose	2	3	4	1	3	4	2	4	4	3	3	30	3.0	6
T Monitoring is not fit for purpose	4	3	5	3	5	4	4	5	4	2	3	39	3.9	1
U Weak participation, involvement, accountability of beneficiaries	4	2	3	4	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	29	2.9	7
V Slow movement of funds and reporting	4	4	4	2	5	4	2	5	4	2	3	36	3.6	2
W Corruption in targeting and / or cash distributions	3	3	3	1	2	3	4	1	3	3	3	26	2.6	9
X Political interference or influence	1	3	4	1	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	26	2.6	9
Y Staff competency, technical skills, experience inadequate	3	4	4	2	4	2	3	5	2	3	3	32	3.2	5
Z Unclear roles and responsibility	4	4	5	4	3	3	2	5	3	2	3	35	3.5	4

## Scores for severity

Working in pairs, participants considered and scored the risks for likelihood, using the following indicators:

**Table 3: allocating scores for severity of risks**

Score:	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Area	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
<b>Missed Targets</b>	0-5%	5-10%	10-20%	20-30%	More than 40%
<b>Reputation</b>	Internal publicity	National publicity	Extended national publicity	International publicity	Extended international publicity
<b>Compliance</b>	Minor admonition	Minor penalties	Major Penalties	Major censure	Closure
<b>Safety and Security</b>	Minor injury	Serious injury	Multiple injuries	Single death	Multiple deaths
<b>Financial</b> (proportion of total programme budget)	0-5%	5-10%	10-20%	20-30%	More than 40%
<b>Management Effort required to manage the impact of the event</b>	Event managed through normal activity	Event whose consequences are absorbed by additional management effort	Significant event that is managed by little additional effort	Significant event that needs substantial management effort	Catastrophic event forcing closure

The table below shows the results from the exercise.

**Table 4: scores for the severity of the selected risks**

Risk	Individual scores											Total	Average	Rank
Q Inadequate resource mobilisation	2	4	3	3	3	4	2	3	4	2	30	3.0	9	
R Inappropriate cash transfer mechanism	4	4	1	2	4	2	4	5	3	4	33	3.3	8	
S SOPs are not fit for purpose	3	3	5	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	35	3.5	4	
T Monitoring is not fit for purpose	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	39	3.9	1	
U Weak participation, involvement, accountability of beneficiaries	2	5	4	4	3	4	5	3	3	3	36	3.6	2	
V Slow movement of funds and reporting	3	4	4	2	4	2	4	4	3	4	34	3.4	6	
W Corruption in targeting and / or cash distributions	3	5	1	4	4	3	5	4	4	2	35	3.5	4	
X Political interference or influence	1	4	1	2	2	2	3	4	3	2	24	2.4	10	
Y Staff competency, technical skills, experience inadequate	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	34	3.4	6	
Z Unclear roles and responsibility	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	36	3.6	2	

## The resultant risk matrix

These two sets of results can be rounded to the nearest integer, and combined into a standard risk matrix diagram as follows:

**Table 5: the completed risk matrix**

Likelihood				
5				
4			Inadequate resource mobilization Slow movement of funds and reporting	Monitoring is not fit for purpose Unclear roles and responsibility
3		Political interference or influence	Inappropriate cash transfer mechanism Staff competency, technical skills, experience inadequate	SOPs are not fit for purpose Weak participation, involvement, accountability of beneficiaries Corruption in targeting and / or cash distributions
2				
1				
	1	2	3	4
				5
				<b>Severity / Impact</b>

As noted in the constraints section above, these risks could be distributed a little more widely about the matrix.

## Exploring the risks in more detail

In the final part of the exercise, the pairs were combined into groups of 4 and each group took on two of the risks. They were asked to complete the following table on a flip chart:

Table 6: exploring a risk area in more detail

<b>Risk Title:</b>	<b>Risk Owner (organisation and role)</b>
<b>Description</b> of the area of risk:	
<b>Drivers, causes, triggers</b> for this risk:	
<b>Risk management strategies:</b> chose one or more strategies and outline the approaches below <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding the risk <input type="checkbox"/> Reducing the impact of the risk <input type="checkbox"/> Reducing the likelihood or frequency of the risk	
<b>Milestones</b> for the chosen risk reduction strategies:	

The quality of the resulting outputs is highly variable. Some of them are quite useful, but many will require additional work before being used in a formal risk register.

The following ten pages show the outputs from the exercise as they were produced, with some additional comments from the facilitator below each.

<b>Risk: inappropriate cash transfer mechanism</b>	<b>Risk owner: BDRCS</b>
<b>Description:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insecurity (both)</li><li>• Corruption (cash)</li><li>• Slowness (bank)</li></ul>	
<b>Drivers, causes and triggers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conservative approaches</li><li>• Low visibility</li><li>• Liquidity crisis</li><li>• Resistance from bank (staff)</li><li>• Accessibility</li></ul>	
<b>Risk management strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consultation with beneficiaries and stakeholders (reducing likelihood of risk)</li><li>• Cash insurance (reducing impact)</li><li>• Stage transfer (reducing likelihood)</li><li>• Do not use cash (avoid risk)</li></ul>	
<b>Milestones:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beneficiary communication (Tool)</li><li>• FPA – with banks FI</li><li>• SOP – cash insurance</li></ul>	

#### Facilitator comments:

The core risk here is that a payment mechanism may be selected which is inappropriate for certain groups of beneficiaries, either by virtue of their location, their situation or a combination of both.

Work was undertaken in 2012 to produce cash SOPs<sup>1</sup> for BDRCS with support from American Red Cross, but it is still in draft and has not been translated into Bangla. Some aspects of this package were used for this operation. These SOPs will need to be updated, and must be translated to Bangla as a priority, and formally adopted by BDRCS. Staff and NDRT volunteers should be trained in their use.

It is suggested that a flow chart or weighting system be developed which considers the beneficiary group, the location, the type of transfer, the distance to the bank (and implications of costs and loss of working time), as well as any potential social or financial benefits associated with bulk purchase, perhaps. This would need to be tested against beneficiary preferences (which the review finds to be quite varied) and piloted in the field.

It is also suggested that BDRCS consider again mobile money options, as this is gaining acceptance in Bangladesh. Literacy considerations are important here, and it may prove inappropriate for some time yet.

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<sup>1</sup> The document is actually called 'BDRCS Direct Unconditional Cash Transfers In Emergencies'

<b>Risk: weak participation, involvement and accountability of beneficiaries</b>	<b>Risk owner:</b> BDRCS, IFRC and donors
<b>Description:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can evolve complaint</li><li>• Can hamper organization image</li><li>• Exclusion (EVI may not be targeted)</li></ul>	
<b>Drivers, causes and triggers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of pre-consultation</li><li>• Wilfully avoidance on the part implement</li><li>• Lack of baseline information</li><li>• Lack of trained Human Resource</li><li>• Less dissemination of proposed interventions – feedback mechanism</li></ul>	
<b>Risk management strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoiding the risk</li><li>• Reducing the impact of risk</li><li>• Reducing the livelihood or frequency of risk</li></ul>	
<b>Milestones:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inception workshop at grass root level involving all relevant stakeholders</li><li>• Involving beneficiaries in all stages of the project</li><li>• Feedback and complaint mechanism</li></ul>	

**Facilitator comments:**

The primary risk owner is BDRCS as implementing partner.

The main milestones needed to avoid the risk are to revise the SOPs to ensure that participation is strengthened at key points in the needs assessment and programme design phases.

The risk management strategies need to be expanded. For example: specific work needs to be done on communication with beneficiaries, to shift the emphasis away from the written word and embrace a wider range of technologies. Technical support for this is available through the Zone office.

On feedback mechanisms, these need to be created in a manner that really encourages affected people (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) to provide feedback and raise issues. This means a choice of feedback mechanisms. It should be possible to create a mechanism where non-contentious issues can be dealt with by project staff locally, and serious issues can be addressed via an 'external' route that does not involve the local project staff (who may be the source of the problem).

Logs should be kept of all feedback received and the action taken.



<b>Risk: inadequate resource mobilisation</b>	<b>Risk owner:</b> BDRCS, IFRC
<b>Description:</b> Continues gap in formation of situation	
<b>Drivers, causes and triggers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Competence to be able to comply to donor requirements</li><li>• Partners do not come to donors</li></ul>	
<b>Risk management strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoiding risk- pro active and resource mobilization/fund raising</li></ul>	
<b>Milestones:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	

**Facilitator comments:**

The causes for weak appeal coverage are multiple: donors may not see the event as a priority; they may not see the planned response or the actors as credible; they may have other preferred partners.

Where effective joint needs assessment exists, there is an opportunity and perhaps an obligation on serious humanitarian agencies to advocate with donors who are being selective about the areas – either geographic or sectoral – that they wish to support.

Where Appeals do not attract sufficient funding, these should be subject to internal review and analysis, perhaps together with PNS partners, to understand why the appeal was not seen as attractive. Findings from this review should be acted upon in future responses.

There is an apparent gap in quality control of POA associated with Emergency Appeals. A checklist with a simple scoring system may help to identify areas of weakness in plans and supporting documents. This needs to be accompanied by a coaching approach to ensure that such gaps can effectively be addressed. Every IFRC delegation should have the capacity (with support from the DMU) to produce a high quality POA with a full set of supporting analysis, monitoring tools and associated documentation.

<b>Risk: SOP is not fit for purpose</b>	<b>Risk owner: BDRCS</b>
<b>Description:</b> Confusion in matter of implementation. Delay in implementation	
<b>Drivers, causes and triggers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scenario is not clear</li><li>• Scale of donation or operation vary</li><li>• Type / amount of cash (threshold)</li></ul>	
<b>Risk management strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoiding the risk</li><li>• Reducing the impact of risk</li><li>• Reducing the livelihood or frequency of risk</li></ul>	
<b>Milestones:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review</li><li>• Field test</li><li>• Contextualization</li><li>• Adaptation and endorsement of SOP</li></ul>	

#### Facilitator comments:

There are at least two “SOPs” in question here: the BDRCS relief manual, and the more specific draft SOPs recently developed for cash-based responses. Only the second of these was explored in the review process.

However, in the light of the quality of the written documentation, it is proposed that the general SOPs be reviewed in the light of the areas identified in Figure 1, to ensure that they provide adequate guidance across the whole range of the process.

It is also suggested that these SOPs be reviewed in the light of the section on Response Option Analysis in the Recovery Guidance, which is an area that does not appear to be well covered at the moment and was not considered during this workshop (as the decision to use a cash transfer had been decided in advance)

Where reviews and evaluations identify programmatic or management weaknesses, these should be acted upon in a systematic manner. The IFRC and BDRCS should provide a formal management response to all such reviews. Where recommendations are accepted in whole or in part, these recommendations should be tracked and progress against them should be reviewed on a quarterly basis, by the management teams of both institutions.

<b>Risk: monitoring is not fit for purpose</b>	<b>Risk owner: BDRCS</b>
<b>Description:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<b>Drivers, causes and triggers:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate experienced staff</li> <li>• Lack of communication at all level</li> </ul>	
<b>Risk management strategies:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing the impact of risk</li> <li>• Reducing the likelihood or frequency of risk</li> </ul>	
<b>Milestones:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More supervision</li> <li>• Cash distribution through bank account</li> </ul>	

**Facilitator comments:**

This risk should be owned by IFRC and BDRCS, as they both have responsibilities in their area.

The key driver for poor monitoring is a poor understanding of the value and purpose of monitoring at the management level. This is accompanied by weak technical skills in this area, and poor technical oversight of the products.

The primary purpose of monitoring is to ensure that the programmes are on track to deliver high quality results for the affected population. The outputs of the monitoring process are also necessary for effective and timely reporting and communication with donors and stakeholders.

Work needs to be done on identifying the best indicators to use in monitoring. This is not an area where much guidance is available, although detailed scenario mapping can help here, as can context and programme-specific risk analysis.

Of all the components identified in Figure 1, which provide confidence that a programme is likely to be successful and meet its objectives, this is perhaps the most critical. The section on mitigating or avoiding risk above is very incomplete: this area needs substantial attention.

Effective guidance on other aspects of monitoring is available in the form of the IFRC M&E handbook, and particularly Annexes 4, 8 and 16.

<b>Risk: political interference and influence</b>	<b>Risk owner: BDRCS</b>
<b>Description:</b> Political interference	
<b>Drivers, causes and triggers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers being pressured (political connection)</li> </ul>	
<b>Risk management strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoiding the risk</li> <li>Reducing the impact</li> </ul>	
<b>Milestones:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable planning</li> <li>Disseminate of 7 principles of the RCRC Movement</li> </ul>	

**Facilitator comments:**

The risk of political instability is real, especially on the eastern borders with Myanmar. BDRCS has a natural advantage here, especially in comparison with INGOs, but if the situation becomes serious this may not be enough to ensure it retains the capacity to operate. The key strategy here, as correctly identified above, is dissemination of the fundamental principles. It may be that joint work with ICRC is of value in this instance.

Detailed scenario planning, repeatedly asking the question ‘what if?’ is a useful exercise here. In situations that are potentially volatile or unpredictable, contingency planning is much more challenging than for seasonal floods or cyclones.

The other half of this equation is political influence acting within BDRCS, at the headquarters or at the local levels. This is both more likely, and easier to mitigate, at least in part, but it will take commitment. Changes in overall government or in individual appointments within the current administration may also influence this.

Work is already underway to review the legal base of BDRCS and this must be supported. Internally, there are critical actions that can be taken to reduce this risk, in three broad areas:

- HR reform, specifically in the adoption of competency based best practice in recruitment of new staff;
- improved management processes that decentralise decision making and locate it at the appropriate level in the appropriate department; and
- Improved and strengthened SOPs that reduce the opportunity for personal influence over operational decisions.

<p><b>Risk: staff competency, technical skills and experience, are inadequate</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Risk owner: BDRCS</b></p>
<p><b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hill areas</li> <li>• Beneficiaries are in hard to reach areas</li> <li>• Vehicles are not sufficient</li> </ul>
<p><b>Drivers, causes and triggers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More staff and RCYs are needed to engage in the implementation</li> <li>• Capacity of most of the RCY were not up to the mark</li> </ul>
<p><b>Risk management strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoiding the risk</li> </ul>
<p><b>Milestones:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deploy NHQ staffs</li> </ul>

**Facilitator comments:**

This area of risk can be seen as embracing two possible concepts: quality and quantity. Contrary to the group’s findings above, this risk is common to BDRCS and IFRC.

Quantity first. BDRCS have a mechanism for deploying (highly skilled) volunteer surge capacity around the country: the NDRT. They also have informal systems for deploying headquarters staff into emergency operations, sometimes for quite extended periods to meet demands. They do not have a formal system for developing, retaining and deploying professional surge capacity, and they recognised in the plenary discussions that this would be valuable.

IFRC do have several such mechanisms. The most readily available, the Regional Disaster Response Team, is deployed infrequently but provides a cost-effective response. Other global tools such as FACT, ERU and FERST are normally only deployed into large-scale emergencies. There is also informal surge capacity available from the Zone DMU and other Federation structures. But the deployment of surge capacity requires the recognition that there is a gap, and the attitude within the delegation during the operation appears to have been one of ‘making do’ with existing resources.

Quality is a much more challenging issue. It’s worth being explicit about the different roles and expectations of BDRCS and IFRC in this regard. BDRCS can reasonably be said to be ‘working towards’ international standards and best practice. IFRC really should be operating at this level as a matter of course.

Within BDRCS, there is little fresh intake of staff at senior level, with most people joining quite young and working their way up through the ranks. There is lots of training provided through IFRC, little (if any) of which makes serious efforts to measure the impact or follow up on implementation. Awareness of key issues such as those raised during this workshop is low.

Sadly, there is little evidence that the quality issue was high on the agenda within IFRC either: whether at the delegation or the Zone level. The evidence for this is found in the proposal and the ECHO submission, and in the subsequent reporting. This is a matter of serious concern.

A medium term deployment of a highly skilled emergency manager for 18 months, with a responsibility for coaching and supporting staff in IFRC and BDRCS is recommended. At the level of KL, an internal mechanism for scoring and approving Plans Of Action is clearly needed, together with a coaching system to support those charged with developing them if they are found to be below par.

<b>Risk: unclear roles and responsibilities</b>	<b>Risk owner:</b> BDRCS and IFRC
<b>Description:</b> Confusion leads to slow implementation rate Sense of responsibility culture Jeopardise relationship among partners	
<b>Drivers, causes and triggers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Memoranda of understanding (MoU)</li> <li>• Lack of information and compliance</li> <li>• Lack of team work and joint responsibilities</li> <li>• Lack of transparency</li> </ul>	
<b>Risk management strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoU – for every project</li> <li>• Regular induction</li> <li>• Good project planning</li> <li>• Participation in decision making procedure</li> </ul>	
<b>Milestones:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard template for MoU</li> <li>• Project implementation Plan (PIP) – guideline</li> <li>• Feedback mechanism</li> </ul>	

#### Facilitator comments:

There is a multi-page pre-disaster agreement between BDRCS, IFRC and the PNS, which was developed in 2012. Like the cash SOPs, it was not initially made available during the review process. It provides a good basis for cooperation in four key areas, with thresholds set for action:

- Operational responsibilities
- Coordination mechanisms
- Acceptance of international assistance
- Agreement on specific standards

It is not clear if this agreement has been signed by all current operational PNS, or if this is actually a pre-requisite for working with BDRCS.

Section 5.1.4 of the agreement outlines responsibilities relating to the agreement on specific standards, and in the section on IFRC responsibilities, makes specific reference to Sphere. In this context, it would be worth revisiting the Sphere Handbook: in particular the early sections. The issues identified in Figure 1; the feedback during the opening sessions of the lessons learned workshop, and the issues explored in the sessions on future risks are all very well covered in the Core Standards.

The real issues with roles and responsibilities are covered in this agreement, but they are not reflected in reality. The practice in the field is one of 'joint responsibility' and this is not the expectation of the agreement, nor the norms of Movement practice.

It is proposed that the IFRC delegation engages some external expertise, from the Zone office in KL or an appropriate consultant, to support a reflective process to examine the nature of the relationship within the framework of local context and international best practice, and uses the results to make recommendations about the approach, the structure and the staffing of the delegation.

<b>Risk: slow movement of funds and reporting</b>	<b>Risk owner:</b> BDRCS and IFRC
<b>Description:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay implementation</li> <li>• Slow finding</li> <li>• Reputation of BDRCS</li> </ul>	
<b>Drivers, causes and triggers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff competency</li> <li>• SOPs and reporting</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Participation of Unit Executive Committee (UEC)</li> </ul>	
<b>Risk management strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing likelihood or frequency of the risk</li> </ul>	
<b>Milestones:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong coordination among partners</li> <li>• Joined monitoring and sharing findings</li> <li>• Timely reporting</li> </ul>	

#### Facilitator comments:

This is an area that was not well explored during the lessons learned workshop, but evidence from the review process, and its selection as a priority risk, both suggest that it is an area in need of further attention.

In essence, the movement of, and reporting on, funds passing through BDRCS is slow. This generates a problem within the IFRC systems, in that it is difficult to advance additional fund (beyond an acceptable level of float) until existing funds have been reported against.

It may be that the level of float needs to be reviewed in the light of the scale of the disaster. It must be recognised that there will always be funds 'in the system' and that this amount must be sufficient to allow smooth operations.

At the same time, there was acknowledgement that there were blockages, and that reporting could have been faster. In part, this is linked to the discussions on surge capacity, and in part it is tied to 'traditional' paper-based management systems with low levels of decentralisation, that are inflexible and perhaps inappropriate, especially during emergency operations.

It is therefore suggested that BDRCS should seek Federation support to review their internal systems, for communication, decision-making, and transfers of funds, looking both at emergency capacity and normal programming. The review should consider all levels within the BDRCS.

<b>Risk: corruption in targeting and/or distributions</b>	<b>Risk owner:</b> BDRCS
<b>Description:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	
<b>Drivers, causes and triggers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SOPs</li><li>• Monitoring and reporting</li><li>• Influence and pressure from local communities/political leaders</li></ul>	
<b>Risk management strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reducing the impact of risk</li></ul>	
<b>Milestones:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beneficiaries communication</li><li>• Training of staff Monitoring and reporting</li><li>• Regular coordination with stakeholders</li></ul>	

**Facilitator comments:**

The risks of corruption during distributions are quite effectively limited by the Cash SOPs, which are fairly robust. While it seems that elements of these were used in the operation, they are technically still in draft, and there is no concrete evidence that they have been translated and form a regular part of the BDRCS process. If this has not been done, it should be a priority.

The risks of various forms of influence during the targeting processes should be covered by BDRCS relief manual and this has not been explored during this review process or through the Lessons Learned workshop.

Risks can be associated with geographic targeting – and here the political influence is the main area of risk (see above) – or in individual targeting. Both of these areas can be addressed through a review of the DM SOP.



## Conclusions and recommendations

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From the most important perspective, that of the beneficiary, the operation was a delayed success. The cash reached appropriate beneficiaries in a safe manner, with only a modest cost to most of them. The review finds that the cash transfers met their objective to strengthen food security in the period after the flooding, and that the training and the physical projects undertaken both had benefit for the affected communities. The amount of the grant was too small to have a more substantial impact on recovery, covering all the sectors identified in the JNA.

**Recommendation 1.** Where a multi-sectoral needs assessment exists and multiple needs have been identified, then all efforts should be made to generate a multi-sectoral, integrated response such as that described in the Federation Appeal. These efforts should include advocacy with donors on the basis of the common needs assessment.

The design of the operation was generally weak. The Appeal's monitoring framework was poor and standard tools were not used, or not used properly. There is no written context analysis, no market information, and no analysis of particularly vulnerable or marginalised groups. There is no evidence that gender issues were given appropriate attention. Yet the Appeal design process was led by an experienced delegate, and the ECHO proposal went through multiple round of revision, and had access to technical support from KL, where it was finally approved internally and submitted to ECHO.

The Federation has a reasonably good set of tools available in the Appeal, the Plan of Action, guidance on M&E and the Recovery Guidance. All of these tools should have been applied, and applied properly, to the design of this operation as a matter of course. After the relief activities, there was plenty of time prior to the submission of the ECHO proposal to do this, and yet more time to improve them before recovery activities really took off.

If a weak proposal is accepted with an insubstantial baseline, incomplete indicators and poor analysis, all parties must take some responsibility for the reporting, which will inevitably be below standard as a consequence. While every effort should be made to provide a high quality, transparent and timely final report to ECHO, there will be practical limitations in terms of data availability.

**Recommendation 2.** The role of the IFRC delegation in emergency response should be to ensure that the response plans, articulated through the POA, meet certain minimum standards. The POA should include context analysis including possible scenarios and associated risk mapping, relevant market analysis, a detailed gender perspective, and the inclusion of effective mechanisms for beneficiary communications. It must include a complete and proper monitoring framework with fully defined indicators and meaningful supporting information.

**Recommendation 3.** IFRC should have and use a scored checklist for POA approval, which ensures that Appeals meet the minimum standards outlined above. While such a checklist may have different thresholds for work done in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, it should be fully applied to medium-term early recovery activities. Responsibility for this should be held by the DMU in KL, and the PMER department should also sign off on each plan.

**Recommendation 4.** BDRCS should review the cash tools developed in 2012 and ensure that the full toolkit, including annexes, has been translated into Bangla and that the NDRT members and relevant staff have all been trained in its application.

The working relationship between IFRC and BDRCS appears to have shifted over recent years, with an increased emphasis on direct operational support, rather than technical support to an operational partner. The root causes of this shift and a consideration of ways in which it might be addressed are both beyond the immediate scope of these TOR, but the relationship itself is an essential factor in the performance issues and is a proper area for inclusion.

In essence, IFRC could be considered to be working in the manner often adopted by partner national societies, rather than focussing on development of capacity and support to institutional change. It's worth observing that the MOU is very clear about the appropriate roles and responsibilities, but that the reality on the ground appears to be more operational.

This is being encouraged by some donor attitudes calling for higher levels of staffing and oversight. Comparisons by these donors to the structure and working practices of INGOs are not helpful in this regard: the operating models and legal base of BDRCS are simply not comparable with INGOs.

The delegation seems to be stretched: requests for information or simple administrative processes can take substantial time to be addressed. Proactive communication or provision of resources is not the norm: for example, neither the relief manual nor the draft cash-specific SOPs were shared with the review team, and information on HR changes was not forthcoming despite requests.

Assuming that this shift in focus were to be corrected in the near future, it's not clear that the IFRC delegation has the right structure to meet the revised purpose, or that the current staff have the correct mix of competencies to deliver the appropriate types of support.

**Recommendation 5.** The delegation would benefit from a high level review of its purpose, structure and staffing, and its working practices, to ensure complementarity and compliance with the pre-disaster agreement. The review should also consider IFRC's relationships with BDRCS, ICRC and the PNS, to identify potential points of fracture and address them in a proactive manner. It should then consider appropriate staffing levels, in terms of numbers of staff and competencies, to meet the expectations.

IFRC salaries are reportedly much higher than BDRCS, which makes it easier for IFRC to recruit high quality staff. This can result in IFRC staff with much higher capacity and wider experience than their BDRCS counterparts; joint operations in the field may then cede decision making to IFRC and undermine rather than build capacity. The disparity is certainly a source of tension, and the recent salary increase for IFRC staff, undertaken with no equivalent change immediately on the table for BDRCS, have worsened this situation.

Through the process there has been insufficient attention paid to the operation by the management teams in both BDRCS and IFRC. This began with the poor proposal development and continued into implementation. Despite the weaknesses in the monitoring framework, there were concrete indicators that things were not going to plan as early as February 2013, but these were not given much attention.

It seems to have been clearly understood within IFRC, that because of the history, performance against this contract was important – even more so than usual – for the overall relationship between IFRC and ECHO, and it should be closely observed. This understanding did not lead to sufficiently high levels of oversight and management, however. This issue was compounded by weak documentation and poor communication between the various levels within the operation from field to HQ.

**Recommendation 6.** The Bangladesh delegation should develop an internal tool for management reporting on programme implementation. This should be combined with strengthened monitoring within BDRCS and IFRC that includes indicators for **internal processes**; changes in **context and risks**; and **results** for the affected population at the output and outcome levels all included. This tool should then be tested by application to existing programmes, and revised until it is fully fit for purpose.

Communication has been weak throughout much of the implementation period, although it has improved recently after the programme started to attract external scrutiny. Notwithstanding the poor baseline and monitoring tools, the reporting has been weak: ambiguous sometimes to the point of appearing evasive. Communication has largely been reduced to formal reporting, with missed opportunities to engage with stakeholders, donors, partners and colleagues in KL.

The reporting itself contains mixed messages on key issues such as the selection of target areas, processes for beneficiary selection, and coordination with the local authorities: messages that were not really clarified during monitoring visits by donors. It may be that the processes are not as clear as they might be, or not universally understood, or it may be just poor communication. Formal reporting passes through technical review in KL, but this did not resolve the issue.

In addition to the strengthened tools recommended above, work needs to be done on improving the frequency and quality of communication from the delegation (and by implication, from BDRCS). This needs to be substantial and consistent. In the short term, however, the final report to ECHO must be prioritised in terms of time and quality.

Recommendation 7. An accelerated timeline for the ECHO final report is already in place, and it should be followed. It is critical that the final report is transparent, open, and unambiguous, and that it is delivered on time. The concerns of the ECHO team are well understood and well documented: they should form a checklist for the final report and must be addressed.

Recommendation 8. Formal reporting should always be complemented by informal information sharing and discussion. This strengthens relationships, builds confidence, and provides an opportunity for advocacy, as well as an opportunity to strengthen donors' understanding of the RC/RC Movement.

Recommendation 9. The delegation and BDRCS should jointly consider undertaking a statistically representative impact survey of beneficiaries, using a retrospective baseline. The process would require technical inputs and a budget, but it might provide valuable evidence of impact should the programme be subject to future audit and be found wanting.

While the ECHO supported project is closed and the reporting almost finished, the work begun in the 'lessons learned' workshop is incomplete. If the momentum is lost now, the effort will have been in vain and the opportunity to learn lessons will be missed. The IFRC leadership should work closely with BDRCS to conclude these processes, and may choose to share some of the outcomes later with ECHO as a further contribution to improved transparency and mutual understanding.

The pre-disaster meeting will provide one opportunity to progress this discussion, but it will also need additional resources, time and people, over the following weeks.

Recommendation 10. On-going work to strengthen recruitment practices within BDRCS is critical to effective risk management and should be prioritised. Decentralisation of hiring decisions, stronger HR processes, a competency framework, appraisal systems, and a review of remuneration are all options. BDRCS should also consider ways to strengthen staffing at the Unit level for short periods of time during emergency responses.

Recommendation 11. The risk analysis exercise undertaken at the end of the workshop is incomplete. Risk owners should take the lead in reviewing the matrix: the locations of the existing risks should be revisited and additional elements should be included. The final exercise needs to be completed for each of the identified risks, and a set of actions developed to include the identified milestones. The outcomes of this exercise should be presented to the stakeholders, and progress against the milestones needs to be monitored.

Recommendation 12. IFRC and BDRCS should develop a management response to issues arising in this report and the recommendations – and those of other reviews. Where recommendations are accepted in whole or in part, an action plan must be developed, and it should be subject to regular monitoring and the management be held accountable to it.

## Annex: Workshop participants

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List to be included...