

Case study from Syria 2023 Earthquake emergency response

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) provided cash assistance to more than 205,000 people in response to the devastating earthquake that struck in February 2023. In addition, they assisted 122,525 vulnerable people to prepare for the winter ('winterisation'), covering both people in the earthquake-affected areas and vulnerable households in other rural areas. Together, these responses made up one of the largest cash operations that the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) has implemented and contributed to SARC's position as the main actor delivering cash assistance in Syria¹.

SARC took the role of convener for all aspects of the response, including coordinating the Movement's collective response in accordance with its operational plans and capacity, as per Movement Coordination for Collective Impact Agreement, the Seville Agreement 2.0. On IFRC's side, in line with the Agenda for Renewal², IFRC embraced its role in National Society development and leveraging the capacities of the entire IFRC network to establish a common coordination structure.³

SARC conducted an evaluation on both, earthquake and winterisation response, to assess the impact of the assistance and document operational learnings for future programmes improvement.

One Movement Approach for Cash Coordination

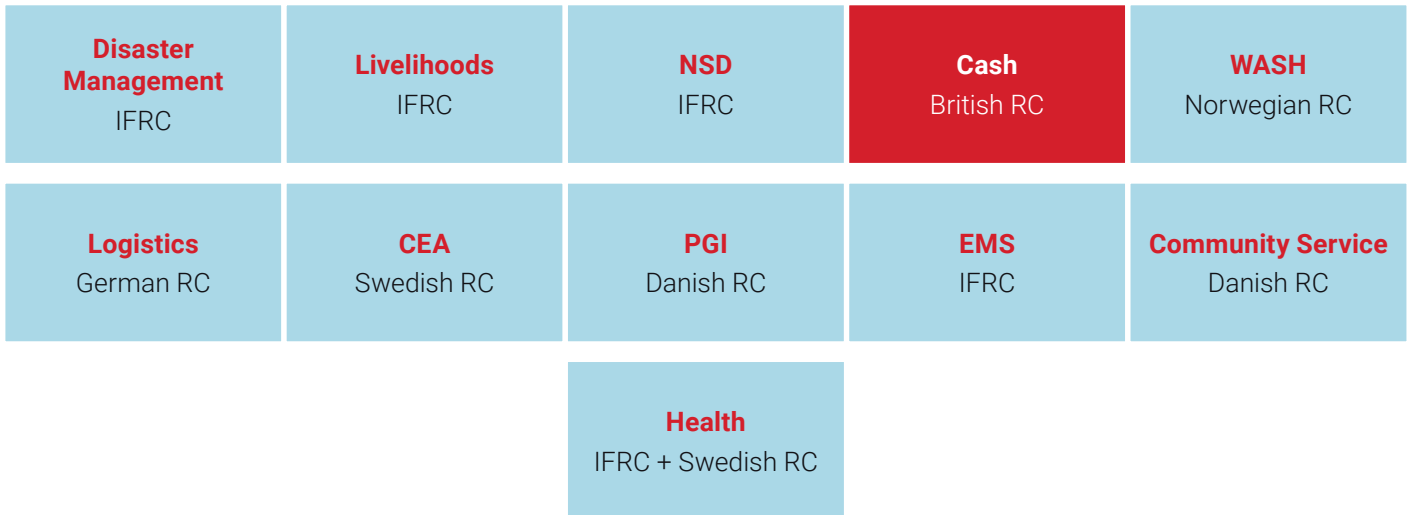
Evaluation key findings

- The One Movement Approach for cash coordination proved effective.
- The approach enabled SARC to focus on operationalising the response strategy and assistance delivery, resulting in increased response speed and positively affecting assistance recipients.
- Early planning and close monitoring of deadlines and partners' needs and obligations to do-nors allowed for deadlines to be met in a timely manner and with quality, resulting in high satisfaction from both partners and donors. British Red Cross took on the responsibility of meeting partners' needs regarding funding implementation, reporting and information sharing, relieving SARC of this responsibility.
- This model of coordination has been recognised by all key informants as a successful strategy that could be replicated in other contexts when conditions are conducive.

While SARC led the earthquake response, IFRC provided membership coordination, and in-country Partner National Societies (PNS) took the leadership of each technical working group. The structure leveraged the established collaboration between SARC and PNS in different areas.

- 1 See beneficiaries by programme organisation <https://response.reliefweb.int/syria/cash-working-group>.
- 2 To implement the Strategy 2030, the IFRC Secretariat developed the Agenda for Renewal that provides for more focus on delivering on its core mandate: 1) Coordination across member National Societies, ensuring an IFRC-wide-approach, 2) Representation of the membership internationally and regionally including through joint humanitarian diplomacy and 3) National Society development.
- 3 [IFRC GO - Emergency](#)

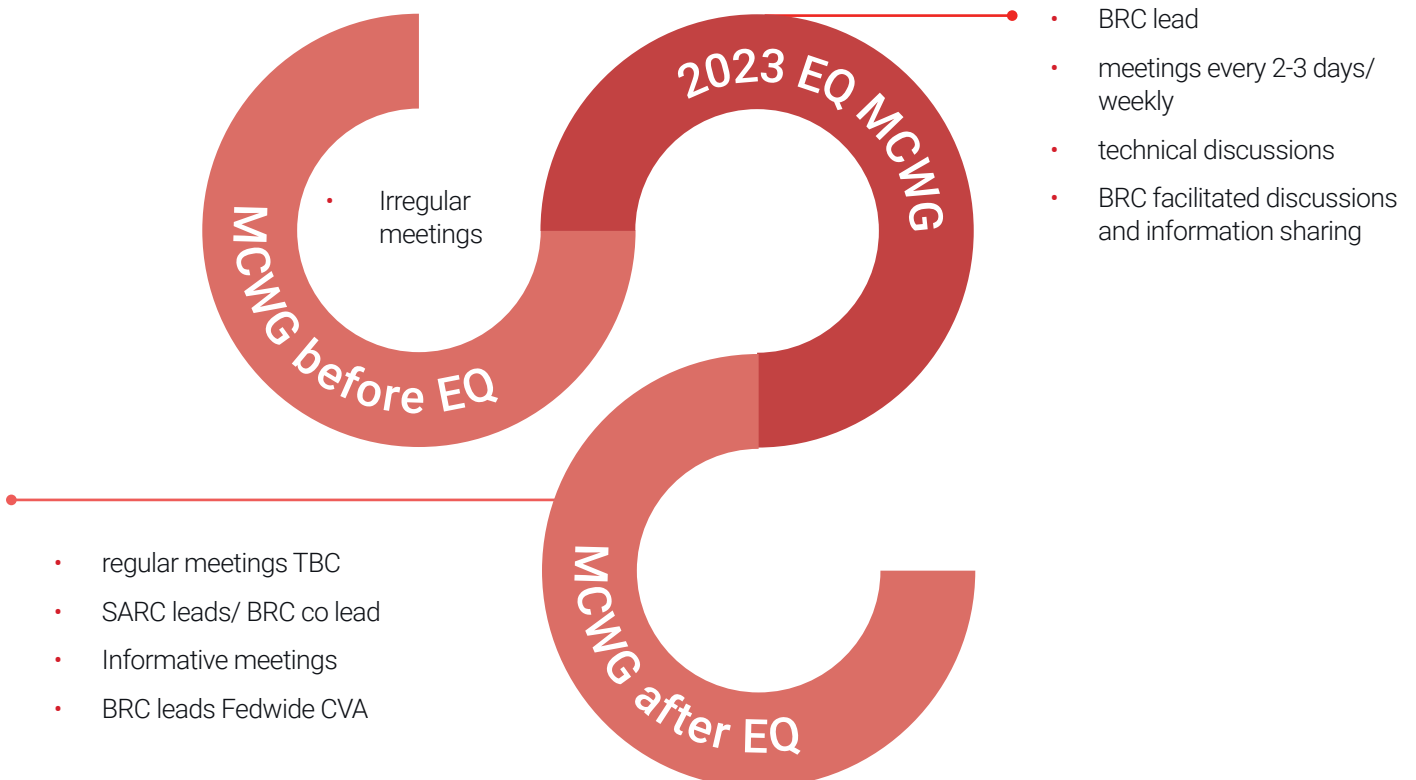
SARC and IFRC-wide coordination structure



For the **Movement Cash Working Group (MCWG)**, the British Red Cross (BRC) was entrusted with the lead role, assisting SARC through the emergency phase of the response. BRC has been a partner of SARC for the past 20 years and, since 2019, BRC has been the lead supporter of SARC’s cash preparedness work. At the time of the earthquake, BRC had a presence in-country and mobilised additional technical cash assistance capacity to support SARC’s response.

Prior to the earthquake, there was existing coordination for cash assistance, which intensified during the emergency. First weekly, then monthly coordination meetings were held until November 2023, covering both technical and informative discussions based on operational needs. In March 2024, the Movement resumed cash coordination activities under SARC’s leadership, focusing on general coordination rather than earthquake-specific matters. BRC continues to co-lead the group, providing support to SARC as required.

Movement Cash Working Group process through the emergency



Enablers

- Clear, quickly defined coordination approach between SARC and IFRC. IFRC's immediate decision to apply the principles of the Agenda of Renewal gave the membership a framework to apply the One Movement Approach for coordination.
- The existence of technical working groups prior to the earthquake facilitated a quick designation of the lead and implementation of the approach.
- SARC's trust in BRC, built on long-standing, well-established relationships, and previous collaborative efforts, made it a natural choice to assign BRC the lead coordination role.
- From PNS perspective, good confident relations and trust in the capacities of BRC facilitated the acceptance of BRC's leadership role.
- BRC's in-country presence and dedicated staff enabled it to quickly take on the lead role. BRC's good knowledge of the NS, the CVA Unit and the context enabled fast decision making around cash priorities and an organised workplan.
- BRC's capacity to provide dedicated technical and coordination support first through its Country Manager and later with support from the CashCap delegate was also key. The strong technical capacity of the group leads was in an advisory role to SARC and partners.



Not a system given success, but context based because of the maturity of people at the table, SARC, PNS and IFRC trusted BRC"



Key Informant

Main contributions to the operation

- The approach reduced the burden on SARC and avoided duplication of effort. While maintaining SARC at the centre of all decision making, this approach prevented them being overwhelmed by managing multiple partners expectations and requirements. BRC assumed this role, allowing SARC to focus on implementation.
- The group developed quickly a concept note that allowed for a coordinated response plan and established one approach for the response. This document, adapted as more information was available, enabled a harmonised response from the beginning and maintained it. The document helped partners engage with donors and mobilise resources as they could share the strategy at very early stages.
- Thanks to coordination efforts, partners met their reporting deadlines and funding implementation deadlines. With many partners in country, each had different expectations and deadlines from donors, putting pressure on the operation timeline. BRC, as group lead, organised partners' requirements for funding spending deadlines and worked with SARC CVA Unit and Finance to allocate funding to the operation, prioritising those with shorter deadlines.
- Allowing SARC to focus all human resources and capacity on the cash response implementation increased the speed of the response, positively impacting the experience of the affected population.
- While BRC's intermediary role protected SARC's space, partners highly appreciated that information was shared openly and in a transparent manner. Initially, group discussions were more technical as new challenges arose, and the group sought solutions together. As the operation evolved, the meetings took on a more informative character.
- The coordination facilitated information sharing and monitoring of all reporting requirements and deadlines. The group lead processed information shared by SARC and helped use the CVA unit dashboard information to meet deadlines.
- The coordination space provided opportunities for increased synergy between PNS and more coordination with other departments in SARC.
- Although fewer partners supported winterisation cash assistance, the group still provided a useful space for coordination.



With cash we saw that something was happening, and assistance reached beneficiaries. Now all our projects include a cash component."



Key Informant

Recommendations for other contexts

The One Movement Approach for cash coordination presents an opportunity for a coordinated cash response, reducing pressure from partners and National Societies (NS) in times of emergency while helping meet partners requirements.

Some minimum conditions are required.

- Pre-crisis coordination structures in country is key.
- The group lead must have a good understanding of the NS and the context, as well as partners' needs, to effectively play an intermediary role and protect all parties' interests.
- Additional technical capacity is required, either new or relocated in country, but ensure someone is fully dedicated to coordination.
- The Movement CVA coordination lead can assist NS in attending external national and regional CVA coordination working groups.

