

## Disaster and Crisis Working Group (DCWG); Turin, 6-8 June 2023

The Disaster and Crisis Working Group (DCWG) meets annually in person under the following [Terms of Reference](#). The meeting in 2023 was hosted by Italian Red Cross in Turin, Italy. All details and pre-reading materials can be found here: [DCWG Turin 2023 Website](#) and the agenda is linked here: [Agenda](#).

### Meeting Summary, Updates and Actions:

The following notes, updates and proposed action items resulted from the various sessions. As updates become available, the incoming DCWG organizing committee will provide information and/or organize meetings and webinars for continued discussion and progress.

#### Preparedness and Readiness

- Presentation from Nelson Castaño ([link to Preparedness & Readiness deck](#))
- Key distinction between preparedness and readiness: *Preparedness is the long-term process of planning for an event. Readiness is the condition to act now.*
- DCWG members provided input on map of existing initiatives. (Update: [DCWG Mapping of Readiness Activities](#))

#### SMCC

- A discussion of ongoing challenges and potential action points related to Movement and Membership Coordination.
- A poll was used to prioritize next steps regarding SMCC. The results can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

#### Sub-WG on Membership Coordination in Operations

The DCWG subgroup on membership coordination in operations presented the progress of their work since they were established during the DCWG meeting in June 2022. The group was created to develop an approach on how the New Way of Working can be applied in emergencies. The group presented the first draft of the membership coordination framework, which consists of a vision, modular design of the membership coordination set-up, a process to launch membership coordination after a disaster strikes and a catalogue of membership coordination services. The next priorities of the group are to ensure a more inclusive and diverse representation, and to start testing elements of the framework in future operations to capture lessons and assess how the framework may need to be adjusted.

- Presentation on work-to-date by sub-WG ([DCWG subgroup presentation](#)).
- DCWG members provided feedback on what is needed by all parties on this agenda. Key points and questions that emerged:
  - Clarify the alignment with Movement Coordination, MCAs and SMCC, and ensure that there is no duplication.
  - Reconsider the wording of “framework” as it might cause confusion and imply something rigid whereas this is intended as a flexible approach to be adjusted depending on the context.

- Clarify when the framework applies and what happens in a situation where ICRC is a co-convenor.

## Meta-Analysis Topics

[Presentation on Meta-Analysis](#) by Jamie LeSueur (HEOPs), followed by four “deep dive” thematic sessions. The presentation articulated findings from the last 18 years over 67 operations and emphasized that:

- 1 in 23 people require humanitarian assistance, this has doubled in the last four years.
- 103 million people are displaced.
- Last 8 years have been the warmest on record.
- In relation to the RC/RC we are seeing an increase in the financial requests of the Secretariat (larger appeals). It is also increasingly expensive to run operations.
- **Update:** link to final version [Operational Meta-Analysis 2020-2023](#)

Each summary document from the deep dive sessions contains potential action items; these action items will require further engagement and commitment from DCWG members in upcoming meetings (summary documents from each session are in [Appendix 1](#)).

- [Assessment, Analysis and Planning](#)
- [Lack of understanding of IFRC processes and mission duration/handover](#)
- [Unsolicited In-Kind Donations](#)
- [Refusal of rapid response and ERU](#)

## Localisation

Localization is a container word, meaning different things to different people and organizations. Instead of trying to come up with a unified definition, the focus was put on identifying actions aiming to move closer to its general goals and philosophy, and where the response modalities put forward in any emergency response operation should be locally acceptable. Surge deployments at scale are by nature international but let’s find ways to improve and extend our regional surge networks, as well as include and expand local capacities because of an international response operation. How can we cement the learnings and sustain the right level of local capacity after a scale down of international operations?

## DCWG: Next Meeting and new Organizing Committee (OC)

- Four members of the previous OC are stepping down. Swedish and Netherlands RC have volunteered to be co-chairs moving into the next year of planning.
- In-person meeting to take place in June next year (possibly in Sweden) with the intention of 2-3 virtual meetings beforehand.
- German RC, British RC, and Japanese RC all expressed interest to join the new OC.

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## Appendix 1: 2023 Meta- Analysis Summary Documents

### 2023 Meta-Analysis: Assessment, Analysis, and Planning

**Finding:** Although improvements have been made in assessment and analysis, there is room for continued growth, including by more strongly linking analytical outputs with dedicated operational planning for decision-making.

#### Operations reference:

Country	Crisis
Global	COVID-19 (2020-23)
Ukraine	Ukraine and impacted countries (2022-pres)
DRC	Mt. Nyiragongo eruption (2021-22)
Turkiye	Earthquake (2023-pres)

#### Problem set:

In recent years, several improvements have been made in the assessment and analysis file:

1. The assessment technical competency framework and assessment role profiles have been completed;
2. Needs assessment learning pathways with references to learning initiatives have been developed;
3. The Assessment Cell has deployed to several operations (Bahamas, Honduras, COVID, Syria, DRC, Ethiopia, Mozambique);
4. The Drones ERU is under development;
5. Several trainings (ENAP, SDRA [online modules], MDC, HIAC) have taken place with over 100 people trained;
6. The Operations Toolkit's Assessment section has been completed and is continuously updated;
7. DEEP rolled out to 30 National Societies in all five Regions;
8. The IFRC has also signed a USD \$10m Accelerating IM programme with USAID to support IM mentoring, NS staffing, and adaptation of the assessment tools for NS use cases.

However, as was seen in Ukraine, contextual realities—including prohibition of primary data collection by Government—and other factors undermine our ability to conduct strong assessments. As highlighted by the GB Oversight Group for Ukraine, this inhibited the operational strategy's ability to "reflect our understanding of...needs and capture the distinctive ways in which the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement can make a difference". As such, while improvements have been made there is still room for growth.

Linked to this, how assessment and analysis informs decision-making was highlighted as a challenge in several operations. While some best practices of integrated analysis and planning cells were referenced in Nyiragongo, the Regional coordination for Ukraine, and Turkiye, there exists no standard for operational planning approach that is applied across emergencies nor are individuals deployed specifically to support with planning. This despite the best practice finding highlighting the efficacy of operational planning cycles, informed by solid analysis, in supporting coordination and decision-making in emergencies.

There is a tension between a thorough needs assessment and the need to respond rapidly to sudden onset disasters. This requires more discussion (to me it seems that there are 2 discussions going in parallel – needs assessment, and rapid operational planning and response).

We need to think how we keep our trained rosters up to date. We train and train, but have no real mechanism for refresher trainings / keeping the delegates up to date, so we end deploying people who are not 100% knowledgeable.

To compound this problem set, the meta-analysis also highlighted related challenges in vertical information flow within the IFRC. This impacted the Secretariat's ability to maintain good internal coordination between all levels (Field, Delegation, Region, HQ) as well as horizontal coordination and representation with Movement and interagency partners. As such, while assessment and analysis have improved over the years, a gap remains in the link to operational planning and how information flows within/between the IFRC and Membership.

#### Key Points: [Assessment](#), [Analysis](#), and [Planning](#)

##### Action points:

1. Ensure emergency needs assessments are included within our minimum requirements for quality operations, including integrating the requirement to conduct a needs assessment into the JD for operations leadership as well as the KPI's for quality operations. This should link strongly to the newly created IFRC team examining for quality in operations.
2. 'Build the narrative' around the necessity for planning functions in large-scale operations, emphasising the link between analysis and forecasting with informed leadership decision-making. Learn from good practices ongoing amongst the Membership, to better articulate the need and how elements could be integrated in Federation-wide operations. This should also ensure a link to the work and planning of the DCWG Sub-Group on Membership Coordination.
3. Continue to work through existing Needs Assessment initiatives and technical working groups to ensure strong capacity-building within the National Societies. This should include developing and referencing the incentives and benefits of conducting strong needs assessments in terms of positioning, planning, and quality response to encourage our collective to prioritize them in operations.
4. Work with Movement partners, including through the DCWG sub-group for Membership Coordination in Emergencies, SMCC, and the New Way of Working to overcome the barriers—including data sharing—to conducting common/coordinated/joint needs analyses in Federation-wide and Movement operations.
5. There is a tension between the need to conduct thorough needs assessment and the need to respond rapidly to sudden onset disasters. More discussion is required to find ways to reconcile the tensions between the two.
6. There is a need to think how we keep our trained rosters up to date. We train and train, but have no real mechanism for refresher trainings/keeping the delegates up to date, so we end deploying people whose knowledge is not as up to date as it should be.

**2023 Meta-Analysis:** Lack of understanding of IFRC processes + mission duration/handover

**Findings:**

1. High turnover of surge staff, weak handovers, and short mission timeframes are a serious detriment to operational continuity and erode trust with the HNS, IFRC and Membership.
2. General lack of understanding of IFRC systems and emergency response procedures, and processes amongst the Membership, which undermines response, increases inefficiency, and augments risk.

**Operations reference:**

Country	Crisis	Finding
Global	COVID-19 (2020-23)	1 & 2
Ukraine	Ukraine and impacted countries (2022-pres)	1 & 2
DRC	Mt. Nyiragongo eruption (2021-22)	2
Malawi	TS Ana (2022)	2
Central America	Hurricane Eta and Iota (2020-21)	2
Belarus	Population movement (2015-16)	2
Bahamas	Hurricane Dorian (2019-22)	1 & 2
Afghanistan	Humanitarian crisis (2022-pres)	1
Ethiopia	Tigray Crisis (2021-23)	1
DRC	Ebola (2018-21)	1
Turkiye	Earthquake (2023-pres)	1
Southern Africa	Cholera multi-country (2022-pres)	1

**Problem set:**

A recurring theme for nearly two decades, the high turnover of surge staff, weak handovers, and short mission timeframes are a serious detriment to operational continuity and erode trust with the HNS, IFRC and Membership. Although the average mission timeframe has increased in the past eight years from just over one month to 56.5 days and the handover process has been formalized by the IFRC, low adherence to proper handovers and continued instances of short missions—bilateral and multilateral—erode the perception and efficacy of rapid response.

Related to this, rapid responders from the Membership have consistently relayed their general lack of understanding of IFRC systems, personnel, and emergency response procedures, which reduces their ability to quickly have an impact as well as their confidence. While the Surge Induction was developed to address this problem set, it continues to be reported in very recent operations indicating that more should be done.

**Key Points:** Lack of understanding of IFRC processes + mission duration/handover

**ISSUE: IFRC Processes and system / Handovers.**

**ACTION POINTS:**

1. Decentralization of the Induction to IFRC Operations training to IFRC RO and NS

2. Work on a guidance with “minimum procedures for Dummies” – should be easy to access and disseminate. It should be linked to the Toolbox.
3. Make a granular analysis of compositions of pools by sector, region, NS, etc. This should include: how many NS has volunteer rosters, how many has stand by capacity, what is the scope of their pools.
4. Reach consensus with regards to the number of days up to 60 for a minimum length. Decide on key positions and share this with NS.
5. Build more opportunities for developing missions, specially remote and to IFRC Operations.
6. Handover – Make it more mandatory and ensure completion of the handovers documents in missions.

## 2023 Meta-Analysis: Unsolicited In-Kind Donations

**Finding:** Unsolicited or sub-standard in-kind contributions continue to be sent in the early stages of large-scale crises. This violation of the Principles and Rules clogs relief pipelines, imposes massive costs on the operation and HNS, and can risk the Movement's reputation vis-à-vis Government, partners, and the affected population.

### Operations reference:

Country	Crisis
Global	COVID-19 (2020-23)
Ukraine	Ukraine and impacted countries (2022-pres)
Central America	Hurricane Eta and Iota (2020-21)
Turkiye	Earthquake (2023-pres)

### Problem set:

A recurring theme for decades, unsolicited or sub-standard in-kind contributions continue to be sent in the early stages of large-scale crises, imposing logistical, financial, and reputational challenges on receiving NS and the IFRC. This problem set is also articulated well by OCHA<sup>1</sup>:

*“These inappropriate and - for most of them – unusable relief items spark off strong criticisms from the recipients, be it from the civil society in regard to the dangerousness of some products and the needs of the population that remain unaddressed, or from the authorities of the affected states which often have no other choice than having these donations destroyed at great costs. These criticisms are now taken up by international relief agencies in view of the reduction of their operating space caused by inappropriate donations (in terms of impact on their freight/warehousing/staff capacities, financial costs, logistics bottlenecks, etc.) In addition, they are confronted to a growing discredit from the public opinion on the basis of an indiscriminate perception of poor resource management in emergency situations.*”

Despite the clear guidance in the Principles and Rules for RCRC Humanitarian Assistance, this dynamic continues in crisis. Currently, no initiative exists within the IFRC network that is designed to unpack the root causes behind unsolicited/sub-standard goods or propose actions to collectively address this problem set. Ad hoc approaches are implemented, for instance the Movement Guidance on unsolicited goods issued in March 2022 for Ukraine, but these are often reactive and do not address the core issues nor the needs of the various RCRC partners in managing the contributions—either reducing pressure from domestic governments/populations or need for visibility.

## Key Points: Unsolicited In-Kind Donations

### Points for action:

The group called for a technical working group on unsolicited in-kind donations (U-IKD) to be created and engage in the following activities:

1. Advocacy & Communications

- Reach out to other members of the humanitarian community to explore opportunities for collaboration and joint educational messaging before and during crises to key stakeholders (governments, media, public, community groups)
- As relevant, explore opportunities to reinforce messaging on U-IKD with messages on green response, cash response etc.
- Build on what has already taken place in the guidelines for SMCC mini-Summit/Joint Statement and develop standard messaging for NS to include in the development of their communications strategies for emergency appeals (Australian Red Cross to share what they already have)
- Develop SOPs to equip NS in 1) managing offers of U-IKD and their related political/public pressure and 2) manage U-IKD when they are sent regardless.
- Include notions on the management of U-IKD in the next revision of the Sphere standards (Nelson C. on the Committee)

## 2. Policy/governance

- Ask the Governing Board to issue a statement calling for compliance with the Principles and Rules on U-IKD, reminding partners that the operational costs of U-IKD will be transferred back to the NS and not diverted from emergency appeals.
- Request that a side event be held at the next International Conference (2024) to create a space for discussions between Movement partners and governments.
- To maximize impact, these two requests should be presented by a consortium of National Societies that have found themselves on the receiving end of U-IKD and, ideally, that are on the governing board as well (potential NS to be probed for interest: Poland RC, Ukraine RC, Tonga RC, Turkish RC, Honduras RC (GB), Colombian RC (GB), Tanzania RC and a sponsor government for the International Conference)

Sophie Ford (Australian RC), Nelson Castaño (IFRC) and Jennifer Breckenridge (IFRC) will take point on this and are looking for other DCWG members to join the working group.

## 2023 Meta-Analysis: Refusal of rapid response and ERU

**Finding:** Increasing trend amongst National Societies who are refusing ERU and surge deployments due to legacy negative perceptions of their effectiveness, applicability in certain contexts, cost to the operation (perceived or actual), and post-departure fallout.

### Operations reference:

Country	Crisis
Uganda	Ebola virus disease (2022-23)
Greece	Population movement (2015-20)
Central America	Hurricane Eta and Iota (2020-21)
Ukraine	Ukraine and impacted countries (2022-pres)
Southern Africa	Cholera multi-country (2022-pres)
Turkiye	Earthquake (2023-pres)
Syria	Earthquake (2023-pres)

### Problem set:

In line with the Agenda for Renewal and affirming the sovereignty of a Host National Society (HNS) in its own territory, the HNS is in the lead and at the center of their own response. As such, they are empowered to make the decisions most relevant to them in achieving a successful operation.

A novel finding in the 2023 meta-analysis, there exists an increasing trend amongst HNS, and some IFRC Heads of Delegation, of aversion to or outright refusal of surge—global and/or regional rapid response and ERU. Although there are several reasons for this, the analysis highlighted the following:

- Legacy negative perceptions:** The IFRC and Membership have faced challenges with surge in the past including high turnover of staff, short mission durations, weak handovers, lack of NS inclusion, perceived cultural insensitivity, varying calibre of delegates, operational ineffectiveness, and leaving a post-departure wake and additional burden on the HNS, which has fostered a negative perception of the global tools. These perceptions have likely become entrenched, as they are recurring in operations and their impacts shared widely within the Network.
- Applicability:** Although improvements are expected through the ERU optimization process, a criticism remains that ERU's are not fit for purpose in upper-middle and high-income nations. With the recent frequency of emergencies in urban, first-world environments, the applicability of ERU deployments is reportedly lower.
- Cost of surge:** A delegate deployment is a costly endeavour. While many Surge are provided to an operation free of charge, the perception exists amongst HNS that the costs of deploying surge are:
  - Not commensurate to the benefit they can expect—linked to negative legacy perceptions.
  - Reducing available funding for the HNS (operational + support); and/or
  - Financially inefficient when compared to local contracting.

Aversion to surge manifests in several ways from hesitation to deploy to outright refusal. The former was seen in the first phase of the Ukraine response, where the IFRC Regional Office had to negotiate with each affected NS individually to authorize the deployment of Operations Managers. In Uganda during the EVD operation and in Nicaragua during Hurricane Eta/Iota, the NS' outright refused the

deployment of surge, while in Türkiye, TRC, in line with Government, would not consider ERU deployments and refused bilateral Membership implementation.

The benefits and impacts of aversion, hesitation, and refusal are multifaceted with different implications on different Movement components. However, it does pose a risk to the Surge system as, if the trend continues and augments, the IFRC and Membership will face increasing difficulties maintaining their surge readiness, particularly from the experience and cost-efficiency perspectives.

#### Key Points: Refusal of rapid response and ERU

- Not fully in agreement with the finding that more NSs are refusing Rapid Response – as number of deployments are increasing, and not going down,
- Types of Disasters and where the disasters occur also has implications on possibility to deploy – some of the impacted NSs have capacities e.g. Turkey.
- Austrian RC – re-thinking surge have been asking these questions relevant for all:
  - ERUs – do we need all these big units?
  - Where should these capacities be based?
  - IFRC has less coordinators for sectors in Regional Delegations which has impacted the enhancement of regional capacities.
  - How do we do localization of capacities?
- Refusal of surge could be linked to Trust as well as in some cases attitudes of people who have been deployed – limited soft skills to work with HNSs (bossy and directing not collaborating)

#### Re: ERU

- Some ERUs in current shape and form are not always needed – we need to be more modular **(ERU TWGs to define the modularity)**
  - **What is the cost of maintaining the HR and Equipment for the ERUs not always requested? Should they be maintained?**
- Assessments – not always able to determine which ERUs are needed or lacking forecasting or understanding evolving needs resulting in deployment of the wrong types of ERUs **(Deploy the Assessment Cells who has this expertise)**
- There is a need to define expertise needed to help define the types of support to be mobilized (ERU/Rapid Response) – IFRC
- High Risk ERUs – there is reluctance to trigger the request in case it's not needed.
- Why they push back – the support offered is not always aligned with HNS capacity, mandates, or priorities.
- Understanding implications of the ERUs will ensure acceptance of ERUs.
- Optics – basecamp in Turkey was not accepted because it would not be perceived well when compared to how the communities were living after the earthquake.
- Educate Senior Management in NSs on the Tools (ERUs and Rapid response) – **(IFRC Regional Offices and delegations)**
- Decisions on rapid response mobilization needs to be based on needs and analysis of capacities in country.
- Before requesting surge support – look at capacities in-country to support the response **(HEOps/Operations Managers)**
- Shorter availabilities – consider prioritizing profiles with longer availabilities even if they are not the most qualified **(will reduce short deployments and turnover)**
- Mapping of Rapid Response capacities across NSs will help get a picture of capacities across NSs/Sectors

- IFRC technical leads need to advise the ERUs on strategic direction the secretariate wants to take to inform improvements.
  - Obsession with Assessments is becoming an obstacle to response.
  - Clarify the link between the DCWG/ERU Optimization Steering Committee and the GSWG – how do these work/complement each other.

## Appendix 2: Movement and Membership Coordination Action Points

### 100 Points Poll:

A poll was used to prioritize emerging issues and next steps regarding SMCC. The ranking of priorities is shown in the table below.

Priority	Task	Who
1	<p>Seville 2.0: Better understanding of Seville 2.0 in operations to leads of Seville 2.0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explainer validated by IFRC/ICRC on how to realize Seville 2.0 in OPS. Who does what when?</li> <li>• Who coordinates the membership in responses in conflict? There is a significant gap between the simplicity of the roles &amp; responsibilities as outlined in Seville 2.0 according to Karen's description in the video <a href="#">briefcast</a> vs. participants' experience and impressions from Ukraine/Sudan.</li> </ul>	Boyama IFRC and Kathy ICRC
2	Utilize joint task-force information forum to flow information more broadly to PNS. Establish a process flow on how information is shared.	Sub-WG on Membership Coord in Ops
3	<p>MCO: Revisit the MCO training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invigorate the roster.</li> <li>• Identity the complementary b/w MCO and Membership Coord</li> </ul>	Bushra Nicolas Nienke
4	<p>At Appeal level, identify incentives and opportunities to coordinate better between IFRC and ICRC</p> <p>O/A: Revisit the lessons learnt and status of how to better operationalize coordinated appeals.</p>	
5	Seville 2.0: Finalize the revised MCA and disseminate in 2023	Bushra Nicolas
6	Develop a minimum checklist to set roles and responsibilities within x days after the mini summit (Seville article 3)	
7	Request to the Secretariat to provide analysis on Donors' reasons for not providing funding to the Movement	Secretariat
8	Request to Secretariat to develop specific messaging on programs that are difficult to sell to donors.	Secretariat
9	Netherlands RC to share with DCWG their engagement with donors on donor requirements.	Netherlands RC