

The Zambia Red Cross Society

OACAC Findings Report

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Facilitators:

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The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network, reaching 150 million people each year through our 187 member National Societies. Together, we act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We do so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions.

Guided by Strategy 2020 – our collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade – we are committed to 'saving lives and changing minds'.

Our strength lies in our volunteer network, our community-based expertise and our independence and neutrality. We work to improve humanitarian standards, as partners in development and in response to disasters. We persuade decision-makers to act at all times in the interests of vulnerable people. The result: we enable healthy and safe communities, reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen resilience and foster a culture of peace around the world.

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Introduction

The Organisational Capacity Assessment & Certification (OCAC) self-assessment exercise (OCAC phase 1) was conducted in Lusaka, Zambia on 6-8 February 2013.

Key people were selected by the Society to form an internal assessment team. They comprised members of the governance, the acting Secretary General, and staff and volunteers from the Headquarters and branches to ensure wider representation of the group.

Some participants had finalised the individual assessment exercise prior to the joint meeting; their ratings are reflected in the joint results matrix. Participants were free in assessing the capacities and status of the Society and in expressing their opinions. They were invited by the leadership to critically identify areas for improvement. They engaged fully in the group exercise and the results of the assessment reflect the consensus obtained after a sustained debate.

After an introductory session describing the tool, about two days were dedicated to working through the attributes and achieving consensus on each score through dialogue and debate. Following this an additional day was spent to discuss the findings, prioritise key areas for improvement and to undertake some rapid analysis and identify some potential solutions in small groups. The outcomes of this discussion are not fully reflected in this report, as the exercise was afforded only limited time and allowed for only preliminary thoughts and discussion about potential solutions. This work could be used as a basis for further reflection and discussion on concrete measures to be undertaken by the National Society to strengthen the areas identified.

It should be noted that this report comes more than one year after the self-assessment workshop was held. This report is based therefore based on consensus reached back then and some recommendations might not be valid anymore, if the Zambia Red Cross Society has already addressed them. The Organisational Development department would like to sincerely apologise for this delay due to exceptional circumstances.

Context

The Country

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are essentially open organisations that interact constantly with their environment. They serve their home community in coordination with the legal authorities, get support from partners and donors and work with staff and volunteers that are part of the community. While they are the direct representatives and components of an International Movement, the Red Cross and Red Crescent family, they are directly influenced by the history, working and living conditions in their country of origin. Any organisational assessment should therefore be cognisant of that history and all relevant environmental conditions.

The Republic of Zambia is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the north, Tanzania to the north-east, Malawi to the east, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia to the south, and Angola to the west. The population of the country is estimated at about 14 million people, and comprises approximately 72 ethnic groups, most of which are Bantu-speaking.

A British colony from 1891, the country, called until then “North Rhodesia”, gained independence in 1964 and changed its name to Zambia. Constitutional changes introduced in 1991 allowed for a multi-party system, removing the one party rule instituted in 1972. Despite issues in both the 1996 and 2001 elections, Zambia has a reputation for political stability and a relatively efficient, transparent government. The country is divided into ten provinces, each administered by an appointed deputy minister. Each province is further subdivided into several districts with a grand total of 89 districts.

Historically heavily reliant on copper for its exports, Zambia suffered starting in the mid-70s from the decline of the price of copper on the world market and entered a period of economic stagnation until the early 2000. It has more recently experienced a number of consecutive years of economic growth, and while hit by the world economic crisis, it rebounded in 2010 thanks to high copper prices and record maize crop. Agriculture represents only an estimated 20% of total GDP, but accounts for an estimated 85% of total employment in the country.

Despite economic growth, Zambia’s economic growth has not translated into significant poverty reduction: 68% of the total population were living below the poverty line in 2006¹, one of the highest rates in the world. This is reflected in the figures achieved by the country in terms of Inequality adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI): Zambia ranks 117th out of 132 countries (2013 estimates²) and seem not to improve as fast as other countries: it ranked 110th out of 134 countries according to estimate in 2011.

Malaria, HIV and AIDS remain the major drivers of the disease burden, combined with an increase in non-communicable diseases. Maternal and child mortality remain high, and malnutrition remains a challenge especially in children less than five years of age, with stunting

¹ Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank. The 1.25 US\$ per person a day is taken into account here. If the limit is set at 2 US\$ per person a day, that figure would rise to an estimated 82.5% for that same year.

² Source: Human Development Report, UNDP.

levels estimated at 45%³. The Zambian health sector has for a long time been significantly affected by various constraints, which have made it difficult to adequately improve health service delivery to the desired levels. These constraints include: a high disease burden exacerbated by the high morbidities and mortalities due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic; poor social-economic situation; critical shortages of qualified health workers at all levels of health service delivery; poor state of health infrastructure, equipment and transport system; erratic supply of essential drugs and medical supplies; inadequate funding to the health sector; and major inequities in the distribution of resources between urban and rural areas. The country is also faced with a rapidly rising burden of non-communicable diseases, including mental health, diabetes, cardio-vesicular diseases and violence.

The National Society

The Zambia Red Cross Society was officially recognised by an Act of the Zambian Parliament in April 1966. It was recognised by the ICRC later that year, in December 1966 and became a member of the IFRC in September 1967.

At the time of the workshop, the Zambia Red Cross Society was recovering from a crisis that affected the National Society on multiple levels. In short, a “*legacy of leadership, systems and process failures and integrity scandals*”⁴ have left the Society with a debt exceeding 2 million USD, most of which is due to the government, changes in its leadership⁵, and damaged its image as a credible and trustworthy partner.

A recovery plan, covering 2012 to 2013, was implemented; this plan focused on settling the outstanding debt, strengthening the Society’s resource mobilization capacities and performance, leadership (governance and management), and improve its image, its systems and procedures and service delivery.

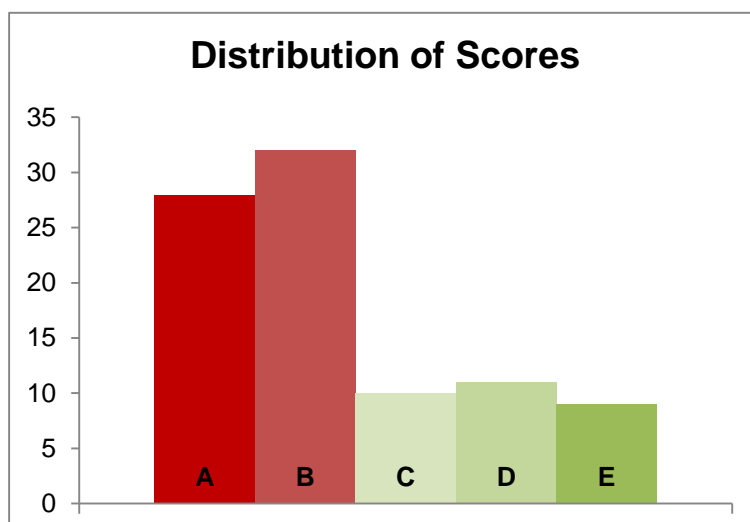
The results

³ Source: World Bank, 2014

⁴ Source: 2012-2013 Recovery Strategy, Zambia Red Cross Society.

⁵ With the appointment of new Board members, and the removal of the former Secretary General and process underway to appoint a new one.

Attached is the list of organisational capacities that were self-assessed using the OCAC self-assessment tool and the results. The list shows the consensus that was obtained following extensive discussions. Out of the ninety (90) organisational characteristics and attributes, twenty-eight (28) were scored at the A or lowest level, thirty two (32) at B level, ten (10) at C level, which is the benchmark, eleven (11) at D level and nine (9) at E level.



As this is a self-assessment exercise, these ratings reflect the opinion of the NS assessment team and not a judgement by the facilitators. Thus, out of the 90 benchmarks that were rated, the Society immediately meets the benchmarks in twenty attributes before any corrections are made, while it identified organisational deficits related to seventy other attributes.

Looking more closely at the attributes that scored below the benchmark level, at A or B (the “deficits”), it becomes evident that they can be grouped into a number of core issues. Following the self-assessment on all attributes, the weaknesses identified were clustered into the following key areas for improvement:

1. Internal communications
2. Resource Mobilisation
3. Policies, procedures, systems
4. Human resources
5. Volunteer management
6. Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER)
7. Security and safety management

Following the self-assessment on all attributes, the weaknesses identified were clustered into key areas for improvement; the NS self-assessment team was then asked, in groups, to select key areas of development, and to identify for each area the key issues at stake, what needs to be done and by whom (see separate sheet). Since the time allowed only for a brief brainstorming, the ideas shared by each group are not formally included in this report, but can be referred to if the Society is planning to act on the weaknesses presented in this report.

Conclusions/Recommendations

1. Communication

Internal Communication

The self-assessment team felt that internal communication, especially between the Headquarters and branches, was one of the key areas that require attention. The challenges

faced by the National Society, including at leadership level, seem to have created a divide between the Headquarters and some branches. More particularly, relevant information from Headquarters was not reaching the relevant people at branch level, and information from branches was not systematically shared with the Headquarters. This was further illustrated by the diversity in individual answers given by members of the assessment group on many of the attributes reflecting divergent views. Such differences in understanding and the lack of a clear and consistent picture of the Zambia Red Cross Society (Headquarters, branches) poses threats and affects its functioning, i.e. lack of implementation of the Society's policies and procedures, difficulties in presenting the work done by the National Society as a whole to stakeholders. This can be a source of confusion, tension and overall organisational performance challenges.

The National Society should strengthen communications within the organisation at all levels and not only from the Headquarters to the branches, but also from branches to Headquarters and between branches to ensure greater awareness and understanding internally of the National Society. This communication plan will be enhanced by ensuring that all volunteers (including Governing Board members), members and staff are provided with a basic induction course when joining the National Society. Different communication needs for each group need to be defined, and a simple system put in place to ensure that all have access to the information they need. The lack of a simple and inexpensive way to communicate key information amongst the Society's entities hinders efficient internal communication. For example, all communication between Headquarters and branches is currently done by mail, which is costly and time consuming.

Measures to consolidate and present information from all branches plus Headquarters highlighting the work of the National Society as a whole should be taken, and disseminated both internally and externally. This implies regular input from all the Society's branches and consolidation at Headquarters. This would in turn support the Society's efforts in strategic decision making, identification sharing of best practices and need for support from branches, as well as resource mobilisation efforts.

During the workshop, the internal communications group identified ways to improve communication between Headquarters and branches, as well as branch to branch. These include exploring whether communication can be done by email instead of mail, ensuring involvement of all relevant stakeholders, and intra-branch visits. These ideas need to be further explored and implemented.

External communication

The National Society's image suffered from the crisis that affected the organisation, and the OCAC workshop highlighted this area as one that needs to be further developed. In fact, the Society's 2012-2013 recovery plan highlights the restoration of its credibility as a key area of focus. Once the early "image recovery phase" is completed, the Zambia Red Cross Society should also consider looking at its communication systems, efforts and achievement more strategically. Considerations should be given to areas that have been rated low in the OCAC self-assessment, namely its more reactive than proactive communication style, the limited communication with beneficiaries, the absence of a plan and clear protocols to answer negative media coverage. It should also be noted that the attribute related to communication during emergencies was rated below the benchmark. The work done by a Society during emergencies represents a powerful opportunity to showcase its work and the difference it makes. Such an

opportunity should not be missed, and a National Society should be prepared to answer and proactively engage with media, partners, government counterparts.

2. Resource Mobilisation

The current overall financial situation of the National Society is critical, as financial management over years have left it with a very significant debt, and strong measures have been taken to avoid bankruptcy. This, in turns affects the Society in many ways, as illustrated by the many related attributes that scored below the benchmark: lack of insurance, of vehicles, salaries paid well beyond the due date, lack of staff, difficulties to pay the bills, etc. The measures taken by the National Society are a step in the right direction, and will hopefully, with further assistance from the government of Zambia and other partners, allow the Zambia Red Cross Society clear the outstanding debt.

While the financial status is serious, the self-assessment team also agreed that the resource mobilisation capacities were weak. There is no dedicated staff working on resource mobilisation, and the Society doesn't run systematic fundraising campaigns at Headquarters and branch level.

The National Society is in urgent need to develop domestic sources of income, to be able to cover at least all of its core costs with long term funding. The Zambia Red Cross should get support from experts to map all potential sources of income (fundraising campaigns, income generation, government grants, private companies, individual donors etc.) and develop a realistic plan with clear targets. For this strategy to translate into tangible results, all should support this effort and clear roles should be assigned to the Governing Board members, the senior management and the staff. The Society should strengthen its image as a Zambian organisation that supports the most vulnerable in the country. A brainstorming session with existing partners to support development of domestic income could allow for an initial support to kick-off initiatives to strengthen and develop local source of revenues, as identified in the Resource Mobilisation strategy. Strengthening local sources of funding is a long road that may take some years before it yields a significant flow of income. It is important to involve all components of the Zambia Red Cross in ensuring its long term financial stability; branches should help shape the strategy and take an active role in its implementation. A committed and cohesive executive and management body will be important to ensure consistency of course and continued vigour. The resource mobilization working group echoed this recommendation, and see the recruitment of a resource mobilisation specialist to develop a strategy as the way forward.

3. Policies, procedures, systems

The need to improve and ensure effective implementation of key policies, procedures and systems is already recognised in the recovery plan; and it is due to the lack thereof that has allowed for the many challenges facing the Zambia Red Cross Society today⁶. The OCAC self-assessment exercise highlighted such a need in many different areas. The National Society

⁶ The recovery plan states that "majority of the failures at ZRCS stemmed from inadequate, inefficient or non-existent systems and processes or simply flouting of the same, key actions have been recommended to ensure that this is arrested forthwith".

should review all its current policies, procedures and systems and assess whether they are adequate and relevant, and whether new ones are needed. More specifically, the Society should see whether policies and systems in the area of integrity, reputational risk management and violence prevention are in place. Financial management and oversight was another area where weaknesses in policies and practices was reported, and the development of an effective internal audit control/audit function and governance level supervision (through establishment of a Finance and/or Audit Committee), as well as systematic external audits on the Society's financial statements, will not only help prevent future issues, but also help the Society to restore its image as a credible and transparent partner.

And in order to ensure that all these policies, procedures and systems are effectively supporting the Zambia Red Cross Society in achieving its mission, it is essential to make sure they are applied by all of the units of the National Society. In fact, given the disconnect that can exist between the Headquarters and branches, all branches should be involved in the drafting and implementation of these systems and policies. This is mostly an issue of internal communication already mentioned, but it is vital that all branches receive and disseminate all key documents that guide the Society; including the Statutes, strategic plan and any other key document.

4. Human Resources

Paid staff

Given the financial problems the National Society has faced, staff has not always received its pay on time in recent years. Moreover, the Society does not regularly measure satisfaction of its staff, and training opportunities are largely non-existent (or ad-hoc at best) within the National Society. If the National Society wants to grow, it will have to build on a realistic number of committed and professional staff, who are motivated, highly skilled and engaged. To achieve and sustain this, recruitment and retention of staff will be a critical issue. Staff development is not only important in order to guarantee the professional quality of the staff, but also an important contributor to their overall satisfaction and retention in the organisation.

The HR working group focused on training of staff. Whilst learning could involve training, it could also be achieved through other strategies that are 'lower cost' such as providing work time to undertake online courses on the IFRC platform, secondment to other roles and mentoring/coaching from business leaders in the community. Also, staff surveying (potentially anonymised) soliciting overall feedback to organisational performance and satisfaction can help the leadership to improve on those areas.

5. Volunteer management

Attributes related to volunteering were almost all rated below the benchmark, as the self-assessment showed a general lack of investment and reliance on volunteers. Only some of its activities can be carried out by volunteers; overall recruitment and retention (including volunteer recognition) was rated below the benchmark: and though there is a volunteer policy, it is not systematically applied or discussed at the Governing Board level.

Volunteers are key to the Red Cross identity, the National Society needs to take a step back and reflect what it means to be a volunteer-based organization today. The National Society needs to

review how they want to recruit, manage, recognise and make best use of volunteers. The volunteers should not be considered as an *extension* of the staff but as the prime providers of local Red Cross services. Red Cross staff is there to support them and to fulfil tasks that require a level of professionalism or long-term consistency which cannot be provided by volunteers.

The Zambia Red Cross Society should identify best practices in recruiting volunteers in its diverse branches which could then be replicated throughout the country. In conducting this review, it could also familiarise itself with examples of sister National Societies that have successfully managed to build a volunteer base that provides services to their communities. Once the strategic direction has been set with regards to the role and involvement of volunteers, systems and procedures should be setup or adapted to ensure that they are properly supported and encouraged.

6. Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER)

The results of the self-assessment exercise reflect a need to look more closely into planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) systems and practices. While some practices are in place, the self-assessment team agreed that the capacities of programme staff need to be strengthened, that the planning, monitoring and reporting should be conducted for all activities including those of branches to provide a comprehensive picture of the activities carried out by the Society, and improvement made in the area of accountability towards beneficiaries and other stakeholders. A unified PMER system with standard formats should be developed and disseminated and used by all levels of the National Society. Such a system should be made simple enough so that it can be easily used by all, and flexible enough to be adapted, if needed, to the specific environment and work of all branches.

The Zambia Red Cross is currently conducting evaluations on an ad-hoc basis. Developing a policy or rules for when an evaluation is carried out, how it is done, and how identified areas for improvement are addressed, can strengthen a culture of learning within the Society and allow for systematic improvement of its service delivery.

7. Security and safety management

A number of attributes that scored critically low reflect obvious weaknesses in the areas security awareness and basic protection of National Society assets, volunteers and staff. The National Society could request ICRC to conduct a series of “Safer Access” sessions to improve the security awareness of staff and volunteers. The knowledge obtained through the training could then help the Society’s senior management team to draft a comprehensive security policy and regulations and to define roles and responsibilities for security and critical incident management.

Next steps

This report and the detailed findings are addressed to the Zambia Red Cross Society’s President and Secretary General, and shared with the Director of Africa Zone only. It will be up to the

National Society to decide whether and what it wants to share with its partners in order to obtain support.

It is up to the National Society how, and in what order, it wishes to address the deficits identified through this exercise. If it does address the deficits, it may wish to proceed to Phase 2 of OCAC, the peer assessment phase. This exercise involves representatives of National Societies carrying out an assessment of the National Society's impact and internal cohesion. In order to proceed to this phase, Zambia Red Cross Society will be requested to repeat the Phase 1 exercise. Please contact your Zone for advice on this process.

Quite a number of opportunities for further organizational development were identified through the process. The President of the Zambia Red Cross Society will need to further discuss the report and the self-assessment team's findings and agree an appropriate final prioritisation of tasks, responsible lead persons to fulfil them, and timelines within which the agreed actions should have been concluded.

As per the OCAC approach, the IFRC's Organisational Development department in the Geneva Secretariat ends herewith its direct involvement in supporting the Zambia Red Cross Society's development. The Director of Zone will discuss the next appropriate steps with the senior leadership of the Society and will then, as agreed with the leadership, discuss with his representative on how to use the report, if agreed by the Zambia Red Cross Society leadership, as the starting point for a discussion with the leadership of the Society on the way forward. It is suggested that, based on that discussion, a customised National Society development action-plan be developed, which could identify what types of appropriate support the Society may wish to draw from in the form of any required technical assistance from personnel in the IFRC's regional and Zone offices who are relevant to specific areas of work prioritised by the Zambia Red Cross Society for further attention. It may also be that the National Society's wishes to share some or all of its findings with other appropriate Movement and non-Movement partners to address the various key capacity related requirements that were identified through the OCAC process. Such a plan could also support future resource mobilisation efforts.

Closing remarks

The OCAC facilitators and the Organisational Development department sincerely thank the National Society, its Leadership, Management and all staff and volunteers that participated in the exercise for their serious commitment to positive change and their constructive participation in the process at such a decisive time for the Society's future. They congratulate the National Society's Leadership and all participants for their willingness to critically discuss the many attributes that were assessed through the exercise. The facilitators witnessed the commitment and seriousness of all participants that were ready to share all relevant information amongst them and were eager to explain in detail how the systems functions and why.

On behalf of the Organisational Development department,

Roger BRACKE,
Head of department

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the

Movement.

Voluntary service It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

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