



The Alan Shawn Feinstein International Famine Center

Mapping the future capacities of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The Norwegian Red Cross, a member of the IFRC, has contacted the Feinstein Famine Center, asking it to lead a dedicated research process to propose areas where National Societies' special skills and strengths might be further utilised within the framework of the Federation, to suggest new modes of cooperation within the Federation, to analyze the cost benefits of providing certain key Federal services through individual members or small consortia, and finally to look at new modalities for financing, staffing and managing Federation national and regional delegations.

The Feinstein Center is well aware of the traumatic political winds which have blown across the Federation and its Secretariat in recent years, quite apart from the broader turmoil experienced by the humanitarian sector as a whole. Research on the future of the Federation and associated national societies at this particular point in their history will by nature thus involve matters of great sensitivity and importance for the future. Any work which is faithful to the terms of reference provided will necessarily spark contention, both in the process of the research and in its findings and their review.

While such contention is perhaps unavoidable, it can be minimized in a number of ways. The integrity and knowledgeability of the research group and the transparency with which it proceeds are one way. A second is the intent that drives the research, the way it is introduced into the Federation and Secretariat, and the consensus that is developed for using the findings and reviewing the data and the recommendations.

The work will begin in March 2004 and a final report and presentation will be delivered to the Secretary General of the IFRC at the end of June 2004.

Finally we want to highlight how this piece of work fits with a broader research agenda at the Feinstein Center. Under phase v of the Center's Humanitarianism and War project, we will be exploring ways in which the humanitarian enterprise, in all its manifestations, is being reshaped by the forces of globalization, Northern

foreign policy and the global war of terror. Many humanitarian agencies which were once single national entities are now federalizing and many will, in the future, face the same challenges and tensions that the IFRC does today. In carrying out this study on the IFRC we hope to draw lessons which can be applied to other humanitarian federations.

Research management

Advisory board

An advisory board consisting of four sponsoring national societies and the Secretary General of the International Federation will follow the research process and be provided with an informal progress report midway through the exercise.

External sounding-group

In line with research best practice, the research team will identify individuals, familiar with the subject matter, to act as an external sounding board during the research process. This will help ensure that the research is situated in a broader context.

Team structure

- The Research Team will be lead by Dr Peter Walker, Director of the Feinstein International Famine Center and Tufts University.
- Deputy team leader will be Larry Minear, a senior researcher at the Feinstein Center.
- The team will be augmented by up to six skilled individuals from national societies or the Federation secretariat, proposed by the Advisory Board and approved by the team leader. The Feinstein Center will develop profiles for these team members.
- The Feinstein Center will identify and employ two research assistant for the project (these are usually Masters or PhD students with technical skills in the relevant areas).
- As the research progresses, the Feinstein Center may contract for additional expertise in the field of international NGO management and legislation, from the NGO management program at the Harvard Business School or elsewhere.

Team meetings

The research team will meet twice at the Feinstein Center during the duration of the research. The first meeting would take place at the beginning of the process (mid March) to ensure a common understanding and approach to the work, develop working hypotheses and map out a work plan. A second team meeting will be held towards the end of the data-gathering process to consolidate our analysis and agree a work plan for writing up the report.

Web and IT support

An interactive website will be developed by the Feinstein Center to allow research team members to stay in touch and share materials. Extensive use will be made of phone conferencing in the interest of maximizing interacting and keeping costs minimal.

Field visits

Field visits by the Team Leader and/or Deputy Leader will be made to selected Federation Regional Delegations, Country Delegations and national societies, as well as to the Secretariat in Geneva. Where possible they will be accompanied by members of the research team.

Critical value check-list

In carrying out this research, the team will use the following check list to judge the validity and utility of different options for doing “federal” business.

1. How will any proposed new arrangements add to the Federation’s ability to alleviate suffering and reduce vulnerabilities?
2. How will new arrangements add to or detract from NS capacity building?
3. Will new arrangements increase internal disparities or promote equity between larger and smaller, better and less well-resourced NSs? Will the Movement’s principles of impartiality and universality, and underlying principles of trust and democracy be promoted or be a casualty of any and all decentralized configurations?
4. How will new structures interface with other international bodies, networks and agencies? What sort of presence is needed in Geneva to maintain the recognized legal standing of the Federation and its functions?
5. How will staffing work and how will “internationalism” of staff maintained? Will key regional and national offices be able to have the necessary diversity of international viewpoints and yet sensitivity to local cultural considerations?
6. What will be the legal status of new arrangements for cooperation?
7. How does the cost of current approaches change with implementation of the various available institutional options?
8. Will funding for one or more of the new options be more or less available and sustainable than current resources?
9. What will be the management structures and challenges? How will issues of coherence, consistency, and accountability be affected?

Methodology

Task 1: Determine areas where National Societies' special skills and strengths might be further utilized within the framework of the Federation, through National Societies serving regionally or globally as centers of competence.

Experience in transglobal corporations and in a number of UN agencies has demonstrated the utility of networking out three different types of functions.

1. **Corporate functions** such as accounting, mailing, telemarketing and on-line help centers. This offshore migration is usually driven by cost savings – pushing labor intensive and repetitive tasks to countries where labor is cheap yet the necessary technical support infrastructure exists. Available technology allows this to be done on a real-time basis across time zones.
2. **Specialist operational and production functions.** Here industry often takes advantage of a critical mass of skills building up in a country (micro-chip production in Taiwan, software production in India, garment and shoe production in Indonesia and Malaysia). Alternatively corporations often seek to expand upon the necessary specialization of one of their country subsidiaries, to allow its local expertise to be available globally.
3. **Specialist research, knowledge and evaluation functions.** Think-tanks and development functions are often migrated out to protect them from being subsumed under the more pressing and financially larger agendas of production and marketing.

Understanding how national societies, rather than or complementary to the Secretariat, could be used as “centers of competence” is essentially an exercise in mapping the financial, legal and attitudinal consequences of making such a shift. Is it more expensive or cheaper than using the Secretariat? Is it more or less financially sustainable? Would it increase knowledge-sharing and the availability of regionally relevant expertise? How would some sort of global consistency among diffused centers be promoted? How would proportionality in response and resourcing be maintained? How would such an approach work positively to close the gap between the resource rich and resource poor national societies? What would be the legal status of such a “nationally held” resource? How would it be “owned” by the Federation? What would be the legal and tax status of staff working for such a resource? As importantly, how would members

of the Federation regard such a resource? Would they see it as “their” resource – a Federation tool, or as being controlled by the host national society?

Activity 3: Using the above three categories of functions, list out the possible ones which could be tasked out from the Secretariat to national societies.

Activity 4: Take one example from each category, and model what the costs, financial sustainability, legal viability and “Federal” acceptability would be. This activity will require an intimate knowledge of the Federation’s financial systems, the government donor funding world, international and NGO law.

Task 2: Quantify and qualify areas where improved quality and effectiveness in provision of services as well as cost reductions can be obtained in multilateral and bilateral cooperation in programming and capacity building within the Federation.

The Federation has traditionally mounted programs to support individual members (upon their request) through a system of funneling resources from the membership through the Secretariat. Thus national society resources, on their way from the host to the recipient society “metamorphose” into Federal resources, and indeed are often perceived as Secretariat resources. This is particularly the case in disaster relief operations where timeliness and coherence of response is of the essence.

A key principle in this methodology is that the Secretariat acts as honest impartial broker, ensuring that the weaker recipient NS is not inadvertently trampled underfoot by the more heavily resourced and “driven” international assistance operation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this latter key function is not as effective and consistent as it should be. Although the Federation likes to see itself as a Federation of equals, at the operational level this sense of respect and fraternity is often lacking.

The Federation has used, and the Secretariat has encouraged, other models. Consortia of supporting national societies, usually Northern, have been put together to support particular development programs for particular Southern Societies. Individual northern societies have partnered with southern societies on identified activities.

Activity 5: The research group will identify assistance services which could be undertaken by individual national societies or consortia of societies and will map out the potential costs relative to those of doing it via the Secretariat. As part of this work the group will take a present day know consortia activity, for which there is good data on costs, staffing and impact, and create a comparative analysis of how much it would have cost to run the same assistance via the

Secretariat. Likewise we will take a present day Secretariat- run program and cost it out for a consortium. The research group will also look at the feasibility of regularly including none donor societies in such consortia as a mechanism for bridging the rich/poor divide in the Federation.

Task 3: identify key-elements for a consortia approach to operating delegations within the Federation field structure

The Secretariat has effectively three types of out-posted offices or delegations.

First the regional delegations which serve between five and fifteen national societies providing a range of advisory and developmental services for the Societies of the region, an impartial negotiator and facilitator function for the various bilateral and consortia partnerships being developed in the region, a discrete public affairs and finally an advocacy function for the Federation targeted at local governments, with or via the local national societies and independently on behalf of all the membership towards regional and international institutions. Many regional delegations further outpost their expertise having individual delegates situated not in the regional hub but in a particularly critical national society, devoting part of their time to that national society and part to their regional tasks.

Second, major country delegations which provide targeted development, financial and skills assistance to the local national society but do so in a manner akin to an external supporting body. They will have offices separate from the NS, will run their own accounting systems and employ their own staff (which may be seconded from the society).

Third, delegates may be placed directly inside a national society to provide a mentoring or skills enhancement function. Such individuals, usually seconded for a stated period, report to the NS rather than their sending agency.

In the present structure, country delegations are more commonly reporting to regional delegations and these to Geneva.

In all three models the Secretariat seeks to establish a separate legal identity for its delegations as offices of an International Organization. This usually confirms tax and employment exemptions and immunity from prosecution upon the delegates and the delegation.

Separately, the ICRC operates independent country delegations (reporting to Geneva) and a number of regional delegations. Regional delegations provide ICRC services to those countries not covered by country delegations and in addition provide common “corporate” and expert services to the country delegations in their region.

The Strategy for the Movement calls upon the Federation and the ICRC to seek to create joint regional delegations and look to share services where possible.

The Federation's delegate system is multifaceted and complicated, and that of the Movement, with the ICRC added in, even more so.

Activity 6: Interviews with delegates and supported societies in countries which host all three types of Federation delegations and where Federation country or regional delegations have expended to include the country offices of participating national societies (as in Vietnam). These interviews will seek to get a sense of what presently works, doesn't work, what overlaps and what is complementary and how attitudes within the delegations and between delegations and the host national society differ according to the differing structures.

Activity 7: Similarly to activity 5, we will do a comparative cost analysis for a present day regional delegation and a country delegation (including any bilateral operation offices in country) looking at their present costs and the potential costs of running these as consortia. Likewise we will examine the legal implications of this.

Activity 8: We will map the present existence of Federation and Bilateral delegations and delegation staffing levels seeking to identify countries where cost saving through consortia style delegations might be possible.

Task 4: Analyse current Federation strategies, policies, modus operandi and managerial procedures to highlight changes that would be needed to enhance a responsible distribution of Federal responsibilities to the national societies. Identify critical attitudes, functions and approaches which would need to be preserved or enhanced in such a process.

All the developments alluded to in this research imply significant and in some respects structural change for the Secretariat and the Federation at the policy, managerial and human resource level. We are aware of the sensitivities involved in discussion, recommending, and implementing fundamental reforms, both for IFRC and secretariat personnel and for NS staffs, both developing and developed. Relationships with the ICRC also stand to be affected. In order to further grasp the feasibility of these changes we need to map out their potential consequences for policy, managerial practice and human resources and be clear as to what is driving this change – cost saving, better quality service, a more democratic and equitable Federation, a desire for more accountability on behalf of key donors?

Activity 9: Catalogue the present Federation policies, managerial procedures and structures which are directly relevant to the staffing and resourcing of a more networked federal service.

Activity 10: Develop a profile of the minimal attitudinal, skills and systems training that would be needed to “convert” a “national” national Society staff member into an “international Federation” staff member.

Activity 11: Prepare final report and presentation material.

END