

# RED CROSS OF CHAD TAKES A LEADING ROLE IN INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

The Red Cross of Chad has raised its profile and improved the quality of humanitarian action by scaling up its role in interagency coordination for community engagement and accountability

## Introduction

The Red Cross of Chad is taking a leading role in the country's Accountability to Affected People Interagency Working Group by providing trainings to other organisations and hosting meetings. This is helping to position the National Society as a key actor on accountability with UN agencies, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and the Government. More broadly, the National Society's involvement in interagency activities is helping emergency response operations in the country to more effective and sustainable.



*Red Cross of Chad community activities as part of the partnership between the EU and IFRC. ©IFRC 2024*

## Red Cross Society of Chad's role in interagency coordination for community engagement and accountability

Over the last two years, the Red Cross of Chad has been steadily scaling up its involvement in interagency coordination for community engagement and accountability (CEA) as part of the global IFRC partnership with DG ECHO<sup>1</sup>.

Initially the National Society reached out to IFRC's CEA Senior Officer for Central Africa, Yves Ngaleu, for advice on where to start. Allamine Mahamat Senoussi, Red Cross of Chad CEA National Focal Point, remembers, "Yves encouraged us to get more involved in the national Accountability to Affected People Interagency Working Group (AAP WG) in Chad because it could help position the National Society with partners and the Government. He connected me with UN OCHA, who led the group, which led to the Red Cross of Chad being added as a member organisation. Initially, we attended the monthly meetings to get a better understanding of the group and how it worked. We shared information on what the National Society was doing and learned what other agencies were working on, which helped us reduce the risk of duplication of activities and learn from others' experiences and challenges."

<sup>1</sup> Result 5 of the DG ECHO Pilot Programmatic Partnership with IFRC (ECHO PPP) aims to strengthen National Society capacity in community engagement and accountability, including to take a stronger role in leading and supporting interagency coordination.

Chad's National AAP WG is attended by a range of humanitarian actors, including the World Food Programme (WFP), International Office of Migration (IOM), Caritas, INTERSOS, International Rescue Committee (IRC), and ACTED. The group discusses a range of topics with a focus on how humanitarian response in the country can better listen and act on community feedback. This includes the National Society regularly presenting on key trends in feedback gathered through its hotline and wide network of volunteers and community committees. Allamine explains, "All organisations in the AAP WG really benefit from sharing community feedback with each other. For example, other organisations use feedback channels we don't have the resources to set up, so being part of the AAP WG means we still have access to information gathered through these channels. In return, other members can access the feedback gathered through our large pool of volunteers and the community committees we've set up across the country. If we weren't part of the group, it would also be difficult for us to hear any feedback shared with other organisations about the Red Cross of Chad. However, since we are part of the group, we have established contacts that make it easier for other organizations to refer feedback to us."

In 2024 the National Society decided to scale up its involvement in the AAP WG. Allamine explains, "As we were planning activities for ECHO PPP in 2024, Yves suggested we should include budget for coordination so we could step up and take a more leading role in the AAP WG. This small amount of budget allowed us to host the meeting in the Red Cross of Chad's offices three times over the last six months. This really changed our role in the group from being seen as a member to one of the leading agencies." This led to the National Society playing a key role in the development of the AAP WG's annual plan, including leading on some of the activities in the plan. Allamine explains, "We provided a community engagement training for humanitarian organisations in Southern Chad, including actors such as IRC, INTERSOS, ACTED, World Vision, WFP and Care. We also led on communication activities with people in refugee camps in the East of the county."

## Lessons learned

### Benefits of interagency coordination

Allamine believes there are many reasons why National Societies should take part in interagency coordination forums for community engagement and accountability. These include:

- **Together we can achieve more:** "Individually, agencies are limited in what they can do. For example, an individual agency feedback mechanism can't use every possible channel available. However, if agencies work together, and each organisation's feedback mechanism uses different channels to gather feedback, then all agencies can benefit from the feedback gathered through a wide range of different approaches – from social media and hotlines to community-level committees and volunteers. This is better for the

community as it means they can share feedback with humanitarian organisations in whatever way they feel most comfortable and have access to. The feedback will still reach the organisation who can act on it.”

- **Reduces duplication:** “Knowing what other agencies are doing helps us all to better target our interventions so they fill the gaps left by others, rather than just duplicating what is already happening.”
- **Reputation and networking:** “We have much better connections with other actors since joining the working group. By stepping up and taking a lead role we’ve also improved the reputation and respect for the National Society amongst other international humanitarian actors.”
- **Improves sustainability:** “By working together we can also pool our resources and expertise. Each organisation has skills and expertise in different areas so we can learn from each other. It also supports better information sharing on what is happening in the sector. Not just on accountability, but also WASH, shelter, distributions etc.”

### Advice for other National Societies

However, the National Society has also experienced some challenges with interagency coordination, which has led to some valuable lessons learned. Allamine explains,

- **Share responsibility for attendance:** “Sometimes it can be difficult to attend every meeting, as we have limited CEA staff, especially when meetings coincide with missions to the field. To address this it helps to have more than one person who can attend the meeting. Within the Red Cross of Chad, myself and our CEA Project Manager, Mahamat Ahmat Bachar, share the responsibility to attend the meetings.”
- **All agencies need to contribute:** “Last year, the WG agreed we should go to certain provinces to train humanitarian actors in community engagement, but it was difficult to raise the funds to cover the trainings. Very few organisations contributed, so it became a big challenge. For this reason, all agencies should allocate some budget to implement the activities included in the AAP WG annual plan.”
- **Limited understanding of community engagement and accountability:** “Not all members of the group will have the same level of knowledge and experience in community engagement and accountability. To address this, the Chad AAP WG agreed that if a member takes part in a workshop or training, they will bring that learning back and share it with the rest of the group. The Red Cross of Chad was one of the first to do this after we attended an IFRC Social Science training in Ivory Coast. When we came back, we gave a presentation on the role of social science in accountability. For many people, it was the first to associate social sciences and feedback.”

- **Be prepared:** “Before becoming more involved in interagency coordination, the National Society should be clear what they want to get out of it, what it involves, and what the added value is for the Red Cross. This should also include training to strengthen the team’s capacity, as well as internal discussions to ensure management support for a greater role in interagency coordination.”

For Allamine and Bachar, the benefits of interagency coordination outweigh any challenges, and they plan to continue playing an active role in the AAP WG. Allamine explains: “Participation in coordination mechanisms helps to strengthen accountability to communities, donors and stakeholders. Experience has shown that when we work together and share information in a coordinated way, the responses are more effective and sustainable.”

## Contact information

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