

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

Approaches to strengthen local humanitarian leadership:
the CRUDAN–Tearfund partnership in northern Nigeria



BRIEFING PAPER

INTRODUCTION

CRUDAN¹ and Tearfund² have worked in partnership since 1992 on long-term development initiatives in Nigeria. In 2015, they embarked on a new way of working together, led by a strong mutual desire to respond to humanitarian needs brought about by armed conflict in northern Nigeria.

CRUDAN had historically focused on long-term development and its experience in humanitarian response was limited. This led to Tearfund establishing a small team in north-east Nigeria, with the explicit aim of supporting CRUDAN to strengthen its humanitarian response capacity through long-term accompaniment and mentoring.

This briefing showcases key approaches to strengthening localisation³ drawn from the CRUDAN–Tearfund⁴ relationship. Based on this experience, the following recommendations are made for humanitarian actors to adopt and strengthen.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 BUILD A FOUNDATION OF TRUST
Trust was the most cited strength in the study. Stakeholders highlighted it as fundamental to the success of the approach undertaken in the CRUDAN–Tearfund partnership. Intense models of working (eg close accompaniment) and/or changes to pre-existing ways of working together can be challenging, putting a strain on relationships. Tearfund and CRUDAN's partnership was one founded on mutual respect and trust built over several years of working together in development contexts. This meant they were 'able to have tough conversations without the relationship falling apart,'¹⁵ especially when there were frustrations along the way that both parties had to work through.

2 HIRE STAFF WHO 'WALK THE TALK' IN THEIR APPROACH TO LOCALISATION AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING
The partnership approach adopted in this case was intentional in enabling CRUDAN to take the lead while Tearfund undertook a hands-on advisory role, working side by side. Tearfund staff stepped back and allowed CRUDAN to lead on implementation as well as in humanitarian coordination forums.

 Two girls in an IDP camp in Nigeria, in which CRUDAN and other Tearfund partners work. Photo: Ruth Towell/Tearfund

3 PRIORITISE LONG-TERM ACCOMPANIMENT AND LEARNING BY DOING

Capacity strengthening did not focus on formal training sessions. Rather, it was primarily achieved through long-term accompaniment, mentoring, 'learning by doing' and learning from mistakes. The approach to partnership also included **sharing resources, such as office space and vehicles.**

*'Tearfund works very closely with CRUDAN... sharing office space, so there is constant interaction, engagement and feedback. We can pass information to them, and they can ask questions of us, in real-time... face-to-face. In other INGO–NNGO partnerships, the main mode of working together is by sending emails.'*¹⁶

4 CULTIVATE A CULTURE OF LEARNING

CRUDAN is an organisation with a self-described culture of learning –

*'One of CRUDAN's values is that we are a learning organisation, so we don't run away from things.'*¹⁷

CRUDAN staff were passionate about developing new skills and highly committed to supporting crisis-affected communities (many originally started as volunteers), significantly contributing to the strength of the partnership.

5 IDENTIFY AND BUILD ON THE STRENGTHS OF LOCAL ACTORS

Tearfund's decision to invest in the partnership was motivated by a recognition of CRUDAN's strengths in north-east Nigeria in comparison to those of Tearfund. They included, among many others, the reach, access and trust CRUDAN enjoys as a national network organisation with members across Nigeria.

6 ALLOW TIME TO FIND SOLUTIONS TOGETHER

The CRUDAN–Tearfund partnership required significant investments from both partners over a number of years. Sufficient time was essential to learn from implementation and from mistakes. According to the DRA (Dutch Relief Alliance) Consortium Coordinator, the CRUDAN–Tearfund model was 'different because this is a long-term investment.

It is led by the local organisation; Tearfund works as a facilitator for them to realise their capacities. **The partnership is focused on finding solutions that are beyond a budget timeline or a donor timeline.** It's about long-term sustainability. The fact that there's a technical person available to work through the process with CRUDAN is very significant. People are able to be guided on a day-to-day basis rather than a get in/get out model.¹⁸



CRUDAN and Tearfund staff interacting with community volunteers in Michika, northern Nigeria.

7 PRIORITISE LOCAL PARTNER VISIBILITY

Tearfund sought to ensure that CRUDAN participated (and eventually took the lead) in external consortium meetings. Stakeholders interviewed in the study highlighted that **CRUDAN was active and confident in humanitarian coordination meetings** where other NNGOs frequently remained silent.

8 STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

There was a conscious effort to institutionalise capacity by ensuring that knowledge and practice were incorporated into corporate systems. CRUDAN implemented **policies to encourage staff retention**, including formalising salary structures and benefits, providing continued learning and development opportunities and supporting internal career progression. CRUDAN also ensured **'apprentices' were associated with key roles** for the purposes of succession planning and organisational continuity.

9 ADVOCATE FOR FLEXIBLE, LONG-TERM FUNDING FOR CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Dutch government funding from the DRA funding stream was first obtained in 2015 by CRUDAN and Tearfund, to work in consortium with a number of other NNGOs and INGOs. Funding was flexible, allowing for appropriate modifications to programme design. It also contained a **strategic objective directly relating to national partner capacity-strengthening, requiring INGOs to work with and strengthen the capacity of NNGO counterparts.** It was also available (subject to successful applications) **over a number of years**, providing NNGOs with the opportunity to solidify capacity gains over a longer time frame.



📷 Malkohi internally displaced person (IDP) camp in north-east Nigeria, 2015. Photo: Mairo Retief/Tearfund

IMPACT OF THE NEW WAY OF WORKING

CRUDAN's ability to lead humanitarian work, as well as its visibility and influence within the humanitarian community, grew steadily according to all interviewees in the study.

CRUDAN's Food Security and Livelihoods Officer noted that 'in places where CRUDAN was not known before, it is now a household name. In cluster meetings, in sector meetings, people know CRUDAN staff and know that they will have something valuable to contribute. At the beginning, [the cluster meetings] were confusing. Over the years, we have become able to understand the humanitarian system, speak the same language, and integrate.'¹⁹

CRUDAN was the first national organisation to carry out humanitarian cash assistance in north-east Nigeria. Today, CRUDAN is regularly invited to provide training and capacity-strengthening interventions for other local humanitarian organisations.

*'The relationship has been... very helpful because CRUDAN has grown so much, to the point where we are now independent and can source funds somewhere else.'*¹⁰

CRUDAN has started to diversify its donor funding portfolio in order to expand its humanitarian work. Thus far, it has obtained funding from the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund (the UN country-based pooled fund) and another INGO, independently of Tearfund.



Photos from top:

📷 Street scene, Nigeria, 2016. Photo: Louise Thomas/Tearfund

📷 Hygiene promotion kits awaiting distribution, 2018. Photo: Kefas John/CRUDAN

📷 CRUDAN-Tearfund - Food distribution in Yola, north-east Nigeria, 2015. Photo: Istanfanus Gimba/Tearfund.

CONCLUSION

The quality and depth of relationships and supporting behaviours in the CRUDAN–Tearfund partnership was found to be the most critical facilitating factor in the strengthening of a locally led humanitarian response.

CRUDAN and Tearfund had previously worked together on longer-term development programming. The long-standing relationship 'helped CRUDAN to know that despite the challenges, Tearfund wanted the best for them.'

*'...It is a partnership motivated by the mutual desire to help local communities. They felt able to give it time.'*¹¹

The journey is not over for CRUDAN and Tearfund. *Shoulder to Shoulder* identified a number of ways in which the partnership can adapt and change in order to further strengthen local humanitarian leadership.

Working through local humanitarian responders in armed conflict settings often presents a number of additional obstacles. These include tensions concerning sharing security risks and the outworking of humanitarian principles, among others.

Shoulder to Shoulder did not specifically focus on the wider context of armed conflict in north-east Nigeria, where the partnership was developed. However, it is hoped that the lessons learnt and approaches identified will encourage humanitarian actors to take further steps towards facilitating localisation, even in similarly challenging settings.

While some steps have been taken in the right direction, considerable change is still needed in the global humanitarian architecture to support localisation.

It is critical that humanitarian actors recognise the key attitudes and behaviours which nurture partnerships that facilitate localisation.

INGOs and donors especially need to proactively invest in organisational cultures which prioritise these attitudes and behaviours in order to best serve crisis-affected populations.

 A beneficiary receiving a cash grant in Adamawa state, Nigeria, 2017. Photo: Femegoron Cornelius/CRUDAN



FOOTNOTES

¹ Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN) is a national non-governmental organisation (NNGO) in Nigeria.

² Tearfund is an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) working in 50 countries.

³ A process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the independence of leadership and decision-making by national actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations (definition taken from

Australia Red Cross, *Going local: Achieving a more appropriate and fit-for-purpose humanitarian ecosystem in the Pacific*, October 2017).

⁴ Findings are drawn from *Shoulder to Shoulder*, a recent study which looked at the CRUDAN–Tearfund partnership through a localisation lens.

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⁹ CRUDAN Food Security and Livelihoods Programme Officer.

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