

# SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

Humanitarian capacity exchange in a fragile context: a review of the Tearfund–CRUDAN model of engagement in north-east Nigeria

Executive Summary



tearfund

## SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

### Humanitarian capacity exchange in a fragile context: a review of the Tearfund–CRUDAN model of engagement in north east Nigeria

A report for Tearfund, 2019

Author: Ali Wood, Tearfund

Cover photo: Ruth Towell/Tearfund

© Tearfund 2019

Published by Tearfund. A company limited by guarantee.  
Registered Charity No. 265464 (England and Wales)  
Registered Charity No. SC037624 (Scotland)

## Acknowledgments

Sincere thanks goes out to all those who generously participated in this study, giving their time, insight and reflections, including staff from CRUDAN, Tear Netherlands, Save the Children and Tearfund.

Rachel Paton assisted in the research phase of this study, providing invaluable support during interviews and the secondary data review.

In addition, this study acknowledges the (past and present) CRUDAN and Tearfund staff members who have worked tirelessly over a period of many years in order to establish relationships and explore new ways of working together in support of localisation: in particular, Danladi Musa, Martin Jennings, Ruth Dul, Paul Mershak, as well as countless others.

*[The model is] 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<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Dutch Relief Alliance Consortium Coordinator (for the Nigerian Joint Response Consortium), Save the Children

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Research rationale

In 2015, Tearfund, embarked upon a new way of working with the Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN) – one of its long-standing development partners in Nigeria – with a view to supporting CRUDAN to strengthen its capacity to respond to emergency needs brought about by the Boko Haram crisis in the north of the country. The model ultimately involved the establishment of a Tearfund base and team with an intentionally small but capacity-strengthening focused footprint, supporting CRUDAN to take the lead on implementation.

As advocates for the localisation of humanitarian response, Tearfund and CRUDAN wish to document and reflect upon the journey they have undertaken together, in order to identify learning for the benefit of both organisations as well as the wider localisation ‘movement’.

This research therefore seeks to examine the nature of Tearfund’s model of engagement with CRUDAN in northern Nigeria, with a view to contributing to the evidence base for the localisation of disaster response. In addition, it is anticipated that the research will provide inputs for Tearfund’s development of an Operational Support Model for work in complex fragile states, as well as feeding into the ongoing development of Tearfund’s Disaster Management Capacity Assessment programme for partners.

### Background

The creation of the Tearfund–CRUDAN model in northern Nigeria was precipitated by a desire to respond to growing humanitarian needs as a result of the Boko Haram crisis, and galvanised by a funding opportunity which emerged via the Dutch Relief Alliance.

Tearfund’s preferred mode of response is to operate through national partners wherever possible and while CRUDAN had almost exclusively focused on long-term development work, it expressed a strong interest in developing its expertise in disaster response. According to one interviewee: ‘Tearfund didn’t want to go fully operational in response to the Boko Haram emergency; they didn’t want a situation where, once the humanitarian response work was over, [the] partners were nowhere to be found. They wanted a situation in which the humanitarian capacity of the partners could be built at the same time as they maintained their capacity for development work.’<sup>2</sup> From CRUDAN’s perspective there was a clear desire to respond to the needs in its country, coupled with an attitude of learning. According to CRUDAN, the idea to respond ‘didn’t come entirely from Tearfund – there was a necessity on the ground. The insurgency had been going on, there was nothing that was happening there... we had to help somewhere. So when Tearfund said, “we are thinking of going to the north-east to do humanitarian work”, we said “yes”... One of CRUDAN’s values is that we are a learning organisation, so we don’t run away from things.’<sup>3</sup>

What emerged was a highly flexible operational model focused on accompaniment, mentoring and capacity strengthening. CRUDAN took the lead in terms of implementation, with Tearfund occupying a

---

<sup>2</sup> Tearfund Nigeria Country Representative.

<sup>3</sup> CRUDAN Chief Executive.

close, supportive role. According to an interviewee, the model was ‘more fluid than I first expected, but this has been very helpful. CRUDAN... is a core part of the work, an important, key actor. At the same time they understand that they are undergoing a learning process.’<sup>4</sup> Another interviewee noted that ‘Tearfund works very closely with [CRUDAN], especially in terms of sharing office space, so that 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.’<sup>5</sup>

Tearfund’s small team in the north-east (by 2016) comprised three members of staff, who worked alongside a similar or mirror role in CRUDAN, providing technical advice and support. The CRUDAN–Tearfund model in northern Nigeria shared resources, including offices and vehicles, as well as training and capacity strengthening opportunities, with Tearfund providing global technical advisors and surge support as required.

## Key findings

- **Relationships and trust** are critical if similar models are to succeed. Intense models of working or changes to pre-existing ways of working between an INGO and NNGO are likely to generate tension and disagreement at different stages, therefore strong foundations and a high level of trust and mutual respect between INGO and NNGO are necessary in order to work through conflict without the partnership disintegrating.
- **Attitudes** towards partnership, learning, localisation and capacity strengthening are key and INGOs should prioritise recruitment of staff who ‘walk the talk’. INGOs need a twin focus on both capacity strengthening and meeting humanitarian need if they are to genuinely strengthen the capacity of a partner in a sustainable fashion (both of which need resourcing). INGOs who view NNGOs as short term ‘contractors’ are unlikely to develop the quality of relationships with their partners required to sustainably strengthen their capacity.
- **Investment** is needed for partnership models focused on capacity strengthening to succeed: the creation of the Tearfund and CRUDAN model required sustained financial investment from Tearfund over a number of years and this is likely to continue, albeit with a reduction in the level of investment over time. Continued advocacy is needed in this area, to encourage donors to be willing to work more directly and over a longer-term period with carefully selected NNGO partners. Sources of funding for capacity strengthening (e.g. accompaniment roles) need to be explored further, particularly where donors are unwilling to support such costs.
- **Influence and visibility** is important (both for national actors who often lack access to spaces and donors they wish to influence and for INGOs who can use their influence to create space for national actors) but maintaining it is a delicate balance. INGOs can easily lose their ability to positively influence if they do not continue to maintain their own presence in donor and coordination spaces and national partners risk being shut out again when funding dries up.
- **Time** – change is not achieved over a project cycle or donor funding period. Humanitarian actors are typically not well placed in this regard; however development actors don’t always

<sup>4</sup> Tearfund Nigeria Project Officer.

<sup>5</sup> Tearfund Nigeria Programme Manager.

have the relevant (humanitarian) skill set. Tearfund is therefore positively positioned, given its dual focus and long-term presence in focus countries.

- **Capacity-strengthening approach** – training was not the main focus in terms of capacity strengthening in the Tearfund–CRUDAN model; rather, accompaniment and ‘learning by doing’, achieved through working in close proximity, was cited as most effective. Though training provided a great foundation, the real gains were seen as a result of the intentional co-working, open dialogue and the space to put learning into practice.
- **INGO capacity** – incorrect assumptions are often made in terms of INGO capacity and their ability to strengthen NNGO capacity. It is important for INGOs to have their own houses in order, to ensure they can provide high-quality, consistent support. Internal country office capacity assessments should ideally take place prior to the development of a model of this kind to ensure the country office has the skills, resources and experience to support the partner appropriately, drawing in external capacity strengthening support for partners in areas outside its expertise.
- **Sustainability** – there are real threats to the sustainability of the model, primarily relating to staffing and funding. Capacity strengthening needs to focus on corporate systems, culture and practice (at head offices as well as at the project level) in order to institutionalise capacity further and to ensure national partners are able to take the lead in terms of future direction. Questions remain over salaries and incentives for staff, as NNGOs are competing with INGOs on a very uneven playing field. Efforts should continue to support CRUDAN to diversify and solidify its funding base in Nigeria.
- **Overheads** – working via INGO partners raises critical questions relating to overheads (internal cost recovery (ICR)) and whether national partners are being adequately catered for here. In accordance with Charter for Change Commitment 7, more consideration should be given as to how ICRs are split when funding is secured via one or more intermediary INGOs, including in the case of CRUDAN.
- **Exit plan** – as the Tearfund–CRUDAN model was an organic one that developed iteratively, there is no formal exit plan in place. Development of a transition plan whereby Tearfund reduces/adapts its support (without withdrawing it altogether) will allow CRUDAN to become more independent, freeing up Tearfund to potentially support other partners to grow in a similar way.

**Read the full Shoulder to Shoulder report here:**

[learn.tearfund.org/shouldertoshoulder\\_fullreport](https://learn.tearfund.org/shouldertoshoulder_fullreport)



[www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org)

100 Church Road, Teddington TW11 8QE

T +44 (0)20 3906 3906 E [info@tearfund.org](mailto:info@tearfund.org)