**Disaster Resource Partnership Case Study**



Request for deployment – key lessons learned

**The Request**

On August 23rd 2011 the Disaster Resource Partnership (DRP) Secretariat received a request from UNICEF’s Office of Emergency Operations in Geneva in response to the Food Security crisis in the Horn of Africa, for a qualified and experienced engineer to conduct an assessment of schools in selected refugee camps and host communities in Ethiopia. The requested profile was for an International Civil Engineer, with at least 8 years of progressive work experience in institutional civil works. S/he should be highly competent in design, as well as costing, supervision and quality control. S/he must provide evidence of works supervised independently, in Ethiopia or East Africa or in the Horn of Africa region.

The request was qualified with an explanation that while direct work experience in East Africa was desirable it was not mandatory and that DRP candidates without this experience would still be considered for deployment. The request was urgent however and required a response turnaround time of 48 hours.

**The follow up**

The DRP Secretariat immediately shared the terms of reference and the request from UNICEF by email with the focal points from the eleven engineering & construction companies which form the DRP. The email was followed up by telephone calls to individual companies.

**The response**

Five of the eleven DRP companies responded to the request saying that they were not able to deploy. Several companies cited geography as being the main factor hampering their ability to respond to the request. A few companies explained that their internal mechanisms for identifying individuals for deployment had not yet been established and were therefore not yet prepared to respond to such requests.

One company, AMEC, responded, tentatively at first, indicating that they may have an engineer who fits the required profile and would be willing and available to be deployed to Ethiopia. On August 25th, AMEC confirmed that they had identified an appropriate candidate with nearly 30 years of engineering experience who had been the Lead Designer on AMEC’s design/build projects in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The CV of the candidate was sent to UNICEF’s Office of Emergency Operations in Geneva and subsequently forwarded to the country office in Ethiopia. AMEC requested that should the offer of deployment be of interest to UNICEF that a teleconference be organized to review the details of the deployment, assignment, and the security programme.

**The outcome**

UNICEF reverted back to the DRP Secretariat on September 5th saying that the country office had decided to go for an internal solution. Upon reviewing its staffing structure and in light of the ongoing crisis and emerging needs, the country office decided to use an internal UNICEF consultant who had been working on a project in Myanmar.

A teleconference was scheduled with UNICEF’s Office of Emergency Operations in Geneva, AMEC and the DRP Secretariat to debrief regarding why the deployment had not succeeded. UNICEF provided some very honest and direct feedback.

1. The country office had three options available to them to recruit for the position. The first was the DRP engineer; the second was an engineer identified through RedR Australia and the final option was an internal candidate.
2. UNICEF’s relationship with the DRP is still very new. The DRP Secretariat established contact with UNICEF’s Office of Emergency Operations in Geneva only a few days prior to the request for deployment. As such, the organisation is not sufficiently well informed regarding what the DRP is, what are the profiles of the professionals for deployment and what sorts of skills and assets can the DRP provide.
3. As a result the country office’s default option was to go for an internal candidate whom they know and are familiar with and who has a familiar humanitarian background that they can easily relate to. Although the candidate from AMEC had extensive experience building public services structures for the military, this experience did not translate easily in a humanitarian context.

**Lessons learned and next steps**

The lessons learned from this experience can be summarized as follows:

1. Humanitarian actors typically have several standby arrangements at their disposal and will make multiple requests for support from several different organisations in an emergency because none of these standby arrangements can provide 100% assurance of deployment. As a result, the DRP will always be one of several options available to humanitarian organisations. In large-scale disasters however, emergency rosters are often depleted and it is in this case that the skills and services of the private sector through the DRP are most needed.
2. More work must be done by the DRP Secretariat to establish partnerships with a broader range of humanitarian actors so that there is greater awareness of the DRP and the skills and services which humanitarian organisations can access through the partnership. Joint training and increased interaction between the DRP and humanitarian actors will help to form relationships which will greatly increase the chance of deployment. Although partnerships have been established with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), UNOCHA and UNDP, partnerships should be extended, particularly to operational agencies and NGOs such as the World Food Programme (WFP), CARE and UNICEF.
3. The DRP Secretariat can help to ‘translate’ some of the private-sector work experience into a humanitarian context so that proposed candidates for deployment are appropriately vetted and reviewed.

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