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# The Effective Humanitarian Leadership Programme

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Cohort 1 (2014-2015)

Impact Report – Executive Summary

Professor Sharon Turnbull

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### Impact Report – Executive Summary

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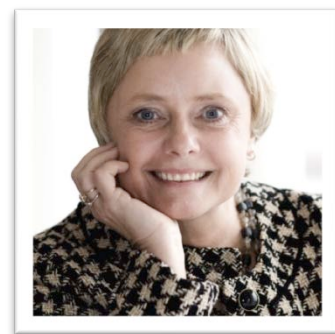
#### Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	Page 3
<b>2</b>	<b>Programme – Design and Evaluation</b>	Page 5
<b>3</b>	<b>Baseline – Needs of Participants, Teams and National Societies</b>	Page 7
<b>4</b>	<b>Learning and Impact – after Module 1</b>	Page 9
<b>5</b>	<b>Coaching – evaluation results</b>	Page 11
<b>6 (a)</b>	<b>Module 2 – pre-course evaluation</b>	Page 12
<b>6 (b)</b>	<b>Module 2 – post-course evaluation</b>	Page 12
<b>7</b>	<b>Achieving the objectives and moving forward</b>	Page 14

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**Dr James Kisia**  
(Executive Director - ICHA)



**Professor Sharon Turnbull**  
(Leadership Specialist, Caplor Horizons)

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### Impact Report – Executive Summary



EHL Programme – Cohort 1

## 1. Introduction

In early 2014, the International Centre for Humanitarian Affairs (ICHA) and Caplor Horizons formed a collaboration to focus on leadership development within the Red Cross movement. ICHA is part of the Kenyan Red Cross, based in Nairobi. It enables capacity building and skill development as well as knowledge generation. Caplor Horizons is an NGO focusing on strengthening organisational effectiveness, including leadership development and is based in the UK.

ICHA and Caplor Horizons designed and delivered the first cohort of a new leadership programme, the *Effective Humanitarian Leadership Programme* (EHL) between mid 2014 and May 2015. This cohort included 26 senior leaders from National Red Cross Societies across 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The project involved the planning and delivery of two modules and included coaching and follow up work. As the results with the first cohort exceeded all expectations, planning for a second cohort is now ongoing. Members of the design and delivery team from Caplor Horizons and ICHA have many years of relevant experience and everyone involved was struck by the results and the positive feedback from participants.

The immediate, direct and extensive impact both on the participants' actions and on their organisations, as a result of the leadership programme, has been impressive. A rigorous evaluation process was conducted before, during and at the end of the programme, which has contributed to the design, delivery and the coaching support.

Data, from this process, has revealed numerous examples of focussed and courageous personal action, leadership behaviour changes, renewed teamwork and significant organisational interventions that have made a real difference to how national Societies are run.

Corroborating feedback from their teams and colleagues, as well as from their own leaders, has enabled the participants to recognise the visibility and level of their personal change. For example, many individuals on the programme have already reported completely revising their leadership style, enhancing their communication strategies, building more effective and motivated teams, starting the process of cultural change, providing clearer and more robust strategic implementation, and building more sustainable and collaborative partnerships with donors and beneficiaries.

The programme has provided the participants with a toolkit for leading themselves, their teams and their national Societies, as well as enabling them to support each other during the process. However, the programme's impact has only just begun and the coaches, who got to know the participants during and after Module 1, have reported a new energy and determination amongst the leaders who attended Cohort 1, and they are persuaded that the positive results are set to continue beyond the end of the programme. Much evidence has been collected that this is the case. The participants themselves continue to report positively on their successes and progress. Many participants have also reported that they have been spending time disseminating their new ideas and knowledge to their colleagues and direct teams in the desire to extend the programme's reach. This appears set to continue for some time to come and indicates that the momentum and focus built up during the programme will continue.

The remainder of this **Executive Summary** (together with the full **Impact Report** that contains the longitudinal data demonstrating the programme's results) provides an insight into how the programme researched the needs of the participants, evaluated the baseline, and captured the learning as people progressed through the different stages. The documentation also summarises the future plans of participants for action and leading organisational change beyond the programme. Further data will be collected in September 2015 to analyse progress and confidence exists that the stories of positive change will continue to provide further evidence that this programme has achieved more than it set out to achieve.

The quality, curiosity and determination of the leaders in Cohort 1 was exemplary. Desire to learn, know, and to implement learning for positive change far exceeded the engagement often found in groups of leaders. Whether this is because of the nature of humanitarian work and the Red Cross movement itself, or whether it is because so few of the leaders have received such leadership education or development before, remains unclear (relevant evidence will emerge during cohort 2).

What is clear, however, is that based on the evidence received so far (and outlined in this document) this programme needs to continue to extend its reach further, sustaining real change in the Red Cross Movement and beyond.

## 2. Programme - Design and Evaluation

Following the baseline analysis, the programme was designed as two five-day residential modules (in September 2014 and March 2015) held in Nairobi, with coaching sessions (via Skype) scheduled in between the two modules. Both modules were designed to be highly participative and experiential, focussing on the real ‘work based’ needs of the participants and their Societies.

The design included:

- Robust profiling and needs assessment, ahead of two intensive training sessions in Nairobi, together with coaching, evaluation and strategic level learning.
- Focus on individual, team, national Society and country level needs, with leadership development sessions carried out as a group (to develop wider understanding and commitment to shared standards and impact).
- Emphasis on developing self-confidence, positive attitudes, behaviours and commitment towards high achievement and standards of leadership.
- Focus on good governance, accountability and transparency with key stakeholders, and most importantly the communities that the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies serve.
- Developing critical and reflective thinking ability in the Humanitarian leaders.
- Responsible decision-making and personal accountability.
- Building effective teams.
- Developing a range of leadership skills and abilities, such as effectively leading change, resolving conflict and motivating others.

This **Executive Summary** presents key points in relation to the baseline and emerging outcomes and the impact from the programme. A wider account of findings, including the evidence from the research process, can be found in the following two key supporting documents:

- i. The **EHL Baseline report** on leadership challenges and development needs for Cohort 1 participants. (September 2014)
- ii. The full **EHL Programme Impact Report** (May, 2015).

In addition to the ‘pre-course questionnaires’ that preceded the programme and gave a robust picture of the leadership development needs of the participants and their Societies, the design was also informed by a number of important diagnostic reports, conducted in preparation for the programme as follows.

- Two papers written to support the EHL programme: ‘**Sustaining Effective Leadership in a Federal Structure**’ and ‘**Strategy and Change in Federal Organisations**’. Both written by Dr Peter Moore (Governance Advisor, Caplor Horizons).

- Strategic Assessments of the South Sudan Red Cross and Zambia Red Cross (conducted in Aug 2014) - by Dr James Kisia (Executive Director, ICHA) and Dr Ian Williams (Executive Director, Caplor Horizons).
- Background analysis about the Red Cross movement and summary of Charles Handy's writings about federal structures - by Samson Hailu (International Development Advisor, Caplor Horizons).

The evaluation of the programme and its impact to date is based on the responses of the participants at the end of the each of the two modules, the coaching impact, and at the end of the programme as a whole.

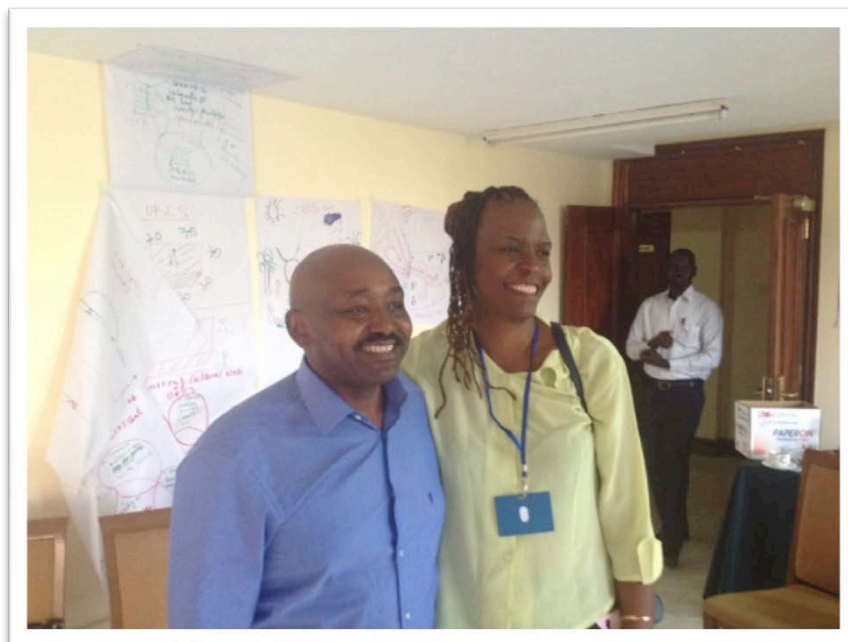
The intention is to capture further impact beyond the programme (this will next be done in September 2015).

#### Kirkpatrick's 4 levels (1959)

The process followed Kirkpatrick's *four levels of evaluation* model that measure:

- Reaction of delegate - what they thought and felt about the training
- Learning - the resulting increase in knowledge or capability
- Behaviour - the extent of behaviour and capability improvement and implementation/application
- Results - the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance

The evaluation captured all four levels of learning, but was most focused in assessing levels 3 and 4 to evaluate impact and outcomes.



Dr James Kisia (Executive Director - ICHA) with Ethel Kaimila Namaliya (Malawi Red Cross)

### 3. Baseline - Needs of Participants, Teams and National Societies

The key details are included in this section; however, for more information see: ‘**EHL Baseline Report**’ on leadership challenges and development needs for Cohort 1 participants (September 2014).

The main areas of responsibility of the participants were reported as:

- Strategic and Operational Leadership.
- Finance and Resource management.
- Leading and developing people.

Recurring additional themes that crossed all three key areas were *planning and coordination, managing resources and finance, managing risk, motivating people, and leading change*.

Participants were asked how they saw their leadership requirements changing to meet future challenges. The most common themes to emerge were:

- Increasing vulnerabilities due to changes in the external landscape.
- Shifting of donor support and diminishing resources.
- Exponential growth.
- Sustainability and Competition.
- Human resource development.

There is no doubt that the participants all work in highly complex and dynamic environments. Balancing external and internal responsibilities, providing strategic direction, sustaining partnership relationships, generating and controlling resources, and engaging and motivating appropriate caliber people are all significantly stretching their leadership capabilities.

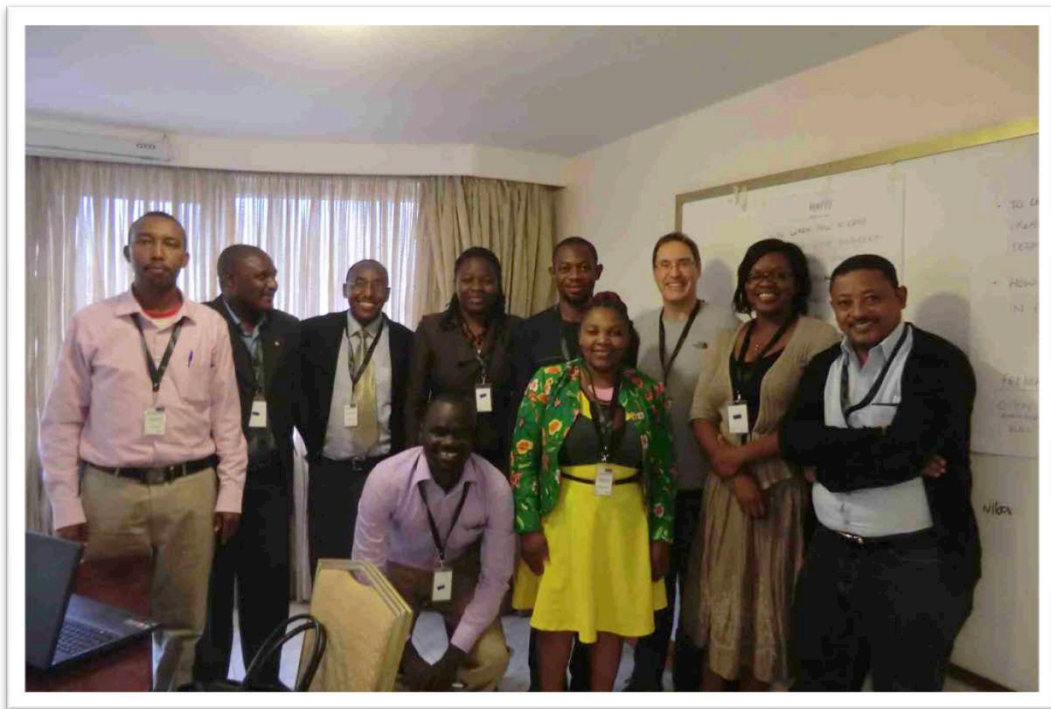
The federal structure of the Red Cross Movement creates additional complexity. In this context, the need for balance and sensitivity across the IFRC and the different National Societies (taking into account the ICRC and all key stakeholders - each with its own language, culture and political context) is a demanding leadership challenge.

There was no doubt at the start of the programme that the participants were acutely aware of the tensions of leading within a federal structure context, their responsibility to set clear goals and vision and to devolve accountability down into their organisations - whilst at the same time keeping a clear eye on the external dynamics and on their partner relationships.

Many of the ambiguities involved with the structure were creating further challenges. It was clear that the participants were also conscious of the importance of ‘twin citizenship’ and ‘interdependence’ (see *Federal principles of Charles Handy, summarized in paper by Samson Hailu for EHL*): notably, balancing their allegiance to their immediate National Society with support for the wider Federation and for their donor and client communities.

Our pre-programme research identified a significant desire within the Societies to strengthen their leadership capacity and to close the gap across leadership levels by improving strategic leadership development; and also by engaging with internal HR processes such as appraisal, coaching and mentoring, recruitment and retention.

This, alongside initiatives to strengthen the engagement and performance of their people, and to build more transparent structures, accountability and effective financial controls were seen as key.



EHL Cohort 1 - 'Blue Group'

We also found that managing complex stakeholder dynamics was a critical element of these leaders' roles, combined with the cultural and political challenges of a federal structure, adding an additional layer of challenge.

All the above facts were clear from the participants' questionnaire responses. Another constant challenge - the difficulty of ensuring sustainability through recruiting and retaining the right staff - was also frequently highlighted in the survey results.



## 4. Learning and Impact - after Module 1

Only the key points are distilled in this section. For further details, please refer to the full **EHL Impact Report** (May, 2015).

Module 1 focussed on laying the foundations of effective leadership behaviours through building greater self-awareness, more effective communication and team building. The following summarises the questionnaire-based responses of the participants at the end of the first Module.

- **What has been your biggest learning this week?**  
Many pointed to gaining a better understanding of the meaning of effective leadership. Others noted their greater understanding of how leaders can learn to lead. An almost equal number of participants pointed to learning new and specific skills of leadership. And many also reported learning more about themselves as leaders.
- **What have you learned most about yourself as leader?**  
Communication featured as by far the most frequently cited learning across a number of questions. This was closely followed by reports of increased self-awareness and self-control. Finally the rest of the responses tended to fall into categories of becoming more confident in strategic thinking, and decision-making and analysis.
- **What has surprised you most about what you have learned?**  
Communications and their importance once again featured most frequently. However, a number of further critical elements of leadership were mentioned in response to this question, including: the importance of emotions and motivating the team, the need for self-awareness and self-discovery as a leader; and the importance of setting clear objectives and sharing a vision. Some participants found the course style and methodology itself a surprise, as well as the learning *journey* to becoming more effective leaders. Even the nature of leadership itself was declared by some to be a surprise.
- **What do you plan to do differently as a result of the course?**  
*Communications* and focussing on *developing the team* were most frequently mentioned in response to this question, which sought to understand the participants' plans for action. Also mentioned were the desire to continue to focus on developing their self-awareness and self-control, as well as working on influencing others, setting objectives and achieving more strategic impact.

- **What difference do you hope this will make?**

These categories are clearly very helpful to understand at this stage. More effective teamwork is cited most frequently, followed by the linked categories of creating passion and engagement, and developing others to achieve their goals. Beyond these categories were: a focus on ideas generation and improvements to the operational efficiency; enhanced strategic impact and sustainability; improved partnerships; and the overall achievement of objectives.

- **In three words how would you describe EHL?**

Examples are shown below:

- *Soul searching, interactive, rigorous.*
- *Excellent, satisfying, reflective.*
- *Informative, inspiring, engaging.*
- *Demanding, refreshing, challenging.*
- *Applicable at all levels of leadership, life-changing, inspiring.*
- *Motivational, challenging, productive.*
- *Interactive, motivational, encouraging.*
- *Excellent, realistic, challenging.*
- *Educative, tailored to my needs, informative.*
- *Informative, excellent, practical,*
- *Challenging, enlightening, many learning points about myself.*



Elhadj As Sy (Secretary General – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent) with Caplor Horizons Team

The most frequent additional comments focussed on how to broaden access to EHL.

The level of engagement of this group and the desire to apply their learning in the workplace was exceptionally high on leaving the first module. Sustaining this level of motivation to change themselves and their workplaces was the next challenge of the programme and it was at this point that the coaching relationships became a key element.

## 5. Coaching - evaluation results

Overall the participants found the coaching to be of great personal value and felt that it was a critical element of the EHL programme.

In particular they valued the 1-1 time, with several commenting that this was the first time that they had ever had such a discussion that focussed purely on themselves and their own development.

Similarly, many participants also valued the opportunity to explore options relating to a specific, live issue or challenge that they were facing in their workplace. Again this was seen as something they had not experienced before (and had not been possible during the EHL residential modules, due to time restrictions).

At the end of the second coaching session, each participant was asked to outline an outcome (*Kirkpatrick level 3 and 4*) that they felt the EHL coaching had specifically contributed to. (*These have been distilled down to make them anonymous.*)

### Personal examples given included:

- ‘Extra funding secured that I did not expect’ (having used the communication model with donors, that I had learnt as part of EHL).
- ‘Got government backing and involvement to complete a project that had stalled.’
- ‘Re-motivated a member of staff who was not performing’ (by finding out why, using the right sort of questions and feelings).
- ‘Established new governance for the national Society in my country.’
- ‘Developed a strategy for my region as I now have the time, due to improved delegation skills’.
- ‘Did low cost team building that was fun and really helped build the team atmosphere.’
- ‘Changed my style of leadership to ask more questions before imposing my solution. My team have commented that I am much more approachable and am now people-focussed not task-focussed’.
- ‘Involvement with remote regions is now much better, as they feel that we now listen to them’ (using communication model learnt, and by being pro-active and visiting more).
- ‘Attendance at board meetings has improved dramatically’ (by meetings being organised and chaired more effectively).

The coaches noticed a general lack of local support for some of the participants they coached. This was partly down to a lack of knowledge amongst local line management of what the EHL programme involved, coupled with a lack of experience in supporting personal development for local staff. It is felt that many of the local Red Cross organisations would benefit from a stronger coaching and mentoring culture.

## 6 (a). Module 2 - pre-course evaluation

At the start of Module 2, participants were asked to give examples of changes they had made in their leadership during the period between Modules 1 and 2 and the results of these changes. Almost everybody reported improvements in communications with others, often including their relationship with their manager, or horizontal communication with colleagues. The majority reported changing their leadership styles to become more participatory, more empowering, and more able to give their teams the space and trust to perform without them. There were many examples cited of:

- Leading a change
- Trying out new ways of communicating
- Enhanced teamwork and performance
- Enhanced communications

At the start of Module 2 it was clear to observe the progress made by all participants during the six months that has elapsed since the first module, and by the enormously high level of continued engagement and energy that they brought to Module 2. There was a bond, trust and camaraderie between the participants and the facilitators that enabled people to make real progress during module 2 and to sustain and build on the engagement that had been evident during Module 1.

## 6 (b). Module 2 - post-course evaluation

Module 2 was designed to build on Module 1 in order to refresh and review participants' leadership practices before moving on to explore how strategy, organisational culture, power, and leading change are interconnected, as well as how these are affected by their complex federal context.

Using a similar experiential methodology, the module focussed on diagnosing internal and external cultural contexts, developing and communicating strategy, and strategic implementation.

**The first question asked was: 'What has been your biggest learning this week?'**

*Communication* was once again a frequent theme, as well as *Strategy Implementation*, *Culture and Strategy*, *Change*, *Authenticity*, and *Integration of Learning*.

**Participants were also asked: 'What do you want to do differently as a result of EHL' and 'What difference do you hope it will make?'**

Comments that emerged were clustered by theme and are illustrated below with a single participant quotation for illustration (further quotations can be found in the full report):

- **Leadership style and Performance:** *'I will avoid the traditional ways of doing things and replace these, phase by phase, with the models I've learned to become effective. This will avoid misunderstanding, increase performance, and decrease stress'.*

- **Communication:** *'Improve my communication, recognise every effort of my team, and encourage them to improve. Lead by example and train my team further. This will change the way our people think and do things'.*
- **Decision-making:** *'I will always look for other options in any discussion and in decision making, involving as many colleagues and volunteers as possible'.*
- **Engaging and developing people/team:** *'I want to plan a strategy of how I will win people's hearts and minds. I want to be a leader who will motivate my team in order to see greater output in their work. This will change their attitudes towards work in a positive way'.*
- **Dissemination and organisational impact:** *'Have meetings to disseminate what I have learned using the communications model. Be more influential in communication and sharing information and support and counselling in times of change. My team will feel more involved, so we share one common objective'.*
- **Strategy and Culture:** *'Focus on strategic direction and support the team to realise their potential and contribution. This will help me in taking my National Society and team in a positive direction'.*

**Finally participants were asked, in three words, 'How would you describe the course?'**

Some examples are found below:

- *Empowering, motivating, fruitful*
- *Excellent, motivating, rewarding.*
- *Excellent, eye opening, a must for very leader.*
- *Break through, life changing, inspiring.*
- *Involving, full of great ideas, technical.*
- *Results oriented and effective, tailored according to the needs in the Red Cross Movement, Intellectually designed.*
- *Excellent, practical, empowering.*
- *Informative, participatory, transformational*
- *Enlightening, influencing to think outside the box, empowering.*
- *Invaluable, timely, transformative.*
- *Really related to practice, very good, interactive.*

Once again participants were keen that this course is extended to more participants across Africa: e.g. *'I suggest it grows more in southern Africa to help better leadership, knowledge and preparedness for change in many organisations'.*



## 7. Achieving the objectives and moving forward

When asked (prior to EHL) in the baseline analysis, ***‘What do you hope the value of the programme will be to you as a leader?’***, the key clusters of their responses identified were themes as:

- Enhancing my personal skills, knowledge, and capabilities;
- Motivating people;
- Achieving results

When asked ***‘What do you hope the value of the programme will be to your team?’***, the leadership capabilities identified fell into three key categories:

- Enhanced Motivation,
- Stronger Teamwork,
- Enhanced Performance

When asked ***‘What do you hope that the value of the programme will be to your organisation?’***, the key clusters identified in response to this question were:

- Enhanced organisational efficiency and strategy,
- Enhanced external influence on Stakeholders,
- Enhanced impact on Society

It is clear from the evaluation research conducted at the end of the two modules and the coaching that learning and impact at all three levels: *individual*, *team* and *organisation* are now well under way against the criteria set above. Significant evidence exists, for example, that there has already been significant and tangible transformations in leadership behaviour and action, numerous stories of change, considerable evidence of enhanced communication and greater motivation in the workforce, leading to visible results and impact. Beyond Module 2 we are now optimistic that many of the actions identified for further change and action in the participants’ organisations will increase organisational impact in their Societies and impact on their stakeholders.

There has already been a transformational leadership journey from Module 1 to the end of Module 2 for the participants, with the coaching acting as the glue and support to enable the transfer of learning back to their national Societies. Participants have greater self-awareness, greater understanding of communicating with and motivating their teams, and greater understanding of the processes of cultural diagnosis, strategy implementation and leading change. They are also displaying more confidence of working within and acting upon their complex federal environment with multiple stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The next stage of evaluation will be to focus on the continued impact of the participants’ learning back in their national Societies, the longer term impact on their teams and Societies, how they cascade their learning in their national Societies and, ultimately, the overall impact on their client communities and on the work of the Red Cross in these countries.

***Professor Sharon Turnbull  
Leadership Specialist, Caplor Horizons***

***May 2015***