

The Salvation Army
2014 USA Salvation Army Conference for Social Work and Emergency Disaster Services
25 to 28 March 2014, Orlando, Florida

GLOBAL CONVERSATION SESSION 4A

“How can “One Army” develop comprehensive solutions to international problems?”

Major Brad Halse
Territorial Government Relations Manager
Australia Southern Territory

Can we work together as one Army? It’s an interesting question and one which has been asked a multitude of times, certainly within the Army, less often from politicians, the media, academics and the interested public. Why? Because they start with the assumption that of course we work together as one Army. How could it be otherwise?

This notion of working together is much harder to attain than to talk about. Ideology and organisational philosophy, even theology, does not always translate into practice or fundamentally shape policy.

But now, as much as ever, we need to revisit this question. And for a number of reasons, not the least of which are financial and human resource efficiency, and maintaining an organisational ethos that fundamentally reflects Christian faith, theology and spirituality.

Perhaps the primary reason, however, is that our world has changed dramatically in recent decades; our social reality in so many ways has been revolutionised. And to some degree, some of these changes have not yet been integrated into Salvation Army practice globally.

The principle change that should prompt us to tackle this matter is, simply, the globalisation of the world. Economics, communications and organisational structures in both the business and the not for profit world have been globalised. Our environment is different.

There are benefits to this and there are negative outcomes, but regardless of how much we analyse the changes which have happened there is no turning back. The world is not going to return to a federation of independent nations and alliances. We, as part of the Church universal, as a global Army, as a major welfare provider, need to recognise and deal with this reality as a matter of priority.

We are responding in parts of the Army world, and I will briefly share some examples in this paper, but I think it would be a fair comment to say that these examples do not yet typify the way the Army operates.

Let me say why I have doubts regarding the extent which our territories and commands around the world work together. Apart from a natural scepticism born of a journalistic mind, I cite the example of my own nation, Australia.

Australia is an incredibly fortunate nation. We are wealthy by most standards, we enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world, and we enjoy a stable democratic political system which, on the whole, is in pretty good shape.

Within this context we have an Army which comprises two territories, the Australia Southern Territory, from which I hail, headquartered in Melbourne, and the Australian Eastern Territory, headquartered in Sydney. In terms of the Salvation Army world, our two territories are very well resourced; to a significant degree we reflect the broader wealth of the Australian society and economy. And yet...

In many areas of social policy and service provision our two territories have always had significant difficulties in working together. Whether we are talking about the service areas of housing and homelessness, or asylum seekers and refugees, or drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, or any number of others, or programmes centred around our evangelical mission activities – we continue to have trouble, at times, working as one Army within Australia.

Those of you at this conference come from vastly different national and geopolitical contexts. For some of you, like those from our host nation, there are multiple territories in the one country. And that brings its own very significant challenges in working and presenting as one Army.

For others, your Army context may be a territory which comprises two, three or more nations. Be that in an African context, or a European or Asian one, the challenges for you must be significant. If a wealthy nation like Australia sees an Army, comprising just two territories, having trouble working in a unified manner, then we should not underestimate the challenge in other parts of the world.

However, the imperatives are before us and we have to devise good methods to achieve good outcomes. I want to speak of two examples, briefly, to encourage debate. One looked like being a terrific example of the Army working together, creatively and practically, only to stumble due to external circumstances. The other is up and running and over the next few years will hopefully produce positive outcomes.

The first example comes from Taiwan, and involves that territory seeking to work in partnership with our Indonesian and Philippines territories in direct service provision, and further partnering with the British and Australia Eastern territories in terms of funding support. Finally the partnership was rounded out to be a six-member partnership because of the role which IHQ needed to play in the development of the multi-partnership.

A model was developed involving the Taiwan, Indonesian and Philippine territories to identify, care for and allow the appropriate repatriation to Indonesia and the Philippines of women who had been trafficked to Taiwan for the sex trade and/or domestic servitude. The previous leaders of the Army in Taiwan, Majors Michael and Annette Coleman, from my home territory, worked at length with their counterparts in the other two countries, and with IHQ, to develop a strong working model. The work was further carried forward by their successor as Taiwan Regional Commander, Lieut-Colonel Jennifer Groves.

In developing this cross territory model, specifically titled the Pathway Home Network, these territories identified particular risks. They are worth noting. Not in order of priority they were: financial loss; occupational health and safety issues; potential damage to the Army's reputation; legal problems; a loss of continuity, particularly as related to personnel changes; a loss of engagement from one of the partner territories; and, finally, the geo-political risks, that is, risks to the cross territorial partnership which come from outside the Army.

These risks are important to consider when establishing working partnerships in the context of "one Army". In the case of the Pathways Home Network it was the last of the identified risks, the geo-political risk, which brought this promising initiative to a halt. Early in 2013 the Taiwanese government, which was clearly a significant stakeholder in developing the model, changed its mind about a critical element of the model, thereby making it unworkable. From the Army's perspective it needed to be shelved.

It is a clear example of one of the risks being realised with disappointing results. External stakeholders, not only governments, will have to be seriously considered when developing these types of partnerships, and potential risks must be mitigated as best as possible.

At the very least the Pathways Home experience demonstrates that we must be prepared for failure as well as success. The road to better globalisation within the Army will definitely be littered with casualties. What battle worth fighting has no such landscape?

In speaking with Major Coleman about the experience of developing this partnership model, various challenges were identified which are worth noting for discussion. They are:

1. The actual difficulty in establishing multi-partner relationships should not be underestimated.
2. Funding – both the quantum and the term over which it will be provided is always a
3. challenge.
4. The long preparation time required to develop Memorandums of Understanding.
5. The need to liaise with and through International Headquarters.
6. Developing and maintaining external stakeholder relationships, be they with governments, statutory agencies or other organisations and businesses.

7. Understanding and working with Salvation Army politics between territories and with IHQ.

Whilst these challenges, together with the risks identified, may seem confronting they are not insurmountable.

Firstly, we should expect any process aimed at establishing solid, intelligent partnerships to be a challenging one. There is no short cut. Part of the answer to identifying the range of challenges, and the depth of them, is to invest significant time exploring the mutual interests of all stakeholders beforehand, not during the actual programme development phase. It really is a case of investing time rather than spending it, let alone wasting it.

Issues around funding and the time needed to develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) need also to be carefully considered. At the end of the day, however, whilst the time taken, particularly in the development of the MOUs can be frustrating, it is a necessity.

It is, however, incumbent upon IHQ if it seeks to walk further down the Global Track to expedite these processes as far as reasonable, without compromising programme design, and to build on already established processes.

This challenge also relates to the identified challenge of understanding and successfully navigating the various political processes and dynamics which come into play when different territories are trying to partner between themselves and with IHQ. The complexity of Salvation Army politics can still surprise us. Perhaps it should not, but at the same time the message may be there to all leaders to remove as many of the barriers to easier inter-territorial relationships, and thereby negate some of the frustrating politics.

Finally, in relation to the challenges, there is the matter of external relationships. Government relationships will always loom large when this dynamic is being explored. From my perspective as the manager of government relations in the Australia Southern Territory, I know well the complex landscape which The Salvation Army needs to walk to try and build worthwhile relationships with governments, both national and regional, without compromising our mission and values. There is simply no alternative but to invest time and energy into the building of these relationships, always keeping our eye on the long term game as distinct from immediate short term outcomes.

The question of government relations is, as our friends discovered with the Pathways Home Network, always going to be sensitive and crucial.

This discussion of the risks and the challenges in forming solid, well planned partnerships, may be seen by some as being too pessimistic. To the contrary.

The work of the European Network of Social Services (ENSS) over recent years in developing multi-territory and multi-nation partnerships to help address major social problems is a shining light in the landscape. To intelligently consider how The Salvation Army may be

involved in addressing major social issues like human trafficking and the phenomenon of the Roma people within Europe, a great deal of energy and thinking has been invested in how the Army in Europe can develop programmes which can be responsive and efficient.

Jeroen Hoogteijling, the then Chair of the European Network of Social Services, was very much at the heart of developing the Army's European strategy, and I acknowledge his input and views to this paper. I also acknowledge the input of Ms Celine van den Berg-Doef, also from the Netherlands Territory.

The result has been the endorsement last year by all European territorial and command leaders, under the overall oversight of the Under Secretary for Europe from IHQ of the inter-territorial model for working together on trafficking and roma issues, in particular. I quote from their strategy document:

"We envisage The Salvation Army as a single seamless organisation responding to the needs of trafficked persons. The Salvation Army will work across borders and boundaries to stop human trafficking through prevention, protection and reintegration restoring hope, freedom and human dignity for all.

"A united and coordinated approach by the various bodies within TSA (e.g. women ministries, corps, social services, international development, family tracing and territories) is needed to fight this global evil and to provide a continuum of care together with partner organizations."

Much time needed to be invested, over several years, within European territories, and within IHQ, to finally get a strategy articulated and accepted. There were no short cuts. It was the collective experience of the ENSS working with IHQ and the various territories within the European zone. It is a matter of playing the long game.

How well will this new strategy for working with trafficked persons in Europe work? How much will it cost, and can the Army afford it? Will changing leadership at territorial and international headquarters potentially impede progress and outcomes? These are unanswerable questions at this time, and rigorous evaluation processes need to be central to the ongoing assessment. We should be optimistic about the potential of this type of model, which sees territorial leaders prepared to cede a measure of control and responsibility to others, in specific programme areas, so that prompt and timely responses can occur across territorial and national borders.

What those involved in this project needed to get right, in the first place, was the strategy. It was important to identify the strategy to deal with issues, and then put in place the structure. Perhaps sometimes we have got that the wrong way round in the Army.

There is real hope and optimism that this model can and will work. If it can work in the European context, why not in other parts of the globe? Whilst the geographical context is

hugely significant in this European example, many of the principles and practices developed can be considered for other parts of the Army world.

We need to watch with great interest as to how this model now unfolds in practice, with a view to perhaps encouraging other territories to replicate the principles and basic structure into different contexts.

One final comment about a sometimes forgotten component in this pursuit of working and serving as one Army, namely the local corps, and within those corps, the local Salvationists.

It is all very well, and necessary, to consider the larger structures of the Army when looking at this issue of 'One Army'. We consider inter-territorial partnerships, and the roles played by international and territorial headquarters, and by other stakeholders, and by Salvation Army networks of social programmes, the list goes on. But at the heart of The Salvation Army are local corps, and the people who constitute those corps. And these corps and soldiers can be, and should be, absolutely integral to helping The Salvation Army to serve as one Army.

In both the European model which we looked at, and the Taiwanese one, the programme designers saw the incredible value of people at a local level being integrated into the outworking of these services. It is about, to a significant degree, there being a strong utilisation of committed people at ground level. This should never be underestimated. The professionalization of the Army and its services has sometimes led to a devaluation of the importance of the local corps.

I close on a note of optimism, despite my journalistic cynicism and my Australian experience! The world expects us to work as one Army, to be a global Army. Without resorting to naivety and jingoism, we really need to respond. Such a response should not require us to forget that the strongest military forces of history have always had different regional commands and leaders; they have not been seamless. Nevertheless, the imperative to action is before us. There is much to be done in this area.