



Credit French Red Cross.

Key achievements and recommendations

- Dissemination through traditional printed materials (IECs) when combined with two-way dialogue by community volunteers encourages the communities to be more involved and engaged.
- The identification and selection of the cultural reference point, in this case Lah Lun, triggered discussion on the topic of disaster risk reduction which increased the impact of the communication materials.
- The engagement of local knowledge and local resources by PMI, including artists from West Sumatra to design materials and incorporate local traditions to facilitate community involvement, resulted in genuine ownership by local stakeholders and groups.
- Resource the assessment of community's information needs and communication patterns to ensure effective and relevant messages are delivered to the community. This could be integrated within existing assessments such as vulnerability capacity assessments (VCAs) or the baseline survey.
- Partner with local communication professionals to translate the baseline results into a creative, effective and localized communication strategy.
- Promotion activities in the ICBRR log frame should include a comprehensive assessment of communication channels and incorporate two way communication.
- Build on local assets to communicate. Integrating messages into a cultural reference point such as Lah Lun was highly effective.
- Understand the capacity of the organization to communicate effective outwards. Create a decision map or tree to understand how information moves within the organization and when information should reach decision makers during a disaster.
- Understand the capacity of the province and organization to respond to feedback from the community. Design and test your feedback system with the community.
- Work with organizational leaders to ensure they are relaxed about communities adding their voices and content to the programme.
- Successful communication to and with communities that supports resilience building should supply the content, motivation and tools to communities. This will help communities mobilize themselves to act autonomously.
- Communication with communities should place communities at the centre, rather than the brand or organization. Messaging that is engaging and with the potential to motivate, rather than a conventional brand message, should be embraced.



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Role of beneficiary communication in building resilience

Introduction

Resilient communities are generally thought to be knowledgeable and connected.¹ The Integrated Community Based Risk Reduction approach (ICBRR) adopted by Indonesian Red Cross Society-Palang Merah Indonesia (PMI) supported by its partners, French Red Cross and The Netherlands Red Cross, recognizes and aims to influence and strengthen community knowledge and awareness of disasters, as well as assisting with the formation of effective connections between the community and external agencies that can assist the community in the event of a disaster.

Background

West Sumatra is known for its extreme vulnerability to natural hazards. When two destructive earthquakes struck Sumatra in Indonesia in 2009, triggering landslides and killing almost 1000 people, PMI expanded its risk reduction programming to target affected communities. After two years this was further expanded to nine communities in three districts (Padang, Solok and Bukittinggi). The programme integrated two-way communication within the ICBRR framework to foster a dialogue with the community and to channel feedback to PMI and to clarify the information received during the programme cycle. Offering beneficiaries a channel through which they can provide feedback and raise concerns about the assistance they receive is generally regarded as an important part of being accountable and transparent. The programme also worked to build better capacity amongst the PMI team, by providing technical support to allow the field team (province and district) to thoroughly disseminate risk reduction issues for communities.

“I notice that when we visit the communities and explain them about disaster preparedness in face to face at household level and in groups, they become more engaged and involved with the program as we communicate with them and at the same time we also listen to them.”

Budi, CBAT Kayu Kubu, Bukittinggi

¹. Access to communication and information is generally thought to be a characteristic of resilient communities as it builds knowledge and connection of communities. The concept of resilience is well documented and is most often defined as the ability of individuals, communities and states and their institutions to absorb and recover from shocks, whilst positively adapting and transforming their structures and means for living in the face of long-term changes and uncertainty.

Why this document?

This document captures the key experiences of the beneficiary communication programme run at province and district level by PMI West Sumatra. It includes recommendations for programmatic and institutional change relevant to communication with communities for all Red Cross Red Crescent partners in Indonesia and in the region.

Methodology

Understanding the range of hazards that communities face, as well as communication patterns, is critical to understanding information needs and designing an effective beneficiary communication strategy. The programme in West Sumatra undertook a series of workshops and information assessments at the community level to understand the communication context of each community and to identify the sources of vulnerability to disasters in preparation for design of the communication strategy.

This included PMI conducting focus group discussions on how communities received and communicated information, with the assistance of community based action teams (CBAT). Multiple channels of communication were identified by the community, which included printed materials, radio, television, mobile phones and social media. The use of multiple channels ensured that all community members had access to the information based on their preferences, language and culture of receiving information (whether individually or in groups).

At the organizational level, workshops were also held to identify the capacity of the province and district teams to communicate with communities.

This important step recognized that understanding the capacity of the organization to communicate outwards to communities includes strong internal communication between province and districts. Information management and analysis of the information received from communities is an integral and important part of communicating effectively outwards. Based on findings from the workshop, PMI in West Sumatra established a Facebook site to share information quickly and easily between all stakeholders at province and district levels on disasters and the programme. An administrator at the province level was appointed to manage information in this forum.

“It is a good idea when the radio talk show programmes open up forum for discussion. I tried to participate by calling up by phone and felt that it was great to be able to contribute my thoughts on the issues discussed.”

Local residents in Solok District



A PMI volunteer conducting an information assessment related to disaster risk reduction in Padang. Photo credit: Husni / French Red Cross

What does it mean to be a knowledgeable community?

A safe and resilient community is knowledgeable:

- If it can assess how prepared it is;
- Has a high level of awareness about maintaining good hygiene and sanitation practices and practices these skills;
- Does not put itself at greater risk;
- Can undertake search and rescue activities;
- Has had training on shocks and stresses;
- Has a high level of awareness about the shock or stress, stays calm and does not panic;
- Can undertake damage assessments.

Importantly, this information should be assessed at the beginning of the programme cycle and on an ongoing basis across the ICRR programming to allow for appropriate changes and updates as needs change. Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Study, Characteristics of a Safe and Resilient Community, ARUP at http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/96986/Final_Characteristics_Report.pdf

Building an innovative strategy of communication to community

1. Stimulating discussion using a cultural reference point – “Lah Lun”

To stimulate discussion on issues associated with disaster risks, PMI designed a series of questions under the heading “Lah Lun”. Lah Lun is a cultural word often used by the people throughout West Sumatra that explores if people have undertaken actions or steps related to something within their community. Questions asking the community if they were aware of hazards within their village were printed on stickers and large posters and placed at strategic points such as shops, community centres and markets for two weeks.

2. Question cards: testing pre knowledge on risk reduction issues

At the same time as the posters and stickers were disseminated within the community, question cards were distributed by Community Based Action teams (CBAT) volunteers to check the initial understanding of community knowledge of disaster issues. They contained questions to test community knowledge on what to do before, during and after a disaster.

3. Communication material (flipcharts, posters, shop blinds, movies)

To answer the questions posed in the stickers and posters, the programme team designed flipcharts, posters, calendars and shop screens carrying key messages on disaster risk reduction. Integrating the information within everyday items, such as calendars and shop screens, was monitored in a post question card for effectiveness. An important part of this communication was the joint development by PMI and the community of an ‘Uncu’² character that conveyed the messages in the materials. These materials were then delivered by trained CBAT volunteers to the community and allowed the community to check understanding of DRR messaging, as well as gather feedback from communities related to the programme.

4. Question cards: testing post knowledge on risk reduction issues

After completing these communication activities, the communities’ understanding was surveyed using a question card. Results indicated significant improvements in knowledge of disaster risk reduction issues from the pre survey. The results are summarised below.

² Uncu in West Sumatra is a respected person, someone who the community looks up to in terms of knowledge and wisdom and accessible to all members of the community.

Summary of information needs assessment questions in West Sumatra:

- What channels of communication does your community have access to?
- What are the preferred channels of communication? When do you access these channels?
- What are the preferred channels to enable two-way communication between communities and PMI (to voice your opinion, feedback or suggestions) during the programme?



Large posters displayed in a central point in Bukittinggi to build awareness on disaster risk reduction issues. Photo credit: Husni / French Red Cross

In undertaking the communication with communities, the use of traditional printed media was a focus. In this way, the community receives the information on disaster mitigation through several media such as posters, billboards (baliho) and shop blinds which are diffused throughout the villages. Meanwhile, the community volunteers and other conduits such as government departments and schools provide further education through training on many occasions at the household level and during community gatherings using information presented in a printed flipchart.



No Questionnaires		Pre		Post	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Do you understand the signs of hazards in your village?	675	537	1078	130
2	Do you understand the steps to take to save your family from these hazards?	772	438	1101	106
3	Do you understand the borders of the hazard areas in your village?	324	638	736	198
4	Do you understand the evacuation route for hazards?	721	491	1066	142
5	Do you understand the strategies on minimizing the victims during the hazard?	414	797	908	299
6	Do you understand the steps to take after the event happens?	455	600	989	217
TOTALS		3361	3501	5878	1092

The activities reached 2,425 people within West Sumatra. In pre and post questionnaires communities were surveyed across West Sumatra to determine their understanding of issues related to disasters.



PMI worked with local warungs (food stalls) in disseminating disaster risk reduction messages integrated within the warang menu. Photo credit: Husni / French Red Cross