COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN EMERGENCIES: RESEARCH AND TOOLS

Guidelines and tools on how
to engage communities and
be accountable to them
during Red Cross Red Crescent
emergency work
(a research project)

December 2023

TABLE OF CONTENT

Pakistan
Kuala Lumpur/ Islamabad, 26 Aug 2022 - Almost a thousand dead including children, as ravaging floods displace over 3.1 million people while damaging more than half a million homes in multiple districts across the country.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANS	African National Society
CVA	Cash Voucher Assistance
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability
DCPRR	Disaster and Crisis Prevention, Response and Recover
DREF	Disaster Response Emergency Fund
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PGI	Protection, Gender and Inclusion
PNS	Partner National Society
PMER	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
Q&A	Questions and Answer
RCRC	Red Cross Red Crescent
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission of Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
US CDC	United States Centre for Disease Control
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This document outlines the key findings of a research project in Africa and across regions to better understand community engagement in emergency response operations. The research conducted, provides guidance on how to prioritize the needed actions to engage communities and ensure accountability towards them, as well as the responsibilities of everyone involved in emergency operations. The recommendations and guidance highlighted in this document have been incorporated into the wider Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) guide (Module 5 https://www.ifrc.org/document/cea-guide) and will continue to guide the shaping and scaling up of community engagement approaches in emergencies..

Hundreds of community members, volunteers, and staff members across the Africa region and beyond throughout this research have reiterated that engaging communities in emergency operations is important, necessary and also feasible. A diverse mix of community members in all contexts confirmed that they want to play a part in the operations affecting them, and consulted staff and volunteers shared approaches to truly engage communities so that they play an active role in designing and managing operations.

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is already playing a leading role in community engagement and accountability. Through its network of local volunteers, the Red Cross Red Crescent establishes meaningful relationships and links with local communities before, during and after emergencies. There is also a clear commitment from the leadership, corroborated by well defined institutional commitments and donor requirements.

But it has also become clear, that it is often difficult for us to look beyond our community volunteers and community leaders. There is uncertainty on what is expected from the different roles that are involved in emergency operations. Efforts to engage communities are often implemented in silos and not founded on an integrated approach encompassing the whole operation with all its different technical pillars. Consequently, a need was voiced to clarify the roles and responsibilities, as well as to introduce simple and realistic tools for engaging communities in a systematic way.

An area that was frequently mentioned and discussed were community feedback mechanisms. An overwhelming majority mentioned them as something important and beneficial, and many examples were shared of successful practices. At the same time managing feedback in a systematic way and translating it into concrete operational changes is one of the key challenges that needs attention. Tools and resources are needed to focus on this area and further strengthen this successful effort.

We heard about many examples from both within and outside the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement of things that had gone terribly wrong because of not properly involving and working with local communities. There were examples shared of community members being trampled to death or stabbed at poorly organized distributions, volunteers and staff attacked because of fear and misunderstanding of actions taken to protect people from infectious diseases, as well as time and resources wasted on support that was never used or failed to be relevant and useful.

One of the key recommendations shared by the staff and volunteers consulted was to improve the way we are communicating and coordinating internally, for being able to have one joint plan and one vision and to put it in practice together with the communities we aim to support. There is also a need to support our link to the communities – our network of volunteers. We need to ensure our volunteers have the support and motivation they need to do their work effectively, build strong relationships and play the important role of advocates for their local community.

INTRODUCTION

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BACKGROUND

There is an increasing recognition in the humanitarian sector of the importance of Community Engagement and Accountability and the crucial role it plays in ensuring we have safe access to communities and that our programmes are of a high quality, achieve maximum impact, help crisis-affected people recover more quickly and lead to more sustainable development.

In order to harmonize and align existing community engagement and accountability practices, movement-wide commitments for CEA were developed as an annex to the 2019 Council of Delegates resolution "Movement-wide Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability". These apply to all movement programmes and operations, therefore also to all emergency operations. To help operationalize these commitments, a strategy to strengthen community engagement and accountability in Africa was developed and published in 2020. This document provides strategic actions and concrete steps for African National Societies , Partner National Societies, IFRC and ICRC in Africa to overcome the greatest barriers to enhancing community engagement and accountability. One of the suggested actions of the community engagement and accountability roadmap is to "Establish clear, simple, and achievable minimum actions for CEA in emergency response operations".

WHAT WE DID AND WHY

While there is general agreement that community engagement and accountability can help us better prepare and respond to emergency operations, there is a lack of understanding of what this means in practical terms. So far there is little guidance on community engagement and accountability that is tailored to emergency operations. The general guides and tools are often too ambitious, or the practical advice is not relevant for emergency contexts. To clarify what it means to engage communities and be accountable to them in emergency operations, as well as identify the bare minimum needed in any emergency context, research was conducted to better understand the current practice of community engagement and accountability in emergency operations, as well as underlying factors such as barriers and enablers to meaningful engagement and accountability to communities before, during and after emergency operations.

WHERE SHOULD THIS TAKE US

This research project is one of the first steps of a process to strengthen our practice of engaging communities and ensuring accountability in Red Cross Red Crescent Movement emergency operations and to demystify what we mean with engaging communities in emergencies. This document includes guidance on how to put the general community engagement and accountability minimum actions into action in the emergency context, recommendations on how to test these in emergency operations in Africa, as well as suggested additional tools to be developed to support more systematic ways of engaging communities and being accountable to them in emergency operations.

CURRENT PRACTICE AND FACTORS WORKING FOR AND AGAINST THE INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

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To better understand the current practice related to community engagement and accountability in emergency operations, and the system these operations are part of, the main successes and enabling factors, as well as challenges and barriers to successful community engagement and accountability were explored and mapped out.

- **Successes** are activities which usually work well, have received positive feedback and were mentioned as positive examples during interviews or in documentation.
- **Enabling factors** are circumstances or actions that facilitate the process of engaging communities in emergency response operations.

- **Challenges** are activities that are usually difficult to implement and were mentioned as areas which require improvement and specific additional support during interviews and in documentation.
- **Barriers** are circumstances or actions that hinder the process of engaging communities in emergency response operations.

Many of the enabling factors identified in our research are in line with those identified in the process to develop the community engagement and accountability strategy for Africa. This shows that investment in these enabling factors helps promote community engagement in emergency operations, as well as the institutionalization of community engagement and accountability as a way of working in the longer-term.

DEMONSTRATED SUCCESSES AND ENABLING FACTORS

Based on the consultations and reviewed documentation, below is an overview of the activities which have been working well in Red Cross Red Crescent Movement emergency operations.

Successes

- **Feedback mechanisms**
  Clearly the biggest success in relation to community engagement and accountability in emergency operations are feedback mechanisms. These were mentioned as examples for something that is usually working well and adding value during more than half of the general key informant interviews. Most commonly it was mentioned that operations were adjusted based on community feedback, with examples including changes of the items included in standard kits, adaptations of safe and dignified burial practices and the equipment used, expanding the topics covered in health promotion activities, or providing cash instead of in-kind distributions. It was mentioned that feedback findings were used as successful advocacy tools with other partners, and examples were shared of efforts to identify the right and appropriate feedback channels for the specific context.

- **Working with local volunteers**
  Another success most commonly highlighted was the work with local volunteers. This was frequently mentioned by colleagues on the country level, and often referred to in Sierra Leone where many volunteers were recruited during the Ebola response and are still involved. It was mentioned that working with local volunteers helps to gain and maintain trust from communities, facilitates the work as community

volunteers speak the local language and understand the local context, and ensures sustainability of efforts as the volunteers stay in their communities. Improved communication and information sharing with the community was also mentioned in relation to working with community volunteers. Having a network of local volunteers in place was highlighted as a key advantage when starting a new emergency operation.

- **Working with community structures**
  A frequently mentioned success was also the work with local structures. Examples were shared of efforts to work with traditional and religious leaders, mother's clubs, traditional healers, as well as committees for planning and implementing certain activities. Mentioned were the approaches of identifying the existing structures in place and working with them, strengthening them and using the local knowledge and capacities. The link to local administrative structures was also highlighted in this regard. Working with local leaders was often mentioned as a successful practice when introducing a new operation and the National Society team to the local community.

- **Trainings on community engagement and accountability**
  Community engagement and accountability trainings were frequently mentioned as a successful activity before or during an emergency operation. It was mentioned as something that is useful in the preparedness phase to ensure everyone understands the concept and what is expected from the teams. It was also mentioned that the community engagement and accountability trainings have successfully been

combined with other trainings during emergencies, such as trainings on health topics or a combination of a CEA and PGI training. Branch level trainings have been mentioned as particularly helpful, as well as including Government officials in trainings to ensure good collaboration with local authorities.

Certain factors have been identified as key to enabling meaningful engagement and accountability during emergency operations. Where community engagement and accountability was strong, it was mainly thanks to following factors.

Enabling factors

- **Understanding of the concept of community engagement and accountability**
  The most prominent enabling factor identified in this process is staff and volunteers' understanding of what community engagement and accountability entails and is about, as well as acknowledgement of its potential to help us do a better job. This is mainly linked to staff or volunteers having gone through a community engagement and accountability training and/or having experienced it in practice. The right mindset of staff and volunteers was also mentioned in this regard, which might not be achieved through trainings, but can be a natural way of approaching the work with communities. This enabling factor mirrors the first strategic change of the community engagement and accountability strategy for Africa, which calls for "*greater understanding of community engagement and accountability and its importance to programme quality, trust and sustainability*" as this will "*lead to increased prioritization, resources and implementation of the approach.*"[1]

- **Staff dedicated to community engagement and accountability, and sufficient staff in general**
  The main resources needed for engaging communities is staff time. One of the most frequently mentioned enablers for community engagement and accountability in emergencies was having a person push this agenda and support its integration in the operation. A particularly strong factor is a strong and engaged community engagement and accountability focal point of the National Society. Having the support of experienced community engagement and accountability delegates in the beginning of large-scale emergencies has also shown to have a big impact, such as in the Ebola response in Eastern Congo, as well as the cyclone Idai operation in Mozambique. This is again in line with the community

engagement and accountability strategy for Africa, which recommends the appointment of qualified community engagement and accountability focal points on the country, cluster and regional levels, as well as to adequately budget for community engagement and accountability to make sure dedicated staff is in place.[2]

- **Leadership buy-in**
  Support from leadership has also been mentioned as one of the key prerequisites for successful community engagement and accountability in emergency operations. This was often mentioned in relation to the support of the operations manager, who can make sure community engagement and accountability is integrated across the operation, ensures there is sufficient community engagement and accountability staff and follows up on action in response to community feedback data. Furthermore, support from the leadership of the National Society has been mentioned to be crucial as well, often in relation to ensuring there is a full-time position for community engagement and accountability, and steps are taken towards the institutionalization of community engagement and accountability in the National Society's way of working. The impact of leadership buy-in can be seen in the National Societies of Kenya, Sierra Leone, Malawi and Burundi, who have made some of the biggest progress in institutionalizing community engagement and accountability. *This is also in line with the findings of the process to develop the CEA strategy for Africa, which found that "change happens when there is support at every level of the organization*".[3]

- **Community engagement and accountability as a requirement**
  Another key factor for enabling community engagement and accountability in emergencies is the requirement of community engagement and accountability according to strategic documents, as well as requirements from the donors. This is in line with the findings of the IFRC and the CDA Learning Collaborative report "All the evidence we need", which found that when requirements for community engagement and accountability were well articulated in organizational plans and processes, programmes were also of higher quality, as well as higher trust between the National Society and communities.[4] Both the movement-wide minimum commitments to community engagement and accountability, as well a country-level community engagement and accountability strategies were mentioned as enabling factors. Donors asking for detailed information on

how communities will be engaged, requiring activities such as feedback mechanisms in their proposals, as well as following up on these aspects in the reporting was also mentioned as a way for ensuring community engagement and accountability is properly planned for and receiving attention throughout an operation.

KEY CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

Based on the consultations and reviewed documentation, below is an overview of the main activities related to community engagement and accountability, which have been difficult to implement in Red Cross Red Crescent emergency operations.

Challenges

- **Managing community feedback in a systematic way**
  Even though community feedback mechanisms were identified as a key success, the challenge most frequently brought up in key informant interviews was to manage community feedback during emergency operations. This was often mentioned in relation to less resourced operations, where systems are often weak and there is no capacity for collecting and analyzing the feedback in a systematic way. There were several comments indicating that feedback mechanisms are seen as something for well advanced National Societies or operations with high community engagement and accountability capacity. This shows that there is a need to clarify basic ways of managing community feedback that can be applied in emergency contexts, using existing accessible and appropriate feedback channels and analyzing and acting on the feedback at the local level.

- **Gaining a sound understanding of the local context and its challenges and local capacities**
  It was highlighted frequently that it is a specific challenge to conduct a proper needs assessment during an emergency operation and to understand the socio-cultural context, power structures, capacities, preferences and needs. One aspect is that assessments are challenging and often missing in general. Another reason is that it seems to be challenging to include the mentioned aspects in the emergency needs assessment process and have the guidance and staff to support this

- **Continuous and open communication throughout the operation**
  Another one of the key challenges is to ensure continuous, two-way communication with communities. Most frequently mentioned was the difficulty of providing information on the operation, such as the support provided, details on the activities and the length of the operation. It was also mentioned that among technical teams there is often a focus on the "hardware", but a lack of focus on the "software". This means that there might be shelter kits or bank cards provided, but it is not sufficiently explained how to construct the shelter or how to use the bank card.

- **Integrating community engagement and accountability across the operation**
  Implementing an integrated approach has also come out as one of the most difficult areas when looking at community engagement and accountability in emergencies. It was mentioned in relation to poor communication and coordination between the technical sectors, as well as a lack of inclusion of support services in planning processes. It was frequently mentioned that community engagement and accountability was operating in a silo, especially when operating as a separate pillar for risk communication and community engagement during public health emergencies.

Morroco
The province of Chichaoua is one of the most affected region from the earthquake that stroke the country on 8 September. Some villages in the mountain have been entirely destroyed. Hundreds of people have lost their life.
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- **Ensuring the support provided is relevant**
One of the most frequently mentioned mistakes during emergency operations, was the provision of support that does not correspond to communities' biggest needs. This is linked to the difficulty of conducting meaningful emergency needs assessments, the pressure to deliver and the tendency of providing what the National Society or the IFRC is most experienced in. It was frequently mentioned that it is difficult to change standard packages or ways of working, or that there is just a lack of information on the local needs and practices, which can lead to items provided flooding local markets as they are sold by recipients, or the lack of use of facilities constructed. It was also mentioned that less tangible ways of providing support, such as catering to information as well as emotional needs of communities, are often neglected.

Certain factors have been identified as main barriers to meaningful engagement and accountability during emergency operations. Where it was difficult to integrate community engagement and accountability in the operation, it was often hindered by following obstacles.

Barriers

- **Lack of understanding of community engagement and accountability**
The biggest barrier identified is a general lack of understanding of community engagement and accountability. While there is support of the approach on all levels and a consensus that community engagement and accountability is important and beneficial, it is unclear what it means in practical terms, as well as what is expected from the different roles involved in emergency operations. This was mentioned in relation to not having a systematic approach to engaging communities and community engagement and accountability not clearly being spelled out in operational plans. It particularly becomes a barrier when key people such as the leadership do not understand the concept of community engagement and accountability, as it will then not be enforced, as well as planned and budgeted for. These findings are in line with the findings of the process to develop the community engagement and accountability strategy for Africa, which identified the lack of understanding of community engagement and accountability as the key barrier to the integration of it.

- **Time pressure and the perception that community engagement and accountability always takes time**
Another key barrier is the fact that during emergency operation there is a pressure to deliver, especially during the first days and weeks, and the belief that community engagement and accountability costs time that is not available. This time pressure was often mentioned as a reason for not being able to engage communities and a need to identify the actions that are most important, as well as feasible and realistic when time is scarce. This is linked to the general lack of understanding of community engagement and accountability and corroborates the need of clear guidance in how to implement community engagement and accountability in emergency operations, which this document aims to provide.

Nigeria
Ibrahim Ladidi, 20 years old, explains to Red Cross volunteer, Hauwa, how the water quickly flooded their area in Kogi state, Nigeria. Her family lost most of their meize, potato and yam crops. They were lucky enough to salvage their fishing tools and will do their best to fish so they can feed their family. Rainfall began in July and has continued into September, causing Nigeria's two main rivers – the Niger and the Benue – to burst their banks. The resulting disaster has caused almost 200 deaths, hundreds more injured and thousands displaced.
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- **In-accessible communities and volatile context**
A factor making it difficult to engage communities during emergency operations is also a difficult local context. Mentioned were a lack of social cohesion making it difficult to work with the whole community and bringing them together, as well as a volatile security situation. A general lack of access to the community due to insecurity, but also a community on the move or a lack of connectivity was mentioned in this regard. This was also mentioned in relation to political interference and a lack of political goodwill of the local Government.

- **Lack of staff to community engagement and accountability**
Not having the support needed to push the agenda and support everyone involved in an emergency operation to engage communities and be accountable to them, was mentioned as another one of the key barriers. It was mentioned that a person with the necessary experience and the knowledge of available resources and tools is needed to support the process. Frequently brought up was also that it is often a problem that the focal point for community engagement and accountability does not have the necessary influence to be involved in the planning process, as well as the problem of community engagement and accountability focal points often being charged with many responsibilities other than community engagement and accountability and not finding the needed time to focus on community engagement and accountability.

- **Weak internal coordination**

Another aspect impacting the level and quality of community engagement and accountability is the extent internal coordination is functioning. If there is no internal coordination during an emergency operation, it can happen that activities are planned and promised which turn out to be unrealistic as support services were not involved and necessary equipment can't be procured in time. A lack of internal coordination can also lead to an overlap of activities of different technical sectors in the same communities, unclear roles and responsibilities, as well as a lack of action on community feedback, as it is not shared and discussed. Poor coordination was also identified as a key barrier in the process to develop the community engagement and accountability strategy for Africa, which also points out that "poor internal structures can inhibit meaningful external engagement".[5]

RISKS OF NOT INTEGRATING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILIY IN EMERGENCIES AND THE ADDED VALUE IF YOU DO

If we do not take the time to understand the local context, work with communities, plan together with them and ensure two-way communication, we run the risk of

DOING HARM

- by working with the wrong community representatives, enabling nepotism, corruption, misuse of power and fueling tensions and conflict
- by disregarding trauma and stress in camps which can lead to riots and tensions
- by intervening in a way that can cause panic and hurt people
- by putting people using a service or involved in activities at risk
- by working with staff and volunteers taking advantage of their position of power and not having the mechanisms in place to highlight these abuses and act on them

RISKING OUR VOLUNTEERS' AND STAFFS' SAFETY

- by not explaining activities or inaction, causing harmful rumors and misinformation leading to violent acts of self-defense
- by not leaving communities with a resort to complain and share their discontent other than violence
- by taking actions leading the team to be perceived as or associated with threat actors such as armed groups
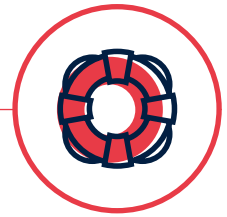
WASTING TIME AND RESOURCES

- by providing something that is irrelevant to people's biggest needs or cannot be used due to local customs, beliefs, traditions, preferences or other locally specific barriers
- by disregarding local knowledge and capacities and providing support that could have been covered by the community themselves, or organized in a more efficient way
- by implementing activities that won't be continued by the community once the operation has ended
- by not being able to continuously improve as issues are not identified and acted upon, and suggestions for how to improve not received

FAILING TO REACH OUR OBJECTIVES

- by not reaching the most vulnerable, as we do not know who and where they are
- by not anticipating local risks and obstacles
- by not using the most effective ways to engage and work with people, and facilitating sustainable behavior change

This in turn means that engaging communities and putting in place systems to ensure we are accountable to them has the added value of

SUPPORTING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

- by empowering them and enhancing their capacities to respond to emergencies in the most efficient, appropriate, and sustainable way
- by supporting communities to be aware of the main hazards in their environment and plan for appropriate actions in the case of an emergency
- by ensuring ownership of activities and handing over full responsibility at the end of an emergency operation

IMPROVE QUALITY, EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- by using local capacities and knowledge to deliver the most appropriate and relevant support
- by identifying and acting on issues related to service delivery in real time
- by ensuring continuous learning and improvement through regular adaptations and open dialogue
- by identifying cases of misconduct in real time and providing evidence on how they were acted upon

BUILDING TRUST, ACCEPTANCE AND ENABLING ACCESS

- by providing evidence to be working in real partnership, to be valuing communities' opinions and feedback and act on issues shared by communities
- by working with local staff and volunteers who know the local context, speak the local language and are representative of the different components of the community
- by identifying other sources of mistrust early and addressing them through open dialogue and transparent communication

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BE PREPARED TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

INSTITUTIONALIZE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

The best way to ensure communities are engaged and the National Society is accountable in future emergency operations, is to institutionalize community engagement and accountability. This means that mechanisms to share information, collect and respond to feedback and facilitate community participation will already be in place, rather than having to be set up from scratch, when time is limited at the start of an emergency response.

The strategy to strengthen community engagement and accountability in Africa, which was developed in a consultative process and published in 2020, lays out clear paths towards strong and meaningful community engagement and accountability for African National Societies, their partner National Societies as well as the IFRC. Following these roadmaps tailored to the region by implementing the suggested actions, helps to be better prepared for emergencies.

The minimum actions to institutionalize community engagement and accountability are to

1. Strengthen community engagement and accountability understanding and capacity at all levels in the National Society

2. Allocate resources, including funding and staff, to strengthen and institutionalize community engagement and accountability

3. Integrate community engagement and accountability into all National Society strategies, values, plans, policies and tools so it becomes a standard way of working for all staff and volunteers

4. Establish a community feedback mechanism for the National Society, with processes for managing sensitive complaints

INTEGRATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION EFFORTS

Communities are usually the first responders to any emergency and know their context best, which is why they are an integral part of disaster risk reduction work.

The following steps are in support of community engagement in preparedness efforts, and will help to enable better community engagement and accountability once the emergency hits:

- **Examine the National Society's response system** to better understand the level of preparedness in the area of quality and accountability as part of the assessment process of the Preparedness for Effective Response approach.

- **Conduct an** enhanced vulnerability and capacity assessment to support communities to become more resilient through the assessment and analysis of the risks they face and the identification of actions to reduce these risks.

- **Ensure communities take a leading role when developing early action protocols,** especially when it comes to the agreement on the actions to be taken in case of the first warning signs of an emergency, as well as who will be receiving support. This is an important component of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement approach of Forecast-based Financing.

The information gathered and documented during these processes helps to identify areas to improve on to be best prepared for emergencies, saves a lot of effort during the assessment phase of an emergency operation and enable you to start responding together with the community based on an already established and trusted relationship.

HOW TO ENGAGE COMMUNITIES IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE OPERATIONS

The ten actions below set out the minimum every Red Cross and Red Crescent emergency response operation should aim for, if they want to achieve an acceptable level of accountability to communities. They are drawn from the 16 minimum actions for community engagement and accountability in programmes and represent the most important aspects to focus on when there is greater urgency, limited time, and more complexity.

HOW TO USE THIS SECTION

- The tables below provide guidance on how to the meet the nine minimum actions for community engagement and accountability in emergency operations

- Each table includes the minimum measures that should be taken to meet the action, as well as how to go further when more time, capacity, and resources are available

- Every emergency response context is different, so there is no hard rule on when to follow the minimum or advanced measures. However, the minimum measures are the 'bare minimum' that all operations should implement, regardless of the context, resources, or capacity available. Given stronger engagement with communities improves the quality of the response, the advanced measures are put into practice whenever possible

As a general rule, the minimum measures are more likely to apply:

- ↘ In the early stages of a response i.e., the first few months
- ↘ For smaller emergencies, where the response timescale is likely to be less than six months
- ↘ When there is limited community engagement and accountability experience and capacity within either the National Society, or as surge support
- ↘ When there is limited funds and human resources available for the response

The advanced measures are more likely to apply:

- ↘ Later in the response, i.e., from month three onwards
- ↘ For larger or protracted emergencies, when the response timescale is likely to be longer than six months
- ↘ When there is a good level of community engagement and accountability experience and capacity, either within the National Society or as surge support
- ↘ When the response has a good level of funding and human resources

- The explanation on how to meet each action has been kept deliberately short to make it easier to reference when time is limited. However, more detailed guidance on meeting each action can be found in the accompanying tools or the institutionalization and programmes section of the general CEA guide.

Ten actions to engage communities during emergency response operations

All stages

1 Community engagement is integrated across the response
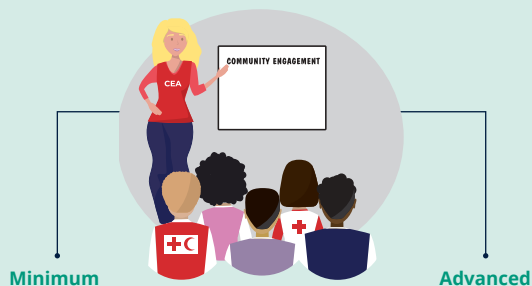
Minimum
- Brief staff and volunteers on CEA
- Discuss CEA in operational meetings
- Identify a CEA focal point

Advanced
- Train staff and volunteers on CEA

Emergency Assessment

2 Understand community needs, capacities, and context

Minimum
- Secondary data review
- Rapid needs and context analysis

Advanced
- Detailed needs and context analysis
- Interagency joint assessments

3 Carry out the assessment with transparency and respect for the community

Minimum
- Discuss assessment plans with community representatives
- Introduce the National Society and explain the assessment purpose
- Brief staff and volunteers on the assessment purpose and process

Advanced
- Train staff and volunteers on communication and feedback
- Coordinate with external partners
- Verify assessment findings with communities

Planning the response

4 Discuss response plans with communities and key stakeholders

Minimum
- Discuss response plans and ways of working
- Coordinate internally and externally to avoid causing frustration in communities

Advanced
- Use participatory planning approaches
- Cross-check plans with communities before implementing

5 Discuss and agree selection criteria and distribution processes with communities

Minimum
- Explain selection criteria and targeting
- Respond to questions and complaints
- Discuss distribution processes

Advanced
- Agree selection criteria together
- Use community-based targeting
- Plan distributions with the community

6 Include community engagement and accountability activities and indicators in response plans and budgets
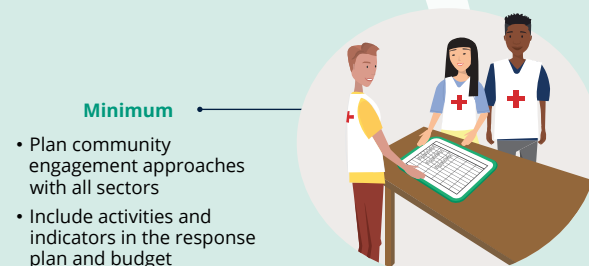
Minimum
- Plan community engagement approaches with all sectors
- Include activities and indicators in the response plan and budget

During the response

7 **Regularly share information about the response with the community**

8 **Support community participation in making decisions about the response**

Minimum
• Involve the community in key decisions

Advanced
• Enable active community participation
• Plan the exit with communities

Minimum
• Keep sharing information about the response
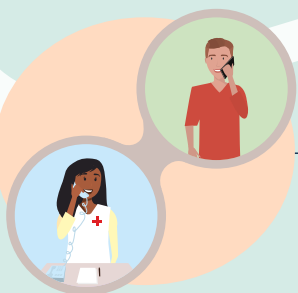• Communicate exit plans clearly

Advanced
• Check communication approaches are effective

9 **Listen to community feedback and use it to guide the response**

Minimum
• Establish a simple feedback mechanism
• Check the operation is meeting people's needs
• Monitor for unintended consequences
• Act on feedback and monitoring data

Advanced
• Improve the feedback mechanism
• Discuss feedback with partners
• Monitor community engagement approaches
• Collect case studies of feedback being used

Evaluating and learning

10 **Include the community in the evaluation**

Minimum
• Evaluate community satisfaction
• Share evaluation findings internally

Advanced
• Communities help plan the evaluation
• Organise a community-led evaluation
• Discuss findings with communities
• Discuss findings with partners

Tools to help (The CEA guide and toolkit are available here.)

7 **Tool 7:** CEA M&E tool

8 **Tool 8:** CEA job descriptions

10 **Tool 10:** Code of Conduct briefing

12 **Tool 12:** CEA Case Study template

13 **Tool 13:** CEA in Assessments tool

14 **Tool 14:** Q&A sheet for volunteers

15 **Tool 15:** Feedback kit

16 **Tool 16:** FGD guide

17 **Tool 17:** Community meetings tool

18 **Tool 18:** Participatory approaches to selection criteria

19 **Tool 19:** Communication methods matrix

20 **Tool 20:** Exit Strategy guidance

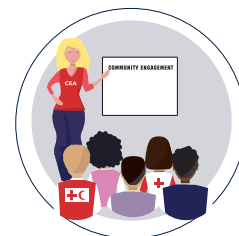**22** **Tool 22:** Developing a CEA emergency plan

23 **Tool 23:** SOP for CEA in IFRC emergency operations

24 **Tool 24:** CEA checklist for sectors and roles

25 **Tool 25:** CEA in emergencies briefing

The CEA foundational and CEA in emergency training modules are here

AT ALL STAGES OF THE RESPONSE

① Community engagement is integrated across the response

One of the key barriers to stronger accountability in emergency operations is that community engagement approaches are not well understood by all staff and volunteers and are not consistently integrated across all sectors. This leads to community engagement approaches becoming stand-alone activities and each sector adopting its own accountability mechanisms. This is a waste of resources, leads to gaps in how the operation is being accountable and causes frustration in communities.

At a minimum: (when capacity, time and resources are limited)

▶ **Brief all staff and volunteers on community engagement and accountability**
All staff joining an emergency response should be briefed on their responsibilities in relation to engaging communities and the mechanisms and approaches being used within the operation to ensure accountability. This helps to ensure community engagement is integrated in a consistent way across all sectors. Everyone must sign the Code of Conduct and be briefed on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and corruption.

Tools: 25 Template for CEA briefing in emergency operations   24 CEA Checklists for sectors and roles

▶ **Discuss community engagement issues in operational meetings**
Community engagement should be a standing agenda point in all meetings. This includes discussing the mechanisms being used to engage communities and how these are working; issues raised through community feedback and participatory approaches and how to respond; information that needs to be shared with the community; key decisions that require community consultation; and any risks or concerns that could affect the operation.

Tools: 10 Code of conduct briefing, Template CEA agenda points for coordination meetings

▶ **Identify a community engagement focal point**
Although everyone in the operation has a responsibility to ensure good community engagement, having a clear focal point can help to ensure it is not forgotten and is well integrated within response plans and across sectors. This person should have experience in community engagement approaches, be at the right level to influence sector leads, and have enough time to dedicate to the role. Ideally, there should be a dedicated staff member for community engagement and accountability.

Tools: 23 SOP for CEA in IFRC emergency response   8 CEA job descriptions

Advanced: (when there is more capacity, time, and resources)

▶ **Train staff and volunteers on community engagement and accountability**
Provide community engagement and accountability training to staff and volunteers working on the operation. Use the two-day branch level training[6] or the one-day emergency-specific training packages[7].

Examples from the Movement

- Training volunteers in Madagascar helps build community acceptance, pg 81
- CEA positions added value to the Hurricane Dorian response in the Bahamas, pg 81

DURING THE EMERGENCY ASSESSMENTS

2 Understand the needs, capacities, and context of affected communities

The assessment is critical as it determines the direction of the rest of the response, including what support is provided, to who, how and when. If these decisions are based on inaccurate assumptions or a limited understanding of the situation, there is a risk the operation will fail to meet people's needs, undermine local capacity, or do more harm than good[8]. This damages the National Society's credibility and leads to a loss of valuable time and resources while mistakes are corrected.

At a minimum: (when capacity, time and resources are limited)

▶ **Internal & external secondary data review**
Save time and resources and reduce assessment fatigue in communities by checking internally what information the National Society already has about communities affected by the emergency. For example, past needs' assessments, monitoring data, evaluations or reports from previous programmes and operations, or past community feedback data from the same locations. It is also important to look online or ask external partners, stakeholders and coordination groups for any joint needs' assessments, evaluations, stakeholder data or publicly available research which will provide you with useful insights about the community.

Tool: 13 Checklist for assessment

▶ **Rapid situation & needs analysis**
Ask about needs and priorities and develop a basic understanding of the community functions through simple, fast approaches such as direct observation, secondary data review, key informant interviews with local authorities, community leaders, head of local associations and organizations and local volunteers. Speak to a range of diverse community representatives, groups and associations. A basic situation and needs analysis should capture:
- The main needs and best ways to deliver support
- Who the community leaders are, and if they are trusted
- Main community groups and associations
- Other stakeholders, e.g., other NGOs, local authorities
- Demographics and community profile including, livelihoods, religion, poverty levels, gender roles, ethnic groups, literacy levels, languages spoken and any marginalized or at-risk groups
- Main capacities and strengths in the community and how these could be supported and used as part of the response
- Main channels of communication in the community, what people need information about, and how they would feel comfortable asking questions or raising concerns to the National Society.

Tools: 13 Checklist for assessment   25 Rapid PGI Analysis Template

Advanced: (when there is more capacity, time, and resources)

▶ **In-depth context and needs analysis**
Expand the rapid need and context analysis, to get a more in-depth understanding of the needs, preferences, and context in the community including community structures, power dynamics and gender roles. For example, through household surveys, focus group discussions with different groups, and community mapping exercises. Use the IFRC analysis framework to guide you on the information relevant to CEA to be included in the emergency needs assessment. These can be done periodically as the needs and priorities of communities can change overtime.

▶ **Consider an interagency joint assessment**
In larger emergencies, it may be possible to carry out a joint needs and context analysis with other agencies. This can save time and resources and reduce assessment fatigue in communities.

Examples from the Movement

- Different approaches to get the information needed in Indonesia, pg 83
- Communicating in the right language contributes to a smooth distribution in the Philippines, pg 83
- IFRC and Red Cross National Societies support interagency assessment in the Americas, pg 83

3 **Carry out the assessment with transparency and respect for the community**

Start the relationship off well by treating people with dignity and respect, listening openly to their needs, answering questions honestly, and not making false promises or raising expectations about what comes next.

At a minimum: (when capacity, time and resources are limited)

▶ **Discuss the assessment with key stakeholders in the community**
Discuss the assessment in advance with key people in the community. It's important to not only reach community leaders in this process but also heads of community groups and associations, Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers and local authorities. Ask for advice on how to conduct the assessment and if other organizations have already carried out assessments.

Tools: **13** Checklist for assessment **17** Community meetings tool

▶ **Introduce the National Society and the purpose of the assessment**
For some communities, it may be the first interaction they have ever had with the Red Cross Red Crescent. They may not know who we are and what we so it's important that the National Society introduces themselves before all else. Organise a community meeting and provide information on the National Society, the purpose and process of the assessment, outline who, what and how the data will be used, what happens once it's completed, staff and volunteer codes of conduct and behaviour and how people can ask questions or raise concerns.

Tool: **14** Q&A sheet for volunteers

▶ **Brief staff and volunteers on assessment**
Brief staff and volunteers on the assessment purpose, process and what happens next, so they can answer questions accurately and avoid making false promises and raising unrealistic expectations about the response. (Re)Brief assessment teams including drivers) on the code of conduct, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, anti-fraud and corruption, and how to manage feedback and complaints. Staff and volunteers should also be aware of the referral mechanisms and how to access them in the instance they are faced with people with specific needs (e.g. MHPSS, Child Protection, SGBV, etc.)

Tools: **13** Code of Conduct Briefing **3.2** PGI Tool 3.2: Guidance on basic case management and referral mapping *(Should be used with support from PGI practitioners*

Advanced: (when there is more capacity, time, and resources)

▶ **Train staff and volunteers on communication and feedback**
Train staff and volunteers involved in the assessment on good communication skills and responding to feedback, including how to manage expectations. Use the one-day training on good communication skills and complaints handling., which includes a module on the Code of Conduct.

▶ **Coordinate with external partners and local authorities**
Attend external coordination meetings to gather information on what others are doing and discuss assessment plans and findings to identify areas for collaboration and avoid duplication. This includes attending community engagement and accountability coordination groups.

▶ **Verify your assessment findings and analysis with the community**
Hold meetings with a diverse mix of community representatives and community members to share the results of the assessment, discuss anything that might still be unclear and check the response activities being planned will meet peoples' needs.

Tool: **17** Community meetings tool

Examples from the Movement

- Key groups missed from the assessment led to their needs not being met, pg 85
- Listening openly to the community helped identify the real issues in Bangladesh, pg 85

PLANNING THE RESPONSE

4 **Discuss response plans with communities and key stakeholders**

Although it may feel like there is no time to involve communities in planning an emergency response, their involvement can save time and resources in the long run by confirming planned activities will meet the main needs, identifying potential obstacles and suggesting where the community can contribute support.

At a minimum: (when capacity, time and resources are limited)

▶ **Discuss response plans with key stakeholders in the community**
Discuss response plans with a mix of community representatives including community leaders, heads of community groups and associations, Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers and local authorities. Check activities will meet the needs and priorities of the community and ask about the best ways to deliver them. If feasible, discuss what will happen when the operation ends and what support the community and/or other stakeholders would need to take activities over.

Tools: **17** Community meetings tool   **20** Exit strategy guidance

▶ **Ask communities how they want the National Society to work with them**
Discuss with key community representatives how the National Society should work with them during the operation, including how, when and what information should be shared, how feedback should be managed and the best approaches to ensure meaningful community participation in managing and guiding the programme. Involve the community in the process of planning the feedback mechanism, including how feedback should be collected and responded to and if different approaches are needed for complaints about sexual exploitation and abuse, or fraud and corruption.

Tools: **16** FGD guidance   **15** Feedback kit

▶ **Coordinate internally and externally to avoid causing frustration in communities**
Organize internal planning meetings to make sure all sector plans are complementary and won't lead to confusion or duplication in communities. Check with finance and logistics that any plans to provide goods or cash are achievable before commitments are made to the community. Plans should also be presented and discussed with government and other responders in bilateral or coordination meetings to avoid duplication and identify opportunities for collaboration and sustainability. This also reduces the risk of making promises to communities to provide support that falls outside of government policies and plans e.g., providing cash-based assistance when the government has a policy against this.

Tool: **24** CEA checklist for sectors and roles

Advanced: (when there is more capacity, time, and resources)

▶ **Use participatory planning approaches**
Use participatory planning approaches, such as community workshops and meetings, human-centered design, vulnerability capacity assessments or activities such as ranking, decision trees, mapping, etc. Engage all groups in the community in planning the response. In some cases, there will be existing structures already in place from other operations to collaborate with communities, use these existing approaches if it's available to you.

▶ **Cross-check plans with the community before you start implementing**
Organise a community meeting to discuss the final response plan before implementation starts to ensure it meets community needs and expectations. This is a chance to clarify any misunderstandings or unrealistic expectations, answer questions and agree any contributions from the community.activities over.

Tools: **17** Community meetings tool, CEA and PGI checklist for relief distributions

Examples from the Movement

• Community-led approach to recovery planning in Mozambique, pg 87

5 Discuss and agree selection criteria and distribution processes with communities

Communities rarely know how or why aid agencies choose who receives support and who does not. This can cause tension in communities and lead to perceptions theNational Society is biased or corrupt,affecting the safe access of staff and volunteers.

At a minimum: (when capacity, time and resources are limited)

▶ **Explain selection criteria and targeting processes**
Communicate selection criteria widely and clearly to recipients and non-recipients, using a range of channels and approaches. This helps to prevent rumours and tensions from escalating and threatening access. While it is often easier and quicker to ask community leaders to select who receives support, this exposes the National Society to the risk of corruption and failing to reach those most in need. If community leaders do carry out the targeting, it's important to verify the lists by checking a percentage to make sure they do meet the selection criteria. Posting recipient lists in a public place supports transparency and can help identify corruption but discuss it with the community first as it could put people at risk of violence or stigmatization.

Tools: **18** Participatory approaches to selection criteria **19** Communication methods matrix

▶ **Be ready to respond to questions and complaints**
A feedback mechanism must be in place to respond to questions and complaints about the selection process. The most common complaint will probably be from those who feel they have been unfairly missed out, so have a clear process for investigating these cases and provide an explanation of the final decision to the complainant. Failing to deal with type of complaint, can lead to loss of trust, anger, and even security incidents.

Tool: **15** Feedback kit

▶ **Discuss distribution processes**
Ask community representatives about the best days, times, and methods for distributions.

Tool: **24** CEA checklist for sectors and roles

Advanced: (when there is more capacity, time, and resources

▶ **Agree selection criteria with the community**
- If possible, agree selection criteria with the community as they may have different perceptions of who is most in need or vulnerable
- Engage with a wide range of groups, including those who are not likely to receive support.
- Keep in mind local power structures and social hierarchies and how they could impact people's suggestions on selection criteria and targeting.
- Communities may not agree with or understand why selection processes are needed, so explain why the National Society cannot help everyone equally e.g., limited resources.

Tool: **18** Participatory approaches to selection criteria

▶ **Use community-based targeting**
- Depending on the context, it may be possible to carry out targeting with the participation of the whole community. This can help ensure the process is fair and open. However, it's important to discuss this option first and ensure peoples' safety and dignity won't be at risk.
- Alternatively, involve different community groups and representatives in identifying who should receive support based on the selection criteria. This is more participatory than relying only on community leaders, but still needs to be cross-checked.
- If targeting marginalized groups, ask them how it should be done to avoid stigmatizing them or putting them at risk.

▶ **Plan distribution processes with communities and key stakeholders**
- Discuss with community groups and those being targeted, the safest and most efficient ways to distribute support, whether this is traditional goods in kind, or cash-based assistance.
- Ask the community to help manage the distribution, including who shouldn't be involved.

Tool: **24** CEA checklist for sectors and roles

Examples from the Movement

- Participatory approach to agreeing eligibility criteria for cash and voucher assistance in Nigeria, pg 90
- Simple steps for a better distribution in Zanzibar, pg 91

6 Include community engagement and accountability activities and indicators in response plans and budgets

If community engagement is not in the plan and budget there is a strong chance it will be forgotten in the rush and pressure to respond.

At a minimum: (when capacity, time and resources are limited)

▶ **Plan community engagement approaches with the whole operations team**

This ensures everyone understands how communities will be engaged and the responsibilities within their sector. This is particularly important for feedback mechanisms as all sectors will have a responsibility to act and make changes based on the feedback received so buy-in from staff and management is critical. Develop a clear plan for how feedback will be collected, analysed, shared and discussed internally and acted on.

Tools: **22** Developing a CEA emergency plan   **24** CEA checklist for sectors and roles

▶ **Include community engagement and accountability activities and indicators in response plan and budget**

Explain in the response plan narrative and activity plan how information will be shared with communities, participation supported, and feedback managed. There should be indicators to manage this, and funding allocated in the budget.

Tools: **6** CEA budgeting template   **7** CEA M&E tool

Examples from the Movement

- Lesotho windstorms disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) appeal, pg 91
- The Bahamas Hurricane Dorian Emergency Appeal, pg 91

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS FOR OPERATIONS
(*for more options see* Tool 7: CEA M&E tool)

This is a menu of potential operational indicators. Not all of them need to be used, but it's important to include some that monitor progress through the eyes of community members. Data collected from community members must be disaggregated by sex, age, and disability (at a minimum) so any gaps in engaging specific groups can be identified.

Monitor community engagement activities
- # / % of staff and volunteers working on the operation who have been briefed on community engagement and accountability
- The operation is informed by a needs assessment
- The operation is informed by a context analysis
- # of different community groups and representatives consulted on response plans, per geographical location
- # and type of methods established to share information with communities about what is happening in the operation, including selection criteria if these are being used
- # of opportunities for community participation in managing and guiding the operation
- # and type of methods established to collect feedback from the community
- # of operational decisions made based on community feedback

Monitor levels of operation accountability to communities
- % of community members who feel the aid provided by the operation currently covers their most important needs
- % of community members who feel treated with respect by the operation's staff and volunteers
- % of community members who feel the operation has communicated well about plans and activities
- % of community members who feel their opinion is taken into account during operation planning and decision-making
- % of community members who know how the operation decided who should receive aid and who does not
- % of community members, including marginalized and at-risk groups, who know how to provide feedback or make a complaint about the operation
- % of people who received a response to their feedback about the operation

DURING IMPLEMENTATION

7 **Regularly share information about the response with the community, using the best approaches for different groups**

Not sharing information with communities about the response is a common weakness in emergency operations and can lead to rumours, unrealistic expectations, and a breakdown of trust between the community and the National Society. Good communication means the response can benefit from valuable community insights, be warned of changes in context or security issues, and build stronger community ownership.

At a minimum: (when capacity, time and resources are limited)

▶ **Keep sharing information about the response through multiple channels**
Systematically share information on operation plans, progress, activities, selection criteria and distribution processes, delays and challenges, and people's rights and entitlements. Advertise the feedback mechanism and any opportunities for community participation in decision-making. Use multiple trusted communication channels, as one channel will not reach everyone, and make sure information is clear, simple and in local languages. Be aware of who might be excluded from receiving information and find alternative channels to reach them. Make sure community volunteers are also kept informed so they can share accurate information with the community.

Tools: **19** Communication methods matrix **14** Q&A sheet for volunteers

▶ **Communicate clearly when the response is ending and other sources of support**
Communicate clearly when the operation is ending, what will be handed over, who the community can contact in case of issues and sources or referrals for ongoing support. Staff and volunteers should be kept informed too, so they can accurately answer community questions. Ending the operation without warning, can harm the relationship between the National Society and the community.

Tool: **20** Exit strategy guidance

Advanced: (when there is more capacity, time, and resources)

▶ **Test and review communication approaches**
Regularly check *the operation is* using the most trusted and preferred channels, approaches, and languages to reach different groups and that the information shared is received, understood and useful. Communication approaches may need to be adapted as the impact of the emergency changes and the situation evolves.

Tools: **7** CEA M&E tool **19** Communication methods matrix

Examples from the Movement

- Bangladesh Red Crescent Society overcomes COVID-19 barriers to communicating, pg 94
- Good communication in Malawi helps tackle corruption by community leaders, pg 94

8 **Support community participation in making decisions about the response**

Participation leads to better operations by ensuring the community and the National Society can work together to overcome any problems that arise. Not engaging communities leads to a top-down approach, lack of trust, and potential security and access issues.

At a minimum: (when capacity, time and resources are limited)

▶ **Involve the community in making key decisions**

Establish approaches, such as regular community meetings or focus group discussions, to involve the community in key decisions about the operation. Consult with a representative cross-section of the community including men, women, and any marginalized groups. For example, ask for suggestions on how activities should be implemented, discuss the location and design for any construction, ask for input on the selection criteria and targeting recipients, decisions about which activities to keep or cut, and how to respond to issues raised through feedback.

Tools: **16** CEA FGD tool   **17** Community meetings tool

Advanced: (when there is more capacity, time, and resources)

▶ **Enable active community participation in managing and guiding the operation, including supporting community-led activities and solutions**

Establish mechanisms to hand over more decision-making power to communities, for example through community committees or supporting community-led action plans. Discuss ongoing operational issues and decisions on a regular basis and ask for community input to key decisions. Carry out regular checks through key informant interviews or focus group discussions to ensure that the committee is performing its role as the bridge between all ground in the community and the National Society.

▶ **Plan the exit with communities**

Organise planning meetings with community representatives and members to discuss what will happen after the operation ends and agree an exit plan.

Tool: **20** Exit strategy guidance

Examples from the Movement

- Community Based Action Teams in Indonesia plan their own COVID-19 response activities, pg 96
- Use local capacity to plan and manage distributions in Libya, pg 96

9 Listen to community feedback and use it to guide the response

Community feedback is critical to understand if the operation is meeting peoples' needs and where improvements are needed. Community members will have questions, concerns, and suggestions whether a formal feedback mechanism is in place or not. So, it is important to have some means of managing community feedback or it can lead to frustration and a loss of trust.

At a minimum: (when capacity, time and resources are limited)

▶ **Set up and maintain a simple community feedback mechanism**
Ensure there is a functioning community feedback mechanism in place for the response, based on the preferences of the community, identified during the assessment and planning phase. At a minimum, this mechanism needs to meet the following requirements:
- Have at least of two channels for collecting feedback from communities, e.g., face to face through volunteers or passed on by community representatives
- Everyone in the community should know about the feedback mechanism and feel safe and comfortable to use it, including men, women, boys, girls and any marginalized or at-risk groups
- There should be a means of recording feedback, such as an excel spreadsheet, and tracking what issues have been responded to
- Community members need to receive a response to their feedback
- How to act on feedback should be discussed in response team meetings
- Issues falling outside the mandate of the National Society should be referred to other organizations, government, and partners
- All staff and volunteers need to understand how the feedback mechanism works and their role and responsibility in supporting it
- It should be capable of handling sensitive feedback safely and securely, e.g., sexual exploitation and abuse, corruption, or protection issues
- Analyse if feedback is coming from a broad cross-section of the community and no one feels excluded from using the mechanism.

Tools: **15** Feedback kit **24** CEA checklist for sectors and roles **7** CEA M&E tool
16 FGD guidance

▶ **Check the operation is meeting people's needs and reaching the most at-risk**
Proactively check the operation is meeting people's needs, reaching the most at-risk groups, and support is being provided in the right way. This can be collected through formal monitoring processes or informally through community meetings, meetings with representatives or focus group discussions with different groups.

Tools: **7** CEA M&E tool **16** FGD guidance **24** CEA checklist for sectors and roles

▶ **Monitor operations for any unintended negative consequences**
Monitor the impact the response is having in the wider community to ensure there are no unintended negative consequences that could cause harm to people. For example, putting marginalized groups more at risk through selection criteria processes or destabilizing local markets through food distributions.

▶ **Act on feedback and monitoring data and use it to guide the response**
Discuss community feedback and monitoring data as a standing agenda item in staff, volunteer, and management meetings, with enough time to discuss how the operation should be adjusted to act on issues raised by the community.

Tool: **15** Feedback kit

▶ **Review and improve the feedback mechanism**
Conduct focus group discussion to gather feedback on accessibility and trust in the feedback mechanism across different groups and discuss how the mechanism can be improved, for example by adding additional channels or strengthening response times. Review how feedback is being acted upon internally and discuss in coordination meetings how the use of feedback could be strengthened.

Tools: **15** Feedback kit   **7** CEA M&E tool   **16** FGD guidance

▶ **Coordinate with external partners on community feedback**
Regularly share feedback insights, reports and/or non-sensitive feedback data with other humanitarian stakeholders via email or in coordination meetings. When needed, advocate in coordination or bilateral meetings for collective action to address broader issues raised in community feedback.

Tool: **24** CEA checklist for sectors and roles

▶ **Monitor the effectiveness of community engagement approaches**

Check if community engagement approaches are working well and all groups in the community are satisfied with the quality of information, participation and influence they have over the operation - and make changes when needed.

Tool: **7** CEA M&E tool

▶ **Collect case studies of how community feedback is being used**
Capture examples of when programmes have been adjusted and impact improved because of community feedback.

Tool: **12** CEA Case Study template

Examples from the Movement

- Bahamas Red Cross set up a hotline for hurricane response, pg 99
- Listening to community perspectives to improve the Ebola response in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), pg 99
- A helpdesk helps to support distributions of relief items in Ethiopia, pg 99

EVALUATING AND LEARNING FROM THE RESPONSE

10 Include the community in the evaluation

Community members should be the key source of information in the evaluation. If the operation hasn't helped them to recover from the crisis, it hasn't worked at all – no matter how many items were distributed. Evaluations should be an important tool to help us learn from the community about what worked well, and what didn't work and should be avoided or changed in future emergency response operations.

At a minimum: (when capacity, time and resources are limited)

▶ **Ask community members for their opinions of the operation**
Ask a cross-section of community members if they were satisfied with the timeliness, quality and effectiveness of the support provided, the way it was delivered, and what could be improved for future operations. Include these questions in the evaluation survey or if no evaluation is planned, ask these questions through key informant interviews, focus group discussions or community meetings.

Tools: 7 CEA M&E tool   16 FGD guidance

▶ **Share evaluation findings internally**
Share evaluation findings with colleagues to ensure others can benefit from lessons learned and avoid repeating mistakes. For example, through a lessons learned workshop or by emailing the evaluation and key findings.

Advanced: (when there is more capacity, time, and resources)

▶ **Involve communities in planning the evaluation**
Ask community representatives and members about the best way to carry out the evaluation. For example; what questions to ask, how data should be collected, who should collect the data, when it should take place and how findings should be shared.

▶ **Organise a community-led evaluation**
Have the community lead and carry out the evaluation process themselves, for example using the IFRC's Indaba participatory approach for baselines, monitoring and evaluations and IFRC's PMER unit has a manual, tools and examples of community videos.

▶ **Discuss evaluation findings with communities**
Go **back** to communities and discuss the findings of evaluations and next steps with them, for instance through meetings or workshops.

▶ **Discuss and share evaluation findings with external partners**
Share evaluation findings with external partners to ensure others can benefit from lessons learned and avoid repeating mistakes.

Tool: 19 Communication methods matrix

Examples from the Movement

- Kenya Red Cross drought response evaluation has a strong focus on community experiences, pg 101

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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ROLE
Leadership

Responsibility

Institutionalize community engagement and accountability approaches within your organization:

- ↘ Ensure CEA is integrated in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery strategies
- ↘ Enforce the implementation of the CEA minimum standards during emergency operations

- ↘ Make it clear this is a priority by discussing it in meetings and measuring whether you are meeting accountability commitments
- ↘ Recruit community engagement and accountability staff and allocate funding for CEA activities
- ↘ Ensure CEA is included in response funding discussions and proposals

ROLE
Operations manager/HEOPs

Responsibility

Ensure there is a consistent way of working with communities and strengthen accountability to them across the operation:

- ↘ There are enough dedicated staff for CEA, especially in the beginning of the operation to support the integration of CEA and training of staff and volunteers
- ↘ Make sure that everyone joining the operation is briefed on the CEA strategy of this emergency operation and their roles and responsibilities according to their positions.
- ↘ CEA is a standing agenda point in internal coordination meetings and action of community feedback is discussed and tracked
- ↘ The implementation of the CEA minimum actions is supported and monitored

- ↘ The planning process is collaborative, based on an appropriate understanding of the community context, and all technical sectors inform each other of the activities planned in which communities
- ↘ Ensure CEA plans and strategies are well reflected in the overall strategy of the operation
- ↘ Discuss and agree what should happen at the end of the operation and what support the community will need to take over
- ↘ Measure how well the operation is meeting peoples' needs and if they are happy with their level of participation

ROLE
Sector leads and staff

Responsibility

Ensure you are working with communities and ensure accountability in your activities:

- Integrate community engagement sessions into all trainings and ensure your teams understand the concept and added value of CEA
- Understand the local context, plan together with communities and ensure to complement and use local capacities to provide support that is most relevant to communities' needs
- Include community engagement activities in your plans, budgets and proposals – and build in flexibility to respond to changes in needs
- Discuss community feedback and how to act on it in team meetings
- Share regular updates on the progress of your activities and any operational changes with communities
- Discuss and agree what should happen at the end of the operation and what support the community will need to take over

ROLE
CEA staff

Responsibility

Lead and support efforts to strengthen community engagement and accountability in your organization throughout all stages of an emergency response:

- Provide training to staff and volunteers working on the response
- Integrate community engagement and accountability in response plans and budgets – including measures to ensure effective communication, participation and management of community feedback
- Establish a community feedback mechanism for your National Society and ensure findings are shared across the operation and sectors
- Help to integrate community engagement and accountability in strategies, policies and plans
- Help integrate community engagement commitments into other sectors' policies, tools and trainings
- Help coordinate between the sectors on activities conducted in the same communities
- Understand the process and procedures of the emergency operation and discuss plans with support services to avoid delays of activities due to procedural mistakes or delays
- Participate in inter-agency coordination mechanisms related to CEA
- Share community feedback findings with external partners and relevant stakeholders

ROLE
Volunteers

Responsibility
The link between the community and the National Society and communities' advocates:

- Share information with people about who the National Society is, and what activities are being carried out in the community
- Answer community members' questions
- Share community feedback and concerns with the National Society
- Involve community members in planning and managing activities

- Share and use your knowledge and community insights to help design and improve the operation
- Flag if you anticipate tensions and misunderstandings linked to certain activities with your team leaders

ROLE
Volunteer management and/or branch managers

Responsibility
Support volunteer communication and participation:

- Keep volunteers informed of what's happening in the National Society and the emergency operations, and ensure they are informed of operational changes
- Ensure volunteers are aware of what is expected from them, have signed and understood the code of conduct, as well as know their rights
- Brief volunteers on sensitive and serious community feedback and ensure volunteers know how to identify such cases and share it with the right focal point

- Involve volunteers in planning, managing, and closing of emergency operations
- Meet regularly with volunteers and listen to and act on their feedback about what is happening in the community
- Walk the talk - make sure we treat volunteers the way we expect them to treat the community

ROLE
Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Responsibility
Integrate community engagement and accountability into PMER processes:

- Ensure community engagement is integrated in the Emergency Appeal, Operational Strategy, and Implementation Plan – including activities, indicators, and budgets
- Include indicators to measure the quality of community engagement in monitoring and evaluation plans

- Use community feedback as part of monitoring data
- Help ensure previous learning is used to inform new operations – so we don't repeat past mistakes in communities
- Allocate a section in reports to cover community feedback
- Support the collection of disaggregated data

ROLE
Information management

Responsibility
Support the systematic and responsible use of community data:

- ↘ Set up and support processes to collect, manage and analyze community feedback
- ↘ Ensure all data is collected and handled in a safe and responsible way
- ↘ Support the process of producing information products that are easy to grasp and support operational decision-making
- ↘ Support the set-up and use of digital and cellular communication channels with community members
- ↘ Support knowledge management systems to ensure findings and lessons learnt are documented and shared across operations and the Movement

ROLE
Communication

Responsibility
Support in promoting human stories, amplifying community voices and bringing attention to the humanitarian crisis:

- ↘ Support in developing content and products to share testimonies and stories of the affected populations
- ↘ Ensure that people are portrayed as active agents and in a dignified way
- ↘ Ensure communication campaigns are informed by community feedback data
- ↘ Facilitate the use of two-way communication systems
- ↘ Highlight the importance of community engagement and best practices in external communication
- ↘ Support the engagement of local journalists on how to cover humanitarian and public health emergencies
- ↘ Support the development of CEA case studies

ROLE
Security

Responsibility
Integrate community engagement and accountability into security management processes:

- ↘ Advocate to response leadership that CEA is important for preventing security incidents
- ↘ Ensure community feedback such as threats or warnings are handled urgently and appropriately
- ↘ Monitor how the National Society and Movement is perceived by the community and discuss with communities how to build trust
- ↘ Help share information about the operation and the role and mandate of the Movement to prevent misperceptions and rumors that could harm the Red Cross Red Crescent reputation and access

ROLE

Support services (logistics, finance, administration etc.)

Responsibility

Ensure our processes and procedures can support and do not hinder community engagement:

- Logistics should be involved in planning to make sure we don't make promises to communities we can't keep on aid items and timelines
- Finance, logistics and administration procedures should be flexible enough to allow for changes as community needs evolve

- Ensure volunteers are paid on time as delays can cause frustration and hinder good communication and collaboration with the community
- Support efforts to ensure volunteers are insured and have the support they need to complete their work safely

ROLE

Human resources

Responsibility

Integrate community engagement responsibilities into HR processes:

- Support the recruitment of local staff
- Include CEA in staff and volunteer inductions and briefings
- Include CEA competencies (listening, empathy etc.) in role descriptions and assess for these when hiring
- Assess how well staff engaged communities during appraisals
- Ensure incoming staff are briefed on and sighed the Code of Conduct, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, anti-fraud and corruption

- Support the process of handling sensitive and serious community feedback and ensure there are focal points with the appropriate experience and capacity in place for acting on the feedback
- Support the set-up and maintenance of internal feedback mechanisms

ROLE

Partnership and Resource Development

Responsibility

Facilitate donor understanding of community engagement and ensure donors support the community engagement and accountability component of emergency operations:

- Ensure community engagement and accountability is included in funding requests and proposals
- Support the operations team to advocate for and negotiate flexible budgets and plans

- to allow for support tailored to the local preferences and context
- Share and highlight successful examples of community engagement and accountability with donors
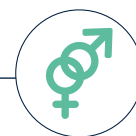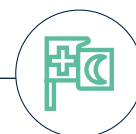
ROLE

Protection, Gender and Inclusion

Responsibility

Work with CEA to support programmes and operations to ensure we 'do no harm' and that no one is left behind, left out or left unsafe:

- Include questions on how to engage communities in gender and diversity analysis
- Help to ensure the systematic collection of sex, age and disability disaggregated data
- Mainstream PGI in community engagement approaches:
  - Provide support to ensure that the channels and approaches adopted to share information with communities are meeting the needs of all community members, including women, people with disabilities and marginalized and at-risk groups
  - Provide guidance and support on developing and adapting information to

better reach different groups, for example children, women and people with disabilities
- Provide guidance on how to engage with communities safely and without doing harm on sensitive topics, such as sexual and gender-based violence, gender roles, discrimination tof marginalised groups, or child safeguarding
- Provide guidance and support to ensure that sensitive feedback and complaints are handled safely and appropriately
- Provide guidance and support to address challenges to the active and safe participation of all parts of the community
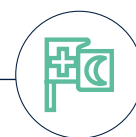
ROLE

National Society Development

Responsibility

Support the institutionalization of community engagement and accountability in preparedness of emergencies:

- Include accountability to communities in organizational development processes and assessments
- Include CEA in organizational strategies, mission statements and values
- Support advocacy efforts for mainstreaming CEA by providing advice on who and how to target and identifying influential champions

- Advise and support efforts to put in place a CEA focal point or to strengthen their role by positioning them well within the NS and ensuring the necessary support
- Support setting up organizational feedback systems for volunteers and staff members

ROLE

IFRC, ICRC and partner National Societies

Responsibility

Support National Societies to prepare for and respond to emergencies in a coordinated way:

- Provide funding for community engagement and accountability in any National Society programme, operation or initiative supported, including providing core funds for institutionalizing the approach
- Provide funding for CEA focal points to support emergency preparedness and response
- Include community engagement activities and indicators in operation plans
- Provide technical support to implement community engagement and accountability approaches in emergency operations

- Coordinate and align the support on CEA provided to the National Society and ensure the National Society is taking the lead on their CEA strategies for emergencies
- Advocate to National Society leadership and staff on the importance of working in partnership with communities
- Institutionalize community engagement and accountability in IFRC, ICRC and partner National Society ways of working.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Climate Centre. As well as the following partners: Action Contre la Faim, UNHCR, World Vision, ECHO, Ground Truth Solutions, USAID and US CDC.

We would also like to thank head of IFRC country and clusters in Africa, as well as IFRC national, cluster and regional disaster management, PMER, IM, logistic, communications and all programmes colleagues for their time and support.

ANNEX I – METHODOLOGY

A mix of approaches was applied to gain a holistic view of the current practices to engage communities and be accountable to them in emergency operations, and identify the successes and enabling factors, as well as challenges and barriers.

1. Putting in place a working group

A working group was established to support the progress, share experience, and provide input from the various different technical angles relevant for emergency operations. The group was composed of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement colleagues supporting emergency operations on the country, regional and global level and representing disaster management, community engagement and accountability, other cross-cutting topics such as protection, gender and inclusion, the different technical sectors such as health and WASH, as well as support services. Please see ANNEX II for the detailed list of participants of the working group.

2. Desk review

Review of following types of documents to the extent available:

- Strategic documents related to RCRC emergency response as well as CEA

- Article and reports on CEA in emergencies, with a focus on RCRC response

- Case studies and lessons learnt reports on CEA in emergencies

- Tools and guidance documents related to CEA in emergencies

Please see ANNEX III for the detailed list of documents reviewed.

3. Field research

Three countries were identified for field trips by the working group established for this project. The countries were chosen with the aim of having a mix of small, medium, and large-scale emergencies, different emergency contexts and levels of experience and capacity. It was also taken into account that specific research projects were conducted on the Ebola operation in eastern Congo, as well as the Cyclone Idai operation in Mozambique at the same time. Findings of these separate projects were included in this process.

The three countries chosen for the field research were Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Niger. These countries represent a range of emergency contexts, including floods and landslides, population movement, Ebola (past and present operations), cholera, conflict and complex emergencies. A more detailed list can be accessed here.

Country	Time of field visit
Uganda	10 – 15 November 2019
Sierra Leone	5 – 18 January 2020
Niger	23 February – 7 March 2020

In all three countries key informant interviews with key staff involved in emergency operations were conducted, as well as focus group discussions with community members and volunteers presently or previously involved in or affected by emergency operations.

Data collection method	Location	Context	Target group	Adult women	Adult men	Female youth	Male youth	Total
UGANDA								
Focus group discussion	Kisoro	Ebola	Community		19	20	30	69
			Volunteers	14	3			17
	Kyangwali	Displacement	Community	24	46	12	13	95
			Volunteers	3	8			11
Key informant interview	Kampala	Mixed	RCRC staff	2	5			7
SIERRA LEONE								
Focus group discussion	Freetown	Mudslides	Community	10	8	2	8	28
			Volunteers	8	12			20
	Kailahun	Flooding, Ebola	Community	10	19	10	15	54
			Volunteers	4	8			12
Key informant interview	Mixed	Mixed	RCRC staff	1	8			9
NIGER								
Focus group discussion	Diffa	Displacement, conflict, complex emergency	Community	12	22	4	6	44
			Volunteers	6	10			16
	Maradi		Community	10	9	11	8	38
Key informant interview	Mixed		RCRC staff	1	10			11
Key informant interview	Mixed		Other humanitarian organizations	3	6			9
Subtotal:				108	193	59	80	
Total no. of people:								440

4. General key informant interviews

Additional interviews were conducted with colleagues involved in RCRC emergency operations on the country, cluster, regional as well as global level.

Level	African NS	PNS	IFRC	ICRC	RCRC Climate Centre	UNHCR	Donors	Total
Country	3	1	3					7
Cluster			10					10
Regional		5	31	1	2	1		40
Global		6	7				2	15
Total no. of people:								**72**

Please see the list of key informant interviews in ANNEX I.

5. Discussions during workshops or network meetings

Another source of information included in this research were discussions and group work on the topic of CEA in emergency operations in a range of meetings.

Date	Type of meeting or workshop	Location	Activity	Lead
25 September 2019	Africa CEA Surge training	Naivasha, Kenya	Highlighting most and least feasible CEA minimum actions in a group exercise	Eva Erlach, CEA Delegate IFRC Africa
2 October 2019	East Africa Disaster Management Network Meeting	Kigali, Rwanda	Group work on enablers and barriers for CEA in emergency preparedness, as well as solutions to tackle barriers	Eva Erlach, CEA Delegate IFRC Africa
7 October 2019	Uganda Red Cross Society CEA training	Kampala, Uganda	Training participants going through the CEA minimum actions, assessing current practice and prioritizing actions	Eva Erlach, CEA Delegate IFRC Africa
18 November 2019	East Africa PMER/CEA network meeting	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	Group work on the relationship between CEA, IM and PMER, as well as the roles and responsibilities, when working on a feedback mechanism	Sharon Reader, Senior CEA Advisor IFRC Africa
28 January 2021	DHEOPS Induction Co-Design Session	Remote	Co-design session on "What needs to be in place so that you, as HEOPS, can make operational decisions informed by community feedback?"	Jonath Lijftogt, Volunteer Coordinator & Digital Community Engagement Advisor at 510, Netherlands Red Cross Alexandra Sicotte-Lévesque, CEA Manager, IFRC Caroline Austin, Global Senior CEA advisor, IFRC

Analysis

The primary and secondary data gathered in this diverse range of activities were analysed and coded using an analytical framework developed for this research project (please see ANNEX IV for the full analytical framework). Data were coded using the software MaxQDA, which allowed to identify the main successes and challenges, as well as the underlying barriers and enabling factors across countries and contexts. Differences according to type of emergency, as well as differences in perceptions between community members and staff, volunteers and staff, and the different departments involved, were explored and taken into consideration as well.

The main challenges, barriers, successes and enabling factors, as well as recommendations shared during the process, were mapped out according to the different stages of an emergency operation. This process was aligned with the revision of the general CEA guide, which is happening in parallel. The revised version of the CEA minimum action was used as a basis for the main section of this document, which provides guidance on how to implement the general CEA minimum actions in an emergency context, prioritizes the actions and provides the supporting tools needed for putting them in practice.

Drafts of this document were presented and shared with the working group for this process and feedback used to refine the document.

6. Field-testing

To test the feasibility of the CEA minimum actions and the usefulness of the accompanying tools and resources a process of field testing was conducted. Discussions took place with the DCPRR team to identify possible emergencies for field testing. It was important to test the materials in different emergency contexts and with varying levels of CEA capacity to ensure that the materials were being tested in realistic environments where CEA support may be limited. Additionally, as many of the actions build on each other, it was important to test the materials from the beginning of an emergency operation. Though, this was not always possible.

Within the Africa Region, two locations were identified for testing these included the Ebola outbreak in Guinea and the Nigeria Hunger Crisis. A third location was also identified in the Europe Region, this was the Ukraine-Russia Conflict. These countries represent a mix of emergency contexts (i.e. public health emergency, food insecurity crisis and armed conflict) with varying degrees of complexity.

Country	Time of testing	Tools tested
Guinea	August – November 2021	• CEA minimum actions • CEA in Health Checklist
Nigeria	February - April 2022	• CEA minimum actions • CEA in CVA Checklist • Participatory approaches to selection criteria and targeting • Community Meeting Tools • Focus Group Discussion Guide • Exit strategy Guidance
Ukraine	April 2022 - January 2023	• CEA in CVA Checklist • CEA in Health Checklist

Due to the complexity of the emergencies, all operations had a CEA surge or delegate present in-country to support the field-testing process. To ensure that the CEA minimum actions and tools were relevant and appropriate for the response the field-testing was done in collaboration with technical sectors. There were limitations to the support provided as these were active emergencies and the CEA surge and delegates had competing priorities with implementation of activities. However, in Nigeria this was an exception as there was dedicated support available for the field testing.

In Nigeria, the British Red Cross supported with the deployment of a CVA surge through their Cash Practitioner Development Programme (Cash School). The main objectives of this deployment were to pilot the CEA minimum actions and tools, document lessons learnt and good practices and revise the minimum actions and supporting tools as necessary, including identifying gaps for new tools (if any) to strengthen the integration of CEA within a CVA emergency response. The CEA in CVA checklist was reviewed by 4 participants (programme staff) from the Abuja Country Cluster delegation and 5 participants from the Nigerian Red Cross Society. While 22 participants, comprising 11 branch staff and 11 volunteers from the Benue branch.

The piloting process in Nigeria included:

- Briefing to staff and volunteers on the minimum actions and tools
- Workshops at HQ and Benue branch using the CEA in CVA checklist to self-evaluate how well CEA has been integrated into CVA response activities. The workshops were organized with IFRC CEA officer and colleagues working in the Hunger Crisis, Nigeria Red Cross Disaster management and Operations teams and CEA staff. At the branch level workshops were held with staff and volunteers.
- Key information interviews and conversations with staff and volunteers from IFRC and Nigerian Rd Cross working in the response. This method was used to gain insights from the response teams on the CEA minimum actions and tools that were not able to be tested.
- Focus group discussions with two communities in Benue to introduce them to the tools and seek their inputs on processes and understand from their perspectives whether the tools strengthened community participation and engagement.

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8. For example, by providing items people don't need so they sell them in the market and damage local businesses and the economy.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

The **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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