



**Enhancing Emergency Response
Effectiveness through Community
Engagement and Accountability (CEA):
The Building Trust Project in Iraq**



Overview of the Context

The haemorrhagic fever outbreak in Iraq presented a significant challenge for public health, disproportionately affecting butchers and cattle owners, especially in ٢٠٢٣ and ٢٠٢٤. These populations were at the highest risk due to their proximity to livestock, limited understanding of disease prevention measures, and lack of personal protective equipment. Building on the importance of having the buy-in of these communities to adopt better hygienic practices, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent partnered with the Iraqi Red Crescent integrated community engagement and accountability approaches through the “Building Trust Project” to respond effectively to this health crisis



Description of the Action

The project aimed to address the threat of haemorrhagic fever through a multifaceted strategy that emphasized awareness, protection, and community collaboration. It was designed to not only deliver critical resources but also actively engage communities in shaping the response. key actions included::

Conducting awareness sessions using participatory approaches tailored to local cultural contexts.

Distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks, and aprons to safeguard community members and frontline workers

Establishing continuous feedback mechanisms to allow for real-time adaptation of interventions, ensuring responsiveness to evolving community needs.

Coordinating with local health authorities and community leaders to increase acceptance and reach.

Guided by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) principles, the project prioritized local input throughout its implementation. During the assessment phase, community feedback played a critical role in shaping the focus of awareness sessions and informing the logistics of PPE distribution. This approach ensured that the response was both effective and contextually relevant, fostering trust and collaboration with the target communities.



Achievements and Results

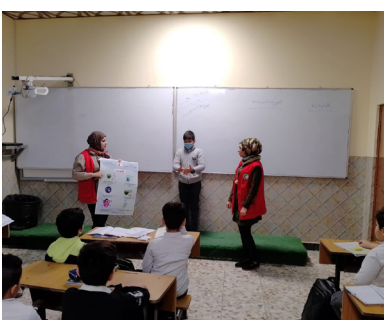
Integrating Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) principles into the intervention significantly enhanced its effectiveness and sustainability. The participatory approach ensured that the project addressed local needs while fostering trust and collaboration. The following outcomes highlight the impact of embedding CEA into the response:

Increased Reach and Impact: The project reached over 15,000 high-risk individuals, including butchers, cattle owners, and community influencers and leaders, one butcher said: «استطيع نشر التوعية للناس من خلال مهنتي» which translates to “I can start spreading awareness to people through my profession”. Also, the feedback mechanisms ensured tailored interventions, leading to higher acceptance rates for PPE use and behavioural changes.

Improved Knowledge and Practices: Awareness sessions saw high attendance, with %97 of participants reporting increased understanding of haemorrhagic fever prevention and %91 adopting safer hygiene practices.

Enhanced Trust and Collaboration: Continuous engagement with the communities increased their trust with the IRCS, enabling the project to overcome initial resistance and cultural barriers

Sustainability and Community Ownership: Community-driven adaptations ensured the interventions remained relevant and applicable beyond the project lifecycle, promoting sustained impact and local ownership of the response, as one butcher said: «أنا كصاحب قصابه أعطيت العمال توجيهات ان يهتمو بالنظافه الشخصيه» Which translates to: “As a butcher, I instructed workers to focus more on personal hygiene and the cleanliness of livestock to be slaughtered.”



Lessons Learned

Feedback-Driven Adaptation: Leveraging community feedback led to culturally appropriate messaging and higher participation rates.

Coordination with Local Actors: Involvement of community leaders and health workers enhanced trust and improved the projects reach..

Coordination with Local Actors: Involvement of community leaders and health workers enhanced trust and improved the projects reach.

