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# COUNCIL OF DELEGATES

## OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS
## AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Geneva, Switzerland
8 December 2019

# Movement-wide Commitments for
# Community Engagement and Accountability

**Resolution**

**Document prepared by**

**The International Committee of the Red Cross**
**and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**
**in consultation with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

Geneva, December 2019

# RESOLUTION

# Movement-wide Commitments for
# Community Engagement and Accountability

The Council of Delegates,

*reasserting* that as a global humanitarian network of millions of people, the *raison d'être* of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) is to prevent and alleviate the suffering of people vulnerable to and affected by disasters, conflicts, and health and social problems,

*reaffirming* the Movement's accountability to vulnerable and affected people in its efforts to provide support and assistance impartially and without discrimination to address their needs, and to protect and preserve their dignity, including protection from sexual abuse and exploitation,

*recognizing* that vulnerable and crisis-affected people have existing skills, capacities, community systems and structures, and direct knowledge, understanding and experience of their situations, and have the right to participate and lead in designing, implementing and making decisions about the humanitarian activities that concern them,

*recognizing* also that Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers at the community level are often affected by and the first responders to situations of crisis and therefore provide a vital entry point to support efforts to improve accountability, effectiveness and localization of humanitarian actions,

*emphasizing* that community engagement and other forms of inclusive participation contribute to more timely, relevant, appropriate and effective humanitarian programmes; build trust and proximity with the people and communities we aim to serve; reduce risks of sexual abuse and exploitation, corruption and misuse of resources; and positively impact the safety and security of our staff and operations,

*reaffirming* the importance of systematically collecting and responding to vulnerable and affected people's views on their needs, priorities, vulnerabilities and capacities, and the responsibility to use this information to guide decision-making and adapt activities in response to the feedback and inputs received,

*acknowledging* the diversity of individuals who make up any community, its existing and evolving power dynamics and patterns of inclusion or exclusion, and the need to take measures to understand these dynamics and include all groups equally and equitably in community-engagement processes as well as to adapt activities according to different needs and vulnerabilities,

*highlighting* that effective community engagement enables different groups of people to share their insights or experiences; to ask questions or clarify expectations; to obtain accurate, relevant and potentially life-saving information; to share feedback on the quality and effectiveness of programmes and operations; and to hold us to account,

*commending* the existing capacity, experience and efforts of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in adopting and applying community engagement and accountability to people and communities more systematically in their policies and programmes,

*acknowledging* the Movement's existing commitments to strengthening accountability to and engagement with vulnerable and affected people, such as the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief, the IFRC's 2013 General Assembly decision (GA/13/40) on promoting active engagement and wider participation of the communities in operations and programmes, the IFRC's 2018 Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and the 2015 International Conference resolution on sexual and gender-based violence (32IC/15/R3), amongst other relevant policy decisions,

*acknowledging* also the Movement's contribution to initiatives to increase quality, effectiveness and accountability in humanitarian action, such as the Core Humanitarian Standard for quality and accountability and pledges made by the IFRC and the ICRC to support community participation and localization of aid and work in a more coordinated manner to promote community engagement and accountability as part of their Grand Bargain commitments,

*recalling* that, at the 2017 Council of Delegates, the workshop "From words to action: Community engagement and accountability in practice" concluded with a call for a Movement-wide approach to developing and scaling-up of shared commitments on community engagement and accountability to vulnerable and affected people and communities,

*acknowledging* efforts since then to develop a set of commitments in consultation with the various components of the Movement (National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC) that build on and complement existing or emerging initiatives intended to strengthen community engagement and accountability,

1. *adopts* the Movement-wide Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability, as annexed to this resolution;

2. *encourages* all Movement components to engage with and be accountable to the people they aim to serve in a manner consistent with these Movement-wide Commitments, and dedicate adequate human, financial and technical resources to do this;

3. *requests* all Movement components to work together to strengthen their individual and collective capacities and progressively integrate these commitments and actions into policy, management and decision-making processes, tools for capacity assessment, organizational development, programme planning, monitoring and evaluation, coordination, and cooperation with a view to reducing duplication in approaches and increasing harmonization;

4. *requests* all Movement components to share and document knowledge gained and lessons learned from their efforts to adopt and apply these commitments with a view to continuously improving the Movement's engagement with and accountability to vulnerable and affected people and thereby improving the outcomes of our humanitarian action and advocacy;

5. *recommends* that National Societies providing support and assistance to other National Societies also integrate the commitments into their international cooperation strategies, including by providing financial and other support to strengthen sustainable community engagement and accountability capacities of host National Societies;

6. *calls upon* all Movement components to continue to develop a harmonized performance-measurement framework to monitor and assess the extent to which the Movement-wide Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability are integrated into their ways of working, and report back to the 2023 Council of Delegates on progress and achievements made.

# Annex
# Movement-Wide Commitments for
# Community Engagement and Accountability

**Introduction**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in consultation with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), have developed the following **commitments and minimum actions** as an annex to the 2019 Council of Delegates resolution "Movement-wide Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability".

The commitments and minimum actions aim to **harmonize and align existing practices in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement** (Movement) and ensure that there is a consistent approach to how we engage with and are accountable to vulnerable and crisis-affected people and communities, while recognizing and respecting the specific mandates, roles, responsibilities and capacities of National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC.

This annex also includes a **draft performance-measurement framework** setting out proposed outcomes, indicators and benchmarks to orient how to integrate the commitments and minimum actions into policies, programmes and operations.[1] This work will be refined, tested and adapted for use by the IFRC, ICRC and National Societies with a view to developing a harmonized approach to monitoring and reporting back to the Council of Delegates on progress towards implementation of these community-engagement and accountability commitments within the Movement.

## SECTION ONE: Scope, definitions and rationale

**Scope**

The commitments are intended to be relevant and applicable to all Movement components, their staff and volunteers, whether they work on short-term emergency responses or longer-term programmes or provide other services and assistance involving direct engagement with people and communities. The accompanying actions are intended to strengthen and improve accountability at all levels:

- National Society headquarters and branches, and domestic and international programmes and services to assist at-risk, vulnerable and crisis-affected people
- IFRC and ICRC national, regional and global programmes and operations
- other situations where one or more Movement components and/or external partners work together with similar objectives and seek to work with and assist similar people and communities.

**Definitions**

While many National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC have developed their own policies around community engagement and accountability, **the Movement still lacks a common definition and shared understanding** of these concepts and of how to integrate them into programmes and operations. Uncoordinated and diverse approaches undermine the potential of working together as a Movement to fully and effectively incorporate the needs, concerns, priorities and inputs of people and communities into policies, plans and decision-making processes, whether at the branch or community level, or in large-scale programmes and operations involving several Movement components.

In an effort to address this, the following proposed definitions draw on existing terms used within the Movement, as well as externally used and agreed concepts regarding accountability to affected people. The definitions will help ensure **a more consistent and common understanding** of community engagement and accountability. This is especially important when developing and implementing programmes and operations with people and communities, as well as for Movement cooperation and coordination, advocacy, capacity-building and organizational development processes.

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[1] This draft document builds on *A Red Cross Red Crescent Guide to Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)*, a 2019 Council of Delegates background paper supporting this resolution, and extensive consultations with and input from National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC. They are invited to continue to comment on this draft in order to ensure that the final Council of Delegates resolution reflects the Movement's priorities and ambitions around improving and strengthening community engagement and accountability.

**Accountability** refers to the mutual responsibility of all components of the Movement to use their power and resources ethically and responsibly to **put the interests of people and communities they aim to serve at the centre of decision-making,** thereby ensuring that humanitarian actions lead to the best possible **outcomes and results** for them, while protecting and preserving their **rights and dignity** and increasing their **resilience** to face situations of vulnerability and crisis. This includes people's rights to equitable access to assistance in proportion to their needs, priorities and preferences, the right to information, and the right to provide feedback and participate in decisions that affect them.

Accountability also includes the responsibility to ensure Movement staff and volunteers comply with all legal and ethical obligations to protect and safeguard the integrity and dignity of those we seek to serve, prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and corruption and misuse of resources, and to take timely and appropriate corrective action to deal with situations that compromise principled humanitarian action.

**Community engagement** refers to ways of working collaboratively with people and communities to ensure that Red Cross and Red Crescent actions are effective, inclusive, sustainable and accountable, and that they contribute to supporting and enabling people and communities to lead and shape positive, sustainable changes in their own lives and on their own terms. This includes **processes to systematically listen to, engage and communicate with people and communities** in order to better understand their diverse needs, vulnerabilities and capacities; to gather, respond to and act on feedback and input about their priorities and preferences; and to provide safe and equitable access and opportunities to actively participate in decisions that affect them.

This also includes the responsibility to communicate transparently and in an appropriate, accessible manner about Movement principles and values, the aims and objectives of Movement action and advocacy, what they can expect from us, and how people and communities can participate in and provide their inputs about issues and decisions that affect them.

**People and communities** are understood to mean any group of vulnerable, at-risk or crisis-affected people that the Movement aims to serve, without discrimination and according to need, in line with our Fundamental Principles. This requires recognizing the diversity of individuals who make up any community, the role that gender, age, disability, diversity and existing and evolving social, economic and power dynamics and patterns of inclusion or exclusion play in increasing the risks, vulnerabilities and marginalization of some groups of people within a community. It also means the responsibility to adapt community-engagement approaches to address different needs, capacities, vulnerabilities and preferences of different groups and take measures to deliver safe, inclusive, equal and equitable access to support and assistance.

While the main focus is improving accountability to the most vulnerable and worst affected people and communities directly reached by programmes and operations, whether facing situations of conflict, disasters or other circumstances placing them at risk or vulnerability, the commitments also imply the need to consider the views and perspectives of other groups of people not directly receiving assistance but who may be indirectly affected by Movement action and advocacy.

These commitments also imply taking measures to be more transparent and accountable within the Movement, from supporting and listening to staff and volunteers working at the branch and community level, to building effective and equitable relationships between components of the Movement, and the shared responsibility and commitment of senior management and leadership at all levels to ensure community engagement and accountability is core to our ways of working with the people and communities we aim to serve.

### Rationale
The Fundamental Principles oblige us to work to prevent and alleviate human suffering in situations of crisis, and to provide assistance without discrimination and according to need. This is the foundation of our **individual and collective accountability to the people and communities we seek to assist**.

The [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief](), a number of Movement policies, and external commitments such as the [Core Humanitarian Standard for quality and accountability](), reinforce this duty. They call on the Movement to **put vulnerable people and communities at the centre of humanitarian action and advocacy**. This means working in ways that respect local culture, preferences and diversity and promote people's **right to be informed about, participate in and share their input on** the decisions that affect them. It also means ensuring that programmes and operations generate results and outcomes that are **meaningful for them**.

**Community engagement** – the way we relate to the people we aim to serve – is critical to meeting our accountability commitments. Regularly engaging with people and communities and incorporating their feedback and input into the assessment, formulation, design, implementation, management and monitoring phases of programmes and operations is key to ensuring that our action is effective and accountable.

Systematically incorporating community engagement and accountability into policies, management and decision-making processes, and integrating this into programmes and operations can help the Movement to:

- listen to, understand and address communities' assistance **needs, priorities and preferences**, and identify issues around power dynamics, age, gender, disability, diversity and inclusion and how these influence vulnerability

- provide more fair and equitable access to **appropriate and relevant assistance** and services

- identify, mitigate and **manage risks**, including communities' **security and protection** concerns, and take measures to ensure staff and volunteers are aware of and comply with their legal and ethical responsibilities, particularly around prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

- **empower people and communities** to actively exercise their rights to engage with and participate in decision-making processes and support them to advocate with relevant authorities and aid providers, including the Movement, to address their needs and priorities,

- identify and help mobilize local **communities' capacities, knowledge and resources** to reduce their **vulnerability** and develop and implement strategies to strengthen and increase their **capacity and resilience** to prevent and mitigate future situations of vulnerability or crisis

- improve the **quality, effectiveness and sustainability** of Movement action and advocacy **from the perspectives of people and communities themselves**

- build and reinforce relationships of **trust, transparency and respect** between the Movement and people and communities.

> **These commitments and minimum actions will help consolidate and replicate good practices, reduce duplication of tools and approaches and ensure continuous learning and improvements in the way the Movement engages with and is accountable to the people and communities we aim to serve.**

# SECTION TWO: Commitments and minimum actions

This section sets out **seven commitments** and recommended minimum actions aimed at strengthening and improving community engagement and accountability across the Movement. These commitments provide a framework to ensure community engagement and accountability become a core way of working in the Movement, reflected in our institutional policies and procedures, fully integrated into programmes and operations, and guiding cooperation and collaboration within the Movement and with external actors.

**Commitment 1:**
*All Movement components commit to integrating community engagement and accountability in their strategies, policies and procedures.*

**By 2023 all Movement components will:**
- adopt a specific policy commitment to put people and communities' capacities, needs, priorities and preferences as the basis for Movement action and advocacy
- reference and integrate the Movement-wide Community Engagement and Accountability Commitments in other relevant policies, strategies and procedures, such as on disaster response, health care, gender, protection, communications and staff and volunteer management
- ensure all relevant strategic and operational plans include an explicit explanation of how community-engagement and accountability actions will be integrated, monitored and measured in programmes and operations that involve working with people and communities.

**Commitment 2:**
*All Movement components commit to regularly conducting an analysis of the contexts they work in to better understand and address the diversity of needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of the people and communities they seek to serve and assist.*

**By 2023 all Movement components will:**
- undertake situation and context analysis to identify existing knowledge, skills and capacities and the social, economic, political and/or cultural factors and power dynamics that increase risks and vulnerabilities for different groups of people in the community, using equitable, accessible participatory approaches to engage and involve all groups of people in communities whenever possible
- design programmes and operations based on this analysis, paying special attention to integrating gender, age, disability, protection, inclusion, conflict sensitivity and "do no harm" approaches into needs assessment and planning activities
- regularly monitor and update the situational and context analysis, and collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other diversity parameters, assess protection risks and use this data to inform decision-making processes, while taking measures to protect and safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of personal data.

**Commitment 3:**
*All Movement components commit to facilitating greater participation of local people and communities, including National Society volunteers, and helping them to apply their knowledge, skills and capacities to find appropriate and effective solutions to their problems.*

**By 2023 all Movement components will:**
- take measures to regularly listen to people and communities and consult with them to identify their priorities and preferences on the design and implementation of programmes and operations that affect them, and how they want to participate in decision-making
- integrate mechanisms to facilitate safe, accessible and equitable engagement with and participation of people and communities in all phases of programmes and operations in line with their preferences, and ensure that their inputs and contributions are systematically integrated and considered in decision-making processes
- prioritize the use of local knowledge, skills, capacities and resources when implementing programmes and operations, including adopting measures to allocate funding and resources and transfer decision-making responsibilities to local communities (including National Society volunteers and branch structures) on decisions that affect them whenever possible and appropriate.

**Commitment 4:**
*All Movement components commit to systematically listening to, responding to and acting on feedback from the people and communities we aim to serve.*

**By 2023 all Movement components will:**
- take measures to regularly listen to and consult people and communities on their trusted and preferred channels and means of providing feedback and complaints about issues that concern them as a regular part of programme and operation activities
- integrate context-appropriate, safe, accessible and equitable measures to regularly collect, document, analyse, respond and act on people and communities' feedback, including mechanisms to assess how satisfied they are with the timeliness, quality and effectiveness of assistance, their participation and ability to influence decision-making and their interactions with us, and use this information as the basis to adapt and continuously improve the quality, effectiveness and accountability of Movement action and advocacy
- ensure institutional responsibilities and channels are clearly established to address feedback, track any actions taken or not taken as result and close the feedback loop by transparently reporting back to people and communities and validating how their feedback has been considered, with specific procedures in place to deal with issues of sexual exploitation and abuse or other sensitive issues.

**Commitment 5:**
*All Movement components commit to greater transparency in our communications and relationships with people and communities we aim to serve.*

**By 2023 all Movement components will:**
- regularly consult with people and communities on their trusted and preferred information sources and communication channels and identify their priority information needs, paying particular attention to diversity issues, and, based on this, design, test and make sure that information-sharing, behaviour change, advocacy and two-way communication activities are relevant, inclusive, accessible, and language and culturally appropriate
- when planning and implementing programmes or operations, take measures to regularly engage with people and communities to inform them of and seek approval for the aims and objectives; planned activities; budget allocations; selection criteria for receiving assistance; and mechanisms to obtain more information, submit feedback and complaints or participate in programmes and operations
- make consistent efforts to build ongoing relationships of mutual trust and respect with vulnerable people and communities and other stakeholders, transparently sharing information about the Movement's principles and Code of Conduct, values and ways of working, and what they can expect from us in terms of our actions, behaviours and responsibilities, with particular attention paid to reaching out to the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in communities.

**Commitment 6:**
*All Movement components commit to strengthening knowledge, skills and competencies in community engagement and accountability at all levels, and systematically incorporating this learning into our work.*

**By 2023 all Movement components will:**
- allocate adequate human, financial and technical resources to systematically integrate community engagement and accountability into institutional strategies, policies, programmes and operations
- designate a focal point in their senior governance and management team to monitor and oversee community-engagement and accountability initiatives throughout the organization and in programmes and operations
- ensure that performance appraisals of relevant staff members include assessment criteria for their community-engagement and accountability responsibilities and set out realistic and achievable performance benchmarks and indicators and appropriate support for them to achieve this
- share widely existing community-engagement and accountability guidelines and tools, and prioritize the provision of ongoing technical assistance, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing measures for Movement leadership and governance, management, staff and volunteers, particularly at the branch and community level, as part of overall organizational, human resources and cooperation strategies

- encourage and facilitate knowledge-sharing, peer-to-peer learning and a community of practice within and between National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC, and with external partners, drawing on good practices and learning to build greater awareness and understanding of how community engagement and accountability contributes to better outcomes for vulnerable and affected people and communities.

**Commitment 7:**
*All Movement components commit to coordinating their approaches to community engagement and accountability when working in the same context, including with relevant external partners, in order to increase coherence and consistency, avoid duplication and improve effectiveness and efficiency.*

**By 2023 all Movement components will:**
- continue to consolidate work on the Community Engagement and Accountability toolkit, and apply common approaches to community engagement and accountability in all programmes and operations, in line with affected people and communities' priorities and preferences, and the host National Society's own strategy and vision
- establish and use common platforms and mechanisms for community engagement and accountability, such as joint feedback mechanisms or methods to foster people and communities' engagement with and participation in decision-making processes, and participate in relevant coordination mechanisms and platforms with external actors whenever appropriate and possible
- transparently share relevant information, input, feedback, data and analyses from people and communities with other Movement components and relevant external partners in order to identify and address their issues and concerns, with due regard for confidentiality, security and protection issues.

# SECTION THREE: Expected outcomes, monitoring and reporting

Systematically adopting and implementing these commitments and actions will strengthen our individual and collective accountability to the people and communities we aim to serve and assist. The commitments and actions will help to ensure the Movement is able to more consistently deliver better quality, more effective, meaningful results in line with people's and communities' needs, priorities and preferences, while preserving and protecting their rights and dignity.

However, the success of this resolution depends on how well each component of the Movement adopts and applies these commitments within their own institutional policies, procedures, programmes and operations. Accordingly, the resolution proposes a **draft performance-measurement framework** with three proposed outcomes and indicators to help the Movement to benchmark and assess how well community-engagement and accountability commitments and actions have been integrated into our ways of working and how this in turn contributes to improving the quality, effectiveness and accountability of Movement action and advocacy.

The intention is to use this draft framework as the basis for further discussion between the ICRC, IFRC and National Societies following the Council of Delegates, with a view to developing a harmonized approach to assessing, monitoring and reporting progress at the individual and collective level towards making community engagement and accountability core to all we do as a Movement.

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**Proposed community-engagement and accountability outcomes**

**Outcome 1**
▪ Movement components systematically apply community-engagement and accountability commitments as the foundation to their ways of working with the people and communities they aim to serve and assist.

*Example of an indicator:*
▪ Degree to which the Movement-wide commitments and minimum actions are integrated into National Society, IFRC and ICRC strategies, policies, procedures, programmes and operations.

**Outcome 2**
▪ People and communities reached by Movement action and advocacy are satisfied with their opportunities to influence decisions that affect them.

*Examples of indicators:*
▪ Degree to which Movement components adopt measures for people and communities to systematically participate in designing, implementing, managing, monitoring and evaluating activities.
▪ Degree to which people and communities are satisfied with their ability to influence decision-making in all phases of the programme/operation.

**Outcome 3**
▪ People and communities reached by Movement action and advocacy are satisfied with the quality, relevance and effectiveness of our activities.

*Examples of indicators:*
▪ Degree to which Movement activities have been designed/changed/adapted, based on feedback and input from people and communities.
▪ Degree to which people and communities are satisfied that the outcomes of Movement activities address their priority needs and preferences.

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**Outcome 1** is based on the assumption that adopting and consistently using a community-engagement and accountability focus will contribute to greater proximity, reach, acceptance and impact of Movement action and advocacy. This is consistent with current experiences within the Movement and more broadly in the humanitarian and development sectors. The indicator helps assess whether Movement components have the required institutional commitments, systems and processes in place to systematically integrate community-engagement and accountability measures into their work, and whether those measures are delivering on people's and communities' expectations and desired outcomes.

**Outcomes 2** and **3**, along with the indicators, aim to generate data and evidence **from the perspective of affected people themselves** on how Movement actions are meeting their priority needs and whether they feel they have influence over decisions that affect them. This includes indicators on people's and communities' perceptions of and satisfaction with their ability to shape and influence decisions on the design and implementation of programmes/operations and their satisfaction with the quality, effectiveness and outcomes of the assistance provided. This builds on the growing experience in the Movement of tracking and monitoring people's perceptions and satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of aid efforts as part of the decision-making process.

It is important to note that these proposed outcomes and indicators, along with monitoring and reporting tools, are **still under development** and need to be refined and adapted to Movement components' current planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes. Nevertheless, some harmonization is recommended to collectively track and benchmark how well community engagement and accountability is implemented across the Movement.

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The IFRC and ICRC will continue to consult and collaborate with National Societies to refine and improve the proposed outcomes and indicators, and to the extent possible, ensure consistency and alignment with similar international commitments to community engagement and accountability, such as the Core Humanitarian Standard for quality and accountability.

# Benchmarking community engagement and accountability in programmes and operations

As part of the ongoing consultation process on the commitments and minimum actions, many Movement components recommended developing benchmarks to help integrate community engagement into the design and implementation of programmes and operations. In part, this recognizes the varying degree of capacity, resources and experiences within the Movement on community-engagement and accountability issues, and the need to set out clearer targets for continuous improvement over time.

The following benchmarks offer examples of how the Movement-wide community-engagement and accountability commitments and actions can be applied throughout the lifecycle of a programme or operation. The benchmarks allow National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC to **progressively adopt and improve integration of community engagement and accountability in their work over time**. These benchmarks should be considered alongside work at the institutional level to fully integrate the commitments and minimum actions into organizational ways of working, and to provide adequate support and resources to teams implementing activities with people and communities.

As with the proposed community-engagement and accountability outcomes and indicators, this is still in the development phase, and more consultation is needed to refine and formalize them.

The proposed benchmarks set out three levels of performance:

o **Level 1**: This level is intended for teams with very limited experience in community engagement. It sets out some of the very basic steps that should be included in the different phases of a programme or operation. This includes meeting basic requirements, such as **informing people and communities** of key information and decisions about the programme and of the mechanisms and channels for submitting feedback and complaints.
o **Level 2**: This level is intended to help teams with some experience in community engagement and accountability to scale up and improve the degree to which this is integrated into programmes and operations. It expands on and goes beyond the very basic requirements by incorporating additional measures, such as mechanisms to **collect and respond to feedback and complaints,** and to **consult** and **seek approval** for plans and activities with people and communities.
o **Level 3**: This level helps benchmark what full integration of community engagement and accountability could look like in a programme/operation. It meets the aims of progressively increasing the opportunities for people and communities to **participate directly** and take the lead in programme/operation decision-making, to ensure that their **views, perspectives and feedback are at the centre** of the design, implementation, monitoring and management processes, and to adapt activities in order to better address their need, priorities and preferences.

The range of levels reflects a recognition that there are many contexts where implementing community-engagement and accountability measures is difficult (for example, because of a lack of access and security or limited capacity and experience in community engagement and accountability). This also acknowledges the constraints and dilemmas facing programme and operation teams. Achieving intermediate or advanced levels may not be possible in some situations, though if the context changes and conditions permit, programmes and operations can and should set more ambitious community-engagement and accountability targets and pursue continuous improvement over time.

The benchmarks can also provide decision-makers with the information needed to support internal **quality assurance processes** focusing on how well community-engagement and accountability measures are integrated into all phases of programmes/operations. This is useful for both internal management decision-making and learning and external reporting to donors and other stakeholders.

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### Institutional Benchmarks

**These benchmarks help set out some of the requirements to ensure community-engagement and accountability measures are systematically and sustainably supported within the organization.**

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### Facilitating integration of community engagement in organizational processes

| Strategies and Polices | Management | Organizational Development |
|---|---|---|
| **L.1. A specific policy commitment to put people and communities' capacities, needs, priorities and preferences as the basis for Movement action and advocacy is in place** | L.1. Information and decision-making channels for community engagement and accountability, including responsibilities for addressing feedback, complaints and protection against sexual abuse and exploitation, are clearly established and communicated to all staff and volunteers and partners | L.1. Adequate human and financial resources are allocated to support integration of community-engagement and accountability measures into all areas of work |
| **L.2. Community engagement and accountability is referenced and integrated in other relevant policies, strategies and procedures, such as on disaster response, health care, gender, protection, communications and staff and volunteer management** | L.2. A designated focal point in the senior governance and management team is responsible for monitoring and overseeing community-engagement and accountability initiatives throughout the organization | L.2. Technical assistance, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing measures are in place to increase awareness and understanding of community engagement and accountability amongst leadership and governance, management, staff and volunteers, particularly at the branch and community level |
| **L.3. Community engagement policies and commitments have been developed with the participation and input of governance, management, staff and volunteers, and whenever possible, vulnerable and marginalized people and communities** | L.3. Performance appraisals of relevant staff members include assessment criteria for their community-engagement and accountability responsibilities and set out realistic and achievable performance benchmarks and indicators and appropriate support for them to achieve them | L.3. Staff and volunteers are encouraged and supported to participate in and contribute to knowledge-sharing, peer-to-peer learning and a community of practice |

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**Programme and Operations Benchmarks**

These benchmarks help set out some of the requirements to ensure community-engagement and accountability measures are systematically integrated into programmes and operations.

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**Understanding the contexts and communities we aim to serve and assist**

| Assess, Formulate and Plan | Implement and Monitor | Evaluate and Learn |
|---|---|---|
| **L.1.a. Programme/operation teams conduct a situation and context analysis to identify existing knowledge, skills and capacities and the social, economic, political and/or cultural factors and power dynamics that increase risks and vulnerabilities for different groups of people in the community** | L.1.a. Programme/operation teams regularly update the situation and context analysis to identify any significant changes in the context and adapt activities accordingly | L.1. Programme/operation teams document and disseminate lessons learned and good practices for conducting a comprehensive situation and context analysis to inform programming within the organization |
| **L.1.b. Activities are designed based on this analysis and a needs assessment, with attention to issues of protection, gender, age, disability and inclusion** | L.1.b Programme/operation teams regularly collect and analyse sex, age, disability and other diversity parameters to better understand and adapt activities to the context, with adequate measures to protect and safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of personal data | L.2. Programme/operation teams **consult on** and **use** the lessons learned and good practices for conducting a comprehensive situation and context analysis to inform programming |
| **L.2. Programme/operation teams consult with and seek approval from people and communities regarding the context analysis and needs assessment, and the implications for programmes** | L.2. Programme/operation teams **consult** with and **seek approval** from people and communities on changes in the context and the implications for programmes and operations | L.3. People and communities **directly participate** in efforts to identify and document lessons learned and good practices for conducting a comprehensive situation and context analysis to inform programming |
| **L.3. People and communities directly participate in the situation and context analysis, using equitable, accessible participatory approaches to engage and involve all groups of people in communities whenever possible, and their own knowledge and lived experiences are reflected in the analysis** | L.3. People and communities **directly participate** in updating the situation and context analysis, and are given opportunities to use their own knowledge and lived experiences to propose changes to programmes and operations accordingly | |

| **Facilitating participation and use of local knowledge, skills and capacities** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Assess, Formulate and Plan** | **Implement and Monitor** | **Evaluate and Learn** |
| L.1. **Programme/operation teams include an explanation of how people and communities will be engaged with and participate in decision-making processes in programme proposals and plans** | L.1. Programme/operation teams establish mechanisms to facilitate safe, accessible and equitable engagement with and participation of people and communities in all phases of programmes and operations in line with their preferences | L.1. Programme/operation teams document and disseminate lessons learned and good practices around participation, and use of local knowledge and capacities are documented and disseminated within the organization |
| L.2. **Programme/operation teams consult with and seek approval from people and communities on their priority needs and preferences for delivery of assistance, including preferences for participation in activities** | L.2. Programme/operation teams **consult** with and **seek approval** from people and communities on the design, functioning and effectiveness of participation mechanisms and adapt if necessary, to ensure equitable access and inclusive participation of all groups in the community | L.2. Programme/operation teams **consult** with and **seek approval** from people and communities on the lessons learned and good practices for effective participatory approaches and the use of local knowledge and capacities |
| L.3. **People and communities directly participate and jointly define objectives and activities and mechanisms for participation in decision-making** | L.3. People and communities **directly participate** in designing, managing and monitoring activities, including funding allocations and management of financial and other resources when appropriate | L.3. People and communities **directly participate** in identifying lessons learned and good practices for effective participatory approaches and the use of local knowledge and capacities in programmes and operations |

| Facilitating listening and responding to feedback | | |
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| **Assess, Formulate and Plan** | **Implement and Monitor** | **Evaluate and Learn** |
| L.1. **Programme/operation teams include an explanation of how people and communities will be able to provide feedback and complaints, and how these will be addressed by management in programme proposals and plans** | L.1. Programme/operation teams ensure responsibilities and channels are clearly established and in place to analyse, respond and act on feedback as part of management decision-making processes | L.1. Programme/operation teams include people and communities' feedback, including their satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of activities, as a core part of monitoring, reporting and evaluation activities |
| L.2. **Programme/operation teams consult with and seek approval from people and communities on their preferences for providing feedback, complaints and inputs around programme activities** | L.2. Programme/operation teams **consult** with and **seek approval** from people and communities on the analysis of feedback data, take appropriate actions to respond to the feedback, and close the feedback loop to report back on the actions taken or not take as a result of their feedback | L.2. Programme/operation teams **consult** with and **seek approval** from people and communities on the results of feedback, monitoring and evaluation processes |
| L.3. **People and communities directly participate and jointly define mechanisms for collecting, analysing and using feedback, complaints and other measures to track and monitor their satisfaction with assistance** | L.3. People and communities **directly participate** in the analysis and interpretation of feedback data and identify the most appropriate actions to take as a result, including tracking and monitoring if issues have been successfully addressed | L.3. People and communities **directly participate** in monitoring and evaluation processes, defining criteria for quality and effectiveness based on their own experiences, with the findings shared and disseminated with them and other relevant local actors, within the organization and externally |

| Promoting greater transparency and building relationships of mutual trust and respect | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Assess Formulate and Plan** | **Implement and Monitor** | **Evaluate and Learn** |
| L.1. **Programme/operation teams identify people and communities' trusted and preferred information sources, communications channels and priority information needs** | L.1. Programme/operation teams regularly **inform** people and communities about Movement principles, values, project objectives, plans and activities, how to provide feedback and participate in decision-making processes and other relevant information | L.1. Programme/operation teams **inform** people and communities in a timely manner about changes or modifications to plans and activities, including information on project end-dates and transition plans |
| L.2. **Programme/operation teams consult with and seek approval from people and communities on the most appropriate means to facilitate accessible, relevant, appropriate, transparent and inclusive communications for them, with particular emphasis on age, gender, disability and diversity issues** | L.2. Programme/operation teams **consult** with and **seek approval** from people and communities on planned information-sharing, behaviour change, advocacy and two-way communications activities | L.2. Programme/operation teams **consult** with and **seek approval** from people and communities on monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of activities and their communications, engagement and interactions with the Movement |
| L.3. **People and communities directly participate in defining information-sharing and communications channels and mechanisms** | L.3. People and communities **directly participate** in the design and implementation of information-sharing, behaviour change, advocacy and two-way communications activities | L.3. People and communities **directly participate** in monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of the communications, engagement and interactions with the Movement |