



CLOSING THE GAP:
A STRATEGY TO STRENGTHEN
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY
IN AFRICA
2020–2023



CLOSING THE GAP:

A strategy to strengthen community engagement and accountability in Africa

A joint product of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in Africa and CDA Collaborative Learning

Written by Sarah Cechvala, CDA Managing Director, Sabina Robillard, CDA Associate, and Sharon Reader, Senior Advisor Community Engagement and Accountability IFRC Africa Region

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“Trust is the one commodity that humanitarians have always relied on and perhaps taken for granted. To rebuild trust, we have to listen, and we have to act. People need to be able to participate in the decisions that affect them.”

Francesco Rocca,
President of the International Federation of
Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

FORWARD

There is a troubling gap between the way we, as humanitarian actors, see ourselves and the way we are perceived by the people we set out to help. We must close this divide if we are to rise to the challenge of humanitarian needs in the 21st century.

“If it’s about our community, we should be engaged. There needs to be an understanding between us. But we don’t see change so you’re not listening.”

This stark appraisal of aid workers was given by one woman in Africa in the aftermath of a major disaster.

For humanitarians, such observations should be deeply concerning—but the implications are worse than that. Feedback like this speaks to a breakdown of the one commodity humanitarians have always relied on and taken for granted: trust.

Trust is needed to ask personal questions to people when they are at their most vulnerable. Trust to let strangers treat your desperately ill loved ones. Trust that the life-saving information we share is real and should be acted on. Trust to welcome us into their communities.

When people don’t trust us, our ability to help them—our whole reason for existing—becomes harder and in some cases impossible. And, for people affected by crises, the result can be deadly if it means they forgo lifesaving services.

To build trust, we have to listen and we have to act on what people tell us. We need to do better. We need to make sure that people are able to participate in the decisions that affect them. We need to realize that engaging communities is not an extra burden, nor a box-ticking exercise, but an investment in a relationship that will make projects easier, better, more sustainable, and safer.

From the World Humanitarian Summit to the Grand Bargain, and for many years before, there has been a strong call for better accountability to affected people to improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. Too often, in the rush to support as many people as quickly as we can, we fail to involve people in what we do, or to understand their perceptions and the complexity of their realities. In contrast, when we do listen and adapt to what people tell us, the impact on our work is significant. This document is full of real life examples from all over Africa that demonstrate this fact.

At the global Statutory Meetings of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 2019, we took a huge step forward by adopting a new and ambitious set of commitments that place community engagement and accountability at the centre of all that we do. This strategy provides clear and practical recommendations to make these commitments a reality in Africa and close the gaps in how we work with communities, and among ourselves. This strategy, rooted in the practical experiences of Movement members working in

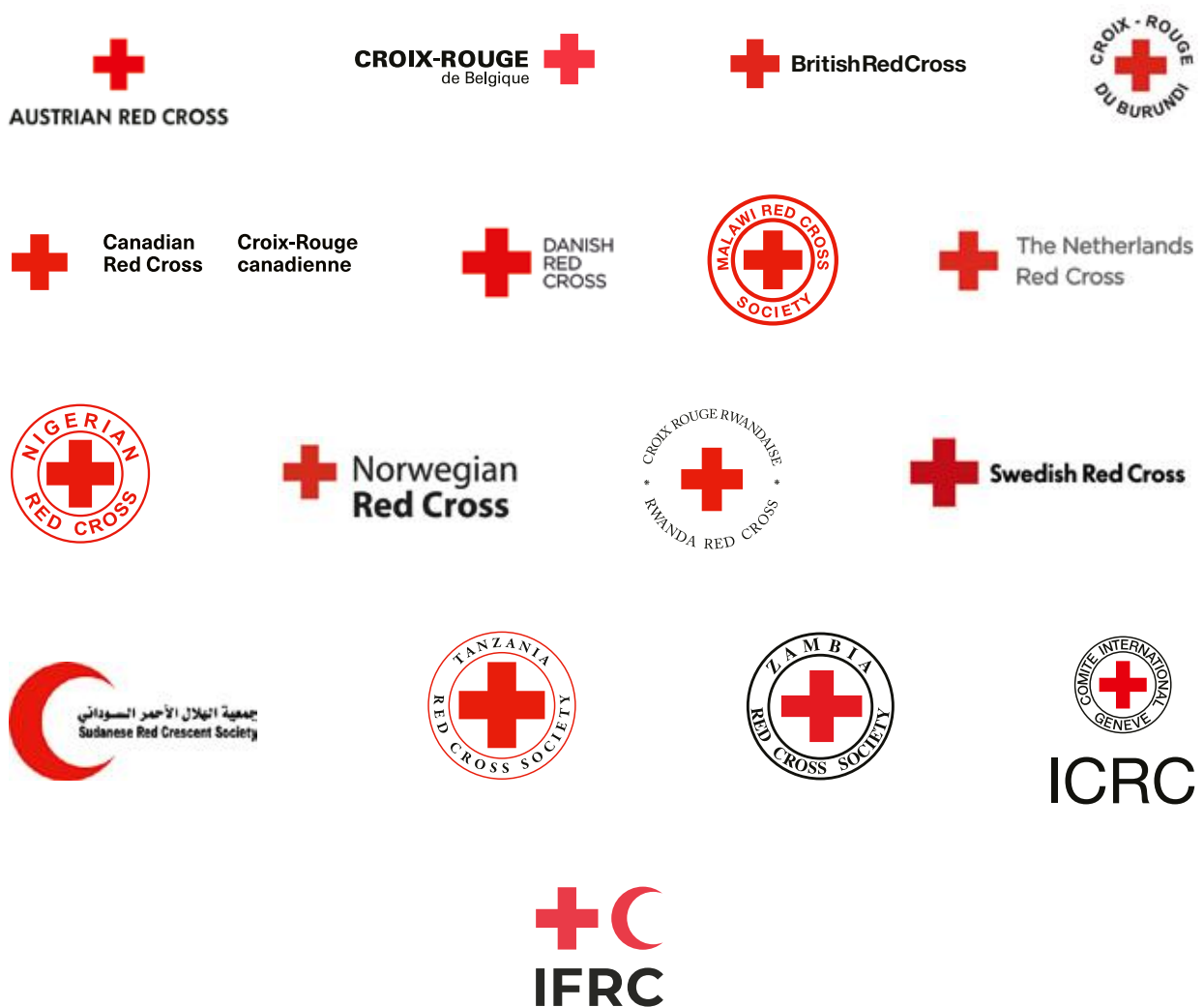
Africa, will help us institutionalize community engagement and accountability into our organizations' DNA. It will help us to put people's voices at the heart of our operations and programmes and start shifting the power imbalances that continue to exist. This will ensure we not only gain the trust of the people we serve but that our work is relevant and impactful.

We will need time, funding, and space to test and adapt the way we work. We will need to work together.

As we attempt to move from rhetoric to action, we need to remember the power of individuals. Everyone in our movement, from volunteers to staff, will need to play their part in how we listen and act on what people tell us. Change is also in the hands of senior leadership, including among donor countries. We must model, value, engage and properly resource our efforts to strengthen community accountability. We all need to be willing to push boundaries in order to fundamentally shift the way we work and rebuild a precious humanitarian commodity: trust.

The Red Cross Red Crescent is not entitled to trust. We have to **earn** it every day by listening to those in need and acting on what they tell us. This strategy will help us achieve that.

The Community Engagement and Accountability Africa Strategy Working Group



LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANS	Africa National Society
AtC	Accountability to Communities
BenComs	Beneficiary Communications
CDA	CDA Collaborative Learning (strategy consultant)
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability
DDP	Deputy Director of Programs
DSG	Deputy Security General
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FP	Focal Point(s)
HR	Human Resources
HQ	Headquarters
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning Unit
NS	National Society
PGI	Protection, Gender, and Inclusion
PMER	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Unit
PNS	partner National Society
SG	Security General
SMT	Senior Management Team

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In particular, the team would like to thank the strategy's Working Group (available in Annex A) for their continuous commitment, oversight, and strategic vision, all of which was essential for the development of this strategy. The team also extends its deepest gratitude to the four National Societies—Burundi Red Cross, Malawi Red Cross, Nigeria Red Cross and Sudan Red Crescent—for their generosity, hospitality, and openness in sharing their experiences by hosting field visits and organizing meetings and workshops with their senior leadership, staff, volunteers, and the communities with which they work. Specifically, a sincere thank you to the IFRC and National Society Community Engagement and Accountability focal points who facilitated the field missions and contributed to the research—Patrick Phiri, Philemon Ndayizigiye, Nagat Malik, Nwakpa O. Nwakpa, and Yvonne Kabagire. The team would also like to thank all the volunteers, community members, and staff who engaged in the field research and review workshops for this strategy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Closing the gap: What will it take to ensure stronger community engagement and accountability in Africa?

Despite disasters and emergencies increasing in intensity and number worldwide, research has shown communities are not feeling adequately involved in decisions that ultimately impact their lives.¹

Growing evidence has shown that community engagement and greater participation can enable the building of trust and ownership and improve the quality and sustainability of programming.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) is firmly rooted in communities and has made commitments to be accountable to those it serves. *IFRC's Strategy 2030* proposes an urgent shift of leadership and decision making to the most local level—placing communities at the very centre of change. These commitments have renewed importance in the context of a broader, global shift among donors, policymakers, and practitioners towards increased participation of affected populations in the humanitarian sector.

Even with these commitments and recognition for community engagement and accountability, there is still a gap between rhetoric and reality. Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes and operations do not always engage communities as well as they could. Recognizing that it is often challenging to put theory into practice, particularly in humanitarian crises, the Movement has been increasing its efforts to meet its commitments to improve how it engages with and is accountable to people.

What is community engagement and accountability?



Community engagement 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.



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.²

¹ IPSOS. 2016. "Community Consultations on Humanitarian Aid."

² For more see: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/what-we-do/community-engagement/>.

But why are we still not engaging communities the way we should? What are the barriers that are preventing us from implementing strong community engagement and accountability approaches and how do we tackle them? What concrete steps need to be taken to ensure stronger community engagement?

This strategy helps to answer these questions, seeking to address remaining gaps that will ultimately strengthen accountability to communities across Africa. It was developed jointly between the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and CDA Collaborative Learning (CDA), to guide efforts to institutionalize community engagement across the Africa Region. Rooted in practical evidence, this strategy outlines the enabling factors that will help to strengthen community engagement and accountability in Africa, as well as the barriers that may be preventing more meaningful progress. It offers Movement partners working in Africa strategic actions and concrete steps to address the key barriers to stronger community engagement.

How was the strategy developed?

Experiences and perspectives were gathered from across the Movement through a mixed-methods approach to understand the institutional structures and systems of the Movement. In-person visits to four countries—Sudan, Malawi, Burundi, and Nigeria—and a project monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER)/community engagement and accountability network meeting, which gathered information from staff of African National Societies, partner National Societies, IFRC, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Red Cross volunteers and communities. A workshop was also held with senior IFRC leadership in Nairobi. In-country information was collected through key informant interviews, force field analysis workshops³, and focus group discussions. Researchers also conducted remote key informant interviews and an online survey, and reviewed background documents, reports, evaluations, and other relevant literature. In total, 443 people provided their input into the development of this strategy.

Discussions highlighted the existing approaches for strengthening community engagement and accountability, what has been done in the past, and why it has or has not worked in order to avoid repeating previous mistakes and build upon best practices. An in-depth analysis of all data exposed the structural changes required to better institutionalize community engagement and accountability practices. An institutional systems map was developed and used as the basis for recommended strategic changes and actions for the Movement to strengthen its accountability to people in Africa.

What progress has the Movement made in institutionalizing accountability approaches?

Community engagement and accountability is not new for the Movement. Although it may not have always been called this, Movement members have years of experience engaging with the communities they serve. These collective experiences offer insight as to the current successes and challenges of integrating community engagement approaches within programmes and operations.

Successes and factors that are supporting effective accountability to communities:

- Change happens when there is **support at every level of the organization**, particularly when it comes from leaders and partners.
- Making the case for accountability and stronger community engagement is more successful when it is **framed around issues that are relevant** to the National Society and its decision-makers.

³ Force field analysis workshops were used to map institutional systems within the National Society and broader Movement. Workshops convened staff of a similar level, and asked participants to identify the most important factors that work in favor of and that work against efforts to institutionalize community engagement and accountability within their own organization at that point in time.

- Success comes when National Societies **build on what is already working well** in terms of engaging communities.
- **Aligning efforts** to institutionalize community engagement and accountability with wider organizational strategy development can amplify efforts and build wider buy-in.
- Having **community engagement and accountability focal points**⁴ helps build momentum, provides direction and technical support, and sets high standards.
- IFRC **technical support** to National Societies strengthens community engagement capacity and creates champions.
- Supporting **volunteers to see their role** as fundamental to strong community engagement leads to better quality programming, enhanced trust, and better access to communities.
- Harnessing the **enthusiasm and interest of community members to participate more** creates important opportunities for stronger accountability and increased community ownership.

Barriers and challenges to institutionalizing stronger approaches to engage communities:

- **Community engagement and accountability is not well understood**, including why it matters, what is its role in programmes and operations, and how to implement it in practice.
- **Lack of evidence** of the impact of community engagement and accountability **is leading to limited buy-in and prioritization** by staff and leadership.
- **Lack of policy or strategy** to guide the implementation of community engagement and accountability, including poor integration into existing policies, guidelines, and strategies.
- **Inadequate and inconsistent resourcing** for core activities to build the capacity of staff and volunteers in community engagement and accountability, which leads to ad hoc implementation.
- **Weak coordination** among Movement members undermines efforts to engage with and be accountable to communities in a consistent manner across African National Societies.
- **Inflexible institutional structures and planning processes** can inhibit meaningful engagement with people.
- Strong accountability mechanisms can be viewed as a **challenge to cultural and community norms**, and this can affect the level of acceptance within communities and organizations.

These kinds of challenges can create self-reinforcing negative cycles that prevent meaningful engagement with communities in programmes and operations. The full strategy offers a systems map that illustrates how the different factors are caused by and affect one another. This means that change cannot come from addressing just one challenge but needs to come from addressing the system as a whole.

⁴ CEA focal points are staff who are technical experts on community engagement and accountability, and who are responsible for integrating the approach across their organization.

What strategic change and action is required to change the way the Movement works?

These barriers can be overcome through a holistic approach that involves everyone within the Movement working together to support key strategic changes. Just as the barriers are highly connected and mutually reinforcing, so are the strategic changes, meaning that progress in one area can facilitate progress in another. Five high-level strategic changes, and supporting actions that would contribute to stronger accountability to communities in Africa include: ⁵

CHANGE #1: Strengthen understanding of and capacity to implement community engagement and accountability across the Movement.

- **Action:** Build understanding of community engagement and accountability, and its importance for enhanced programme quality, trust and sustainability amongst senior leadership with IFRC, National Societies, and partner National Societies.
- **Action:** Enhance understanding of community engagement and accountability and how to practically implement it within programmes and operations, amongst technical teams across the Movement.
- **Action:** Increase technical support and mentoring to African National Societies to institutionalize community engagement and accountability into their ways of working and integrate within their programmes and operations.
- **Action:** Facilitate peer learning and exchange on community engagement and accountability approaches.
- **Action:** Improve coordination and communication among Movement members who are supporting community engagement and accountability efforts.

CHANGE #2: Integrate community engagement and accountability into Red Cross Red Crescent ways of working so it becomes a standard approach for all staff and volunteers.

- **Action:** Clearly articulate community engagement and accountability commitments in all strategic and annual plans.
- **Action:** Integrate community engagement approaches into existing and future policies, guidelines, and operating procedures.
- **Action:** Consider the location for community engagement focal points and ensure that they are best placed to support programmes and operations.

⁵ Listed in no specific order.

CHANGE #3: Increase documentation of successes and lessons learned to enhance Movement-wide understanding and ownership of community engagement and accountability.

- **Action:** More systematically collect and analyse evidence about the impact of stronger engagement with communities on programme and operational quality.
- **Action:** More systematically share evidence about the impact of community engagement and accountability on programme and operational quality with decision-makers at all levels.

CHANGE #4: Increase organizational support and resourcing to institutionalize and implement community engagement and accountability.

- **Action:** Appoint qualified community engagement focal points at all levels to support quality accountability to communities.
- **Action:** Budget for community engagement and accountability adequately and appropriately at all levels of the Movement.
- **Action:** Offer African National Societies more consistent financial support to institutionalize community engagement and accountability into their ways of working (and not just specific programmes).

CHANGE #5: Promote a culture of accountability internally among Movement members and externally with communities and partners.

- **Action:** Integrate responsibilities to work in partnership with communities into hiring, induction, and performance appraisals for all staff.
- **Action:** Strengthen and demonstrate what good accountability looks like internally among all staff and volunteers.
- **Action:** Raise awareness in communities about their right to provide feedback and the organization's responsibility to be accountable.
- **Action:** Adapt internal systems to support stronger community participation in planning.
- **Action:** Promote organizational commitments to be accountable to communities.

Everyone—across programmes and operations, at all levels in every organization—has a role to play in ensuring the interests of communities are at the centre of decision-making. However, depending on the position and organization, there are specific roles and responsibilities to ensure that the strategic changes are implemented (further details in [Section 6](#)).

The one question we must all ask ourselves, is: how can I be more engaged with, and more accountable to, the communities I am trying to help? Together, step by step, we can start to answer this question.



“We are glad Zambia Red Cross staff have come back to provide feedback on project implementation, most of the time, no one comes back to us after an evaluation or assessment of any kind. Decisions are made from their offices without engaging us community members or beneficiaries on what we really want. We are the ones who can tell our story and what we really want or what is on the ground because we are the ones who live in this community. We hope this practice will continue and that our suggestions will be put into consideration. We really say thank you to the Red Cross for this initiative”

Community Member in Zambia

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing demand among policymakers and practitioners for greater accountability and increased commitment towards people's participation in the humanitarian sector. Evidence and experience have shown that when a humanitarian organization truly engages with communities, the outcomes can be more equitable, more sustainable, and of higher quality.⁶ This recognition has been reflected in global commitments such as the [Grand Bargain made during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016](#).

Engaging communities is not a new way of working for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. With thousands of local branches and more than 1.6 million volunteers across Africa, the Movement is firmly rooted in communities. The Movement has made commitments to being accountable to communities in the [Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance](#) and the [International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's Code of Conduct in Disaster Relief](#). [IFRC Strategy 2030](#) recognized that building trust and accountability with communities is one of the seven key transformations needed to rise to existing and emerging global challenges such as climate change, increased natural disasters, migration and epidemics.

What challenges does the Movement face?

Despite an increased emphasis on engaging communities, putting these commitments into action remains a challenge. This gap between rhetoric and reality means that while participatory approaches have long been a part of many programmes and operations, the Movement does not always systematically engage communities as well as it should. The [IFRC Africa strategy \(2017–2020\)](#)⁷ outlined a lack of systematic and meaningful engagement with communities as a key challenge for African NS in addressing local vulnerabilities. A 2016 internal review of community engagement and accountability across the Movement found several weaknesses in how the Red Cross Red Crescent engages people⁸. Recommendations from this study called for National Societies to strengthen the use of two-way communications (particularly feedback and complaint mechanisms), enhance internal and external mechanisms for transparency and community participation and better integrate approaches to engage communities into daily processes. The study concluded that if the Movement wants to be truly accountable to people, it needs to be more consistent and comprehensive in how community engagement approaches are integrated into programmes and operations.

These findings are supported by a baseline survey of Movement partners in late 2017, which sought to understand current community engagement practices, challenges and needs in Africa⁹. This survey highlighted that the collection and use of community feedback to improve programme and operations is a

⁶ For example, see: Anderson, Mary B., Dayna Brown, and Isabella Jean. 2012. *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects; Anderson, Mary B. 1999. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers; Cechvala, Sarah. 2017. *"Mainstreaming of Accountability to Communities: An Operational Case Study"*. Nairobi: Kenya Red Cross Society; CDA Collaborative Learning and IFRC; Cechvala, Sarah, and Isabella Jean. 2016. *"Accountability is a mirror that shows not only your face, but also your back."* CDA-World Vision Ethiopia Feedback Loops Case Study. Cambridge, MA; Chambers, Robert and Ben Ramalingam. 2016. *"Adapting Aid: Lessons from Six Case Studies."* Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK; Jean, Isabella, with Francesca Bonino. 2014. *"We are Here": IFRC's Experiences with Communication and Feedback with Affected Populations in Haiti*. London: ODI/ALNP.

⁷ See: IFRC. 2018. *"IFRC in Africa: 2017–2020"*. <https://www.ifrc.org/who-we-are/vision-and-mission/strategy-2020/>.

⁸ IFRC. 2016. *"Strengthening Community Engagement and Accountability for effective local leadership."*

⁹ IFRC. 2018. *"Mapping community engagement and accountability in African National Societies."*


key weakness for National Societies, with 63 per cent of respondents rating themselves as poor or in need of improvement in this area. Another key challenge identified in the survey related to limited integration of community engagement practices within internal policies and procedures, which directly impacts the ability of National Societies and the IFRC to apply the approach consistently and to a high standard.

Where is the Movement now?

Encouragingly, there is widespread recognition across the Movement that strengthening accountability is critical to ensuring a sustained and relevant presence in communities. [Strategy 2030](#) places a strong emphasis on building trust with communities by putting them in the driving seat when it comes to designing, implementing, and evaluating programs. The strategy also calls for feedback mechanisms tailored to the needs of different groups, and evidence that this feedback is incorporated into our work. In the Africa baseline survey,¹⁰ 88 per cent of the respondents confirmed they would like support to improve how they engage communities, despite the potential of additional workload. The first set of 'Movement-wide Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability' is one of the resolutions presented at the [2019 Council of Delegates](#).¹¹ These commitments and actions aim to harmonize and align existing practices in the Movement and ensure that there is a consistent approach to how members engage with and are accountable to vulnerable and crisis-affected people. Within Africa, there is a growing number of National Societies, partner National Societies, and IFRC delegations who are building community engagement approaches into strategies, plans, and budgets, and are recruiting focal points to push this forward within their organizations.

Why is this strategy necessary?

The strategy builds on this momentum and seeks to address remaining gaps and facilitate a coordinated approach to strengthening accountability to communities and institutionalizing community engagement across the Africa Region. It was developed jointly between the IFRC and [CDA](#).¹² Rooted in practical evidence, this strategy¹³ outlines the enabling factors that facilitate stronger community engagement and accountability in Africa, as well as the barriers that may be preventing meaningful improvements. It offers Movement partners working in Africa strategic actions and concrete steps to address the key barriers to institutionalizing community engagement and accountability in their ways of working. This strategy also establishes roles, responsibilities, priorities, and the financial and human resources necessary to shift the current way of working into one that is more effective and practical for working in partnership with communities. It supports the Africa Region to meet the 'Movement-wide Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability', which will be reflected in IFRC strategy 2030 and the new IFRC Africa Region strategy. In order to ensure a shared and collective approach that builds upon existing practices.



Use of community feedback to improve programme and operations is a key weakness for National Societies, with 63 per cent of respondents rating themselves as poor or in need of improvement in this area.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For more see: <https://rcrcconference.org/council-of-delegate/2019-council-of-delegates/>.

¹² CDA Collaborative Learning (CDA) is a registered non-profit organization 501(c)(3) based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. CDA is committed to improving the effectiveness of national and international actors who provide humanitarian assistance, engage in peace practice, and are involved in supporting sustainable development. CDA's mission is to facilitate collaborative learning that promotes effective and accountable engagements with crisis-affected communities. For more see: www.cdacollaborative.org

¹³ Throughout the document, "this strategy" always refers to the "Strengthening Community Engagement and Accountability in Africa" strategy. Any other strategies that are referenced will use their full title.


How was this strategy developed?

This strategy was developed through extensive consultations with representatives from across the Movement.¹⁴ Key to this process was capturing the insight and perceptions of staff, volunteers and community members about how Movement members engage with and are accountable to communities as well as the changes necessary to improve and strengthen practice. Based on this learning, it offers actionable ways forward for all Movement members. A working group¹⁵ with cross-Movement representation supported the development of this strategy by providing continuous guidance, input, and feedback.

Who is this strategy for?

This strategy is intended for all Movement partners working in Africa, including African National Societies, the IFRC, and partner National Societies who support them. It provides clear and actionable steps for leadership, programme, operational, and support staff, as well as community engagement focal points. Achieving Movement commitments to be accountable to communities that are being served requires a whole Movement-wide approach; therefore, this strategy sets out roles and responsibilities for a broad range of Movement members.

While this document is intended for the Africa Region, it highlights best practices, lessons learned and core principles that apply in many contexts. It provides essential guidance to all Movement members on how they can improve the quality, acceptance, and sustainability of their programmes and operations by adopting a more integrated approach to community engagement and accountability.



88 per cent of the respondents confirmed they would like support to improve how they engage communities, despite the potential of additional workload.

How do you read this strategy?

This strategy is divided into seven sections. Following the [Introduction Section](#), [Section 2](#) provides the methodology used for the research and outlines who was engaged throughout the development of the strategy. [Section 3](#) then highlights existing good practice related to community engagement and offers ideas about how to expand these best practices across the region. An institutional systems map of the different interconnected challenges that are inhibiting more meaningful and sustained engagement with communities is outlined in [Section 4](#). Key barriers emerge from this system map and inform the strategic actions recommended in [Section 5](#). This section also offers a set of high-level strategic changes needed to address the key institutional barriers and provides actionable steps to achieving these changes. Building upon the strategic actions, [Section 6](#) establishes the roles, responsibilities, and milestones for different Movement partners in the journey to institutionalizing community engagement and accountability. Finally, the strategy concludes with [Section 7](#) which synthesizes all the previous information and offers a direct and optimistic path forward for all Movement members to strengthen their engagement with and accountability to people and communities.

¹⁴ CDA's Managing Director, Sarah Cechvala, undertook all fieldwork with National Societies in Africa and conducted all force field analysis workshops. Additional desk based and remote interviews were conducted by Sabina Robillard, CDA Associate.

¹⁵ See Annex A for Working Group Members.



METHODOLOGY

This strategy was developed using a mixed-methods approach. It represents the viewpoints of 443 staff, community members, and volunteers who work for, support or are served by the Movement. Qualitative data, which provided the primary evidence for analysis, was gathered through key informant interviews, focus group discussions and force field analysis workshops (see box). A quantitative survey and literature review¹⁶ provided additional data that was used to affirm the information gathered through qualitative methods and further refine the implications and recommendations.

CDA gathered this data remotely and in-person. Remote discussions were convened on Skype with key staff from across the Movement, including staff of African National Societies, partner National Society delegates in-country and at headquarters, ICRC staff in-country (when possible) and in headquarters, and IFRC staff at the Global, Regional, and Cluster level. Data was collected in-person during four in-country consultations, a workshop with IFRC Africa Regional leadership, and the East Africa PMER/CEA¹⁷ Network Meeting.

Locations for in-country consultations were selected on a volunteer basis, and were carried out with the Burundi Red Cross, Malawi Red Cross, Nigeria Red Cross, and the Sudan Red Crescent. Importantly, the four selected National Societies represent key distinctions in terms of cultural and operational contexts, level of CEA experience, partners working in the country, and institutional structures (including size of staff and resources). In-country consultations with National Societies were conducted by the research team¹⁸ over an

What is 'force field analysis'?

A force field analysis is an approach widely used in the peacebuilding field to understand the drivers of conflict.¹⁹ For this research, the force field analysis workshops were used to map institutional systems within the National Society and the broader Movement. Workshops were held with 8–20 people working at a similar level (e.g. senior management workshop, partner National Society workshop, branch staff, and programmes and operations managers). Participants were asked to identify the most important factors, both tangible (policies, resources, staffing) and intangible (beliefs, attitudes, perceptions), that work in favour of and that work against efforts to institutionalize community engagement and accountability within their own organization at that point in time. After prioritizing key barriers, participants were asked to examine the root causes of these barriers and suggest solutions for overcoming them. Participants were also asked to identify 'whose' role it is to address the challenge and what resources (human and financial) would be needed. In total, the team conducted 25 force field analysis workshops for this research.

¹⁶ The literature review included internal documents such as: Movement-wide reports, PMER assessments, National Society assessments and internal reports, external third-party reviews, the Community Engagement and Accountability training toolkit, etc. It also included lessons learned from CDA's experience working to mainstream similar efforts with other partners as well as a review of the relevant literature from partner INGOs and institutions and the UN. A full annex of the literature reviewed for this report can be found in Annex B.

¹⁷ Program Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (PMER) and Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)

¹⁸ Research teams usually included a CDA staff member, a CEA team member from the IFRC Africa Regional or Africa Cluster offices and the National Society CEA focal point.

¹⁹ For more see: <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/cdaproject/the-listening-project/>.

average of a 5-day visit. In each country, researchers undertook a deep exploration of the current practices, policies, and perceptions that help and inhibit the National Society to integrate community engagement and accountability across programmes and operations. As part of the visit, the research team developed an internal strategy to strengthen community engagement and accountability for each National Society that outlines the key enabling factors, barriers, and solutions to enhance levels of accountability²⁰.

In addition to force field analysis workshops, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with Movement staff, community members and volunteers were conducted in-person and remotely using CDA's Listening methodology.²¹ This approach uses semi-structured interviews, which allow the interviewee(s) to direct the conversation and unveil issues that might otherwise not be considered by the research team. These interviews supplemented the key findings from the force field analysis workshops and enabled the research team to explore emerging topics more thoroughly and directly. In total, 60 key informant interviews and 23 focus groups were convened with 267 people (out of the total 443 people) using this approach.²² The table on pg. 24 presents the breakdown of interviews, focus group discussions, and force field analysis workshops. A web-based quantitative survey was shared by the IFRC CEA Africa Region team through a monthly update newsletter. Sixteen responses were gathered, which provides a modest additional data point.

BREAKDOWN OF DATA COLLECTED

Organization	Key Informant Interviews		Focus Group Discussions (FGD)		Force Field Analysis Workshops		Survey Respondents	Total # of People
	# interviews	# of People	# of FGDs	# of People	# of work-shops	# of People		
African National Societies (including staff, volunteers, and community members)	24	28	23	200	17	109	6	343
IFRC	19	20	N/A	N/A	4	22	2	44
Partner National Societies	14	16	N/A	N/A	4	28	8	52
ICRC	3	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	4
SUB-TOTAL	60	68	23	200	25	149	16	
TOTAL PEOPLE								443

²⁰ Sudan Red Crescent field report and CEA strategy; Burundi Red Cross field report and CEA strategy; Malawi Red Cross field report and CEA strategy; Nigeria Red Cross field report and CEA strategy.

²¹ For more see: <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/cdaproject/the-listening-project/>.

²² Annex C provides a complete list of agencies interviewed.

These activities yielded an incredibly rich set of data that allowed the research team to analyse the strengths, obstacles, and strategies for improving efforts towards greater accountability. Each time a “factor for” or “factor against” was raised during the force field analysis workshops, key informant interviews, and survey data, it was recorded in a spreadsheet. After compiling hundreds of factors in both categories, the team analysed the data for salient themes. While there were certainly differences in perspectives across the broad range of actors, the team was able to identify important trends about sources of hope and concern for all Movement members.

Trends were mapped by causality in an institutional systems map (presented in [Section 4](#)), which helped the research team to determine which factors present the most critical barriers to strengthening community engagement and accountability and how they interact with other factors within the Movement. These priority areas became the focus for the strategic actions and concrete next steps that constitute this strategy (presented in [Section 5](#)).

Drafts of this strategy were presented and shared with a wide range of Movement staff through webinars, workshops and briefing sessions. Feedback collected during these consultations was used to further refine the strategy to ensure it accurately reflects the needs and realities of different Movement members. If you took part in any of these review sessions or commented on the strategy drafts, we hope you recognize your inputs in this document and can feel ownership of this final version.





KEY SUCCESSSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- A. Change happens when there is **support at every level of the organization**, particularly when it comes from leaders and partners.
- B. Making the case for accountability and stronger community engagement is more successful when it is **framed around issues that are relevant** to the National Society and its decision-makers.
- C. Success comes when National Societies **build on what is already working well** in terms of engaging communities.
- D. **Aligning efforts to** institutionalize community engagement and accountability with wider organizational strategy development can amplify efforts and build wider buy-in.
- E. Having **community engagement and accountability focal points**²³ helps build momentum, provides direction and technical support, and sets high standards.
- F. IFRC **technical support** to National Societies strengthens community engagement capacity and creates champions.
- G. Supporting **volunteers see their role** as fundamental to strong community engagement leads to better quality programming, enhanced trust, and better access to communities.
- H. Harnessing the **enthusiasm and interest of community members** creates important opportunities for stronger accountability and increased community ownership.

SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES TO STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Across Africa, there have been strong examples that enable the Movement to put communities at the centre of our work, which can be learned from and built upon. It is important to note that these factors are also interconnected and reinforcing. Working intentionally to improve one factor can help increase the impact of another.²⁴

A. Change happens when there is support at every level of the organization

Bold commitment and clear direction by leadership coupled with robust support from staff and partners can catalyse system-wide change. In National Societies where leadership actively supports community engagement there is a strong momentum to institutionalize accountability approaches. In these cases, the establishment of internal accountability systems by leaders facilitates stronger, external accountability to communities, partners, and peers. Not only was this observed in inclusion of the approach in policy and practice, but also in leadership's participation in community engagement related activities. In Nigeria, for example, one senior staff member explained: *"Leadership participating sends a strong message that this is important, and that there is nowhere to hide."*

Staff, volunteers and partners working across the Africa Region also expressed a notable interest in improving how Movement members can be accountable to communities. Many staff explained that the topic of community engagement and participation is not a new one for their National Society or the Movement. Increased enthusiasm in the topic has emerged due to dedicated focal points within National Societies and the IFRC as well as formalizing the approach. As one IFRC delegate explained: *"Something to be learned from the processes is that these things take time. The IFRC community engagement and accountability regional team's presence there has mattered, and the trainings have had a lasting impact...it has promoted the right thinking for National Societies, and they have become more and more aware."*



"When the senior management team take part in the community engagement and accountability discussion, even for a day, people take it more seriously."

Staff member, Nigeria Red Cross

²³ CEA focal points are staff who are technical experts on community engagement and accountability, and who are responsible for integrating the approach across their organization.

²⁴ Listed in no particular order

Partner National Societies also consistently expressed a willingness to improve mechanisms that enhance accountability to communities within their programmes and to increase funding for both core (e.g. organization-wide trainings, positions and capacity strengthening efforts, etc.) and programmatic community engagement-related activities. In Burundi, one partner explained: *"We are all thirsty for more community engagement and accountability."* In response, a senior manager at the Burundi Red Cross explained that management's role is to harness this support from partners to invest in strengthening how the National Society engages with communities. A senior manager at Burundi Red Cross said: *"Our strategic plan is a resource mobilization tool. If we put CEA on the front line, then it will encourage partners to fund it"*

B. Adapting the accountability message for the audience is key

Making the case for improved accountability is most successful when framed around issues that are relevant and important to the National Society. Arguments for improved accountability that demonstrate a direct positive impact on priorities for National Society leadership, leads to stronger ownership and faster integration of the approach. For example, in some cases, staff explained how increased accountability to communities enhances transparency within the National Society. In other cases, staff highlighted how more systematic and meaningful community engagement increases trust and improves the image of the National Society. In Malawi, senior leadership explained that they were swayed to increase their commitments to community accountability because it was linked to National Society integrity. In this case, linking increased accountability to organizational integrity has attracted greater funding opportunities and new partners to work with the Malawi Red Cross.

NIGERIA: Linking Impact of increased accountability to communities and improved internal transparency

Nigeria Red Cross Society and IFRC Cluster staff described how improved engagement with communities enhances programme quality, trust with communities, and transparency within the National Society. They explained that this allowed for safer access to work with communities in challenging contexts. Staff shared stories about changes they have seen within the Nigeria Red Cross because they have started making a more deliberate effort to engage people. One IFRC staff member explained: *"I saw more changes to our programme in five days than in four months because we improved our communication internally and with communities."*



Several Nigeria Red Cross staff noted that corruption issues were identified due to enhanced communication with communities. A senior manager explained: *"Issues of corruption in the North were identified because of community engagement and we have seen it increase programme quality. Leadership sees and knows this."* Another programme staff member explained: *"Before, people accused us of bias, and we had issues with access and assessment. We realized if there is more community engagement people will be better informed."*

²⁵ For the full case study see: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/05/M-AtC-A4-EN-LR.pdf>.

C. Success comes when National Societies build upon what already works

The idea of working closely with communities is not new. Many National Societies already have ways to listen, engage with and respond to communities through their programmes and branches (such as feedback mechanisms, radio programmes, hotlines, complaints boxes, and directly to volunteers). Staff noted that having these practices in place offers a solid foundation to build even greater accountability to communities. In Burundi, the legacy of beneficiary communications means that many staff are already familiar with activities such as the mobile cinema and radio shows. Building upon these existing well-known practices under the banner of community engagement and accountability helps to systematize and formalize what was previously happening organically, but on an ad hoc basis.

D. Aligning with other institutional processes

Efforts to institutionalize accountability approaches are strengthened when aligned with wider organizational strategy development or institutional change initiatives. For example, while Malawi Red Cross Society was in transition, experiencing changes in leadership, staffing and organizational structures, it created an ideal moment to establish community engagement and accountability as an organizational-wide way of working. Leadership framed the approach as a way to improve programme quality and CEA was embedded within the newly established Planning, Quality and Learning (PQL) department. At the same time, management included increased commitment to engage with and be accountable to communities into their 2019–2021 Strategic Plan. One senior manager said: *"We have a turnaround strategy, and we are changing the way of doing business. We are becoming accountable, so CEA is embedded in that."* These institutional shifts have raised the profile of the approach among staff in Malawi Red Cross, who are now more aware of and eager to integrate it into their work. As one senior manager explained: *"Programs cannot move forward without the strategic plan, and we put community engagement and accountability into that. So, now the emphasis is on this and we can reflect it in our programmes. We have a good opportunity right now."*

KENYA: Timing Can Help Accelerate Ownership of Leaders



A 2017 operational case study on Kenya Red Cross Society's (KRCS) efforts to mainstream accountability to communities²⁵ highlights the importance of timing. In this case, a project to pilot new accountability to community standards coincided with KRCS' development of a new strategic plan. Although this was purely coincidence, having these conversations at the same time helped to mobilize leadership support and commitment and led to accountability to communities being strongly embedded in the new strategic plan.



“If community engagement and accountability is everyone’s job it will quickly become no one’s job”

Staff member, Malawi Red Cross

E. Having community engagement and accountability focal points helps build momentum and sets high standards

Having a staff position for community engagement is vital for integrating the approach into strategy, policy and practice. National Societies’ noted that while a focal point is necessary, it alone is insufficient. It is crucial that the staff who focus on community engagement possess the requisite skills and have the time and passion to drive the initiative forward, rather than it being just one of many responsibilities within their portfolio. Adequate human and financial resources are fundamental for success of these positions; otherwise implementation quickly becomes ad hoc and inconsistent. Community engagement focal points acknowledge that the goal is to embed the approach deeply enough into practice and systems that someday their role will not be needed. In Malawi Red Cross, several staff explained that it is critical to have an internal accountability champion, because otherwise, as a programme staff member said: *“if community engagement and accountability is everyone’s job it will quickly become no one’s job.”*

F. Technical support from IFRC strengthens local capacities

Having technical staff whose sole role is to advise and support National Societies and Movement members in order to transfer skills, build capacity, and capture and share lessons learned can enhance uptake across the Movement. Dedicated IFRC community engagement and accountability staff at regional and cluster levels are fundamental to enhancing awareness across the region on how to effectively engage with and be accountable to people. National Society staff explained that their community engagement approaches have improved as a result of these staff members and their internal advocacy and capacity strengthening efforts.



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Many staff expressed an appreciation for the [community engagement and accountability guide, toolkit and training courses](#)²⁶, which have supported them to practically implement stronger accountability to people. Program and operational staff who have participated in IFRC trainings expressed that they were critical in strengthening their knowledge, capacities and understanding of its importance in quality programming. This research also highlighted the importance of trainings as not one-time efforts. It must be accompanied with ongoing support and cascaded from headquarters to branch and volunteer levels. National Societies that have been able to extend or cascade community engagement and accountability trainings to their volunteers and branch staff have stronger and more responsive approaches to community engagement.

BURUNDI: Cascading training to branch staff

The Burundi Red Cross CEA focal point has focused on extending learning to branch staff because *“they are the ones actually directly applying the approach with communities.”* With support from the IFRC CEA team, the focal point adapted the CEA trainings into a branch-specific training for staff and volunteers. While not all branches have had the same level of community engagement training, those with the training were able to discuss the approach and its significance to their programmes with confidence. In one branch where the Branch Secretary had participated in a CEA training, explained the change he saw after the training: *“The way we were working before was that we would stay in our office and think about the problem in the community and then we would try to solve the problem. But when we went to the community, we would find that the most pressing needs in the area was not what we thought.”* He continued: *“Before we used to see the community as the beneficiary. But now we know they are partners and participants.”*

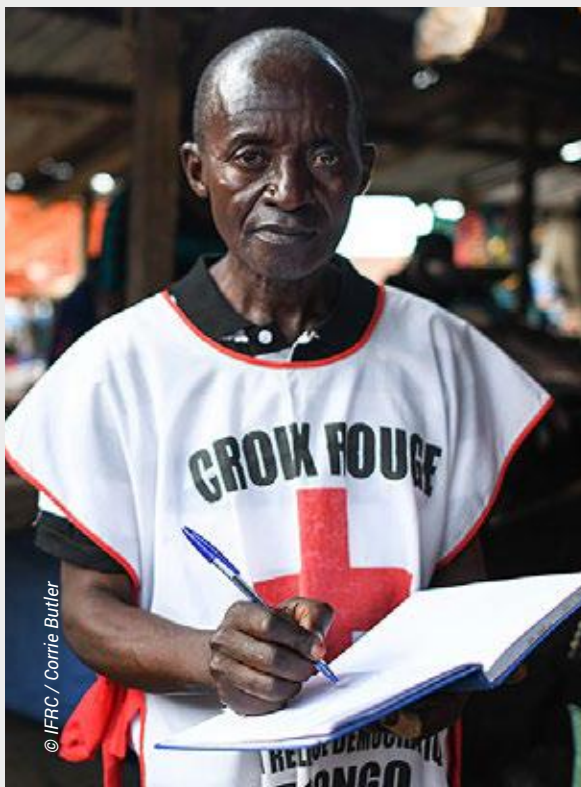


²⁶ All IFRC CEA Guidance and Toolkits can be found here: <https://www.communityengagementhub.org/>

G. Engaging the Movement's volunteer network creates champions

Helping volunteers to see their role as fundamental to strong community engagement leads to better quality programming and enhanced trust and access to communities. The Movement's strong volunteer network is a unique asset for National Societies, with 1.6 million volunteers in Africa alone. Volunteers are often the bridge to safely accessing the community, building trust with people, and ensuring that people feel that they have a voice in the work of the National Society. In Sudan, since the beneficiary communication pilots, many volunteers have been engaged in accountability-related process, such as feedback collection and management. The branch's engagement with the community is highly dependent on the strength of its volunteers and their understanding of accountability to communities. As one staff member explained: *"We have a good relationship with the community that is very dependent on the volunteers and their skills and abilities."* In this case, branch leadership has prioritized accountability to communities by ensuring that staff and volunteers have basic knowledge of the approach and its importance. Some staff noted: *"[Community engagement and accountability] has become a new culture for the branch."*

DR CONGO: Community engagement and accountability opens doors and breaks down resistance



In the Ebola response in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), the community engagement approach played a critical role in ensuring access, safety, and effectiveness for the Red Cross and IFRC staff and volunteers. Widespread mistrust and rumours about Ebola created resistance among affected communities to the life-saving interventions of the Red Cross and partners. A significant community engagement effort was launched, which included behaviour change communication, interactive radio programmes, mobile cinemas, and household visits. This was paired with strong accountability mechanisms, such as feedback systems, and engaging community leaders in the interventions from the beginning. These efforts paid off: The Red Cross saw communities open up to their volunteers and staff and cooperate in the response. One

community engagement focal point explained: *"We removed a lot of resistance. Before community engagement and accountability, every day, the volunteers were chased out [of the community]. Then, we trained 23 volunteers on CEA and they immediately saw a reduction in resistance."*

H. Harness communities' desire to be engaged to cultivate trust

Increasingly, many community members understand that they have a right to input into programmes and give feedback about the services that are intended to support them. Community members consistently expressed a desire and willingness to more actively participate in Red Cross Red Crescent activities. One community member with a disability in Malawi explained: *"We have a lot of ideas about how we can help ourselves, for example by having shared gardens. This would help us to be more self-sufficient and less reliant on our families."* Trust between the National Societies and communities creates an important foundation for successful community engagement. A female community member in Malawi explained: *"If they [the Red Cross and Red Crescent] listen to us, then we can build a better relationship, and they will become more accountable to our needs."*

Staff who had been trained on community engagement approaches discussed the need to harness the enthusiasm and interest of community members to participate and be engaged in programme development, implementation and evaluation processes. They noted increased engagement however needs to come with the systems to manage and address community feedback and input. Staff, particularly at the branch level, explained that community participation must come with strong approaches to manage community expectations, a robust feedback system and the flexibility to adapt based on feedback received.

SUDAN: Community engagement approach provides access to closed communities



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In Sudan, one branch experienced challenges in accessing a particularly culturally conservative Muslim community. However, through consistent and tailored engagement and requests for community input, the branch slowly gained access. Branch leadership praised the community engagement approach and affirmed that it was important in helping them access this community. One branch staff member explained: *"We had a sense of what the community needed before, but now we are accountable to them. Now the community is a partner to us."* During our visit, we met with this community, and leaders described a similar story. One leader explained: *"In the beginning, we were not listening, they [Sudan Red Crescent] did not speak our language and we did not see their value. But, at the end, we realized that they are here for good. Sudan Red Crescent was very patient and listened and responded to us."* Special efforts were also made in this community to engage with women, who were largely confined to the home. Women noted how Sudan Red Crescent had

provided them with first aid and home nursing training in their own homes, which was greatly appreciated. As a result of the trust built between Sudan Red Crescent and the community, women now call female volunteers freely when they have questions or need more support.



KEY BARRIERS

- A. **Community engagement and accountability is not well understood**, including why it matters, what is its role in programmes and operations, and how to implement it in practice.
- B. **Lack of evidence** of the impact of community engagement and accountability is leading to **limited buy-in and prioritization** by staff and leadership.
- C. **Lack of policy or strategy** to guide the implementation of community engagement and accountability, including poor integration into existing policies, guidelines, and strategies.
- D. **Inadequate and inconsistent resourcing** for core activities to build the capacity of staff and volunteers in community engagement and accountability, which leads to ad hoc implementation.
- E. **Weak coordination** among Movement members undermines efforts to implement community engagement and accountability in a consistent manner across African National Societies.
- F. **Inflexible institutional structures and planning processes** can inhibit meaningful external engagement with people.
- G. Strong accountability mechanisms can be viewed as a **challenge to cultural and community norms and structures**, and this can affect the level of acceptance within communities.

KEY BARRIERS TO INSTITUTIONALIZATION

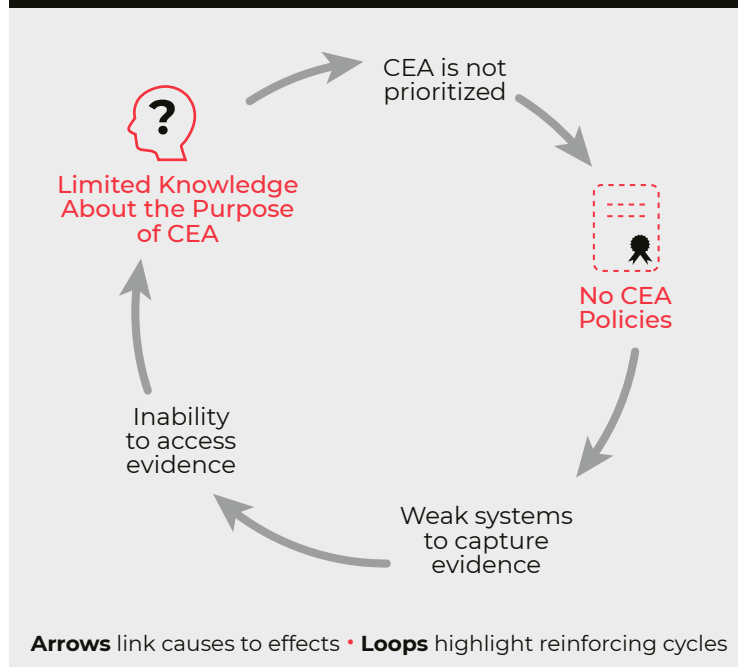
Evidence gathered throughout the development of this strategy enabled the development of institutional systems map, which identifies the barriers to strengthening community engagement and accountability across Africa.²⁷ In many cases, these barriers provide a contrast to the positive enabling factors.

The Movement as a system

The Movement is a system. It is made up of intangible and tangible parts that are interconnected. This means that when one part of the system is changed it will lead to changes somewhere else. If the goal is to strengthen accountability to people in Africa, then an examination of the current Movement system should show which dynamics are creating challenges that are blocking this from happening.

How to read a systems map

IMAGE 1: Example of reinforcing loop
(a small part of Image 2)

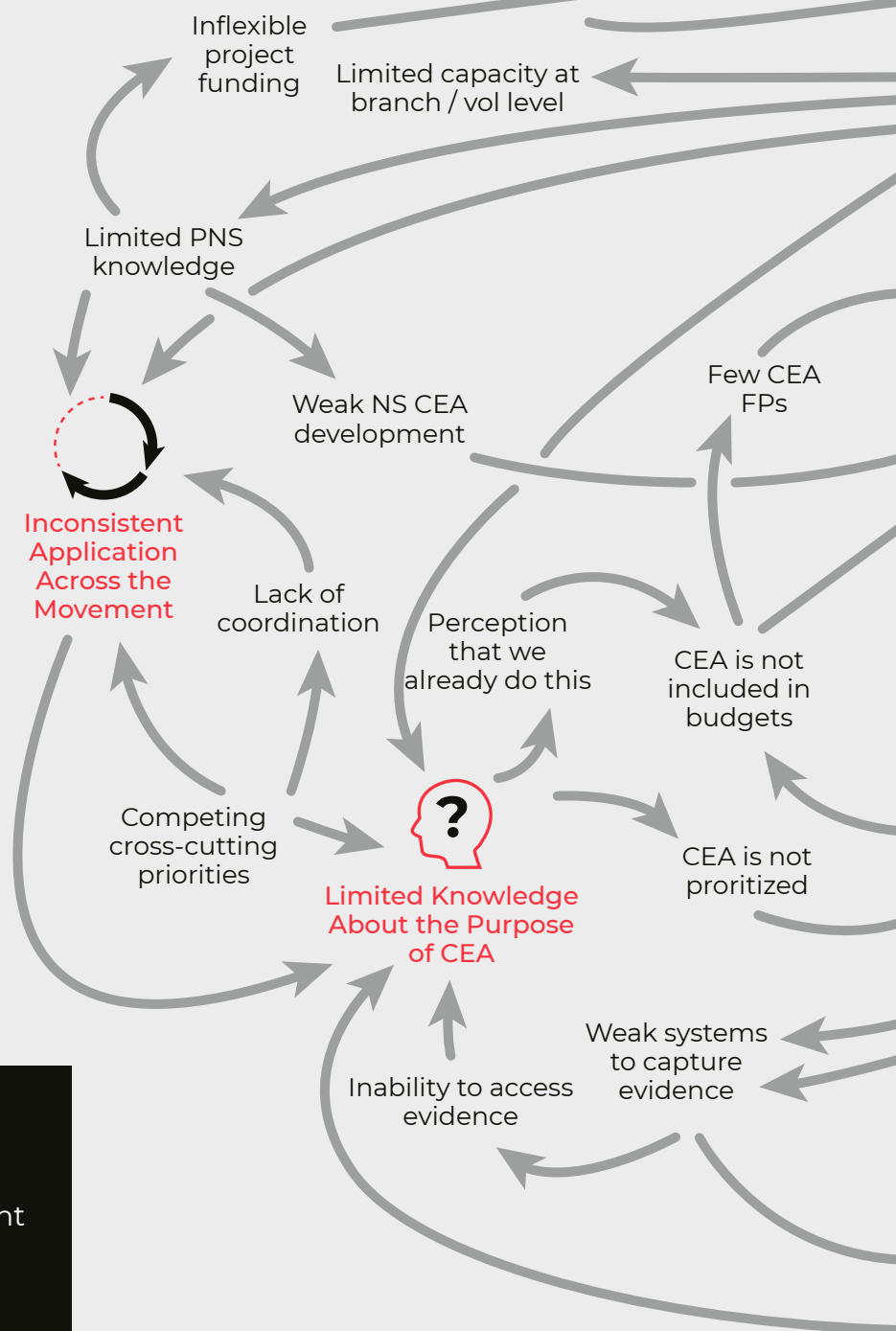


A systems map is used to visualize the dynamics of an institution and identify key barriers to change. Image 1 shows an example of a negative reinforcing loop within the system. Limited understanding of the purpose of community engagement means it is not included in policies and so, not funded, which leads back to the start: there is limited understanding of the approach. Image 2 on the following page presents the causes and effects of the main barriers to stronger community engagement within the Movement in Africa.²⁸ Factors highlighted in red are considered 'key barriers', which if addressed, could lead to significant change. These barriers guide the strategic changes recommended in [Section 5](#).

²⁷ A systems map is a key tool used in the peacebuilding field that is particularly helpful for understanding overall conflict dynamics for the purposes of planning strategies and programmes at macro levels with diverse teams of policymakers and practitioners, also striving for greater collective impact beyond project levels. Systems analysis has the potential to help bridge the gap between analysis and programming by including analysis of points of leverage and approaches for changing the system.

²⁸ Traditionally a systems map is presented with "neutral" features (e.g. "limited knowledge of the purpose of CEA" would traditionally be labeled "level of knowledge of the purpose of CEA") in order to acknowledge that factors within the system can be changed positively or negatively. In this case, the goal here is to present the current barriers to CEA within the Movement in order to highlight where strategic action for institutional change is necessary. Therefore, the research team did not apply the traditional systems approach.

IMAGE 2:
Barriers to strengthening community engagement and accountability in Africa –
An institutional systems map of the Movement



KEY

Bold letters = Key Barriers

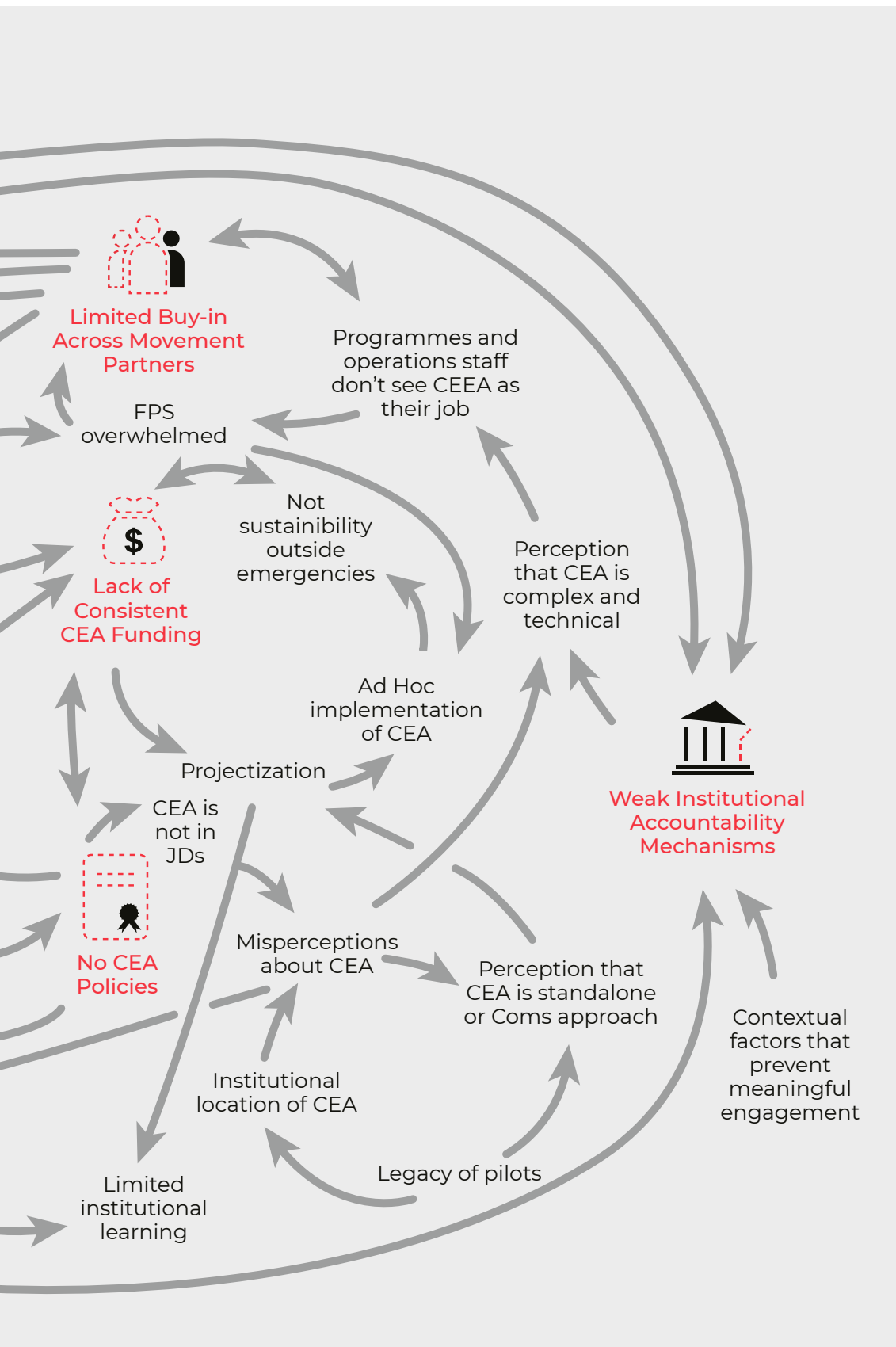
CEA = Community Engagement and Accountability

FP = Focal Point

JDs = Job Descriptions

NS = National Society

PNS = Partner National Society



What are the key barriers to integrate community engagement and accountability?

The sections below provide a narrative for the systems map (See Image 3). Each sub-section²⁹ offers guidance and insight as to the causes and effects for each of the key barriers in the system. Each section captures the key barrier and lays out practical examples of how this barrier is affecting engagement with communities, how barriers can have an 'add on' effect to one another.

A. Community engagement and accountability is not well understood

It was evident from the research for this strategy, that community engagement and accountability is often misunderstood by leadership and staff across the Movement (seen on the map as **Limited Knowledge about the Purpose of CEA**). Misperceptions range from community engagement and accountability being seen as:

- A non-essential, complicated, and technical initiative;
- Something that is the sole responsibility of the community engagement and accountability focal point or communications team (See Image 3); and
- Something that Movement members already do well enough.

Perception that community engagement and accountability is non-essential or too technical

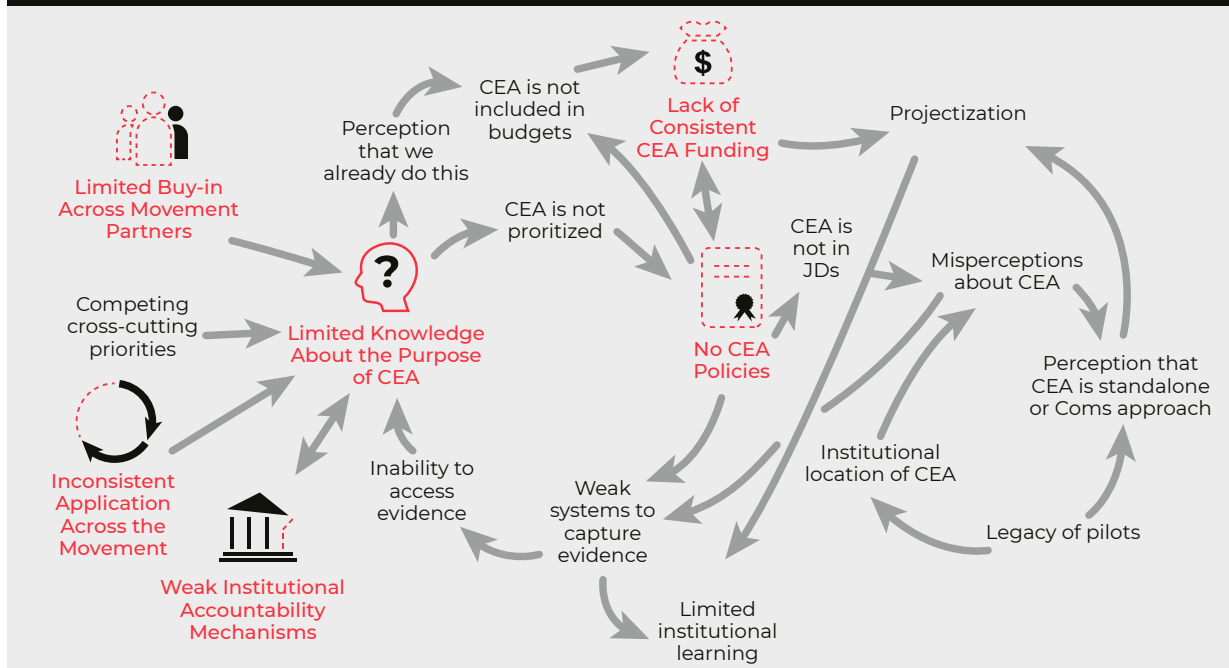
Many people within the Movement explained that community engagement is often understood as a community sensitization initiative or a communications activity, which is 'someone else's job' (typically the communications staff). This contributes to another common misperception that 'community engagement is nice to include, if time and budget permits, but is not an essential part of the programme.' Many staff indicated that activities related to community engagement are seen as an 'add on' to their programmatic work rather than a core part of how they should be working with communities.

BURUNDI: Where community engagement sits within teams can lead to misperceptions

In Burundi, the legacy of the Beneficiary Communications project has meant that some staff's understanding of community engagement is often limited to social and behaviour change communication. As one senior manager noted: *"CEA means mobile cinema and radio shows. We need to change this perception because we only see it as one thing."* Many at the Burundi Red Cross agreed that in order to improve accountability, the organization needs to deepen the meaning of CEA to include transparency, community participation and responding to feedback and complaints. One programme staff member noted: *"Right now, we see CEA as an activity, but I think it should be a routine thing because CEA shows us that we need to continually improve."* The location of the CEA Manager within the Communications Department may be adding to the confusion that the approach is only about sharing information with communities about health, disaster risk reduction, etc. Some staff felt that CEA should have a stronger link to programmes and operations in order to address these misperceptions.

²⁹ Sub-sections are not listed in a specific order.

IMAGE 3: Reinforcing loop – Limited knowledge about the purpose of community engagement



In Nigeria, some staff explained that accountability to communities feels overwhelming and challenging to implement. As a partner National Society staff noted: *"Internally, we face the challenge that CEA is a buzzword, but what does it actually mean? It is a lot of paper, but actualization is the challenge."*

Perception that National Societies already engage communities well enough

Many people believe that National Societies already engage communities well enough. Some partner National Society staff explained that National Societies must engage communities to do their work effectively. Any 'new' community engagement initiatives are burdensome and overcomplicate something that is already happening. One partner National Society staff member explained: *"People see community engagement and accountability/PMER as a challenge to the way they do things."* Because many staff believe they are already engaging communities well enough, efforts to strengthen community engagement are often disregarded. However, in every focus group discussion carried out with communities across Africa, people reported gaps in how National Societies communicate, listen, engage, and respond to them. One community member explained a problem consistently heard across interviews: *"[Red Cross] has never asked us about our preferences. They should give us information directly. We never know what they are doing."*

B. Lack of evidence affects levels of prioritization across the Movement

While there are several factors that contribute to the misperceptions (described above) about community engagement and accountability, one of the factors is a lack of evidence demonstrating the impact improved engagement with communities has on programme quality. Lack of Movement-specific evidence that can demonstrably correlate the impact of stronger approaches to community engagement to improved quality, relevance, and effectiveness of programmes contributes to:

- Weak knowledge about the purpose of the topic; which means that
- Community engagement and accountability is not prioritized; and therefore,
- There are weak systems to capture, document, and present evidence in a compelling way for the appropriate audience.

Lack of evidence of impact

Lack of evidence was raised by many in leadership as a key challenge for increasing understanding about the purpose of community engagement. As one partner National Society said: "It is hard to explain the value add of community engagement and accountability. We don't have any data from National Societies, so it is hard to get the attention of our management." An IFRC staff member also noted: "*There is lots of evidence on behaviour change communication and the impacts this has on outcomes. But the Movement is such a bubble and closed environment, that it doesn't matter that the evidence exists outside the Movement, leaders want to see how community engagement has benefited Red Cross work specifically.*"



"CEA is the soft side of programming, in a world where programmes are all about the numbers, what numbers do you put in front of the donor. It [CEA] is something that is not as visible, it is not as tangible, and yet it is the cement that holds the bricks together. However, the lack of numbers prevents a lot of organizations and partner National Societies from actually investing in it. Because it is hard to show in the results at the end of the programme. It is a qualitative addition rather than a quantitative one, and that makes it invisible."

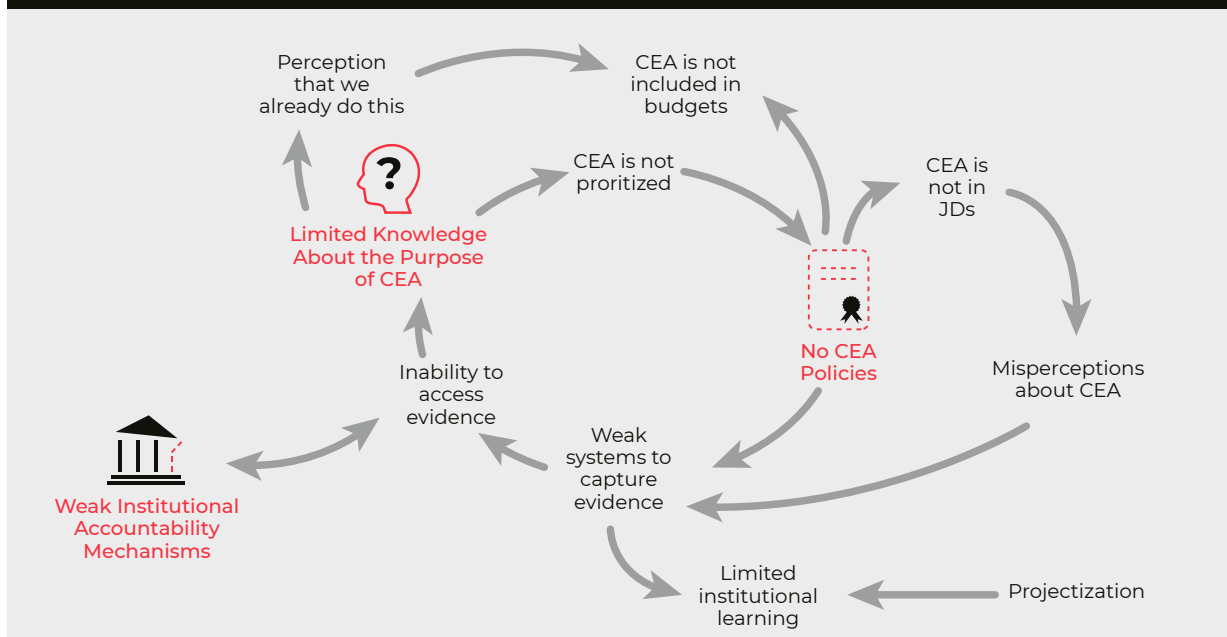
IFRC Staff

Community engagement is not prioritized

Critically, this lack of understanding about the importance of the approach, contributes to community engagement and accountability not being prioritized by leadership, and therefore not being adequately funded or staffed, especially when resources are limited. Fundamentally, if leadership does not see strengthening accountability to communities as a priority, then neither will their staff, and it is unlikely to be embedded into organizational culture, strategies, and approaches, which creates ad hoc implementation, if any at all. One staff member from the Democratic Republic of the Congo Red Cross said: *“Community consultation needs to be understood to be just as important to running a programme as money or vehicles.”*

The previous section (Section 4) presented examples from across Africa where strengthened community engagement led to improved programme quality, effectiveness, trust and sustainability; and where meaningful accountability led to stronger reputations for National Societies. Importantly, if leadership does not have access to that kind of evidence, then they might not realize the critical role community engagement and accountability plays in achieving outcomes that are important to the organization as a whole, such as building trust, reputation, quality and sustainability of interventions, and community resilience.

IMAGE 4: Reinforcing loop – Lack of evidence of impact of community engagement





C. Lack of policy or strategy to guide the implementation of community engagement

One impact of leadership and staff not understanding the value and purpose of community engagement and accountability is that it is not integrated to organizational strategies and policies, nor is a specific policy or strategy developed to guide implementation (seen in Image 5: **No CEA Policies**). This results in weak practices for engaging the community, which are not integrated across the organization's ways of working.

Lack of policy or strategy

Without a community engagement and accountability policy, staff and volunteers do not have clear direction about how to apply the approach as well as the purpose and value of it. This also leads to commitments to engaging communities not being included in organizational strategies, annual plans, or other policies and guidelines (See Image 5). Community engagement is then often implemented in an ad hoc manner, seen by staff as a stand-alone initiative, someone else's responsibility, or not important. For example, the IFRC's strategy 2020 and annual planning documents do not have clear outcomes, outputs or indicators for community engagement and accountability³⁰ and this often leads to it not being included in annual plans. The few times that the research team observed requirements to be accountable being clearly articulated in organizational systems and processes, there was greater evidence of more robust programme quality and strengthened trust between the National Society and communities.

Community engagement efforts are often only implemented at the programme or operation level

When community engagement is not integrated into policy and strategy, it risks becoming linked only to a specific programme or operation, as opposed to being seen as an organization-wide approach. In many cases, an emergency operation was used as a way to get funding to strengthen community engagement approaches within a National Society. However, this limited the National Society's ability to institutionalize accountability approaches across all programmes and operations. This meant community engagement initiatives were not sustained after the operation ended. This also led to staff seeing the approach as something only for emergencies, rather than an ongoing process.

SUDAN: Implications of no community engagement and accountability policy

At the time of the research, the Sudan Red Crescent did not have a CEA policy that provided a standard approach for engaging with and being accountable to communities that could be integrated into proposals, programmes, strategies, annual plans, or budgets. A strong policy creates explicit expectations for how to engage with communities within programmes. Without this, the National Society can expect sporadic application of the approach. Staff often do not know what is expected of them in terms of listening to and working with communities to plan, manage, and implement programmes and operations. Some staff and volunteers also stated that because responsibilities to engage communities are not included in job descriptions, they have a limited understanding of and commitment to the approach. One partner National Society staff member explained: *"There is a commitment at the National Society. But there is a lack of policy for institutionalization and this is when HR [human resources] is necessary."*

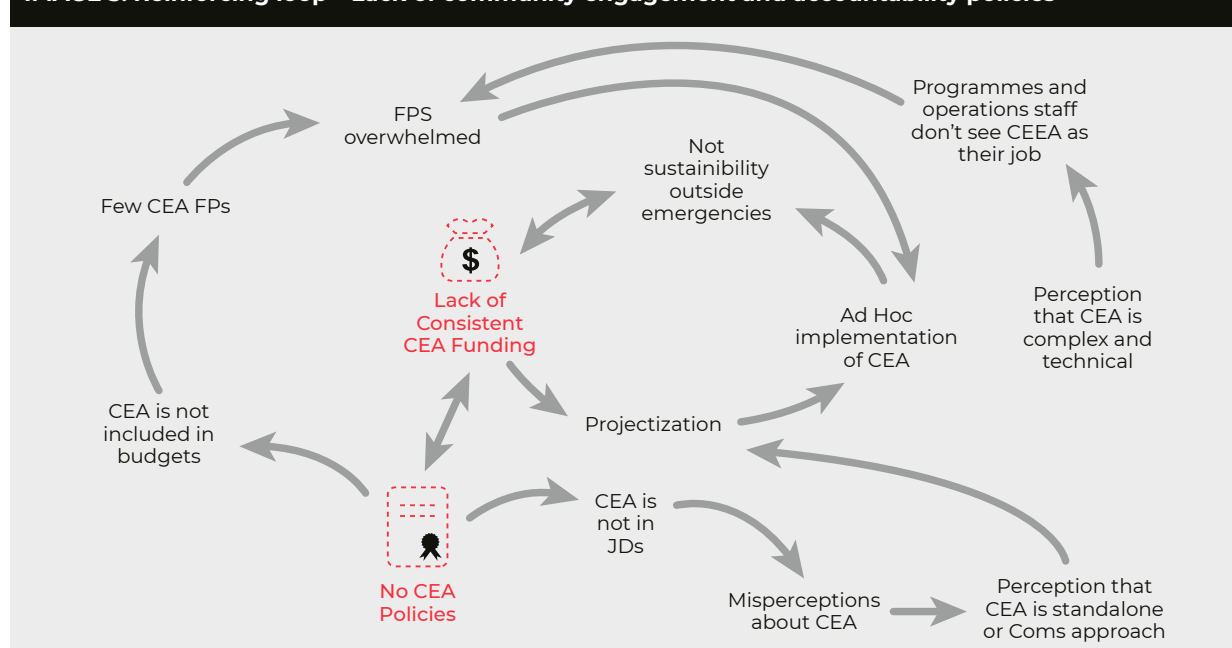
³⁰ IFRC strategy 2020 was developed before community engagement and accountability was adopted by the organization as a key approach to delivering programmes and operations and so is not clearly outlined in the strategy.

NIGERIA: Implications of community engagement ending after the emergency response

Currently, the Nigeria Red Cross Society's main source of funding is emergency response operations. While community engagement approaches, such as feedback mechanisms, have been successfully implemented, the National Society struggles to continue these when the operation closes and the funding ends. This has led community engagement and accountability being seen as a one-time or standalone effort as opposed to an ongoing organizational approach. As one IFRC staff member explained: *"Staff and volunteers need to be trained. Because if they sleep on it in between emergencies, they will lose it. It needs to be better used after disasters."* A senior manager echoed this concern and noted: *"We are doing [community engagement and accountability], but it is project-driven. And, specifically, emergency projects."* An IFRC Cluster staff member noted: *"Community engagement is a one-time thing and then it disappears. It needs to be better integrated into programme design and planning."*

An emergency response can be a difficult time to introduce new approaches due to the pressure to respond quickly. For example, it can be hard to find time to establish a feedback system during the early stages of an emergency response. Challenges often arise because setting up a feedback mechanism requires training, careful planning, and consultation with the community to ensure the right channels are selected and people will trust the system. National Societies would find it easier to ensure a good quality of accountability to communities in their emergency operations, if they already have trained staff and mechanisms in place before the crisis hits. Community engagement and accountability should be as important an aspect of disaster preparedness as stockpiling relief items. For example, in DR Congo, the National Society's initial efforts for community engagement activities within the Ebola response were met with resentment and opposition. A National Society staff member noted: *"Because [community engagement] was undertaken in an emergency it wasn't great. There was a bad reaction to the community engagement and accountability approach [at the beginning]. If it was there before, it would have been better."*

IMAGE 5: Reinforcing loop – Lack of community engagement and accountability policies



D. Inadequate and inconsistent resourcing for strengthening accountability

When leadership and staff do not see the connection between more meaningful engagement with communities and improved programme quality, it leads to limited funding for activities to institutionalize the approach, such as community engagement trainings, human resources, peer-to-peer learning, and policy development (seen in Image 6 as Lack of Consistent CEA Funding). This lack of core funding leads to community engagement approaches being implemented only within some projects and not others, leading to gaps in how the National Society is accountable to people (See Image 6).

Lack of adequate funding to institutionalize community engagement and accountability

This lack of consistent and adequate resourcing was raised by all research participants as a critical problem. Many said that the approach is not appropriately budgeted for because it is simply not seen as an organizational priority. Meaningful engagement with communities requires long-term interaction and trust-building that goes beyond a project cycle.

Some staff however explained that current funding cycles are unpredictable and do not allow for long-term community engagement, which makes prioritizing the approach difficult for National Society staff. In Malawi, staff explained that there is a need for more flexible funding for core activities (for example: trainings, coaching of staff, documentation of lessons learned, etc.) in order to mainstream accountability outside of projects. Staff explained that without this type of funding, it will be difficult to increase awareness and knowledge about the approach and its importance across the National Society.

Gaps in knowledge for all staff hinders operationalizing community engagement

While many people have benefitted from community engagement and accountability trainings across the region, many staff and volunteers have still not been trained on the approach. As a result, there are knowledge gaps, which makes it difficult to operationalize community engagement in a holistic and comprehensive way. These gaps occur at different levels depending on the history of how the approach was introduced to the National Society. For example, the Sudan Red Crescent's accountability to communities' pilot focused on branch-level activities, which has meant gaps at headquarters in terms of understanding. Within Malawi Red Cross, trainings initially focused on manager level and branch staff and Governance did not have the relevant knowledge. It is evident that staff at all levels need to be trained in order to be clear about their roles and responsibilities and how to ensure good community engagement in their work.

Community engagement focal points are essential for institutionalization

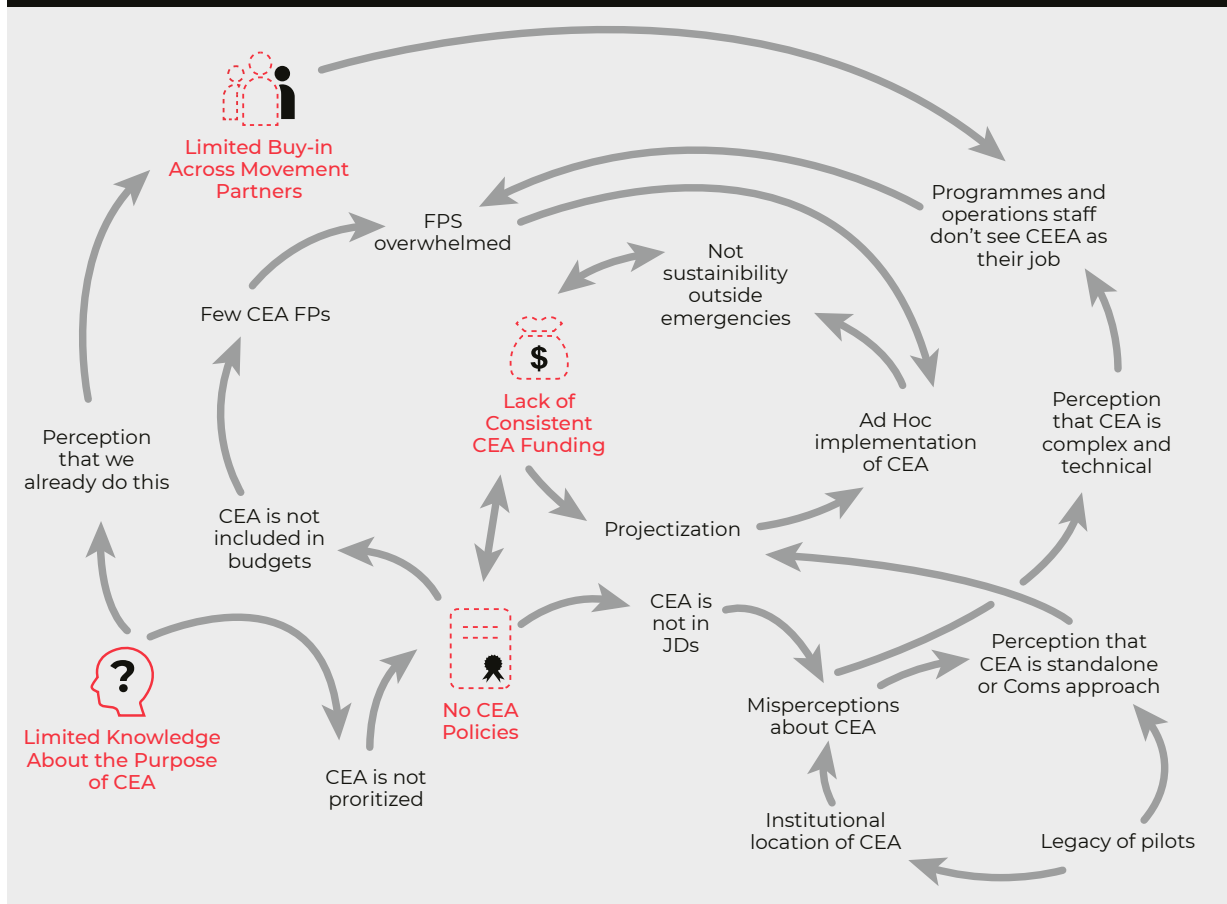
Core funding is critical to ensure adequate human resources are in place to successfully integrate accountability approaches across the organization. While working with communities is a part of everyone's job, community engagement focal points play a specific role in championing the approach, delivering trainings as well as leading on the work to integrate it into strategies, policies and processes. However, there are very few National Society community engagement focal points and the ones who are in position, often

have multiple responsibilities. In National Societies with no community engagement focal point or where the person has too many responsibilities, limited progress has been observed in terms of institutionalizing community engagement and accountability.

This situation is replicated within the IFRC, where community engagement and accountability technical positions are not securely funded or sufficient to provide the hands-on technical support that IFRC delegations and the 49 African National Societies need to embed stronger accountability into their ways of working.

Lack of inclusion of community engagement-related responsibilities into job descriptions and new staff onboarding processes is also contributing to staff not seeing this as part of their jobs, which in turn increases the workload on already overburdened focal points. One IFRC delegate explained: *"Community engagement is not part of my job description, but it has been part of my own willingness to take it on and ensure it is part of our programmes and operations. It is because of a weakness in our programming that I saw the need to improve how we are accountable to communities and demonstrate the importance of this for National Societies."*

IMAGE 6: Reinforcing loop – Lack of consistent funding for community engagement and accountability



E. Weak coordination undermines a consistent approach to engaging communities

The Movement is large and diverse, so it can be challenging to roll out a new initiative in a uniform way. This can lead to different organizations adopting different approaches to community engagement, which causes confusion and undermines efforts to strengthen accountability to communities (seen as **Inconsistent Application Across the Movement** in Image 7).

Different approaches and priorities

Every organization has its own processes, protocols, and priorities, which means they may take different approaches to how they ensure community engagement and accountability in their work. This can lead to confusion for National Societies, who may be asked to adopt different approaches to being accountable, depending on which partner National Society, IFRC delegation or donor they are working with. In addition, not all partner National Societies understand or prioritize it. In fact, many partner National Society staff explained they struggle to get their leadership to understand and prioritize community engagement approaches within their bilateral partnerships, either as part of programmes or within organizational development. If partners refuse to fund community engagement within their bilateral partnerships, it creates confusion and can lead National Societies to devalue the approach.

What's in a name?

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), Accountability to Affected People (AAP), Beneficiary Communications, Accountability to Communities (AtC), Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) all describe the process of working in a transparent and participatory way. While it shouldn't matter what it's called so long as it happens, the sheer proliferation of terms and acronyms creates confusion within and among National Societies. On many occasions during this research, the team was asked what the difference is between CEA and AAP, or between beneficiary communications and AtC? Adopting different names to describe the same approach is contributing to the lack of understanding and is unnecessarily overcomplicating the intention of the approach: to be more accountable to and engage with those that we serve.

Partner and donor issues

Many partner National Societies see cross-cutting issues, such as accountability to communities, as critical to the work they do with National Societies. However, partner National Societies also serve as donors to many National Societies. This partner-donor relationship inherently creates unequal power dynamics that can complicate the process of strengthening community engagement. For instance, some African National Societies felt as if they could not be honest with partners about the challenges they are facing, or the negative feedback received from communities because they are concerned about losing their funding.

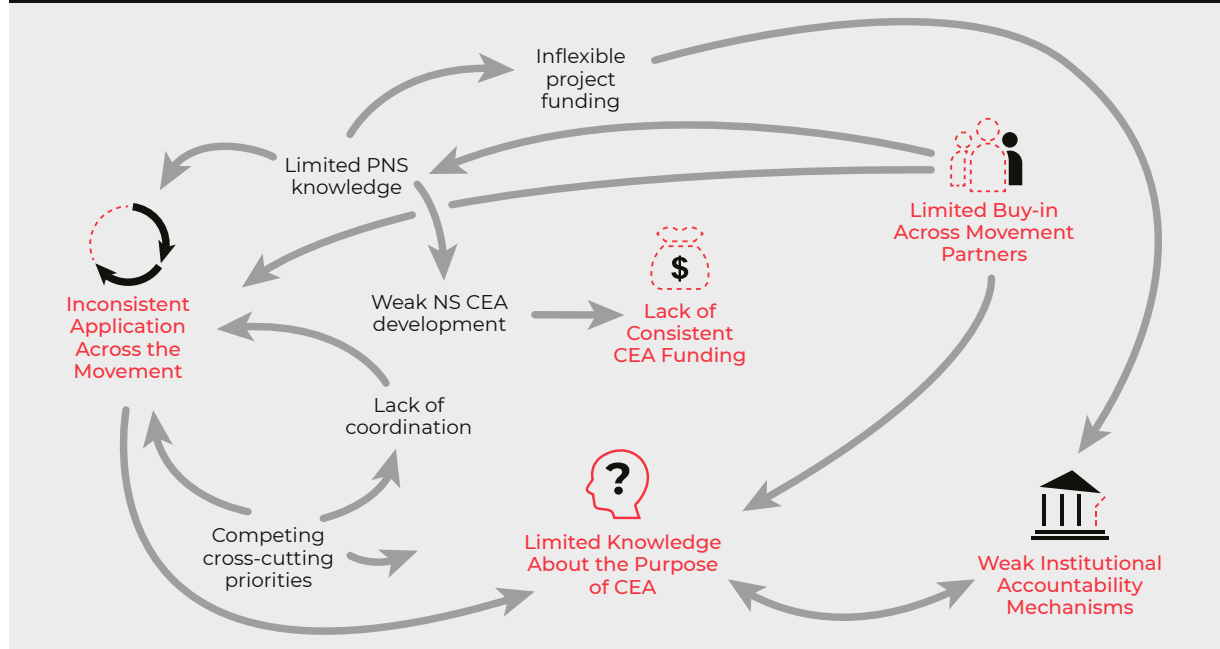
Lack of platforms to share information and coordinate

Staff across all organizations felt that there are not enough platforms to coordinate on important issues and communicate about best practices across National Societies. Several partners explained that they were not sure what other partners were doing or funding in relation to strengthening community engagement. Many noted that enhanced coordination among partners is essential to ensure that they are aligning initiatives with their institutional priorities and strategies to create an all of Movement approach, as opposed to ad hoc funding from partners. A staff member from a partner National Society noted that coordinating on community engagement activities among partners working in the same context would significantly help National Societies mainstream the practice, instead of being pulled in different directions. Several people also noted that having strong internal coherence and coordination can also make it easier for all National Societies to coordinate with external actors, such as governments and humanitarian partners such as UNICEF.

Poor coordination weakens National Society development

In Burundi, for example, weak communication among the National Society and partners inhibited stronger coordination and collaboration among stakeholders engaged in programme development. In this case, staff were unaware of each other's efforts to strengthen accountability to communities, which led to duplication of efforts, gaps in sustained resourcing for core activities, and therefore, weak organizational development for the National Society.

IMAGE 7: Inconsistent application across the Movement



F. Internal structures can inhibit meaningful external engagement

Many of those interviewed for this strategy noted that organizational structure, inflexible planning processes and poor internal communication were hampering efforts to strengthen engagement with communities (seen as **Weak Institutional Accountability Mechanisms** in Image 8).

Poor communication can impact volunteer relationships

Across the Movement, volunteers are often described as the bedrock of the organization and fundamental to high-quality programming. Local volunteers are most commonly the people who actually work with the community, sharing information, asking for their feedback and involving them in planning programmes. A senior manager of a National Society explained: *"Volunteers are our foot soldiers. The better they understand CEA, the better the interventions and the safer the access will be. And it makes life easier for them."* However, at this same National Society, this research noted gaps in volunteer management. Volunteers working with the branches visited for this research expressed frustration about the lack of strong internal communication and coordination processes. Several volunteers explained that staff will often call them and expect them to "drop everything" to support Red Cross activities. Volunteers and community members expressed anger and a feeling of disrespect when the Red Cross does not share their plans and adequately inform them ahead of visits and work, limiting their ability to effectively engage communities. One volunteer said: *"We have a fire brigade attitude."* Another said: *"They [Red Cross and Red Crescent] use us and then they dump us. They only value us when they need us."* And another volunteer explained that the Red Cross expects them to wait around with long gaps in communication, he said: *"With the way they treat us, they must think our second name is patience."* When volunteers aren't provided with the right support and information, it makes it impossible for them to properly engage communities and build trust between people and the Red Cross Red Crescent. Volunteers themselves become frustrated and feel disrespected, which can create challenges for the National Society in terms of strong relationships with communities and safe access in challenging areas.

Poor internal communication and working in silos can also lead to different approaches to accountability within the same organization or result in community engagement approaches only being adopted at one level of the organization, for example within headquarters but not at the branch or vice versa.

Community engagement is not always well integrated

National Societies with consistent levels of community engagement across programmes and operations were those where the person (or people) managing the approach worked directly and regularly with programme staff.

NIGERIA: Where community engagement sits in an organization can delink it from programmes

In the Nigeria Red Cross, the legacy of the beneficiary communications Ebola preparedness programme has meant that community engagement is situated in the communications department. During the visit, community engagement and accountability was being managed by the head of communication and advocacy department and a communication officer. Yet, because of its institutional location in the communication department, Nigeria Red Cross and IFRC staff all noted that community engagement is disconnected from programmes, therefore often left out or an afterthought once programme design and development was already completed. As one programme staff member noted: *"When it was BenComs it was seen as a standalone and not a core part of operating. We still suffer from this."*



“

*“Volunteers are our foot soldiers.
The better they understand CEA, the better the
interventions and the safer the access will be.
And it makes life easier for them.”*

National Society Senior Manager

In Malawi, for example, leadership created a planning, quality and learning department, which both oversees community engagement and accountability and helps the sectors to plan and design their programmes, ensuring community engagement is well integrated. One partner National Society staff said: *“CEA needs to be the way that you start the programme to ensure that it is embedded. One of the weaknesses is that it comes afterward, or it is an indicator in the programme, as opposed to a way in which we develop the programme itself.”*

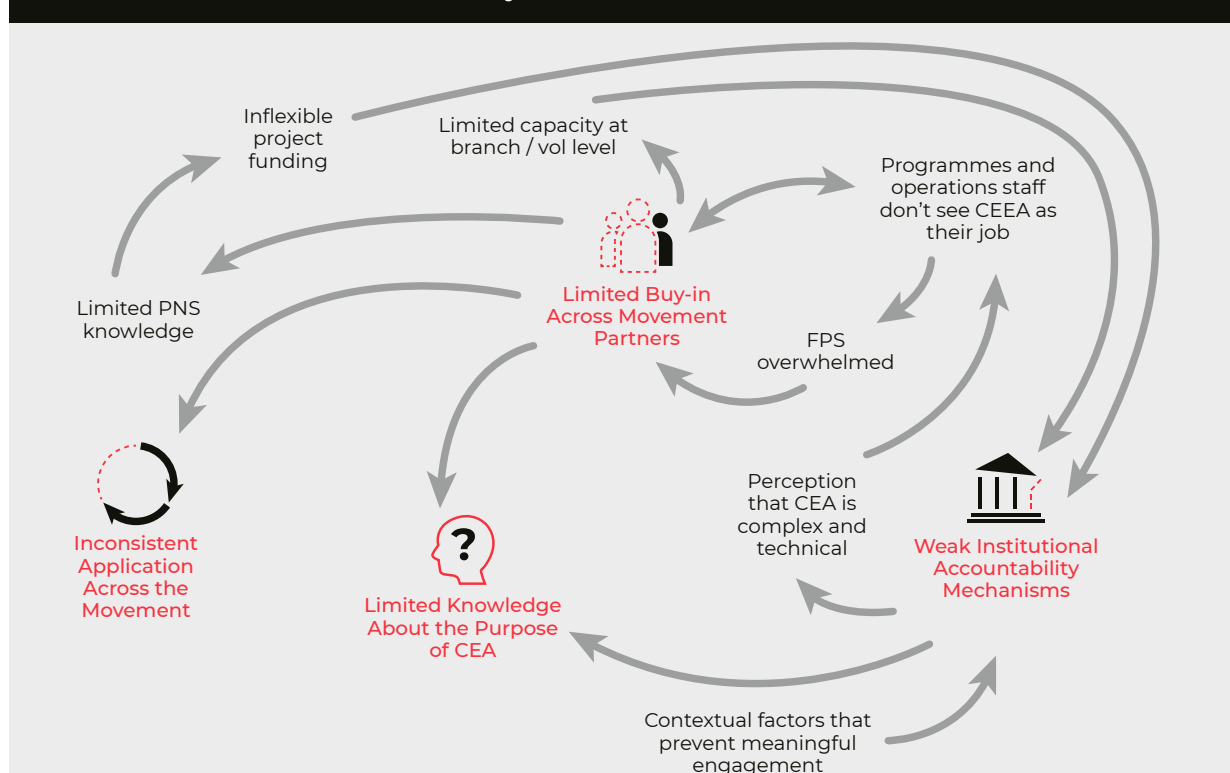
Lack of flexibility in planning

Planning processes, particularly for emergency operations, often lack the time or financial resources required for proper consultation with communities during the design phase. More often than not, the programme proposal or plan is written in the office, with little involvement of community members. Therefore, proposals do not always take community or volunteer perspectives into account, which goes against the Movement’s commitment to engage, listen, and be responsive to local needs. One Nigeria Red Cross staff explained: *“Usually community engagement and accountability is brought in at the end, but it needs to be at the beginning.”* An IFRC staff member said: *“When designing the project, we are copying and pasting from previous experience. We do not have time to engage.”*

Limited ability to adapt based on community input

Rigid internal and donor processes can make it difficult for programme and operations staff to respond to changes in community priorities or context. This puts frontline staff in a frustrating position where they are being asked to ‘listen’ and ‘be accountable’ to affected people, but they are not able to make changes based on feedback from the community. When limited time is given to consult communities before submitting donor proposals, or when donor conditions are too rigid to allow National Societies to adapt to changing needs in the community, it is nearly impossible for the National Society to truly be accountable to the communities they serve.

IMAGE 8: Weak institutional accountability mechanisms



G. Accountability can challenge culture or traditional structures

In many contexts, people explained how culture and traditional community structures and processes is a barrier to strengthening accountability mechanisms. For example, social hierarchy in communities can mean that information does not reach everyone or can lead to an unfair distribution of aid items. Culturally, feedback might be viewed as something negative or a means of highlighting the wrongs of others and this can undermine efforts to establish functioning feedback and complaints systems, internally and externally. When efforts to strengthen community engagement approaches challenge the status quo or threaten traditional power structures, National Societies can find it difficult to navigate the situation.

A challenge to traditional structures

In Nigeria, for example, people noted that the National Society assumes that community members understand and know about the Red Cross and its activities. However, many of the community members and volunteers felt that they did not understand the mandate, goals, and timelines of the Red Cross and its projects. Women and youth explained that information about the National Society is almost always shared with male community leaders. In this case, adhering only to social norms for sharing information, means other groups do not always know the activities and ambitions of the Red Cross. One woman explained: *"Most of the [Red Cross] messages go to men, but then widows don't get the information because they have no one who will share it with them."*

MALAWI: Using community engagement to tackle corruption

Cultural barriers hindered the Malawi Red Cross' efforts to be more accountable to communities. Community members described established practices of favouritism within the community, whereby community leaders would replace those on distribution lists with the names of relatives. This issue was further compounded by cultural barriers to sharing feedback. In Malawi, negative feedback is not culturally acceptable, and this made it difficult for people to feel willing and safe to bring cases of corruption to Malawi Red Cross' attention. When floods hit in March 2019, the National Society addressed this through several measures:

- Volunteers were trained on community engagement approaches;
- Information was shared widely on what people should receive and why; and
- Confidential and easily accessible feedback systems were established.

As a result, the Malawi Red Cross was able to prevent several cases of corruption or intimidation by community leaders and ensure the most vulnerable, such as female-headed households, were able to receive the support they needed. In one instance, a community leader replaced three women's names on the distribution list with his relatives. However, as the women had been informed of their rights, what they should receive and the options for providing feedback and complaints, they were able to raise the issue with the National Society and have it resolved. Based on this experience, Malawi Red Cross will also expand its community engagement activities to include briefings for community leaders, to ensure they understand the National Society's mandate and zero-tolerance approach to corruption.

Cultural and institutional fears of feedback

Cultural fears of or reluctance to give and receive feedback weakens internal and external accountability. Staff, volunteers, and community members alike expressed challenges related to providing and receiving honest feedback. For staff, feedback can be seen as a criticism of their work, and not something that helps the organization to improve. One IFRC staff member said: *"The National Society might have a phobia about this because a feedback mechanism can give sensitive information and people take it personally and are resistant to it."*

Several people inside the Movement also noted that feedback can challenge institutional power structures, and therefore is often frowned upon. Fear to question existing power dynamics were not just felt by staff of National Societies but were also discussed by staff at headquarters of partner National Societies and the IFRC. One partner National Society staff said: *"Community engagement and accountability is scary, because it challenges what exists and calls for change. But all National Societies need this type of challenge, because it is the only way to remain relevant. To remain relevant, we must think about how to deal with the feedback we get. We have taken our ability to work with communities for granted for all these years."*

Community members are often afraid that providing negative feedback could mean that they stop receiving goods and services. In Burundi, for example, the research encountered a notable discomfort from communities about giving and receiving feedback. Due to many socio-political factors, people tend to shy away from sharing information or complaining about things. Community members largely thought the National Society's work was good and were fearful that if they complained they would stop receiving support

NIGERIA: Community engagement can challenge organizational power structures

In Nigeria, several people explained that fear of feedback was the primary reason why some Branch Secretaries were reluctant to share the toll-free line with community members and volunteers. A senior manager said: *"Branches don't want feedback mechanisms because they feel that beneficiaries will report them, or volunteers will report bad behaviours."* In response to this challenge a senior manager noted: *"The senior management team is trying to push on feedback because it needs to come from leadership. Senior management going to branches and pushing it forward helps to carry along the board."*



STRATEGIC CHANGES, ACTIONS AND STEPS

Throughout the force field analysis workshops, key informant interviews and focus group discussions, participants also suggested recommendations and solutions to overcoming the key barriers (presented in [Section 4](#)) to strengthening community engagement and accountability across the Africa Region. These solutions were analysed to identify key themes, patterns, and broader institutional changes that could have a positive impact on the way community engagement and accountability is institutionalized and supported by the Movement in Africa. Based on the analysis, five high-level strategic changes emerged, that could unblock the barriers to a stronger, more systematic approach to engaging and being accountable to people in Africa.

Like the system maps above, these strategic changes are highly connected and mutually reinforcing so progress in one area can facilitate progress in another. For example, increasing evidence of the impact of community engagement on programme quality could help increase staff and leadership buy-in and understanding. This in turn can lead to greater prioritization of commitments to accountability within strategies, plans and budgets. Strategic changes can thus have direct, positive effects on multiple barriers at once, as well as indirect positive effects on other barriers in the larger system. These strategic changes are system-wide shifts that cannot be accomplished by one action or one group, but involve collective and collaborative efforts by the IFRC, National Societies, partner National Societies, and the ICRC, at all levels and across all departments. This is not a strategy for CEA staff only, but a strategy for the Movement in Africa as a whole. It demonstrates how everyone has a role to play in institutionalizing community engagement to ensure that all Movement members are consistently and meaningfully accountable to the people served.

In this section, each strategic change ³¹ is followed by a short description of how it connects to the enabling factors and barriers discussed earlier in this strategy. Listed below are key actions that, if taken, can help achieve the desired change. Each key action is broken down into several action steps. **While everyone can contribute to these activities**, the strategy outlines **who (organization and role)** ³² **is best placed to take a lead** on each activity, and suggests the level of prioritization (high, medium, or low) the action should be given in terms of its impact on overcoming the key barriers to institutionalizing community engagement and accountability in Africa. The list of actions and concrete steps, and their level of prioritization, is based on feedback collected from IFRC, National Society and African National Society staff during a series of workshops to test the findings of the CEA Africa strategy.

The changes, actions and steps described below are not prescriptive; rather, they are designed to serve as a guide to Movement members. Actions can be adapted by Movement members based on their context and their existing progress towards institutionalizing community engagement and accountability. These actions are not exhaustive: there are many additional actions, large and small, that can also contribute to helping the Movement overcome current obstacles and ones that have yet to emerge. Finally, the following section should help everyone to see how the individual actions they take can contribute to a broader change across the Movement. ³³

³¹ They are presented in no particular order of importance but numbered for the purposes of reference only.

³² Who is broken down into agencies – IFRC Global, Africa Region, Cluster, partner National Societies, Africa National Societies, ICRC – and then by level or position within the institution – CEA focal points or teams, leadership, branch staff, volunteers, programme and operation staff, etc.

³³ Annex E includes one-pagers for each strategic change and accompanying action steps.

5 STRATEGIC CHANGES

1

Strengthen understanding of and capacity to implement community engagement and accountability approaches across the Movement.

2

Integrate community engagement and accountability into Red Cross Red Crescent ways of working so it becomes a standard approach for all staff and volunteers.

3

Increase documentation of success and lessons learned to enhance Movement-wide understanding and ownership of community engagement and accountability.

4

Increase organizational support and resourcing to institutionalize and implement community engagement and accountability.

5

Promote a culture of accountability internally among Movement members **and externally** with communities and partners.

KEY TO “WHO” LEADS

The institutionalization of community engagement and accountability requires effort and strategic engagement from all Movement-members. In the action steps below, roles have been identified for the actor and organizations that must spearhead the recommendation.

LEVEL (marked as bold)	Leadership	Senior Management, Secretary Generals, Deputy Secretary Generals, Directors of Programs, Governance, Heads of Departments
	CEA Focal Points	Staff who lead or work related to community engagement and accountability
	Technical Teams	Program and operations technical staff in health, WASH, disaster response etc.
	Human Resources	Staff working in HR departments
	PMER/MEAL	Staff working in the planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) or monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) departments
ORGANIZATION (marked underneath the level)	IFRC	All IFRC – Global, Region, and Cluster or Country
	IFRC Global	Geneva
	IFRC Region	Africa Region
	IFRC Cluster or Country	Clusters and country offices in the Africa Region
	PNS	Headquarters and country or regional delegations
	ANS	African National Societies

STRATEGIC CHANGE #1:

Strengthen understanding of and capacity to implement community engagement and accountability approaches across the Movement.

Greater understanding of community engagement and accountability and its importance to programme quality, trust and sustainability will lead to increased prioritization, resources and implementation of the approach. If the Movement can strengthen staff and leadership's understanding of and capacity to implement community engagement and accountability approaches, this change can help overcome other barriers, including:

- Lack of integration into policies and processes;
- Limited capacity at branch level to meaningfully engage communities;
- Lack of evidence demonstrating the impact; and
- The notion that CEA is 'not my job'.

Such change will require a strategic focus on building understanding and capacity-strengthening at all levels and across all Movement members working in Africa.

The following are priority actions:

ACTION 1: Build understanding of community engagement and accountability, and its importance for enhanced programme quality, trust, and sustainability amongst senior leadership within IFRC, African National Societies, and partner National Societies

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Create and roll out a specialized CEA briefing package for senior leadership to enhance understanding and buy-in. Use messaging tailored to leadership, draw on evidence of impact of CEA and refer to the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions on CEA. ³⁴	CEA Focal Points IFRC Global	HIGH
Develop and roll out a CEA briefing package for NS Governance members based on the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions on CEA and using evidence of the impact of CEA.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	HIGH
Discuss levels of organizational accountability to communities, and progress against meeting the Movement-Wide Minimum Commitments and Actions on CEA, in senior leadership meetings and consider making this a key performance indicator .	Leadership IFRC, ANS, PNS	HIGH
Establish a group of CEA champions , including SGs, Presidents, and senior leaders who can advocate for the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions on CEA during high level meetings and build buy-in and support amongst their peers.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Global	MEDIUM

³⁴ Make it short, easily accessible, and focus on issues of importance to senior leadership (e.g. example integrity, reputation, relevance and fulfilling their mandate).

ACTION 2: Enhance understanding of community engagement and accountability, and how to practically implement it within programmes and operations, amongst technical teams across the Movement.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Roll out the branch-level training and feedback starter kit to NS staff, volunteers, and branch governance ³⁵ .	CEA Focal Points ANS	HIGH
Integrate CEA into other sector and cross-cutting trainings (such as health, WASH, shelter, PGI, surge, ERU etc.).	Technical Teams IFRC, ANS, PNS (with support from CEA focal points)	HIGH
Roll out the CEA 4-day training and planning workshops to National Societies who have not received it (HQ and branch management) as the entry point to strengthening CEA in the organization	CEA Focal Points IFRC Cluster & Region	MEDIUM
Deliver at least one regional level 3-day CEA training of trainers for IFRC and PNS staff working in Africa, and ANS staff, every year. ³⁶	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	MEDIUM
Develop a pool of CEA trainers who can be leveraged to deliver CEA trainings within their own National Society or delegation, and to others in the region.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	MEDIUM
Continue to build the pool of trained CEA Surge personnel who can be deployed to support emergency operations through CEA Surge trainings.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Global	MEDIUM
Simplify the existing CEA Guide and toolkit	CEA Focal Points IFRC Global	MEDIUM
Conduct periodic follow-up with participants from previous CEA trainings (or identify additional incentive approaches) to document milestones/achievements and provide additional support as needed, for example after 1 month, 3 months, 6 months and 1 year. ³⁷	CEA Focal Points IFRC Cluster & Region	LOW
Develop a short e-learning course for CEA in multiple languages	CEA Focal Points IFRC Global	LOW

³⁵ Noting this will need to be translated into local languages and adapted to suit the context.

³⁶ The application process for these trainings should ask the applicant to explain why they need CEA training and how they will apply the learning in their role. In addition, line managers could be asked to sign a consent form that states they will support the applicant post-training to strengthen accountability in their work.

³⁷ Participants should be encouraged and supported to implement and cascade the learning they have gained to their teams and leadership and follow the steps to institutionalization outlined in Section 6 of this report.

ACTION 3: Increase technical support and mentoring to African National Societies to institutionalize community engagement and accountability into their ways of working and integrate within their programmes and operations.

ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY
Shift the balance of support from trainings to a mentoring approach to support NS to institutionalize accountability approaches into policies, systems, and practice. This would involve regular field missions by CEA technical staff to work with selected NS to help them develop a CEA policy or strategy , that sets out what the organization commits to do and what is expected of staff. ³⁸	CEA Focal Points IFRC Cluster & Region	HIGH
Roll out and implement the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to CEA within all organizations.	ALL	HIGH
Develop clear, simple, and achievable minimum actions and sector-specific tools for CEA in emergency response operations, based on the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	HIGH
Map which PNS are supporting CEA in which countries and could sustain technical support to ANS.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	MEDIUM
PNS with CEA expertise to lead on support to NS to institutionalize CEA, in countries where they have long standing bilateral partnerships and in-country teams. ³⁹	CEA Focal Points & Technical Teams PNS	LOW

ACTION 4: Facilitate peer learning and exchange on community engagement and accountability approaches.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Support peer learning visits between NS to share best practices and learn from one another how to more effectively institutionalize and implement CEA.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region & Cluster (with support from PNS)	MEDIUM
Identify and promote peer learning platforms that allow Movement members to share information about how they are implementing CEA. ⁴⁰	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	MEDIUM

ACTION 5: Improve coordination and communication among Movement members who are supporting community engagement and accountability efforts.

ACTION STEP	WHO	PRIORITY
Establish a coordination platform where Movement partners can discuss and plan efforts to institutionalize CEA in programmes or operations within a particular country or context, including agreeing priorities, roles and responsibilities. ⁴¹	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	HIGH
Follow the CEA Guide, toolkit, and Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to ensure there is a consistent approach to CEA across Africa, especially when multiple partners support one NS.	CEA Focal Points & Technical Teams PNS, IFRC, ANS	MEDIUM
Establish a CEA Africa working group among PNS, ANS, IFRC, and ICRC to coordinate efforts. This could be co-chaired by IFRC, ICRC, a NS, and a PNS.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	LOW

³⁸ This also includes helping National Societies integrate CEA approaches into their strategy and annual plans and existing policies, guidelines and tools. This process requires a thorough assessment of how the National Society functions in order to understand how to best institutionalize CEA as a core organizational and programmatic approach.

³⁹ This would expand the number of National Societies who can receive the level of hands-on technical support they need to institutionalize CEA into their policies, systems and practices. However the priority of this action step would be dependent on the PNS' interest in CEA.

⁴⁰ For example, the [Community Engagement Hub](#), Africa CEA monthly newsletter, Facebook page and WhatsApp group.

⁴¹ For example, a Slack group, with channels for countries and regions.

STRATEGIC CHANGE #2:

Integrate community engagement and accountability into ways of working so it becomes a standard approach for all staff and volunteers.

Community engagement is not a sensitization campaign, or the responsibility of one department, or an emergency-only activity. It is part of everything that everyone in the Movement does every day. From the way that front-line volunteers speak with communities to the way an operations manager decides which priorities to focus on, everyone working for and with the Movement needs to be engaging with and accountable to those they serve. By mainstreaming community engagement and accountability expectations into all existing strategies, policies, processes, and the trainings and guidelines of other sectors, it will become part of how programme and operations are designed, developed, implemented, monitored, evaluated, and closed.

If the Movement can integrate community engagement and accountability into its ways of working so it becomes a standard approach for all staff and volunteers, this change can help overcome other barriers, including:

- Inconsistent approaches to accountability across the Movement;
- The perception that CEA is too technical and complex;
- An ad hoc approach to how the Movement engages communities;
- The perception that CEA is a standalone approach; and
- A lack of prioritization of accountability to communities.

The following priority actions can help integrate community engagement and accountability into ways of working so it becomes a standard approach for all staff and volunteers:

ACTION 1: Clearly articulate community engagement and accountability in all strategic and annual plans.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Ensure CEA is clearly articulated in IFRC's strategy 2030 with specific outcomes, outputs, and indicators, which are reflected in annual and emergency response plan templates.	Leadership IFRC Global	HIGH
Include CEA in the revision of organizational strategies and annual plans .	Leadership ANS, IFRC, PNS	HIGH
Integrate CEA into existing, and new, long-term programmes , including establishing feedback and complaints mechanisms.	Technical Teams IFRC, ANS, PNS	HIGH
Collect and share examples of how different NS have integrated CEA into their strategic and annual plans so they can serve as a model to others.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	MEDIUM

ACTION 2: Integrate community engagement approaches into existing and future, policies, guidelines, and operating procedures

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Integrate CEA into emergency response plan of action tools and templates.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Global	HIGH
Integrate CEA into all new guidelines, policies and toolkits being developed. Create a pool of CEA expert reviewers to support this process.	CEA Focal Points IFRC, ANS	HIGH

ACTION 3: Consider the location for community engagement focal points and ensure that they are best placed to support programmes and operations.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Review the location of CEA within NS, PNS, and IFRC to determine if it is in the best place to facilitate institutionalization and integration within programmes and operations.	Leadership ANS, IFRC, PNS	MEDIUM

STRATEGIC CHANGE #3:

Increase documentation of successes and lessons learned to enhance Movement-wide understanding and ownership of community engagement and accountability.

It takes creativity and curiosity to capture the impact of community engagement and participation—it is less tangible than a food distribution or emergency shelter, but directly enables the Movement's mission. Therefore, extra effort must be made to systematically document how community engagement is being implemented, and the impact it has on the relationship with the community, organizational reputation, and programme quality, effectiveness, and outcomes.

Making the evidence of the impact of community engagement more readily available, and appropriately packaged for the respective audiences, increases understanding and willingness to integrate the approach into the Movement's ways of working. It is critical that this evidence is presented and shared in a way that is tailored to and captures the attention of different audiences. For example, the information that senior leaders require to make key decisions needs to look quite different from the information that technical staff use to design and implement their programmes.

If the Movement can increase documentation of successes and lessons learned to enhance Movement-wide understanding and ownership of community engagement and accountability, this change can help overcome other barriers, including:

- Limited institutional learning;
- Weak institutional accountability mechanisms;
- Limited knowledge about the purpose of CEA; and
- Lack of prioritization of CEA.

The following are priority actions:

ACTION 1: More systematically collect and analyse evidence about the impact of stronger engagement with communities on programme and operational quality.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Document case studies that capture lessons learned, best practices, and successes when CEA is integrated into programmes and operations.	CEA Focal Points IFRC, ANS, PNS	HIGH
Ensure CEA best practices from operations and programmes are captured and translated into training, practical tools, and guidelines that can be used by other programmes and operations in the future.	CEA Focal Points IFRC	HIGH
Develop and share core monitoring indicators that capture levels of community engagement in programmes and operations.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	MEDIUM
Include indicators to measure the quality and impact of CEA in monitoring and evaluation plans for all programmes and operations.	PMER/MEAL Teams IFRC, ANS, PNS	MEDIUM
Provide additional training on data collection and analysis to CEA focal points in IFRC and NS to equip them to better collect evidence of impact.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	LOW
Conduct and commission research more frequently to demonstrate the impact of CEA on programme and operational quality and address key gaps in knowledge and practice. Investigate building relationships with academic institutions and hosting researchers and students.	CEA Focal Points IFRC & PNS	LOW

ACTION 2: More systematically share evidence about the impact of community engagement and accountability on programme and operational quality with decision-makers at all levels.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Identify the best channels and creative methods to share evidence of the impact of CEA on a regular basis with different audiences (governance, partners, volunteers, staff, etc.).	CEA Focal Points IFRC & PNS	HIGH
Widely share CEA success stories , case studies, research and lessons learned through traditional and new mediums within and outside of the Movement, including on the Community Engagement online hub .	CEA Focal Points IFRC Global & Region (with Communication support)	HIGH
Profile examples of community engagement impact and success with external partners by publishing articles, presenting at conferences, and event and hosting information-sharing webinars. ⁴²	CEA Focal Points IFRC & PNS	LOW

⁴² This also provides an opportunity for the Movement to learn from others.

STRATEGIC CHANGE #4:

Increase organizational support and resourcing to institutionalize and implement the community engagement and accountability approach.

An important component of capacity is not just technical knowledge, but also having the human and financial resources to put that knowledge into practice. Strengthening accountability to communities requires an investment in placing the right personnel into focal point positions in the IFRC, National Societies, and partner National Societies. Having staff with appropriate skills and enthusiasm will create greater opportunities to integrate community engagement into all organizational and programmatic approaches. If staff are not available to drive this work forward it quickly becomes forgotten amidst the list of other competing priorities. Activities focused on increasing community engagement and participation cannot solely be tied to a specific programme or emergency, because when CEA is funded this way, the work often stops when the programme does. By providing more stable and institutional human, and financial resources in support of strengthening community engagement and accountability, Movement members across Africa and globally can positively shift the way of working, so that it becomes a core approach, rather than something implemented in an ad hoc way.

Increasing organizational support and resourcing can positively affect many barriers, including:

- Lack of strategies or policies to guide community engagement;
- Lack of sustainability outside of emergencies;
- Poor understanding of the approach; and
- Limited number of CEA focal points.

The following are priority actions:

ACTION 1: Appoint qualified CEA focal points to support quality engagement with and accountability to communities.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Identify or hire CEA focal points within NS HQ and branches whose role it is to institutionalize CEA within the National Society and provide technical support to colleagues to integrate the approach in programme and operations.	Leadership ANS	HIGH
Identify and support a CEA focal point in every cluster and ensure the continuation of the support team at the Regional level .	Leadership IFRC Region & Cluster	HIGH
Identify and support CEA focal points at HQ and country level within PNS.	Leadership PNS	MEDIUM

ACTION 2: Budget for community engagement and accountability adequately and appropriately at all levels of the Movement.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Work collectively to identify opportunities for large scale resource mobilization to support work to institutionalize CEA.	CEA Focal Points IFRC, PNS	HIGH
Include funding to institutionalize CEA in annual budgets at all levels. ⁴³	Leadership IFRC, ANS, PNS	HIGH
Include CEA in programme donor proposals and budgets.	Technical Teams IFRC, ANS, PNS	HIGH
Establish a commitment that all programme and operational budgets include a minimum percentage for CEA before leadership signs off.	Leadership IFRC, ANS, PNS	MEDIUM

ACTION 3: Offer African National Societies more consistent financial support to institutionalize community engagement and accountability into their ways of working (and not just specific programmes).

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Funding should be made available to ANS who are working to institutionalize CEA . These funds can help employ CEA focal points, deliver trainings, and integrate CEA into strategies, policies, and processes. ⁴⁴	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region & PNS	HIGH
Include CEA in all partnership agreements between ANS and PNS. ⁴⁵	Leadership PNS	HIGH
PNS who fund bilateral programmes should ensure that funding for CEA is not limited to the branches where they work but can be used at an institutional level to benefit the whole NS whenever possible.	Leadership PNS	MEDIUM

⁴³ For example, for activities such as trainings, policy development, establishing national feedback and complaints systems and policy development.

⁴⁴ Ensure that information about the fund is widely shared, so National Societies are aware it exists. Make sure the reporting mechanisms on this funding are not cumbersome.

⁴⁵ Support for this action can come from the resolution on Movement Wide Minimum Commitments and Actions for CEA.

STRATEGIC CHANGE #5:

Promote a culture of accountability internally among Movement members and externally with communities and partners.

Evidence suggests that strong internal accountability systems between leadership and staff and volunteers leads to a deeper understanding of the value of accountability throughout the organization, which translates into enhanced external accountability practices with communities. When staff and volunteers personally experience the benefits of improved engagement and accountability within their working lives, it becomes easier for them to reflect this approach in the way they work with communities and explain its importance to community leaders. Essentially, the Movement needs 'to walk the talk' internally if it wants to be accountable externally.

Promoting a culture of accountability internally, and externally with communities, can positively affect many other barriers, including:

- Weak institutional accountability mechanisms;
- Limited buy-in throughout the Movement;
- Limited understanding of the purpose of CEA; and
- Community engagement not being prioritized.

The following are key actions that seek to address cultural barriers to accountability:

ACTION 1: Integrate responsibilities to work in partnership with communities into hiring, induction, and performance appraisals for all staff.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Integrate community engagement into staff induction processes (volunteer, staff, and governance inductions).	Human Resources IFRC, ANS, PNS	HIGH
Integrate core behavioural competencies that support good community engagement (e.g. listening, empathy, respect) into all relevant job descriptions and volunteer roles and responsibilities and assess candidates on these competencies during the hiring process ⁴⁶ .	Human Resources IFRC, ANS, PNS	MEDIUM
Ensure staff are assessed on these core community-facing behavioural competencies during the appraisal process.	Human Resources / Managers IFRC, ANS, PNS	MEDIUM

⁴⁶ See CEA Toolkit [Tool 21: CEA responsibilities for job descriptions](#)

ACTION 2: Strengthen and demonstrate what good accountability looks like internally among all staff and volunteers⁴⁷.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	PRIORITY
Strengthen internal communication processes , particularly among HQ, branches, and volunteers, to ensure they are supported to be the link between the NS and communities .	Leadership & CEA Focal Points ANS	HIGH
Establish internal mechanisms, such as monthly volunteer meetings, to ensure community volunteers are met with regularly and their feedback is listened to and acted upon.	Leadership (Inc. Branch) & CEA Focal Points ANS	HIGH
Make time during programme and operational team meeting to discuss community feedback , and how to respond and act on it so staff start to value its importance. ⁴⁸	Technical Teams ANS, PNS, IFRC Country Teams	HIGH
Establish internal feedback and complaints mechanisms for staff and volunteers and ensure leadership use feedback constructively and as a tool to improve. ⁴⁹	Leadership IFRC, ANS	MEDIUM
Introduce 360-degree appraisals as part of performance management system, where managers are appraised by their teams on how they have supported and been accountable to them.	Leadership IFRC & ANS	MEDIUM

ACTION 3: Raise awareness in communities about their right to provide feedback and the organization's responsibility to be accountable.

ACTION STEP	WHO	PRIORITY
Sensitize communities about their right to give feedback and get responses (once a functioning feedback and complaints mechanism is in place).	CEA Focal Points ANS	HIGH
Brief community leaders on NS commitments to working in a transparent and participatory way with communities. ⁵⁰	CEA Focal Points & Branch Staff ANS	HIGH

⁴⁷ The CEA focal point will have critical supporting role in implementing these actions and should work closely with volunteering, organizational and National Society development teams, where these are in place.

⁴⁸ Ensure staff are not punished for any negative community feedback but rather informed that negative feedback is useful information which can help the programme or operation improve.

⁴⁹ Modelling the value of feedback through an internal system would support staff to see that people have a right to give feedback and that it can benefit the organization and how this approach should be replicated in communities.

⁵⁰ Discuss the willingness of the NS to respond to and follow up on feedback and complaints.

ACTION 4: Adapt internal systems to support stronger community participation in planning.

ACTION STEP	WHO	PRIORITY
Advocate for and build more flexibility into donor proposals to allow changes to be made more easily when community needs and priorities change. Share examples of where this has been done successfully. ⁵¹	Technical Teams ANS, PNS, IFRC	HIGH
Make it mandatory that a feedback and complaints system is established and functioning within all programmes funded by PNS and IFRC.	Technical Teams IFRC, ANS, PNS	HIGH
Develop systems to ensure community feedback from previous programmes is stored and readily available to inform the design of future programmes and operations.	CEA Focal Point ANS	MEDIUM
Document and test innovative approaches to increasing community participation and ensure this learning is shared widely within the Movement.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	MEDIUM
Allow enough time and funding for community consultations during the development of new proposals and programmes.	Technical Teams ANS, PNS, IFRC	MEDIUM
Create a fund NS can use to carry out initial consultations before the proposal is submitted to ensure communities can participate from the outset. ⁵²	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	LOW
Document when donors are not supportive of changes to programmes or operations based on community feedback and use this to advocate for changes in donor policy.	CEA Focal Points IFRC	LOW

ACTION 5: Promote organizational commitments to be accountable to communities.

ACTION STEP	WHO	PRIORITY
Use the Movement-Wide Minimum Commitments and Actions for CEA to develop organizational-level CEA policies that set out clear commitments and provide direction and expectations to staff and volunteers, as well as integrating CEA into existing policies.	Leadership ANS, IFRC, PNS (with support from CEA Focal Points)	MEDIUM
Develop guidance on how to run CEA policy development workshops with ANS so that all PNS take a uniform approach to this process, including a review process to ensure policies are being implemented and have impact.	CEA Focal Points IFRC Region	MEDIUM

⁵¹ For example, the use of the 'community project' budget line in Madagascar.

⁵² This would also require IFRC systems to be fast enough to transfer the funds to National Societies to be able to use them between the call for proposal and submission date.



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Strengthening community engagement and accountability is a Movement-wide responsibility. However, when something is everyone's responsibility, it can quickly become no one's responsibility. Therefore, this section takes the key actions from the previous section and presents them as a visual roadmap for each organization, outlining key milestones and who is responsible for meeting them.

These organizational 'roadmaps' are presented as a journey, with the actions likely to have the biggest impact first, followed by medium and then longer-term actions last. In reality, the journey to strengthen community engagement and accountability is not a linear process. The actions, who should lead on them and their level of priority will vary from organization to organization. Actions can just as effectively happen in a different order or simultaneously, depending on the context of each organization. Actions happening across the Movement at different levels will also reinforce the positive impact of one another.

Not all action steps from [Section 5](#) have been included in these organizational roadmaps—some have been consolidated together to make the maps easier to navigate. These organizational roadmaps should be viewed as a way for each actor in the Movement to have, at a glance, an overview of some of the key actions they can take to institutionalize community engagement and accountability within their organization and contribute to overall stronger accountability within the Movement in Africa.

HOW TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY IN IFRC



Build leadership buy-in

- Develop briefing packages for IFRC leadership and National Society Governance
- Make accountability to communities a key performance indicator, and discuss at leadership meetings
- Establish a group of champions amongst leadership to advocate to their peers



Secure funding

- Work with partners to mobilize financial resources to institutionalize CEA
- Include in donor proposals and budgets
- Make a rule that all budgets include a % for community engagement



Secure staff

- Put staff in place to lead on CEA
- Train more CEA Rapid Response personnel

Train staff and volunteers

- Roll out the branch level training and feedback starter kit with National Societies
- Include community engagement in sector and surge trainings
- Roll out trainings to National Societies, IFRC and partner National Society staff new to CEA
- Create a pool of trainers



Integrate community engagement into

- Strategies, annual plans and budgets
- Existing and new policies, guidelines and toolkits
- Emergency response tools and templates
- All programmes, and include a feedback and complaints system



Provide technical support

- Roll out the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to CEA
- Mentor National Societies to institutionalize the approach
- Develop clear, achievable minimum actions for community engagement in emergencies
- Support peer learning between National Societies



Adapt internal processes

- Discuss how to act on community feedback in programme and operational meetings
- Build flexibility into donor proposals to respond to changing community needs
- Consult communities during proposal development



Improve coordination

- Improve coordination and information sharing between IFRC, partners and National Societies



Collect and share evidence

- Capture and share evidence showing the impact of community engagement
- Use evidence to inform future programmes and operations



Monitor impact

- Develop and share core accountability monitoring indicators
- Include indicators to measure accountability in programmes and operations



Improve internal accountability

- Include community engagement responsibilities in job descriptions, inductions and appraisals
- Introduce 360° appraisals and an internal feedback and complaints system



A roadmap to strengthen community engagement and accountability within the IFRC

IFRC Leadership: Roles and responsibilities

High priority ▼

- Discuss levels of organizational accountability, and progress against meeting the Movement-Wide Minimum Commitments and Actions on Community Engagement and Accountability, at senior leadership meetings and consider making this a key performance indicator.
- Ensure community engagement and accountability is clearly articulated in IFRC's strategy 2030 with specific outcomes, outputs, and indicators, which are reflected in annual and emergency response plan templates.
- Roll out and implement the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to Community Engagement and Accountability within all organizations.
- Include community engagement and accountability in the revision of organizational strategies and annual plans.
- Identify and support a community engagement and accountability focal point in every cluster and ensure the continuation of the support team at the Regional level.
- Include funding to institutionalize community engagement and accountability in annual budgets.⁵³
- Integrate community engagement into staff induction processes (volunteer, staff, and governance inductions).

Medium priority ▼

- Review the location of community engagement and accountability within NS, PNS, and IFRC to determine if it is in the best place to facilitate institutionalization and integration within programmes and operations.
- Establish a commitment that all programme and operational budgets include a minimum percentage for community engagement and accountability before leadership signs off.
- Integrate core behavioural competencies that support good community engagement (e.g. listening, empathy, respect) into all relevant job descriptions and volunteer roles and responsibilities and assess candidates on these competencies during the hiring process.⁵⁴
- Ensure staff are assessed on these core community-facing behavioural competencies during the appraisal process.
- Establish internal feedback and complaints mechanisms for staff and volunteers and ensure leadership use feedback constructively and as a tool to improve.⁵⁵
- Introduce 360-degree appraisals as part of performance management system, where managers are appraised by their teams on how they have supported and been accountable to them.
- Use the Movement-Wide Minimum Commitments and Actions for Community Engagement and Accountability to develop organizational-level CEA policies that set out clear commitments and provide direction and expectations to staff and volunteers, as well as integrating CEA into existing policies.

⁵³ For example, for activities such as trainings, policy development, establishing national feedback and complaints systems and policy development.

⁵⁴ See CEA Toolkit [Tool 21: CEA responsibilities for job descriptions](#)

⁵⁵ Modelling the value of feedback through an internal system would support staff to see that people have a right to give feedback and that it can benefit the organization and how this approach should be replicated in communities.

IFRC community engagement and accountability focal points in head quarters: Roles and responsibilities

High priority ▼

- Create and roll out a specialized community engagement and accountability briefing package for senior leadership to enhance understanding and buy-in. Use messaging tailored to leadership, draw on evidence of impact of community engagement and accountability and refer to the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions on Community Engagement and Accountability.⁵⁶
- Roll out and implement the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to Community Engagement and Accountability within all organizations.
- Integrate community engagement and accountability into emergency response plan of action tools and templates.
- Document case studies that capture lessons learned, best practices, and successes when community engagement is integrated into programmes and operations.
- Ensure community engagement best practices from operations and programmes are captured and translated into training, practical tools, and guidelines that can be used by other programmes and operations in the future.
- Identify the best channels and creative methods to share evidence of the impact of community engagement and accountability on a regular basis with different audiences (governance, partners, volunteers, staff, etc.).
- Widely share community engagement success stories, case studies, research and lessons learned through traditional and new mediums within and outside of the Movement, including on the community engagement online hub.
- Work collectively to identify opportunities for large scale resource mobilization to support work to institutionalize community engagement and accountability.

Medium priority ▼

- Establish a group of community engagement and accountability champions, including secretary generals, presidents and senior leaders who can advocate for the Movement-wide minimum commitments and actions on community engagement and accountability during high level meetings and build buy-in and support amongst their peers.
- Continue to build the pool of trained community engagement and accountability surge personnel who can be deployed to support emergency operations through surge trainings.
- Simplify the existing community engagement and accountability guide and toolkit
- Create a pool of community engagement and accountability reviewers who can review all new guidelines, policies and toolkits being developed and support them to have it well integrated.

⁵⁶ Make it short, easily accessible, and focus on issues of importance to senior leadership (e.g. example integrity, reputation, relevance and fulfilling their mandate).

Low priority ▼

- Develop a short e-learning course for community engagement and accountability in multiple languages
- Conduct and commission research more frequently to demonstrate the impact of community engagement and accountability on programme and operational quality and address key gaps in knowledge and practice. Investigate building relationships with academic institutions and hosting researchers and students.
- Profile examples of community engagement impact and success with external partners by publishing articles, presenting at conferences, and event and hosting information-sharing webinars.⁵⁷
- Document when donors are not supportive of changes to programmes or operations based on community feedback and use this to advocate for changes in donor policy.

⁵⁷ This also provides an opportunity for the Movement to learn from others.

IFRC community engagement and accountability focal points in Africa: Roles and responsibilities

High priority ▼

- Develop and roll out a community engagement and accountability briefing package for National Society Governance members based on the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions on Community Engagement and Accountability and using evidence of its impact.
- Shift the balance of support from trainings to a mentoring approach to support National Societies to institutionalize accountability approaches into policies, systems, and practice. This would involve regular field missions by community engagement and accountability policy or strategy, that sets out what the organization commits to do and what is expected of staff.⁵⁸
- Develop clear, simple, and achievable minimum actions and sector-specific tools for community engagement and accountability in emergency response operations, based on the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments.
- Establish a coordination platform where Movement partners can discuss and plan efforts to institutionalize community engagement and accountability in programmes or operations within a particular country or context, including agreeing priorities, roles and responsibilities.⁵⁹
- Roll out and implement the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to Community Engagement and Accountability within all organizations.
- Document case studies that capture lessons learned, best practices, and successes when community engagement is integrated into programmes and operations.
- Ensure community engagement best practices from operations and programmes are captured and translated into training, practical tools, and guidelines that can be used by other programmes and operations in the future.
- Identify the best channels and creative methods to share evidence of the impact of community engagement and accountability on a regular basis with different audiences (governance, partners, volunteers, staff, etc.).
- Widely share community engagement and accountability success stories, case studies, research and lessons learned through traditional and new mediums within and outside of the Movement, including on the community engagement online hub.
- Work collectively to identify opportunities for large scale resource mobilization to support work to institutionalize community engagement and accountability.
- Funding should be made available to African National Societies who are working to institutionalize community engagement and accountability. These funds can help employ focal points, deliver trainings, and integrate into strategies, policies, and processes.⁶⁰
- Use the community feedback starter kit⁶¹ and perception surveys to help develop feedback mechanisms and internal systems to collect, analyse, respond to, and use feedback to make improvements.

⁵⁸ This also includes helping National Societies integrate CEA approaches into their strategy and annual plans and existing policies, guidelines and tools. This process requires a thorough assessment of how the National Society functions in order to understand how to best institutionalize CEA as a core organizational and programmatic approach.

⁵⁹ For example, a Slack group, with channels for countries and regions.

⁶⁰ Ensure that information about the fund is widely shared, so National Societies are aware it exists. Make sure the reporting mechanisms on this funding are not cumbersome.

⁶¹ Contextualized to local context.

Medium priority ▼

- Roll out the community engagement and accountability four-day training and planning workshops to National Societies who have not received it (head quarters and branch management) as the entry point to strengthening community engagement and accountability in the organization
- Deliver at least one regional level three-day community engagement and accountability training of trainers for IFRC and partner National Society staff working in Africa and African National Society staff every year.⁶²
- Develop a pool of trainers who can be leveraged to deliver community engagement and accountability trainings within their own National Society or delegation and to others in the region.
- Map which partner National Societies are supporting community engagement and accountability in which countries and could sustain technical support to African National Societies.
- Collect and share examples of how different National Societies have integrated community engagement and accountability into their strategic and annual plans so they can serve as a model to others.
- Develop and share core monitoring indicators that capture levels of community engagement in programmes and operations.
- Document and test innovative approaches to increasing community participation and ensure this learning is shared widely within the Movement.
- Develop guidance on how to run community engagement and accountability policy development workshops with African National Societies so that all partner National Societies take a uniform approach to this process, including a review process to ensure policies are being implemented and have impact.

⁶² The application process for these trainings should ask the applicant to explain why they need CEA training and how they will apply the learning in their role. In addition, line managers could be asked to sign a consent form that states they will support the applicant post-training to strengthen accountability in their work.

Low priority ▼

- Conduct periodic follow-up with participants from previous community engagement and accountability trainings (or identify additional incentive approaches) to document milestones/achievements and provide additional support as needed, for example after one month, three months, six months and one year.⁶³
- Support peer learning visits between National Societies to share best practices and learn from one another how to more effectively institutionalize and implement community engagement and accountability.
- Provide additional training on data collection and analysis to community engagement and accountability focal points in IFRC and National Societies to equip them to better collect evidence of impact.
- Identify and promote peer learning platforms that allow Movement members to share information about how they are implementing community engagement and accountability.⁶⁴
- Establish a community engagement and accountability Africa working group among National Societies, IFRC and ICRC to coordinate efforts. This could be co-chaired by IFRC, ICRC, a National Society and a partner National Society.
- Conduct and commission research more frequently to demonstrate the impact of community engagement and accountability on programme and operational quality and address key gaps in knowledge and practice. Investigate building relationships with academic institutions and hosting researchers and students.
- Profile examples of community engagement impact and success with external partners by publishing articles, presenting at conferences, and event and hosting information-sharing webinars.⁶⁵
- Create a fund community engagement and accountability can use to carry out initial consultations before the proposal is submitted to ensure communities can participate from the outset.⁶⁶
- Document when donors are not supportive of changes to programmes or operations based on community feedback and use this to advocate for changes in donor policy.

⁶³ Participants should be encouraged and supported to implement and cascade the learning they have gained to their teams and leadership and follow the steps to institutionalization outlined in Section 6 of this report.

⁶⁴ For example, the [Community Engagement Hub](#), Africa CEA monthly newsletter, Facebook page and WhatsApp group.

⁶⁵ This also provides an opportunity for the Movement to learn from others.

⁶⁶ This would also require IFRC systems to be fast enough to transfer the funds to National Societies to be able to use them between the call for proposal and submission date.

IFRC technical teams Africa: Roles and responsibilities

High priority ▼

- Integrate community engagement and accountability into other sector and cross-cutting trainings (such as health; water, sanitation and hygiene; shelter; protection, gender and inclusion; surge; emergency response units, etc.).
- Integrate community engagement and accountability into existing, and new, long-term programmes to test out approaches and find out what works in different context.
- Include community engagement and accountability in programme donor proposals and budgets.
- Advocate for and build more flexibility into donor proposals to allow changes to be made more easily when community needs and priorities change. Share examples of where this has been done successfully.⁶⁷
- Ensure that a feedback and complaints system is established and functioning within all bilateral programmes funded by partner National Societies and in all IFRC-funded programmes.

Medium priority ▼

- Use the community engagement and accountability guide, toolkit, and Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to ensure there is a consistent approach to community engagement and accountability across Africa, especially when multiple partners support one National Societies.
- Include indicators to measure the quality and impact of community engagement and accountability in monitoring and evaluation plans for all programmes and operations.
- Make time during programme and operational team meeting to discuss community feedback, and how to respond and act on it so staff start to value its importance.⁶⁸
- Allow enough time and funding for community consultations during the development of new proposals and programmes.

⁶⁷ For example, the use of the 'community project' budget line in Madagascar.

⁶⁸ Ensure staff are not punished for any negative community feedback but rather informed that negative feedback is useful information which can help the programme or operation improve.

HOW TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY IN AFRICAN NATIONAL SOCIETIES



Build leadership buy-in

- Make accountability to communities a key performance indicator and discuss at leadership meetings
- Develop a CEA policy for the National Society
- Deliver awareness sessions to Governance

Secure staff

- Identify community engagement focal points in HQ and branches



Integrate community engagement into

- Strategies, annual plans and budgets
- Existing and new policies, guidelines and toolkits
- All programmes, and include a feedback and complaints system
- Implement the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to CEA in your National Society
- Check community engagement is in the best place to support programmes and operations



Train staff and volunteers

- Roll out the branch level training and feedback starter kit
- Include community engagement in sector and surge trainings



Secure funding

- Include in donor proposals and budgets
- Encourage partner National Societies to include and fund community engagement and accountability in bilateral programmes
- Make a rule that all budgets include a % for community engagement



Adapt internal processes

- Discuss how to act on community feedback in programme and operational meetings
- Build flexibility into donor proposals to respond to changing community needs
- Consult communities during proposal development
- Collect and save community feedback and use to inform future programmes



Promote accountability in communities

- Sensitize communities on their right to give feedback
- Brief community leaders on the National Society's commitment to transparency and participation



Improve internal accountability

- Strengthen internal communication with staff and branches
- Meet with volunteers regularly and listen to and act on their feedback
- Include community engagement responsibilities in job descriptions, inductions and appraisals
- Introduce 360° appraisals and an internal feedback and complaints system

Collect and share evidence

- Capture and share evidence showing the impact of community engagement
- Include indicators to measure accountability in programmes and operations



A roadmap to strengthen community engagement and accountability within African National Societies

African National Society leadership: Roles and responsibilities

High priority ▼

- Discuss levels of organizational accountability, and progress against meeting the Movement-Wide Minimum Commitments and Actions on Community Engagement and Accountability, in senior leadership meetings and consider making this a key performance indicator.
- Roll out and implement the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to Community Engagement and Accountability within all organizations.
- Include community engagement and accountability in the revision of organizational strategies and annual plans.
- Identify or hire focal points within National Society head quarters and branches whose role it is to institutionalize community engagement and accountability and provide technical support to colleagues to integrate the approach in programme and operations.
- Include funding to institutionalize community engagement and accountability in annual budgets.⁶⁹
- Integrate community engagement into staff induction processes (volunteer, staff, and governance inductions).
- Strengthen internal communication processes, particularly among head quarters, branches and volunteers, to ensure they are supported to be the link between the NS and communities.
- Establish internal mechanisms, such as monthly volunteer meetings, to ensure community volunteers are met with regularly and their feedback is listened to and acted upon.

⁶⁹ For example, for activities such as trainings, policy development, establishing national feedback and complaints systems and policy development.

Medium priority ▼

- Review the location of community engagement within National Societies and IFRC to determine if it is in the best place to facilitate institutionalization and integration within programmes and operations.
- Establish a commitment that all programme and operational budgets include a minimum percentage for community engagement and accountability before leadership signs off.
- Integrate core behavioural competencies that support good community engagement (e.g. listening, empathy, respect) into all relevant job descriptions and volunteer roles and responsibilities and assess candidates on these competencies during the hiring process.⁷⁰
- Ensure staff are assessed on these core community-facing behavioural competencies during the appraisal process.
- Establish internal feedback and complaints mechanisms for staff and volunteers and ensure leadership use feedback constructively and as a tool to improve.⁷¹
- Introduce 360-degree appraisals as part of performance management system, where managers are appraised by their teams on how they have supported and been accountable to them.
- Use the Movement-Wide Minimum Commitments and Actions for CEA to develop organizational-level policies that set out clear commitments and provide direction and expectations to staff and volunteers related to community engagement and accountability, as well as integrating it into existing policies.

⁷⁰ See CEA Toolkit [Tool 21: CEA responsibilities for job descriptions](#)

⁷¹ Modelling the value of feedback through an internal system would support staff to see that people have a right to give feedback and that it can benefit the organization and how this approach should be replicated in communities.

African National Society CEA focal points: Roles and responsibilities

High priority ▼

- Roll out the branch-level training and feedback starter kit to National Society staff, volunteers, and branch governance⁷².
- Roll out and implement the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to Community Engagement and Accountability within all organizations.
- Document case studies that capture lessons learned, best practices, and successes when community engagement and accountability is integrated into programmes and operations.
- Integrate community engagement into staff induction processes (volunteer, staff, and governance inductions).
- Strengthen internal communication processes, particularly among head quarters, branches, and volunteers, to ensure they are supported to be the link between the NS and communities.
- Establish internal mechanisms, such as monthly volunteer meetings, to ensure community volunteers are met with regularly and their feedback is listened to and acted upon.
- Use the community feedback starter kit⁷³ and perception surveys to help develop feedback mechanisms and internal systems to collect, analyse, respond to, and use feedback to make improvements.
- Sensitize communities about their right to give feedback and get responses (once a functioning feedback and complaints mechanism is in place).
- Brief community leaders on National Society commitments to working in a transparent and participatory way with communities.⁷⁴

Medium priority ▼

- Integrate core behavioural competencies that support good community engagement (e.g. listening, empathy, respect) into all relevant job descriptions and volunteer roles and responsibilities and assess candidates on these competencies during the hiring process.⁷⁵
- Ensure staff are assessed on these core community-facing behavioural competencies during the appraisal process.
- Develop systems to ensure community feedback from previous programmes is stored and readily available to inform the design of future programmes and operations.

⁷² Noting this will need to be translated into local languages and adapted to suit the context.

⁷³ Contextualized to local context.

⁷⁴ Discuss the willingness of the NS to respond to and follow up on feedback and complaints.

⁷⁵ See CEA Toolkit [Tool 21: CEA responsibilities for job descriptions](#)



“

“Community consultation needs to be just as important to running a programme as money or vehicles.”

DR Congo Red Cross staff member

African National Societies technical teams Africa: Roles and responsibilities

High priority ▼

- Integrate community engagement and accountability into other sector and cross-cutting trainings (such as health; water, sanitation and hygiene; shelter; protection, gender and inclusion; surge; emergency response units, etc.).
- Integrate community engagement and accountability into existing, and new, long-term programmes to test out approaches and find out what works in different context.
- Include community engagement and accountability in programme donor proposals and budgets.
- Advocate for and build more flexibility into donor proposals to allow changes to be made more easily when community needs and priorities change. Share examples of where this has been done successfully.⁷⁶
- Ensure that a feedback and complaints system is established and functioning within all bilateral programmes funded by PNS and in all IFRC-funded programmes.

Medium priority ▼

- Use the community engagement and accountability guide, toolkit, and Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to ensure there is a consistent approach across Africa.
- Include indicators to measure the quality and impact of community engagement and accountability in monitoring and evaluation plans for all programmes and operations.
- Make time during programme and operational team meeting to discuss community feedback, and how to respond and act on it so staff start to value its importance.⁷⁷
- Allow enough time and funding for community consultations during the development of new proposals and programmes.

⁷⁶ For example, the use of the 'community project' budget line in Madagascar.

⁷⁷ Ensure staff are not punished for any negative community feedback but rather informed that negative feedback is useful information which can help the programme or operation improve.

HOW TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY IN PARTNER NATIONAL SOCIETIES

Secure staff

- Identify community engagement focal points in HQ and branches



Strengthen capacity

- Support the implementation of the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to CEA
- Include community engagement in sector and emergency response unit trainings
- Support a consistent approach to engaging communities by using the CEA Guide and toolkit
- Support peer learning between National Societies



Integrate community engagement into

- Strategies, annual plans and budgets
- Existing and new policies, guidelines and toolkits
- All programmes and include a feedback and complaints system



Provide funding

- Provide funding and support to National Societies to institutionalize community engagement (don't limit support to only bilateral programme areas)
- Work with partners to mobilize financial resources to institutionalize CEA
- Include in donor proposals and budgets
- Include community engagement in National Society partnership agreements
- Make a rule that all budgets include a % for community engagement



Adapt internal processes

- Discuss how to act on community feedback in programme and operational meetings
- Build flexibility into donor proposals to respond to changing community needs
- Consult communities during proposal development



Improve internal accountability

- Include community engagement responsibilities in job descriptions, inductions and appraisals
- Introduce 360° appraisals and an internal feedback and complaints system

Collect and share evidence

- Capture and share evidence showing the impact of community engagement
- Include indicators to measure accountability in programmes and operations
- Conduct and commission research to capture CEA impact and best practices



A roadmap to strengthen community engagement and accountability within partner National Societies

Partner National Society leadership: Roles and responsibilities

High priority ▼

- Discuss levels of organizational accountability, and progress against meeting the Movement-Wide Minimum Commitments and Actions on Community Engagement and Accountability, in senior leadership meetings and consider making this a key performance indicator.
- Roll out and implement the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to Community Engagement and Accountability within all organizations.
- Include community engagement and accountability in the revision of organizational strategies and annual plans.
- Include funding to institutionalize community engagement and accountability in annual budgets at all levels.⁷⁸
- Integrate community engagement into staff induction processes (volunteer, staff, and governance inductions).

Medium priority ▼

- Review the location of community engagement and accountability within National Societies, partner National Societies, and IFRC to determine if it is in the best place to facilitate institutionalization and integration within programmes and operations.
- Identify and support community engagement and accountability focal points at head quarters and country level within partner National Societies.
- Establish a commitment that all programme and operational budgets include a minimum percentage for community engagement and accountability before leadership signs off.
- Include community engagement and accountability in all partnership agreements between African National Societies and partner National Societies.⁷⁹
- Partner National Societies who fund bilateral programmes should ensure that funding for community engagement and accountability is not limited to the branches where they work but can be used at an institutional level to benefit the whole NS whenever possible.
- Integrate core behavioural competencies that support good community engagement (e.g. listening, empathy, respect) into all relevant job descriptions and volunteer roles and responsibilities and assess candidates on these competencies during the hiring process.⁸⁰
- Use the Movement-Wide Minimum Commitments and Actions for Community Engagement and Accountability to develop organizational-level policies that set out clear commitments and provide direction and expectations to staff and volunteers as well as integrating it into existing policies.

⁷⁸ For example, for activities such as trainings, policy development, establishing national feedback and complaints systems and policy development.

⁷⁹ Support for this action can come from the resolution on Movement Wide Minimum Commitments and Actions for CEA.

⁸⁰ See CEA Toolkit [Tool 21: CEA responsibilities for job descriptions](#)

Partner National Society CEA focal points: Roles and responsibilities

High priority ▼

- Roll out and implement the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to Community Engagement and Accountability within all organizations.
- Document case studies that capture lessons learned, best practices, and successes when community engagement and accountability is integrated into programmes and operations.
- Identify the best channels and creative methods to share evidence of the impact of community engagement and accountability on a regular basis with different audiences (governance, partners, volunteers, staff, etc.).
- Work collectively to identify opportunities for large scale resource mobilization to support work to institutionalize community engagement and accountability.
- Funding should be made available to African National Societies who are working to institutionalize community engagement and accountability. These funds can help employ focal points, deliver trainings, and integrate community engagement and accountability into strategies, policies, and processes.⁸¹
- Use the community feedback starter kit⁸² and perception surveys to help develop feedback mechanisms and internal systems to collect, analyse, respond to, and use feedback to make improvements.

Medium priority ▼

- Follow the community engagement and accountability guide, toolkit, and Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to ensure there is a consistent approach across Africa, especially when multiple partners support one National Societies.

Low priority ▼

- Partner National Societies with expertise to support National Societies in institutionalizing community engagement and accountability in countries where they have long standing bilateral partnerships and in-country teams.⁸³
- Profile examples of community engagement impact and success with external partners by publishing articles, presenting at conferences, and event and hosting information-sharing webinars.⁸⁴
- Conduct and commission research more frequently to demonstrate the impact of community engagement and accountability on programme and operational quality and address key gaps in knowledge and practice. Investigate building relationships with academic institutions and hosting researchers and students.

⁸¹ Ensure that information about the fund is widely shared, so National Societies are aware it exists. Make sure the reporting mechanisms on this funding are not cumbersome.

⁸² Contextualized to local context.

⁸³ This would expand the number of National Societies who can receive the level of hands-on technical support they need to institutionalize CEA into their policies, systems and practices. However the priority of this action step would be dependent on the PNS' interest in CEA.

⁸⁴ This also provides an opportunity for the Movement to learn from others.

Partner National Societies technical teams Africa: Roles and responsibilities

High priority ▼

- Integrate community engagement and accountability into other sector and cross-cutting trainings (such as health; water, sanitation and hygiene; shelter; protection, gender and inclusion; surge; emergency response units, etc.).
- Integrate community engagement and accountability into existing, and new, long-term programmes to test out approaches and find out what works in different context.
- Include community engagement and accountability in programme donor proposals and budgets.
- Advocate for and build more flexibility into donor proposals to allow changes to be made more easily when community needs and priorities change. Share examples of where this has been done successfully.⁸⁵
- Ensure that a feedback and complaints system is established and functioning within all bilateral programmes funded by partner National Societies and in all IFRC-funded programmes.

Medium priority ▼

- Use the community engagement and accountability guide, toolkit, and Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions to ensure there is a consistent approach across Africa, especially when multiple partners support one National Society.
- Include indicators to measure the quality and impact of community engagement and accountability in monitoring and evaluation plans for all programmes and operations.
- Make time during programme and operational team meeting to discuss community feedback, and how to respond and act on it so staff start to value its importance.⁸⁶
- Allow enough time and funding for community consultations during the development of new proposals and programmes.

Low priority ▼

- Partner National Societies with expertise to support National Societies in institutionalizing community engagement and accountability in countries where they have long standing bilateral partnerships and in-country teams.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ For example, the use of the 'community project' budget line in Madagascar.

⁸⁶ Ensure staff are not punished for any negative community feedback but rather informed that negative feedback is useful information which can help the programme or operation improve.

⁸⁷ This would expand the number of National Societies who can receive the level of hands-on technical support they need to institutionalize CEA into their policies, systems and practices. However, the priority of this action step would be dependent on the PNS' interest in CEA.



CONCLUSION

It is easy to feel overwhelmed after reading a document like this—systems like the Movement are complex, and there is no magic bullet or single solution to changing them. But that also means that anyone and everyone can be a leader in changing their own small corner of the Movement. The research team heard many inspiring stories about people in National Societies, partner National Societies and IFRC offices who are working towards, and succeeding in, making meaningful community engagement and accountability a reality. Change is already happening across the continent, momentum is building—this strategy provides clear and practical recommendations on how to close the gaps and improve how we work with the communities we serve.

In all this complexity, there are a set of simple truths that can guide future actions:

- **Community engagement and accountability is not one person's job**—it is something that everyone at every level of the organization can and should be doing.
- **Community engagement and accountability is not an extra burden or a box to be checked**—it is an investment in building a relationship with communities that will make projects easier, better, more sustainable, and safer.
- **Community engagement and accountability is not a project or an activity**—it is a way of thinking that should shape every aspect of our work and will ensure the Red Cross Red Crescent remains trusted and relevant in the years ahead.

Understanding these three points and ensuring that the resources and support provided to National Societies is guided by this knowledge, will go a long way in enabling meaningful accountability to communities across the Africa region, and the entire Movement globally.

The strategic changes and practical actions presented in this strategy are rooted in practical research and have been drawn from the collective knowledge and experience of staff and volunteers at all levels of the Movement. If all Movement partners commit to achieving just a few of these recommended actions, the collective impact will be felt.

The one question we must all ask ourselves, is: ***how can I be more engaged with, and more accountable to, the communities I am trying to help?*** Together, step by step, we can start to answer this question.

ANNEXES

Annex A – Working group members

Annex B – Literature reviewed for the strategy

Annex C – Key informant interviewees

ANNEX A: WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

NAME	ORGANISATION	POSITION
Alberto Bocanegra	IFRC Niger	Country Representative
Alexandra Sicotte Levesque	IFRC Geneva	CEA Manager
Amélie Doyon	Canadian Red Cross	CEA Focal Point
Cosmas Sakala	Zambia Red Cross	Health and Care Manager
David Ludovic Loquercio	ICRC Geneva	Head AAP
Eva Erlach	IFRC Africa	CEA Delegate (Emergencies)
Everlyn Milanoi Koiyiet	IFRC Africa	Gender and Diversity Officer
Geors Richards	British Red Cross	PMEAL Advisor
Helmich Roos	Netherlands Red Cross	PME Officer
Isabella Hjorth-Falsted	Danish Red Cross	Country Coordinator
Maja Gram	Danish Red Cross	CEA Advisor
Maria Lopez	Belgian Red Cross	Thematic Advisor- Transversal approaches (CEA/PGI)
Mathilde Köck	Austrian Red Cross	Programme Manager, Ethiopia and Rwanda
Matthew Rwahigi	Rwanda Red Cross	Communications Manager
Mirabelle Enaka	IFRC Central Africa	CEA Focal Point & Communications Senior Officer
Nagat Malik	Sudan Red Crescent	Head of PMER
Nwakpa O Nwakpa	Nigeria Red Cross	Head of communications and advocacy
Patrick Phiri	Malawi Red Cross	Community Resilience Manager
Philémon Ndayizigiye	Burundi Red Cross	CEA Head of Project
Prashan Thalayasingam	Swedish Red Cross	CEA Advisor
Robi Wambura	Tanzania Red Cross	CEA Focal Point and head of OD
Ruwaydah WANGARA	IFRC East Africa	CEA Senior Officer
Sharon Reader	IFRC Africa	Senior CEA Advisor
Sheila Chemjor	Netherlands Red Cross	Response Preparedness Advisor - IARP
Sheila Padmanabhan	Norwegian Red Cross	Results Management Advisor
Sophie Everest	British Red Cross	CEA Advisor
Yvonne Kabagire	IFRC West Coast Africa	CEA Delegate

ANNEX B: LITERATURE REVIEWED FOR THIS STRATEGY

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ANNEX C: KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEWED FOR THIS STRATEGY

	NAME	ORGANIZATION / POSITION	REMOTE / IN-PERSON
1	Abbey Byrne	IFRC CP3 / Community-based Surveillance Delegate	Remote
2	Abiy Abera	Canadian Red Cross / CEA Officer Ethiopia	Remote
3	Alexandra Sicotte Levesque	IFRC Global / CEA Manager	Remote
4	Amélie Doyon	Canadian Red Cross / CEA Focal Point	Remote
5	Andreas Sandin	IFRC East Africa / Operations Coordinator	In-person
6	Anne Kilimo	ICRC East Africa / Communications Manager	In-person
7	Biikinteeb Nanang	Ghana Red Cross / Head of Health and CEA Surge	Remote
8	Bronwyn Nichol	IFRC CP3 / Programme Manager	In-person
9	Cheick Camara	IFRC DR Congo Ebola Operation / CEA Coordinator	Remote
10	Christelle Marguerite	Swedish Red Cross Dr Congo / Programme Manager	Remote
11	Christopher Brewer	IFRC Africa / Cholera Preparedness Project Manager	Remote
12	Cosmas Sakala	Zambia Red Cross / Health and Care Manager	In-person
13	David Ludovic Loquercio	ICRC / Head AAP	In-person
14	Everlyn Milanoi KOIYIET	IFRC Region / Gender and Diversity Officer	In-person
15	Fatoumata Nafo-Traore	IFRC Region / Regional Director	In-person
16	Gaston Ake	Togo Red Cross / CEA Focal Point	Remote
17	Geors Richards	British Red Cross / PMEAL Advisor	Remote
18	Gloria Lombo	DR Congo Red Cross / Chef de Division Nationale Genre et Diversité	Remote
19	Hopewell Munyari	Zimbabwe Red Cross / Disaster Management Officer	Remote
20	Isabella Hjorth-Falsted	Danish Red Cross / Country Coordinator Madagascar	In-person
21	Jamie Lesueur	IFRC Africa / Roving Operations Coordinator	In-person
22	Kaisa Laitila	IFRC Global / PGI in Emergencies Delegate	In-person
23	Lea Balima	Burkina Faso Red Cross / Communications Manager	Remote
24	Lorraine Mangwiro	IFRC Southern Africa / Head of Southern Africa CCST	Remote
25	Lotta Paulson	IFRC South Sudan / NSD Delegate	Remote

26	Lucien Lia	Ivory Coast Red Cross / Chef de Département Communication et Mobilisation des Ressources	Remote
27	Lydia Atiema	Kenya Red Cross / Head of MEAL	In-person
28	Maja Gram	Danish Red Cross / CEA Advisor	Remote
29	Maria Lopez	Belgium Red Cross / Thematic Advisor- Transversal approaches (CEA/PGI)	Remote
30	Maria Twerde	Netherlands Red Cross / Country Representative Ethiopia	Remote
31	Matthew Rwahigi	Rwanda Red Cross / Communications Manager	In-person
32	Michael Charles	IFRC / Acting head of the West Africa CCST	Remote
33	Ombretta Baggio	IFRC Global / CEA Senior Advisor	Remote
34	Pamela Torto	Zimbabwe Red Cross / PMEAL Manager	Remote
35	Robert Kaufman	IFRC Region / Deputy Regional Director	In-person
36	Philippe Marc Stoll	ICRC / Head of Communication Policy and Support	In-person
37	Robi Wambura	Tanzania Red Cross / CEA Focal Point and Head of OD	In-person
38	Ruwaydah Wangara	IFRC East Africa / CEA Senior Officer	In-person
39	Sharon Reader	IFRC Africa / CEA Senior Advisor	In-person
40	Sophie Everest	British Red Cross / CEA Advisor	Remote
41	Stella Tucker	Sierra Leone Red Cross / CEA Manager	Remote
42	Surein Peiris	IFRC Africa /Regional Coordinator, National Society Development	In-person
43	Zaabi Domenic	South Sudan Red Cross / Head of Organizational Development	In-person
44	Abubakar Kende	Nigeria Red Cross Society / Secretary General	In-person
45	Andronicus Adeyemo	Nigeria Red Cross Society / Head of Programs	In-person
46	Pedro Azuogu	Nigeria Red Cross Society / Assistant Secretary General	In-person
47	Nwakpa. O. Nwakpa	Nigeria Red Cross Society / Head of Communications	In-person
48	Tony Obi	Nigerian Red Cross Society / CEA Focal Point	In-person
49	(Chief) Bolaji Akpan Anani	Nigeria Red Cross Society / President	In-person
50	Zulkifilu Aliyu	Nigerian Red Cross Society / IT Officer	In-person
51	Onwuka Jonathan	Nigeria Red Cross / ICT Manager	In-person
52	Yvonne Kabagire	IFRC West Coast / CEA Delegate	In-person
53	Elise Baudot Queguiner	IFRC West Coast Cluster / Acting Head of Country Cluster	In-person

54	Sahal Hassan Abdi	IFRC West Coast Cluster / Head of Operations Nigeria Floods	In-person
55	Mary Mogga	American Red Cross / Cash Transfer Programme Delegate Nigeria Floods Operation	In-person
56	Placidia Vavirai	IFRC West Coast Cluster / WASH Delegate Nigeria Floods Operation	In-person
57	Vincent Pouget	ICRC Nigeria/ Communications Coordinator	In-person
58	Karsten Voigt	British Red Cross / Country Representative Nigeria	In-person
59	Patrick Phiri	Malawi Red Cross / Head of Planning, Quality and Learning	In-person
60	Mr McBain Laiton Kanongodza	Malawi Red Cross / Secretary General	In-person
61	Prisca Chisala	Malawi Red Cross / Director of Programs and Development	In-person
62	Chifundo Kalulu	Malawi Red Cross / Director of Finance	In-person
63	Dieudonne Mayambi Khula	Netherlands Red Cross / Country Representative in Burundi	In-person
64	Philémon Ndayizigiye	Burundi Red Cross Society / CEA Manager	In-person
65	Terry Carney	Finnish Red Cross / Country Representative in Burundi	In-person
66	Anselme Katiyunguruza	Burundi Red Cross Society / Secretary General	In-person
67	Etienne Ndikuriyo	Burundi Red Cross / Director of Programs	In-person
68	Vénérand Nzigamasabo	Burundi Red Cross / Head of Operations	In-person
69	Gilbert Nduwimana	Burundi Red Cross / Hotline Coordinator	In-Person
70	Nagat Malik	Sudan Red Crescent / PMER Manager	In-person
71	Osman Gafar Abdallha	Sudan Red Crescent / Secretary General	In-person
72	Asmaa Khogali Yousif	Sudan Red Crescent / Director of International Cooperation and Public Relations	In-person
73	Imadeldin Abdelrahim	Sudan Red Crescent / Director of Programs	In-person
74	Ibrahim Ali Ibrahim	Sudan Red Crescent / Sinnar Branch Manager	In-person
75	Nawal Kamil	Swedish Red Cross Society / Country Representative Sudan	In-person
76	Kristina Spaar	German Red Cross / Desk Officer Sudan	In-person
77	Kerstin Grimm	German Red Cross / Head of Delegation Sudan	In-person
78	Fabio Beltramini	Danish Red Cross / Country Coordinator Sudan	In-person
79	Sanja Pupacic	Danish Red Cross / PS and Protection Programme Delegate	In-person

Participants in force-field analysis workshops

COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS
Sudan Red Crescent	Swiss Red Cross
	Netherlands Red Cross
	Danish Red Cross
	Spanish Red Cross
	Swedish Red Cross
	German Red Cross
	ICRC
	Sudan Red Crescent operations, programmes and PMER staff
	Staff and volunteers of Sinnar branch
Malawi Red Cross	Swiss Red Cross
	Danish Red Cross
	Community resilience project team Chikwawa Branch
	Malawi Red Cross programmes and operations teams
Burundi Red Cross	Senior Management Team Burundi Red Cross
	Program and Operation team Burundi Red Cross
	Finnish Red Cross
	Belgium Red Cross
	Spanish Red Cross
	Norwegian Red Cross
	ICRC
	Branch Staff in Matana Branch
Nigeria Red Cross	Nigeria Red Cross senior management, programmes, operations, PMER, communications and IT staff and IFRC staff (during a CEA training)
	Anambra branch staff
IFRC Africa Region	Senior management
	East Africa Cluster Program team

East Africa PMER / CEA Network Meeting 2018	Sudanese Red Crescent
	South Sudan Red Cross
	Burundi Red Cross
	Rwanda Red Cross
	Uganda Red Cross
	Ethiopia Red Cross
	Tanzania Red Cross
	Kenya Red Cross
	Zambia Red Cross
	Malawi Red Cross
	Sierra Leone Red Cross
	British Red Cross
	Danish Red Cross
	Norwegian Red Cross
	Netherlands Red Cross
	IFRC East Africa Cluster
	IFRC Africa Region
	IFRC Geneva
	ICRC Nairobi delegation
	IFRC West Coast Cluster
	IFRC Central Africa Cluster

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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