



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY (CEA)

Helping to put communities at the heart of what we do

COMMUNICATE · LISTEN · ACT

WHAT IS CEA?

Community engagement and accountability (CEA) is an approach to Red Cross and Red Crescent programming and operations. It is supported by a set of activities that help put communities at the centre of what we do, by integrating communication and participation throughout the programme cycle or operation.

While CEA is not a new or stand-alone programme, adopting a more systematic approach to CEA contributes to improved accountability to communities, which builds acceptance and trust and supports more sustainable programme outcomes. Ultimately, this helps communities to take an active role in building long-term resilience by enabling them to become more knowledgeable, skilled, connected and to bring about the behavioural and social changes needed to address risks and underlying vulnerabilities.



Community participation and feedback

CEA supports those involved in our programmes and operations to share honest, timely and accessible information with communities about who we are and what we are doing, find ways to engage them in guiding programme design and delivery, and to set up systems for responding and acting on feedback, questions and complaints.



Providing information as aid

In the midst of a disaster or conflict, people need information as much as water, food, medicine or shelter. CEA supports those involved in our programmes and operations to share timely, actionable and potentially life-saving information with communities quickly, efficiently and at large-scale, using systems such as SMS, social media or radio broadcasts.



Behaviour and social change communication

CEA helps behaviour and social change programmes to gain an insight into the perceptions and behaviours of different groups, and to develop engaging and targeted messages. It also provides innovative and participatory communication approaches that support communities to adopt safer and healthier practices.



Evidence-based advocacy

Community members are experts on the challenges that affect them and their solutions, but they can find it difficult to make their voices heard by the relevant authorities or organizations. CEA helps create spaces for communities to speak out about the issues that affect them and make their voices heard to influence decision-makers to take action.



CEA in emergency operations: Nepal earthquake

When a series of powerful earthquakes hit Nepal in April and May 2015, hundreds of thousands of families lost their homes and faced spending the harsh winter months living in temporary shelters. To help families cope, the Nepal Red Cross Society, with support from International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners, launched a cash distribution initiative. Evaluations from previous cash and relief distributions had found only a quarter of respondents had received information about distributions before they actually happened, so the National Society recognised that timely communication needed to be a key part of their operation.

To address this need, the Nepal Red Cross and IFRC's CEA team shared vital information with communities about the distribution sites and timings and eligibility criteria well in advance through radio, schools, community meetings and visiting households. A hotline number was manned 24/7 by a Red Cross volunteer and help desks were set up at distribution sites to listen to and record feedback, as well as provide answers to enquiries. In some areas, volunteers also used mini dramas on TV to share information.

Findings from the post-distribution evaluation showed a significant improvement in community engagement from previous operations. Reports indicated 99 per cent of the respondents received information about the cash distribution in advance while 92 per cent of respondents felt they had received enough information.



CEA in long-term programmes: Resilience building in East Africa

National Red Cross Societies in Burundi and Rwanda are using CEA approaches to improve communication with communities and address unsafe practices, as part of their model household and model village approach to building community resilience. In 2013, both countries launched live Red Cross radio programmes and touring mobile cinemas to provide vital information to communities on how to prevent diseases like malaria and cholera, improve child nutrition and prepare for floods and storms. These activities also encourage feedback and participation from communities, giving valuable insight into the challenges people face and how the Red Cross can better help them.

In Burundi, a weekly 1-hour live radio show is broadcast on a national station, while in Rwanda five branches run monthly shows on regional stations, which combined reach 80 per cent of the country. By the end of their first year on air, Rwanda and Burundi had broadcast 104 hours of radio and answered 1,400 listeners' calls and questions, demonstrating the high level of community engagement in the shows.

Both National Societies also deliver mobile cinemas in branches throughout the country as a means of community mobilisation. The cinema is an interactive activity that uses film and community debate to engage people in learning about safe practices. In the first year, 125,000 people attended the mobile cinema sessions, which are helping to increase knowledge by an average 26 per cent, based on pre and post monitoring results. More than 90 per cent of participants have also reported that attending a mobile cinema has made them feel more confident about preventing diseases, such as malaria and cholera.

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.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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Saving lives, changing minds.



Get involved

Find out more about Red Cross and Red Crescent Community Engagement and Accountability work at www.ifrc.org/CEA.