

## Where to find more information:

IFRC Beneficiary Communication Resource Library contains a wide range of materials such as sample running orders for radio shows, questions to include in baselines, and guidelines for accountability. The IFRC Beneficiary Communication Library provides:

IFRC Beneficiary Communication Share Site:

<https://fedteam.ifrc.org/global/collaboration/disasters/bc/default.aspx>

IFRC Beneficiary Communication Community of Practice:

<https://fednet.ifrc.org/en/communities/communities-of-practice/>

IFRC Beneficiary Communication Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/587239731349669/>

IFRC Beneficiary Communication Website

<http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/beneficiary-communications/>

IFRC Beneficiary Communication YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLr16tpZ6pQmTuWgH38XkEoLGjZytfUdAR>



# Beneficiary Communication

## South Asia Region

### How We Work

[www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

**Saving lives, changing minds.**



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## What is Beneficiary Communication?

Within the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), beneficiary communication is a way of working that recognises the importance of two-way communication between Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) National Societies and the people we support. It is about providing practical, useful information at the right time, listening to people's needs and opinions and using this information to improve our programmes and operations. Beneficiary communication can use technology like SMS, radio and mobile cinema or traditional channels like noticeboards and community meetings. Beneficiary communication aims to improve lives through the provision of timely, relevant and accurate information to communities and supports an environment of transparency and accountability through the creation of feedback mechanisms.

## Why is beneficiary communication important?

Improved communication between communities and RCRC National Societies saves lives and empowers people, by delivering potentially life-saving information into the hands of those who need it most. Beneficiary communication enables the RCRC to be better informed, as vulnerable populations can channel critical data about their situation and needs, increasing the speed, relevance and effectiveness of aid operations and programming. Beneficiary communication facilitates communities ability to voice their views and concerns, and take a more active role in the decisions that concern their recovery. This contributes to well informed and better quality programming that has a greater impact on reducing vulnerability and building safer, more resilient communities.

### 10 REASONS WHY BENEFICIARY COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT

1. Information can be as vital as food and water. In the days and weeks following a disaster, people need information as much as water, food, medicine or shelter. Information – such as how to make water safe to drink or which hospitals are open – can save lives, livelihoods and resources

2. Better, more effective programming: Asking people what they want and need, and involving them in designing and delivering programmes creates better and longer-lasting outcomes for the people we assist.

3. Accountable to those we seek to help: One way to achieve greater accountability in our programming is a more systematic and coordinated approach towards communicating with 'at-risk' and 'disaster-affected' communities.

4. Recognising the community as experts: The people of an affected region are usually the most knowledgeable about their priorities and how best to deal with their challenges. Drawing on that knowledge through two-way communication is at the heart of a flexible and effective humanitarian response.

5. Changing behaviours: Telling people to wash their hands is not enough – we need to understand why they do certain things and what the barriers are to safer practices. Beneficiary communication provides insight into peoples' knowledge, attitudes and practices and offers innovative, engaging tools to support health and hygiene promotion.

6. Building public trust in RCRC: Open, honest communication is a mark of respect, which builds trust between the RCRC and communities.

7. Bad news is better than no news: Even when the information we have is not positive – like a project is ending or a distribution is late, it is better to share this information with the community so that people make the best choice for their situation.

8. Complaints are good: Feedback provides an early warning system that allows issues to be resolved quickly, before they get worse. The RCRC also has a responsibility to listen to and respond to complaints – even if we can't do anything, people still appreciate being listened to and acknowledged.

9. Red Cross cares: It is easy for people affected by disasters or living in extreme poverty to assume society has forgotten about them. Beneficiary communication can have powerful psychological benefits – in Haiti, twelve per cent of people who received an SMS from Red Cross said it made them 'feel cared for'.

10. The world is changing: The explosion in access to mobile phones, the Internet and social media has changed the way people communicate. Communication is no longer top down – people can speak publicly and directly with and about the RCRC, and they expect us to listen and answer.

## Beneficiary Communication in South Asia

**Afghanistan** Afghanistan is one of the most difficult and complex geographical locations in the world to carry out humanitarian services. Over 30 years of conflict pose significant challenges for Afghanistan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) to provide disaster relief and recovery assistance to communities affected by flooding, landslides, earthquakes and droughts. Conscious that its ability to access communities in need is dependent on the relationship of trust between the community and the organization, the ARCS is currently exploring the use of new communication technologies in addition to traditional means to reach out to communities. For instance, the Comprehensive Community Based Health Intervention (CCBHI) program is piloting follow-up services via telephone in order to provide beneficiaries the opportunity to give feedback, in addition to "Grandmother's Committees", which are the focal point for information exchange. In the framework of the "Strengthening Emergency Relief and Disaster Response Capacity of ARCS" program, a beneficiary communication component will be developed to ensure the acceptance of the ARCS and therefore access to communities and ability to deliver services is strengthened and improved.

**Bangladesh** While the most vulnerable have always been at the heart of the work of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), the juxtaposition of a disaster-prone context and an emerging media landscape in Bangladesh offers new possibilities to work more closely, efficiently and effectively with communities. In 2010, BDRCS signaled an interest in exploring 'beneficiary communication and accountability' (BCA) as a crosscutting theme to incorporate into its programs, both reaffirming the importance of the most vulnerable at the center of its work, and opening its vision to exploring new and more effective ways of delivering aid. To this end, BDRCS has adopted a concept note on BCA and piloted a complaints and response mechanism (CRM) in its Cyclone Mahasen operation. The lessons learned from the initiative are now being fed into an organization-wide initiative to have CRMs as an integral part of all its programs. BDRCS is also currently exploring opportunities to develop a national Red Cross/Red Crescent radio show, to establish the TERA (Trilogy

Emergency Response Application) SMS system, and to pilot mobile cinema in its community-based disaster risk reduction CBDRR program.

**Nepal** Nepal is one of the most disaster prone countries in South Asia. Already regularly experiencing seasonal flooding, current assessments suggest that a major earthquake in Kathmandu will result in the deaths of 100,000 people, hundreds of thousands injured and close to 1 million displaced. In a bid to speed up their early warning systems and give the population enough time to take action to protect their lives, livelihoods and homes, the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) is turning to SMS. Working with the national telecommunication providers along with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), NRCS is establishing the TERA (Trilogy Emergency Response Application) SMS system, which is capable of targeting SMS to geographical areas at a speed of up to 100,000 messages per hour. The system will be invaluable for providing at-risk communities with early warning of impending disasters, targeted disease prevention advice during outbreaks, advising of immunization campaigns or when it is safe to go home after earthquakes. The NRCS is also exploring the establishment of an Interactive Voice Response system and transforming its weekly radio broadcasts into a national talk back radio show in the framework of the Earthquake Preparedness program.

**Sri Lanka** After nearly 30 years Sri Lanka has seen an end to its internal armed conflict. This cessation of hostilities has presented the country with an opportunity to regain what it lost through the investment in communities affected by conflict. In 2012, the Sri Lanka Cross Society (SLRCS) decided to harness the power of radio to reach out to these communities in the framework of its Post Conflict Recovery Programme (PCRP), which aims to facilitate the return of IDP families to their communities of origin as well as increase their resilience. Airing once a week, the "Hour for Humanity" seeks provide clear information on the program and services of the SLRCS, to the five northern districts of Vavuniya, Mannar, Kilinochchi, Jaffna and Mullativu, the area that was the most drastically affected by conflict. Based on interview and talk back format, key figures in the humanitarian arena provides information useful for affected communities' recovery and development. The radio programme also provides a hotline for people to call in and discuss or as questions.