**Community Engagement and Accountability:
Nepal Red Cross Society**

Human Response Consulting

Compiled at the request of the British Red Cross and the Nepal Red Cross Society

Executive summary

Background

This learning review of community engagement and accountability (CEA) was commissioned by the British Red Cross (BRC) and Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), with support from the Australian Red Cross. The learning review covers activities implemented by the NRCS, with support from BRC, between 2014 - 2018. The objectives of the learning review were to document learning and, drawing on broader knowledge from both within and outside of the Red Cross movement, recommend areas where CEA efforts, including adherence to the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), can be strengthened and institutionalised in the NRCS.

Strengths

- **Strong commitment** from the BRC and the NRCS to resourcing and prioritising CEA. This is evidenced by the deployment of CEA advisors, recruitment of dedicated CEA staff, embedding CEA into grant applications, development of CEA tools and training, funding a range of dedicated CEA activities, and NRCS passing resolutions and developing accountability frameworks.

- **Experimentation with diverse approaches** to engaging with, listening, and disseminating information to communities.

- **Acknowledgement from peer organisations** within Nepal of the leadership shown by BRC/NRCS in furthering humanitarian accountability in the country.

- Evidence of CEA activities driving **cultural change within NRCS**.

- Provision of training and availability of **extensive training resources** provided to NRCS staff and the large network of NRCS community volunteers.

- **Commitment to face-to-face engagement** between community and NRCS staff and volunteers and evidence of mutual acceptance of the value of this approach.

- **Regular monitoring of feedback** submitted to the hotline, feedback boxes, social media channels. Regular reporting on the hotline.

Weaknesses

- **Lack of systemisation and measurement of objectives** for the various approaches to CEA; corresponding lack of documented adaptive decision making.

- **Lack of a centralised community feedback data capture system**; corresponding lack of trending, comparative analysis, and feeding input into decision making at a strategic level.

- **Resistance to and misunderstanding of CEA at some levels** of the organisations,

which has impacted the ability of CEA to be institutionalised within NRCS; corresponding absence of CEA in the overall strategy.

- **Lack of appropriately framed SOPs** for field level staff: a lot left for interpretation and open-ended input and outputs (as per the previous weaknesses).

- **Gaps in community understanding of scope of CEA:** what they can give feedback on, how, and the response they can expect.

Recommendations

- **Establish a data collection system** to consolidate and analyse feedback coming from multiple feedback channels, and track responses to feedback, ideally by using the existing management information system (MIS).

- Establish an **internal referral mechanism** to deal with different types of feedback.

- **Regular information provision** to communities about what CEA is and explicitly identifying beneficiary selection/eligibility.

- Continue the 1130 Namaste **hotline, radio show, FGDs and face-to-face consultation**.

- **Develop criteria to assist staff and volunteers** to decide when it is appropriate to use methods such as street drama, murals, and feedback boxes.

- **Develop success indicators for CEA** activities that are embedded in project logframes. Undertake monitoring and reporting of those indicators and use that information adaptively.

- **Continue to support dedicated CEA positions at the HQ** and district level, in order to advise and support implementation of CEA activities throughout the organisation.

- **Shift the reporting lines for CEA to sit under the PMER team.**

- Advocate for and **support the government of Nepal** to include humanitarian accountability in its disaster preparedness planning. This can be done by capitalising on the position that the Red Cross has as an auxiliary to the government.

- NRCS to take on the role of **convening other actors** working in the accountability space in Nepal. This addresses the scale-down of the Common Feedback Project (CFP) and capitalises on the high-profile position of Red Cross within the development/humanitarian sector in Nepal.

- **Institutionalise CEA** within NRCS by:

  - Finalising the CEA strategy
  - Embedding CEA in the overall NRCS strategy
  - Developing CEA SOPs and minimum standards for programs
  - Defining CEA KPIs for all NRCS job descriptions
  - Including CEA trends as a standing agenda item in key meetings (such as SMT)
  - Documenting adaptive decisions made based on community feedback
  - Develop a targeted and regular CEA training program for Red Cross staff and community mobilisers

Challenges

- This is a **transition period for the NRCS**:
  - Moving from the earthquake response to development programming
  - Reduction in donor funding to the country as the earthquake response concludes
  - Upcoming merger of Partner National Societies in Nepal

- **Obtaining buy-in from senior leadership** in order to champion and prioritise CEA efforts throughout the organisation.

- Legacy of **CEA previously being perceived as solely a communications function** ('beneficiary communications').

- Differences between ICRC and IFRC in the definition and approach to humanitarian accountability.

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Community Engagement and Accountability: Nepal Red Cross Society

This document examines community engagement and accountability (CEA) activities that the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) implemented, with support from British Red Cross (BRC), since 2014, and in the years following the April 2015 Nepal earthquake and up to and including 2018.

As outlined in the terms of reference (ToR), the objectives of this learning review are:

- Scope the extent to which different partners, including but not exclusively BRC and the IFRC, have supported CEA in NRCS programming and document learning

- Document CEA investments and identify the changes/impact that CEA activities have contributed to, both programmatically and organisationally in terms of impact and quality.

- Analyse whether and how CEA activities have supported Accountability to Communities (using the CHS as a foundation for this analysis).

- Examine how CEA has interfaced with and been integrated into sectoral activities (WASH, Shelter, Health, Livelihoods, Disaster Risk Reduction), particularly where and how feedback from communities has informed responsive project design and adaptation.

- Consider how CEA can best meet the longer-term needs of communities in Nepal and the activities of the Nepal Red Cross Society, and what is most appropriate for Nepal Red Cross Societies HQ and District Chapters to sustainably adopt/implement/prioritise.

- Identify key learning points and practical improvements and next steps for the Nepal Red Cross Society, BRC and other Movement partners in strengthening CEA.

- Explore what exists across NRCS programmes, supported by different partners and identify where there is a need for greater coherence in approach and investment.

- Make concrete recommendations on how CEA can be strengthened in the NRCS, how partners can support the development and institutionalisation of a CEA approach and strategy in a sustainable and impactful manner.

The learning review maps activities undertaken during the period of inquiry and draws on broader learnings from both within and outside of the Red Cross movement to make recommendations on where and how CEA efforts can be strengthened and institutionalised within the NRCS. The learning review is guided by the *Core Humanitarian Standard* (CHS).

The learning review focuses on where the CEA systems contributed to improving decision making within the organisations and where the CEA systems contributed to improving the effectiveness and quality of the services delivered by the NRCS to communities. It examines cases where improvements can be made to advance community engagement and the actioning of feedback at both the tactical and strategic (programmatic and institutional) level.

Many CEA mechanisms were introduced into practice in a post-disaster response context, so this learning review also examines these mechanisms in terms of their suitability and sustainability in the broader operational context of the NRCS.

During the period covered by this learning review, other learning reviews had been carried out: for the earthquake response, the SURE program, and of the CEA program. This learning review builds on them. Where learnings and recommendations have already been made and agreed to in the past, they are reflected and corroborated here.

Methodology at a glance
35 surveys sent; 24 responses received
40 key informant interviews conducted; 29 by phone and 11 face-to-face
500 documents reviewed, including internal and external documents
Three in-country workshops with **62** staff, board, and volunteers
Focus group discussion with **14** community members
Presentation of draft findings to six PNSs and to senior NRCS management

Methodology

The learning review used multiple investigative techniques to identify and explore key themes, capture previous learnings, and frame these themes within broader trends and learnings from the humanitarian sector. Specifically, the learning review used the following techniques to identify and support its findings:

›   **Literature review**

   Review and summarise previous NRCS and BRC reports related to CEA activities by Red Cross and partner organisations in Nepal; review and summarise other reports and learning reviews from the humanitarian accountability sector to cross-match best practices and themes.

›   **Key informant questionnaire**

   A questionnaire was developed and sent to key informants (KIs) to provide standardised data template and a reference point for other KI-related activities (semi-structured interviews, informal discussions, and workshops).

›   **Key informant semi-structured interviews**

   Key informants that completed the questionnaire were interviewed by phone over a two-month period, representing a cross-section of actors either directly or indirectly involved in CEA.

›   **Focus groups and workshops**

   Three workshops were held in Nepal involving district-level staff, board, senior management, and volunteers in reviewing, refining, and broadening the initial findings and recommendations; an additional workshop was held with community members in one of the districts to provide quality assurance and further triangulation to some of the findings (see below).

›   **Community engagement**

   As part of the inception activities of this learning review, it was determined that community data was already available from past evaluations and so additional large-scale surveys and broad discussions were not undertaken. Key findings of this review were validated with one community in the Kathmandu valley region.

Context

In terms of per capita income, Nepal is the 16th poorest country in the world and the second poorest in Asia. 23 percent of the population of 28 million people live on less than $1.25 a day. Nepal's poorest tend to live in the inaccessible west of the country or are from the *Dalit* (untouchable) caste.

High unemployment means that about 1,500 Nepalis migrate for work every day to countries such as the Gulf states, Malaysia, and India. Nepal is ranked 145th in the world in the Human Development Index, a situation that has not improved significantly since emerging from conflict in 2006.[1]

Due to its location and variable climatic conditions, **Nepal is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world.** Every year, these events cause heavy loss of life and damage to property. Climate change and a growing population further exacerbate the effects of natural disasters[2].

On the morning of the 25th of April 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck an area between Kathmandu and Pokhara. The earthquake and a series of major aftershocks were felt in 57 of Nepal's 75 districts[1] causing significant destruction and loss of life. Overall, more than 8,856 people died and 18,000 were injured. The livelihoods of more than 1.1 million families was affected, with 700,000 families displaced, 600,000 houses destroyed, and a further 280,000 dwellings damaged, together with schools, health facilities, bridges, and roads.[3]

The significant damage and loss of life caused by the earthquake led to a large-scale humanitarian response. Among the key operators was the NRCS, which was supported by 13 PNSs, who also responded to the disaster.

The Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) is the largest humanitarian organisation in Nepal, with a network of 75 District Chapters (DCs), covering the entire country.

NRCS has extensive experience working in long term programming and in emergency response, notably following the 2015 earthquake.

NRCS implemented its programmes with the support of PNSs, whose presence in Nepal increased following the earthquake along with the IFRC Secretariat and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). NRCS have sought to increase their capacity in CEA in recent years largely through support from the British Red Cross (BRC) and the IFRC, who have funded CEA staff and specific CEA activities including the 1130 Namaste hotline, a radio show, feedback boxes, and street dramas. CEA activity increased significantly following the 2015 Earthquake. CEA staff supported the development of a CEA plan for the Earthquake recovery programme that worked across all 14 districts supported by different PNSs[4].

CEA efforts by the NRCS, in conjunction with the BRC, come in a global context where the importance of humanitarian actors to be accountable to communities has been growing significantly over recent decades.

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[1] "DFID Nepal," July 2018. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/723229/DFID-Nepal-Profile-July-2018.pdf.

[2] "ECHO Factsheet – Nepal – January 2019." ReliefWeb. Accessed March 11, 2019. https://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/echo-factsheet-nepal-january-2019.

[3] Dobai, Anna and Kafle, Shesh Kanta. "Mid Term Review of Nepal Earthquake Recovery Operation," October 8, 2017.

[4] CEA learning review TOR, July 2018.

Numerous evaluations demonstrate the often-dire consequences when accountability to communities is ignored[5]. Coupled with increased donor prioritisation of accountability[6] and the close relationship between accountability and safeguarding,[7] a global commitment within the sector to improve accountability has formed.[8]

The humanitarian sector has made significant improvements in ensuring community voices inform decision making[9]. But **accountability to affected populations remains a priority** as demonstrated by commitments such as the Grand Bargain[10] as an outcome of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

Findings

The findings incorporate previous findings and recommendations from secondary sources (reports and previous learning reviews related to CEA) validated against the primary data collected by this learning review. Both the findings of this learning review and previous learning reviews and evaluations are mapped against the questions posed by the ToR and represented by the learning review matrix.

Support for CEA activities

This topic captures the CEA related activities and the extent to which they were supported: funding, level of engagement, perceptions.

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[5] "The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda." *Relief and Rehabilitation Network* Study III, Principle Findings and Recommendations. Network Paper 16 (June 1996): 39.

[6] Corinna Kreidler. "The Role of Donors in Enhancing Quality and Accountability in Humanitarian Aid." ODI HPN, November 1999. https://odihpn.org/magazine/the-role-of-donors-in-enhancing-quality-and-accountability-in-humanitarian-aid/.

[7] "From an Ombudsman to a Humanitarian Passport: How Should We Be Addressing Abuse in the International Aid Sector?" Humanitarian Advisory Group, May 2018. https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/HAG-Safeguarding-Thinkpiece-May-2018.pdf.

[8] Agenda for Humanity. "Grand Bargain." Accessed March 11, 2019. https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861.

[9] "Data Story: The State of the System in 9 Charts." State of the Humanitarian System, December 5, 2018. https://sohs.alnap.org/blogs/data-story-the-state-of-the-system-in-9-charts.

[10] The Grand Bargain is an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers (including IFRC). It is concerned with shifting not only money but also power to affected communities. It includes a series of changes in the working practices of donors and aid organisations. The changes include gearing up cash programming, greater funding for national and local responders, cutting bureaucracy through rationalising reporting requirements, and, most importantly in the context of this review, improving accountability to and participation of affected communities. The Grand Bargain was first proposed by the former UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel as a result of the first Humanitarian Summit in 2015.

Support from BRC and other partners

Secondary data reviewed and the KIIs undertaken as part of this learning review revealed dedicated and ongoing support for the development of CEA resources (both human and institutional) within the NRCS, with additional investment and scale up of CEA activities in response to the 2015 earthquake.

This was evidenced by these activities:

- Investment in CEA activities in response to the 2015 earthquake[11]

- The training and orientation of 650 people on CEA[12]

- The employment of dedicated CEA staff[13]

Further, there was a Beneficiary Communications Strategy that, in 2013, referenced other CEA investments and recommendations such as surveys, assessments, and learning reviews. Some of the recommendations from this strategy have already been implemented and some remain relevant.

A key informant (KI) from the Common Feedback Project noted that BRC/NRCS played an active and important role in the Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project (CFP) hosted by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator's Office. The role of the Red Cross being a 'champion' for this interagency common service and actively sharing its community feedback into the CFP platform was seen by the leadership of the CFP as critical, given the large presence and strong reputation of the Red Cross in Nepal.

Investment in training

There was evidence of training of NRCS and BRC staff on the Core Humanitarian Standards and CEA activities. The secondary data reviewed for this learning review revealed detailed and thorough training materials and orientation schedules for both staff at the District and Kathmandu level, and as of March 2018, 280 staff and volunteers had been trained on CEA in the Shelter Program[14] with an additional 370 trained in other programs[15]. For example, there are three-day training packages on CEA, one day CEA orientation schedules, and training sessions for diary-keeping for community mobilisers. However, what was missing was longitudinal evidence of how the training was translated into practice through sustained long-term learning review data such as a knowledge, attitude, and practices (KAP) survey, or similar. There is also no evidence that the CEA training and orientation for staff and volunteers was delivered on an ongoing basis to ensure that CEA skills and competencies were built over the learning review period.

Interorganisational cooperation and best practices

The learning review found evidence of coordination of the NRCS/BRC CEA systems with the CFP hosted by the UN Resident Coordinator office in Nepal. But broader cooperation with other

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[11] Dobai, Anna and Kafle, Shesh Kanta. "Mid Term Review of Nepal Earthquake Recovery Operation," October 8, 2017.

[12] Direct correspondence with the NRCS.

[13] Dobai, Anna and Kafle, Shesh Kanta. "Mid Term Review of Nepal Earthquake Recovery Operation," October 8, 2017.

[14] "ERO March 2018 Infographs -.Pdf." Accessed March 11, 2019.
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ERO%20March%202018%20infographs%20-.pdf

[15] Direct correspondence with the NRCS

organisations that also established similar mechanisms in the same communities forms part of the recommendations.

Duplication of community feedback and consultation systems and processes in the same community are often cited[16] as a cause of frustration by community members.

Lack of interagency cooperation is not uncommon[17.] The learning review believes that better systems can be put in place and will help avoid community fatigue and improve efficiencies.

"Every CEA activity has different importance [...] It depends on [...] who are the beneficiaries"
– BRC staff member

Community
This topic looks at the degree to which the community was served or underserved by CEA.

Demographics served by CEA activities
The demographics identified through the KIIs as most underserved by the CEA activities are the elderly, people with a disability, and people living in remote areas. This observation, from people within the Red Cross movement, was supported by the review of secondary data.

A broader observation from staff was that community members outside the 14 earthquake affected areas were underserved by CEA activities.

Figure 1 *– Keyword frequency: demographics underserved by CEA*

Perceived value of the CEA activities
This learning review was tasked with ranking CEA activities in terms of reach, effort, effectiveness, cost, and value. Ranking allows budgeting, prioritisation and fitting CEA activities with the long-term capacity of the NRCS.

Such ranking is never cut and dry. Different activities have different advantages and disadvantages. Further, given the previous finding that a definition of CEA has not been strongly institutionalised, different KIs may have ranked *CEA activities against different reference criteria*. Thus, caution is advised in the interpretation of results here and triangulation, including through direct community input, is of increased importance.

KIs cited a range of channels for giving information and receiving feedback, including help desk, information kiosks, hotline, radio shows, street dramas, feedback box, focus group, and more. Unfortunately, there does not appear to be systematic data (such as a KAP survey) that measures the effectiveness of these different channels over time.

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[16] Knox-Clarke, Paul, and John Mitchell. "Reflections on the Accountability Revolution." *Humanitarian Exchange*, no. 52 (October 2011). https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/1999/11/humanitarianexchange052.pdf.

[17] Inter-Agency Standing Committee. "Inter-Agency PSEA-CBCM Best Practice Guide." International Organization for Migration, 2016.
https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/best_practice_guide_inter_agency_community_based_complaint_mechanisms_1.pdf.

This makes it difficult to draw conclusions affording a reasonable resolution for rank-ordering *all* the various activities. However, it is nevertheless possible to identify outliers: programs that appeared to be particularly effective and valuable versus programs that were costly in terms of time or money and without a clear positive outcome, or that targeted a limited number of people.

The data that is accessible is the preference of community members, qualitative data from the hotline, and anecdotal feedback from KIs.

Primary data: effectiveness of CEA activities

This section outlines what CEA activities were considered most and least effective by KIs through the questionnaire and which programs were contentious.

The majority (at least 80%) of KIs were familiar with help desk, information kiosks, hotline, radio shows, street drama, feedback boxes, focus groups, and informal information consultations with community and staff.

Effective channel		Ineffective channel	
27.3%	Focus groups	33.3%	Feedback boxes
22.7%	Hotline	23.8%	Radio
18.2%	Conversations	14.3%	Kiosks
13.6%	Radio	9.5%	Street dramas
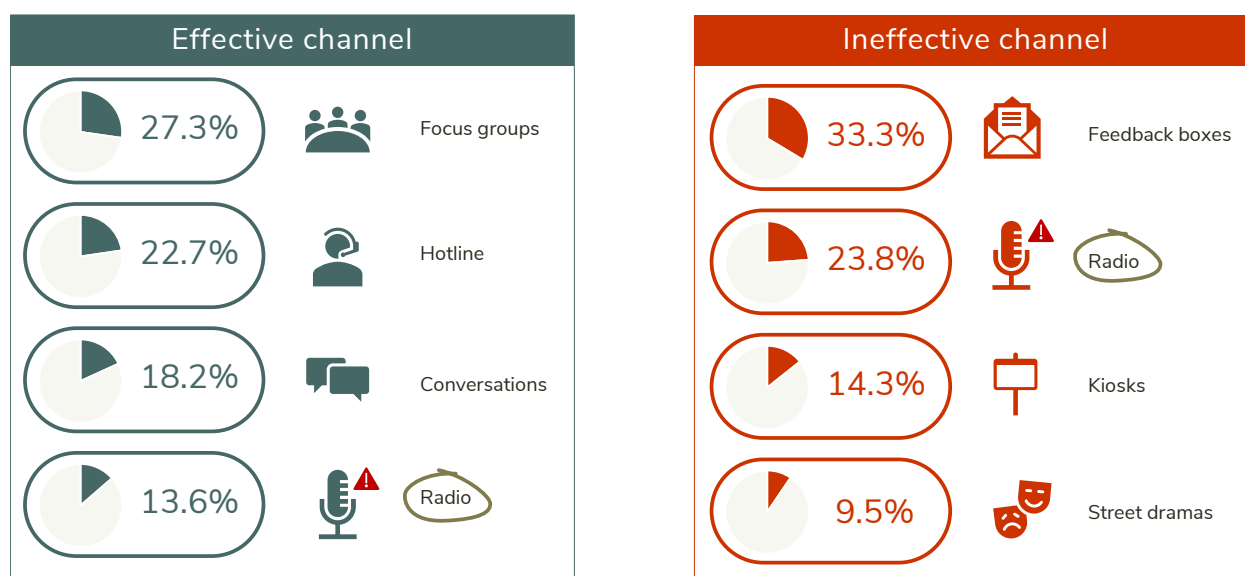
Figure 2 – *KI perceptions: effective vs. ineffective CEA channels*

As shown in the previous figure, the four activities considered **most** effective are:

- Focus groups: 27.3%
- Hotline: 22.7%
- Informal conversations 18.2%
- Radio show: 13.6%

Also shown in the previous figure, the four activities considered **least** effective:

- Feedback boxes: 33.3%
- Radio show: 23.8%
- Information kiosk: 14.3%
- Street drama: 9.5%

KIs tended to explicitly (in open questions and interviews) highlight the effectiveness of the hotline and face-to-face engagement and the ineffectiveness of radio, social, feedback boxes, and kiosk. Three respondents were reluctant to highlight ineffective programs.

The questionnaire did not distinguish between effectiveness in disseminating information and effectiveness in receiving feedback and this may explain some of the contradictory messages. For example, explaining why some KIs felt radio was ineffective while others claimed it was effective. Additional polarisation was noted around the street dramas and murals. This is discussed further in subsequent sections.

› Social media
Only one respondent claimed familiarity with social media in the questionnaire, but, in interviews, all respondents that were questioned about the effectiveness of social media, believed it was ineffective in reaching the most vulnerable communities.

Though the NRCS Facebook page had, at the time of writing, 144,352 likes and 144,094 followers, this was not seen as a communication platform that reached all the impacted communities served by the NRCS.

However, the NRCS Facebook site receives:

"three to four questions or complaints every day [...] mostly about what services Red Cross delivers in that area, blood bank, earthquake, and some complaints about beneficiary selection and being included in the program."[18]

A KII held with a social mobiliser from Goldhunga[19] also revealed that Facebook was used to share information with community members about upcoming events and programs. The Goldhunga subchapter restricts staff and volunteers from posting information directly onto its Facebook page, and the social mobiliser reported sharing the information with key members of the community who then posted it to their own Facebook page for the rest of the community to access.

This approach to staff and volunteers using Facebook in district chapters was supported by HQ staff who indicated that in the absence of a central policy around social media usage, DCs implemented their own approaches to usage.

All community members in the FGD reported seeing information about activities being undertaken by Goldhunga by scrolling through their phones[20]. However, this was not cited as their primary source of receiving information on activities (see **Face-to-face engagement** on page 9).

› Radio show
The radio show (185 episodes as of March 2018) is the only activity that was ranked as effective and as ineffective by at least five KIs.

Two radio shows are produced each week and programming tends to be decided by the communications team. Programs are often aligned with day-celebrations such as Women's Day or Global Handwashing Day; or to regional issues and disasters such as disease outbreaks and floods. For example, in the 2018 Terai floods, the radio show provided updates on the weather and hazards and request assistance from the community (for example, blood or food donations).

The radio show also promotes the different ways that community members can give feedback, like the 1130 Namaste number, Facebook, or talking directly to social mobilisers.

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[18] Radio Program Producer Officer, KII held on Friday 1 March 2019

[19] A subchapter of the Kathmandu district chapter

[20] Community members were using a 'data lite' version of Facebook on their phones. However, they did not identify Facebook by name.

The radio show has its own SMS number and it is mainly used as a way for listeners to respond to the question and answer section at the end of a show. Listeners also send questions and complaints about NRCS programs to the number.

The management of this SMS line is outsourced to a commercial company, which maintains the database of messages and receives about 80 messages a month. It was reported that questions and complaints are responded to as they are received by staff from the communications team. **There are no regular reports generated for the SMS line.**

› Face-to-face engagement
When asked what their preferred method of receiving information and giving feedback, all community members in the FGD cited the community mobiliser. When prompted to consider what alternative channel they would use to get information or give feedback if the community mobilisers were not available, community members responded that they would either wait until a community mobiliser was available or they would go directly to the Goldhunga DC office.

KIs also overwhelmingly cited direct engagement methods as most effective. But the caution here is that such methods, while preferred by communities, staff, and volunteers alike have limitations in terms of scale, transparency, reporting that was not considered by most people interviewed.

› Hotline: issues from the community
Community members cited that sometimes they received information about activities by 'scrolling on their phones' (see **Social media** on page 8), but did not use the 1130 Namaste hotline as their phone interface was in English and they could not read the numbers in order to dial the number. This issue was corroborated by CEA staff from HQ who cited they had received this anecdotal feedback from other community members saying the same.

› Dramas and murals
Many KIs reflected positively on the street dramas and murals. The level of engagement and the positive response by participants was frequently cited as the reason KIs identified these methods of information provision as successful.

However, KIs also responded that these methods were resource intensive in terms of staff, time, and community expectations and that the messaging was ultimately only delivered once or twice through the performance to a relatively small group of people.

It is also worth noting that **the success of the street dramas and the murals seems to be linked to their popularity, rather than their actual effectiveness** as a channel for providing information to community members as illustrated by this comment from an NRCS staff member:

"the street dramas [...] were genuinely popular with both the volunteers and staff running them and the people in the communities where they were held [...] these were also 'co-produced' by young people from the communities who volunteered to help shape the narratives and also take part in the performances, providing a level of community ownership over the dramas"

› Newspaper column
Though establishing a newspaper column had been previously recommended as a potential channel of information provision to communities, there was conflicting views about its effectiveness during the KIIs. While some KIs cited there were no responses captured from community members as a result of this method, others cited it as an effective way to reach a certain sector of the community.

During the PCP workshops for the SURE program, the community ranked newspaper 12th out of 21 methods of receiving information.

Secondary data: effectiveness of CEA activities

Feedback from the "EPS program reflected that disseminating general messages to the entire population was not effective in creating behaviour change,"[21] which led the SURE program to develop the participatory campaign planning (PCP) process to understand which messages and means of communication would be effective with different target groups.

Similarly, there was feedback from community members that "Flex prints have provided only broad details about the programme and the four sectors. The lack of comprehensive information has resulted in some reported confusion about the program amongst community members. Communities also reported that information was often not timely to enable participation."[22] The PCP approach developed by the SURE program demonstrated the range of preferences for receiving information and giving feedback of different segments of the community and was successful in increasing the participation of community members in identifying their preferred method of receiving information and giving feedback and is an approach, which could be replicated in other programs within the NRCS.

Based on the secondary data of the report produced by the SURE team documenting their PCP workshops (which included 28 community groups), it was found that a message delivered through radio, kiosks, and street drama is highly likely to reach SURE's target group. Importantly, **the SURE program holds monthly meetings with the 30 identified champions in each community to check whether the messages being disseminated, and the channels being used are still effective and preferred.**[23]

The EPS RAMP surveys also found that those who reported having face-to-face interaction with NRCS staff or volunteers were more likely to recall preparedness advice and act than those who had not. The SURE approach – looking at populations segmented by vulnerability, "type" of community and priority informal networks - will allow tailoring and targeting of messaging and preparedness actions (complying with government approved messaging), guided by specific vulnerable groups themselves to ensure actions are relevant, realistic and, as a result, more likely to be adopted.

As both the EPS review and the recent BBC Media Action study agree, passive communications materials – leaflets, posters, PSAs etc. – have very limited impact when used in isolation. Friends and family are a far more valued source of information. Information products and materials are of little value unless used as a tool to nurture and encourage popular awareness, discussion and person-to-person information sharing.

Preferred method for giving feedback

From the SURE team report, it was found that "The most preferred feedback channel identified by target groups was NRCS' Hotline service 1130 and direct phone call. The least preferred channels were orientation/interaction program, radio and help and support desk." The hotline "receives an average of 130 calls a month (with some spikes in calls when cash disbursements happening)."[24]

However, it is worth noting that, despite the range of channels developed for community members to give feedback, the Nepal earthquake midterm review in October 2017 found that "it was notable that

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[21] Gita Pandey. "Participatory Campaign Planning for Inclusive DRR Knowledge and Messaging in Nepal." IFRC, n.d.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Yuwan Malakar. "Report on Participatory Campaign Planning (PCP) Process; How to Design Effective & Inclusive Hazard Messages," February 2018.

[24] Ibid.

very few FGDs (conducted as part of the learning review) reflected any knowledge or use of these mechanisms." despite the efforts from NRCS to promote these channels.

This **underlines the importance of not just establishing feedback mechanisms and promoting them to communities, but also the need to continually evaluate their usage and effectiveness** with affected communities and to also understand *why* communities use certain feedback mechanism and not others, as practiced in the SURE program.

Figure 3 – Feedback box: Sindhupalchok

The 1130 Namaste hotline, though only officially launched in June 2016, has emerged as one of the most frequently used and effective information and feedback channels. As of March 2018, 2,599 calls had been received and responded to through the Namaste Hotline, with 900 additional calls in the subsequent year[25]. The 1130 hotline is free to call and accessible on both Nepal's Ncell and NTC telephone networks. Anyone can call with a question, query, complaint or suggestion relating to the Red Cross and its work. If the caller has a query outside the scope of the Red Cross, operators refer callers to relevant alternatives such as local authority offices or other NGOs and organisations.

Operators managing the hotline are trained on complaints handling and are equipped with frequently asked questions (FAQs) document to support them to respond to most calls without further referral to NRCS staff. Questions beyond the scope of the FAQ are shared with the NRCS hotline response officer at NRCS headquarters who is tasked with resolving the query.

The protocol for sensitive calls relating to allegations of a breach of the code of conduct, corruption, gender-based violence, or other critical incidents is that they are passed directly from the call centre to senior NRCS management for resolution[26]. It was also noted by KIs that a specific email address has been established to handle feedback about safeguarding complaints. This email address is monitored by members of the SMT for their direct response. There was no evidence of this email address being widely promoted to the community or that there had been any emails received or responded to using this dedicated address for PSEA/safeguarding.

The hotline response officer is also responsible for compiling a brief monthly report highlighting key geographical and thematic areas which have been generating the most inquiries, as well as examining demographic or other notable trends. These reports are then shared with the NRCS and other

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[25] Direct correspondence with the NRCS

[26] None of the KIs were aware of such incidents, and no reports were identified documenting such incidence, but feedback on the draft of this learning review pointed to to at least half a dozen incidents that were communicated through the hotline.

Movement Partners supporting the operation. The hotline is promoted through the inclusion of the 1130 number in Red Cross communications materials.

3493 calls have been received and responded to through the Namaste Hotline

Multiple primary and secondary data indicate that feedback boxes are not the preferred method for community members to give feedback, despite 105 feedback boxes being established as of March 2018[27]. The mid-term earthquake learning review presented data from FGDs and KIIs conducted with community members that indicated that this was due to having previous experience of using suggestions boxes provided by other organisations or government where their feedback was not responded to, meaning that they were not inclined to use them again. Similarly, the Mainstreaming of CEA into ECHO project report posited that "people barely used suggestion boxes. Often, project staffs find these boxes empty. In many occasions, communities had called project staffs directly on their phone to get project-related information."

The KIIs held with staff as part of this CEA learning review supported this finding, with staff reporting that feedback boxes rarely contained any pieces of written feedback and that community members would request them to have face to face meetings in order to provide feedback instead of using feedback boxes.

Several sources (both primary and secondary) indicated that, while indirect feedback mechanism such as the hotline or the radio show, proved to be broadly successful, these channels did not replace regular public meetings and one-to-one meetings.

Community feedback (both primary and secondary), BRC and NRCS staff and line agencies all confirmed that face-to-face contact is still the preferred route for raising issues which underlies the need to ensure that locally recruited social mobilisers and volunteers are trained to receive and follow-up on any complaints or concerns that are raised with them in a consistent and confidential manner.

Institutionalization of CEA

Institutional perception
The lack of clarity about the definition and purpose of CEA stems from these factors:

- Shift from beneficiary communications ('*ben comms*') to community engagement and accountability

- Schism between how the IFRC and ICRC define CEA

- Varying levels of acceptance, support, and endorsement of CEA from within the NRCS

The **shift within the Red Cross Movement from 'Beneficiary Communications' to 'Community Engagement and Accountability'** has impacted the understanding of what the purpose of CEA is, who is responsible for it, and where the work should sit with in the organisation (this was cited in both KIs with staff from Nepal and globally).

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[27] "ERO March 2018 Infographs -.Pdf." Accessed March 11, 2019.
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ERO%20March%202018%20infographs%20-.pdf.

> "the community mobilizers are the ones who are in frontline and day-to-day communication with beneficiaries. The beneficiaries informally provide numerous feedback to them. Hence, informal conversation with community mobilizer helps us understand what the feedback from the community is about the programme."
> *– NRCS staff member*

Not only has that shift changed (and was guided by) changes in the perceptions of what CEA is, it correspondingly shifted where CEA sits within the organisation. In Nepal, the CEA team is located within the communications team, as this is traditionally the team where 'ben comms' was located. In other national societies, CEA now sits in the PMER team.[28]

Several KIs cited the **schism between how the IFRC and the ICRC defined CEA** and attempted to implement it in the field. 100% of KIs from the BRC noted that this lack of clarity between the approach to CEA from the IFRC and the ICRC had a negative impact in terms of providing clear direction for National Societies (including the NRCS) in terms of CEA implementation.

 A recurrent theme raised by over 40% of KIs was the **varying levels of acceptance, support, and endorsement of CEA activities within the organisation**. The comments from these KIs referred that initial (and sometimes ongoing) suspicion about CEA activities that emerged from both management and field staff about the purpose of CEA. It was cited that many staff initially saw CEA as a way of 'checking up' on staff behaviour and were reluctant to fully embrace the implementation of the activities.

Another aspect of this perception, raised by KIIs and during the in-country workshops, was that many staff had questions about how CEA as a philosophy and practice was different from how the NRCS had always worked with communities and that they were already being accountable to communities. The following quote by an NRCS staff member, captures this sentiment:

"Many people have been working at Red Cross for 30 years. There is an idea that because we are the Red Cross we are already talking to the community and getting their feedback… they don't want to use the CEA resources."

Community feedback influenced adaptive programming, not strategic decision making
80% of KIs cited agreed that feedback from communities had been useful in influencing programming. However, the learning review could not trace whether this feedback influenced strategic decision making and KIs were only able to cite examples of community feedback influencing tactical changes to programs, with some explicitly referring to the absence of influence on strategic decision making.

For example, in the mid-term learning review it was noted that:

"[…] comments after the first mason training sessions in one district resulted in the training methodology being changed in response to observations from experienced masons who had participated in the course. However, […] there was some concern articulated by DPCs [district project coordinators] that **there was little space to be able to adapt the operation budget to respond to emerging local issues** [emphasis added]."

This sentiment was echoed by other KIs. For example, the PMER team commented that they were "getting some information from community to be able to develop and revise plans" but not "the full picture" meaning they could only influence district-level plans but not "bigger plans."

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[28] Sarah Cechvala. "Mainstreaming of Accountability to Communities: An Operational Case Study," December 2017.

Strategy and guidelines

Through review of secondary data and the KIIs conducted as part of this learning review, it was evident that while there was a huge amount of support for staff to implement CEA activities in terms of checklists, guidelines, and trainings, there was an absence of a shared understanding of what CEA was and the overall objectives and goals of implementing CEA activities.

This finding was previously highlighted by the Mainstreaming CEA into ECHO project report where it was found that:

"[...] there exists a formal mechanism to record complaints and feedback. To do so, it was informed that a log book exists. But there is no CEA focal person neither at national nor at district level. There is also no standard operating procedures (SOPs) regarding how to handle and address complaints and feedback."[29]

CEA focal people have been identified within each department at HQ level. These focal people have only undertaken limited training and orientation on CEA and are yet to implement any CEA planning and work in their respective workstreams.

A draft CEA strategy was provided as part of the secondary data provided by the NRCS/BRC[30], which is critical document needed to institutionalise CEA in the organisation. However, the CEA strategy has not been finalised and it lacks specific and measurable objectives, a workplan, budget and other project management tools to ensure that the strategy is operationalised. The draft CEA strategy has not been incorporated into the overall NRCS strategy and therefore the risk is that it remains a secondary priority for the organisation.

Integration into operational sectors

> "Everyone is doing CEA, they talk to the community and get their feedback, but they don't know what CEA is. There is no standard guideline for everyone... so then they think if they just meet with the community they are being accountable."
> *– NRCS staff member*

Overwhelmingly, CEA practices were perceived as adjunctive, rather than integral to operational sectors:

- None of the KIIs considered CEA activities to have been effectively integrated into the operational sectors of the organisation.

- KIs from the CEA team stated that CEA is often seen as an exclusive function of the CEA staff, such perceptions create an unrealistic workload and expectation.

- While some job descriptions for operational sectors included CEA, this was not done across the organisation.

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[29] See Malakar, Yuwan. "Mainstreaming of CEA/Inclusion/CHS into ECHO Funded DPDRR Project: A Guidance Note," January 2018. However, in country interviews identified that there are in fact CEA focal people in some districts and programs. But this is not universal, and CEA focal people have other responsibilities.

[30] "BRC Nepal Updates Report: April- June 2018," n.d.

Other CEA learning reviews and best practice note that when humanitarian accountability is quarantined to the accountability team it is a major barrier to institutionalising humanitarian accountability practices.[31]

Select quotes: perceptions of CEA

"Quite often, the senior management wants to hide the negative feedback received. Hence, do not maintain logs of the negative feedback that came in feedback boxes or direct conversation with beneficiaries"
– NRCS staff member

"Initially, CEA was a difficult negotiation with the senior management of the partner at the district level- they did not want to be questioned or someone raising concern on programme formally. After long persuasion, in the second year [of the earthquake response] there was a gradual increase in the acceptance to CEA and it was further strengthened when designated CEA volunteers were recruited for the designated villages/wards and a fulltime CEA officer was available to follow up and provide oversight"
– NRCS staff member

"[There is] buy in from some important senior management at HQ level, but much less at branch level. For every manager who has accepted and championed CEA, you can probably find at least one or two who don't see the point of encouraging people to complain about us?"
– BRC staff member

Data collection, retention, and analysis
The learning review team did not identify systematic policies and systems for CEA data collection, protection, retention, and analysis. Though MIS, under PMER has been working, in parallel, around similar policies.

Despite numerous CEA methods for feedback being employed, in the review of internal documentation, only hotline and some feedback box (raw) data was available.

KIs from the CEA team indicated that this feedback data was regularly analysed and recorded in a consistent fashion. But the review did not identify attempts to use the data from call centre to inform other programs or form the basis of key performance indicators (KPIs). For example, identify heatmaps of regions with high reporting of incorrect allocation of aid and consider if outreach is required.

Further, the hotline recorded cases where follow up was required but sometimes there was no follow up and information was missing on why the follow up was not completed and this was not systemically reported on.

Responding to feedback: tactical versus strategic
The findings of the learning review identified a disconnect between community feedback and adaptive decision making, either programmatically or organisationally. Case studies[32] demonstrate that the organisation responds to feedback and addresses them at a tactical level, but KIs along with an

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[31] Bonino, Francesca, Isabella Jean, Paul Knox Clarke, Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action, and CDA (Organization). *Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms: Research, Evidence, and Guidance*, 2014.

[32] For example, the *CHS improvement plan* documents a case where community feedback helped identify a beneficiary who did not meet the selection criteria and was subsequently disqualified after an investigation.

absence of evidence to the contrary suggests that community feedback did not systemically influence the allocation of resources or the strategic direction of programs.[33]

A large percentage of feedback (both through sampling of available data and anecdotal feedback from KIs) related to beneficiary selection. On one hand this explains why it was only possible for tactical changes to be made based on community feedback. However, it alludes to a broader issue that community members may not fully understand the full scope of issues that they have the right to give feedback about, including staff behaviour, quality and timeliness of service provision, program design and effectiveness.

Integration into roles and responsibilities
It was encouraging to see that significant work has been undertaken to embed CEA activities into the job descriptions of some staff. However, further investigation revealed that not all jobs had a CEA component and CEA key performance indicators (KPIs) were yet to be developed. Recommendations will focus on providing additional CEA KPIs and reinforcing CEA as a core value in hiring processes.

Continuous monitoring
Data capture and reporting has not been systematised. Specifically:

- Overarching impact targets and monitoring and learning review targets were not set.
- Data collection is often not structured to or used for monitoring the effectiveness of CEA.
- Lack of a central data store for collection, reporting, and analysis.
- Lack of privacy, retention, and data security policies.

Transitioning CEA
The findings demonstrate that CEA activities were predominantly carried out in earthquake affected districts. It follows that, with the broader transition from earthquake response to normal programming in the NRCS, CEA needs to be specifically prioritised and expanded to focus not only on programs, but also the normal service delivery of the NRCS such as the blood bank and ambulance service.

Thus, as part of this transition process, it will be necessary to ensure that CEA is included as a specific workstream in the upcoming transition process to merge Partner National Societies in Nepal (including programs, assets, systems, human resources, structure, compliance and reporting mechanisms). This will ensure that the work undertaken in CEA to date will also be prioritised and embedded within PNSs as they support the NRCS moving forward.

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[33] For example, in the case of the call centre the learning review team identified consistent capture of call centre activity, including monthly reports but could not find evidence of any trend analysis, baselining, cross-referencing call centre activity to other activities within the community, or measurements of the effectiveness of the call centre itself (client satisfaction, unresolved enquiries, and so forth).

Conclusions

CEA has had significant impact on the effectiveness of programs, community perceptions of the NRCS, and attitudes within the NRCS itself.

- Guidelines and tools are well-documented

- Activities are regularly practiced in the field with anecdotal and some systemic data capturing the activities and their consequences

- Values are widespread within the organisation

- Embedded into the various programs, rather than performed as a secondary activity

"CEA needs to be a priority of all program staff working with communities and also back-stopped by a dedicated CEA team with sufficient resources"
– PNS staff member

On the other hand, the findings show that:

- CEA norms, practices, values, and measurement need to be further cemented at the institutional level

- There is a need to provide additional tooling to bridge the divide between standard operating procedures (SOPs) and field-level implementation

- There is an absence of systemisation around data collection and implementation of principles of continuous monitoring and learning review

- There are inconsistencies in the definition of what the "success" of CEA looks like and this feeds into the absence of comparative analysis of the cost/benefit of various CEA activities

- While embedding of CEA into programs makes them more robust and flexible, cross-cutting concerns can be identified to further support CEA within those programs with institutional-level actions being the major factor in effectively addressing these concerns

- There is no 'one size fits all' approach to which channels of communication should be used. Different communities and projects call for different approaches to sharing information and receiving feedback and the key is to consult with communities before establishing these channels. Communities also need continued sensitisation as to what they can give feedback on, how they can do this, and what response they can expect

Recommendations

The following section lists the key actions recommended as a result of the conclusions of this learning review:

Recommendation 1: Ensure systematic and centralized CEA data capture

Difficulty:	High	Value:	High
Timeline:	3 – 6 months	Responsibility:	PMER and CEA

A data capture system can combine complaints and feedback from the various feedback channels and support NRCS to analyse trends and track responses and documentation of decisions made based on community feedback.

A simple and accessible database is needed as a repository where feedback from all channels of engagement can be logged, coded, and made available for trend analysis.

The establishment of a feedback database will also enable reports to be prepared according to different inquiries and audiences. For example, a monthly community feedback trends report for senior management, with the option to breakdown by sector or district.

With standardised data collection, longitudinal trends can be identified, and the organisation will be better placed to make strategic (as opposed to tactical) changes based on community feedback.

It is recommended that MIS manage the input of feedback and expand its processes so that they capture data directly and set policies for that data; instead of just capturing summary data.

Recommendation 2: Select CEA activities based on viability/context

Difficulty:	Low	Value:	High
Timeline:	Immediate	Responsibility:	CEA

The following table summarises, based on the findings, the overall trends of which CEA activities are broadly preferred and are essential and which ones can be employed selectively: with clearly defined SOPs, guidance on when to use, and how to measure.

Selective channels should be monitored to determine whether they should be continued via community consultation and by adding CEA questions to post-distribution monitoring.

When selecting CEA activities, NRCS should also consult specifically with elderly, people with a disability, and people living in remote areas to determine the preferred channels for these groups given they have been underserved by CEA activities to date. The PCP methodology of the SURE program provides one example of how this can be done effectively.

Run continuously	Use selectively
1130 Namaste hotline	Feedback boxes
Radio show	Murals
Face-to-face consultation	Street drama
Focus groups discussion	Newspaper
	Information kiosks

Recommendation 3: Restructure reporting lines

Difficulty:	Intermediate	Value:	High
Timeline:	3 – 6 months	Responsibility:	Senior management

Restructure the reporting lines so that the CEA team is part of the PMER team, while nevertheless maintaining close ties with the communications team. As noted in the findings, the current position of CEA within the organization is a legacy of '*ben comms*'. This leads to CEA being framed as a communication function more than an accountability function. Placing CEA within the PMER team would ensure close coordination and synergy when designing, planning, and resourcing programs.

Recommendation 4: Dedicated CEA position at HQ and district level

Difficulty:	None	Value:	High
Timeline:	Immediate	Responsibility:	Senior management

The findings demonstrate the need to continue investing in dedicated CEA positions at the HQ and district levels, independently of the need to further imbed CEA at the program and institutional level.

The budget is necessary so that CEA staff at the HQ and district offices can maintain technical oversight of CEA activities and to take a leadership role in implementation, monitoring, and evaluating those activities.

Recommendation 5: CEA SOPs and minimum standards

Difficulty:	Medium	Value:	High
Timeline:	3 months	Responsibility:	CEA

Developing CEA minimum standards and SOPs for all stages of the program cycle. Such SOPs need to include safeguarding as a priority.

There already exists comprehensive tools within the IFRC CEA guide that can support the contextual development of SOPs and minimum standards for NRCS, however these should be assessed and agreed upon as part of next steps.

Recommendation 6: Finalise CEA strategy

Difficulty:	Medium	Value:	High
Timeline:	3 months	Responsibility:	Senior management

Finalise the NRCS CEA strategy and provide in it objectives that are specific, measurable, and time-bound and include a detailed learning review plan. Ensure that the organisation strategy and workplan for the NRCS incorporates CEA, and that log frame and budget have dedicated line items for CEA, rather than the CEA strategy being in a separate document that is 'owned' by the CEA staff: this will help to **promote the ownership of CEA by the entire organisation**.

Recommendation 7: Embed CEA in roles: KPIs and job descriptions

Difficulty:	Medium	Value:	High
Timeline:	3 months	Responsibility:	HR

Include KPIs of CEA in the job descriptions of all staff. KPIs should be tailored to specific jobs, for example finance staff may have a KPI related to checking that all budgets include specific line items for CEA related activities, procurement staff may have a KPI related to ensuring that they check community feedback about the quality of goods and services before awarding future contracts to a supplier.

There should also be measurable ways to hold staff accountable to these KPIs in regular performance learning reviews. Examples of this could include a section in monthly reports for staff to document any adaptive changes they have made based on community feedback.

Recommendation 8: Raise the profile of CEA

Difficulty:	Medium	Value:	High
Timeline:	3 months	Responsibility:	CEA

Raise the profile of CEA through internal advocacy. For example:

- Include feedback trends as a standing agenda item at senior management meetings so that the SMT can make adaptive and strategic decisions based on community voices.

- Include feedback trends as a standing agenda item on all-staff and team meetings (not just the CEA team) so that appropriate changes can be made and there is a whole-of-organisation understanding of the critical issues within the communities being served by the organisations.

- Systematically document changes made to programs and strategy by all teams based on community feedback and share these with all staff to reinforce the impact of community accountability.

Capacity

Recommendation 9: Train last-mile service providers

Difficulty:	Medium	Value:	High
Timeline:	Immediate	Responsibility:	Senior management

Develop a strategic training plan for the entire organisation on CEA. Invest in the training of trainers (ToT) that are in turn able to deliver competency-based training to board, staff and volunteers within NRCS and PNSs.

The priority should be on ensuring that last-mile service providers (community engagement staff and community mobilisers) are trained not only in what CEA is, but what the SOPs are and how to implement them in their specific district.

CEA training should be embedded into staff onboarding for District and HQ staff, and then regularly repeated.

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Transition

Recommendation 10: Include as part of transition

Difficulty:	Low	Value:	High
Timeline:	Immediate	Responsibility:	Senior management

Ensure that Community Engagement and Accountability is included as a specific workstream in the upcoming transition process to merge Partner National Societies in Nepal (including programs, assets, systems, human resources, structure, compliance and reporting mechanisms). This will ensure that the work undertaken in CEA to date will be prioritised and embedded moving forward.

Recommendation 11: Accountability in government disaster preparedness plan

Difficulty:	Low	Value:	High
Timeline:	Immediate	Responsibility:	Senior management

Advocacy for broad accountability mechanisms to be embedded into local government disaster preparedness planning. Given the unique nature of the NRCS as an auxiliary to the government, it is in a good position to be able to support continued awareness and capacity building within the government of Nepal around accountability to communities. In a similar way that the SURE program has been working with the different levels of government to advocate around disaster resilience and preparedness, a similar approach could be adopted to support the ward, municipal and national level of government to develop and strengthen their accountability mechanisms. There is an opportunity for NRCS to work alongside the government in the implementation of its Post Disaster Recovery Framework 2016 -2020 (at the federal level) and future disaster preparedness planning.

Recommendation 12: Convening role in CEA

Difficulty:	Low	Value:	High
Timeline:	Immediate	Responsibility:	Senior management

Take on a convening role to bring together I/NGO's and government to continue the sharing of key community feedback trends. As mentioned in the findings, the role of the Red Cross in supporting the CFP was highly valued by its leadership. The CFP, along with many other specific accountability initiatives of INGOs that were scaled up after the earthquake are now also scaling down or have already scaled down. There is a gap within the broader humanitarian ecosystem in Nepal that the NRCS could take an active leadership role in filling.

Annexes

Detailed methodology

The following data was collected for the learning review:

- A survey was sent to 35 key informants selected by the review manager and commissioner of this learning review.

- 24 phone interviews were held with survey respondents, including various roles within the NRCS and BRC; five phone interviews with five external KIs with knowledge of the Nepal humanitarian accountability ecosystem; 11 additional and follow up interviews were held in Nepal with NRCS and BRC staff.

- More than 500 documents were reviewed. These fell into the categories of CEA internal tools and documents, previous Red Cross learning reviews and evaluations, and general humanitarian accountability documentation.

- Three in-country workshops were held with a total of 62 staff, board, and volunteers from Sindhupalchok and Kathmandu Valley district chapters, and from NRCS headquarters.

- A focus group discussion held with 14 community members from Goldhunga in Kathmandu Valley

- Presentation of the draft findings and recommendations to 27 representatives from the Australian, British, Canadian, Danish, Finnish, and Korean Partner National Societies (PNS) and senior management from the NRCS.

Literature review methodologies

The NRCS provided the learning review team with a total of some 500 files consisting of:

- CEA planning documents

- Previous CEA learning reviews (found to be incomplete)

- Outlines and procedures of various CEA activities (for example, feedback boxes, street dramas, radio, and so forth)

- Templates for feedback collection

- CEA/CHS training programs and pamphlets (distributed internally)

- CEA pamphlets (distributed externally)

- 1130 Namaste hotline and feedback boxes raw data and records

- Earthquake Recovery and SURE programmes CEA activities

The learning review team classified the documents into *secondary evidence*: data that refers directly or indirectly to the conduct or consequences of CEA and *secondary analysis*: existing analysis of CEA activities conducted by the NRCS/BRC. Key documents from both categories were then identified and analysed for themes, actors, and additional references and framed in the context of broader learnings.

Selection of key documents

Key documents were selected on the following basis:

- Any document purporting to provide an analysis of CEA by the Red Cross in Nepal

- Any document capturing a story or primary data about community engagement and its effectiveness

- Any document identified as a key document by a KI

- Any document referenced as a key document by another key document

In addition to identifying key evidence of existing CEA activity raw data was flagged for possible reanalysis and triangulation.

Analysis approach

Key documents were thematically analysed, and findings were mapped into an evaluation matrix containing the learning review criteria from the ToR. Observations requiring KI involvement or additional framing in the broader literature were flagged.

Limitations of this literature review

The learning review team noted that raw data was only available for 1130 Namaste hotline and some feedback boxes so supplemental quantitative meta-analysis was limited.

Key informant questionnaires and interviews

This learning review relied on interviews with current and past members of the NRCS, BRC, partner national societies (PNSs), and related organisations. Key informants were interviewed in both the inception and learning review phase but for the purpose of this report both these groups will be treated as a single cohort.

Key informant selection

Key informants were selected on the following basis:

- Identified as key informants by the senior CEA officer of the BRC (and manager of this learning review)

- Identified as key informants by the learning review team during desk review

- Identified as a key informant during the interview phase

- Identified as a key informant during the in-country workshop phase

Formation of KI questionnaire

The KI questionnaire began informally as the collation of ToR questions and relating these questions to the project and various clarifications around the literature review. From the ToR questions, CHS guidelines, and initial ad-hoc research questions, a pilot questionnaire was created.

The questionnaire was tested with three KIs and then refined based on the differential utility of various questions and to improve the usability and readability of the questionnaire itself.

The questionnaire also included questions to evaluate the effectiveness of the instrument itself.

As shown in the following figure, the same questionnaire was used for different roles and capacities, questions began by asking what activities the KI was familiar with and in what capacity and then subsequently asked the KI to comment or rate the effectiveness of those activities in terms of the CHS and ToR criteria.

Experience with

Success of

Observation of
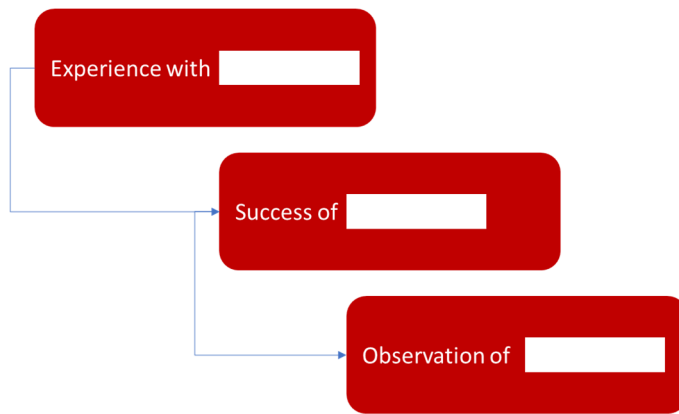
Structure of key informant interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted with KIs who completed the questionnaire. All KIs that completed the questionnaire were also interviewed. The interview consisted of:

- General questions about background and involvement with CEA

- Specific questions based on the role of the individual

- Specific questions drawn from their answer to the questionnaire

All KIs were asked for and gave permissions to record their interviews.

Issues with key informant interviews

The following issues were encountered:

- Interviews were conducted remotely and in English using either a mobile, fixed-line, or over-the-top service (such as WhatsApp or Skype). Communications on some of the interviews were compromised by language barriers, connectivity difficulties, or a combination of these issues.

- 28 percent of KIs did not respond to requests to complete the questionnaire.

These issues were mitigated by validation of findings and recommendations in-country as well as follow up in-country interviews with some KIs.

Glossary of terms

ben comms	beneficiary communications
BRC	British Red Cross
CFP	Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
DC	district chapter
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
FAQ	frequently asked questions
FGD	focus group discussion
GoN	Government of Nepal
HQ	headquarters
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
KAP	knowledge, attitudes, and practices
KI	key informant
KII	key informant interview
KPI	key performance indicator
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRCS	Nepal Red Cross Society
NTC	Nepal Telecom
PCP	participatory campaign planning
PMER	planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting
PNS	Partner National Society
CEA	community engagement and accountability
PSEA	prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
SMT	senior management team
SOP	standard operating procedures
SURE	Strengthening Urban Resilience and Engagement
ToR	terms of reference
WASH	water, sanitation, and health