

THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LISTEN.



MAINSTREAMING BC IN IFRC

infoasaid

A partnership between

INTERNEWS EUROPE
INFORMATION CHANGES LIVES

and

BBC
MEDIA ACTION

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
SECTION 1 : INTRODUCTION	8-9
SECTION 2 : METHODOLOGY	10-11
SECTION 3 : BENEFICIARY COMMUNICATION : NATURE, PURPOSE & OWNERSHIP	12-13
SECTION 4 : ENHANCING WHAT EXISTS	16-17
SECTION 5 : FINDINGS	18-22
SECTION 6 : RECOMMENDATIONS	23-28
SECTION 7 : A MAINSTREAMING PLAN	29
REFERENCES	30

LIST OF ACRONYMS

APZ	Asia Pacific Zone
BC	Beneficiary Communication
DRR	Disaster Risk Redction
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
OCAC	Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification
OD	Organisational Development
DM	Disaster Management
DMSOF	Disaster Management Strategic Operationl Framework
DM SOPs	Disaster Management Standard Operating Procedures
ERU	Emergency Response Unit
FACT	Field Assessment and Coordination
NS	National Societies
POA	Plan of Action
PNS	Partner National Societies
PMER	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
Q&A	Quality and Accountability
TERA	Trilogy Emergency Response Application

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The [infoasaid](#) team would like to thank colleagues in the Communications Department and the Planning Monitoring and Evaluation Department (PMER) at IFRC in Geneva for welcoming infoasaid to undertake a review of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent's (IFRC) approach to mainstreaming Beneficiary Communication (BC).

[infoasaid](#) greatly appreciates the support and guidance provided for the review by the Management Team, consisting of Scott Chaplowe, Pierre Kremer and Simon Eccleshall and the assistance provided by Misgana Ghebreberhan in scheduling numerous interviews.

We would also like to thank Josse Gillijns, Patrick Fuller, Will Rogers, Caroline Austin, Sharon Reader and Scott Chaplowe for providing excellent feedback on the draft report.

Last but not least, [infoasaid](#) extends its gratitude to colleagues from IFRC who agreed to be interviewed for the review. [infoasaid](#) is grateful for their time and patience and for generously sharing their insights, knowledge and experience.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IFRC has a long history and tradition of community engagement. It is currently a thought- and practice-leader in the humanitarian sector in what it calls “BC”, or beneficiary communication.

Facing a fresh opportunity to enhance what exists and the continuing rapid pace of change in its external environment, IFRC in partnership with [infoasaid](#) has undertaken a review of its current approach to BC, assessing the extent to which it is mainstreamed across all operations.

The review on which this report is based demonstrates that **BC is central to the delivery of IFRC’s principles, values and commitments**. BC is not just another competing initiative to be internally marketed by an isolated, underfunded, internal champion. BC is about changing the way in which IFRC delivers its programmes, building on what exists, doing better, working smarter and reaching further.

Findings from the review illustrate that **BC has yet to be integrated systematically, consistently and predictably, in IFRC’s operations**, across both the disaster cycle and programme cycle in all 187 National Societies. Reasons include varying interpretations of BC, confusion about its objectives, and different levels of interest in what some perceive as a “new initiative” but others as an integral part of their existing work.

Based on extensive consultations with IFRC staff, this infoasaid report offers a graphical road map for change, proposals for strategy, staffing and finance, plus a sequenced, step-by-step approach for mainstreaming BC in IFRC.

Key steps in the mainstreaming process:

1: Change minds internally

Shift thinking and create a shared understanding of BC.

2: Institutionalise the change

Reposition and resource the effort.

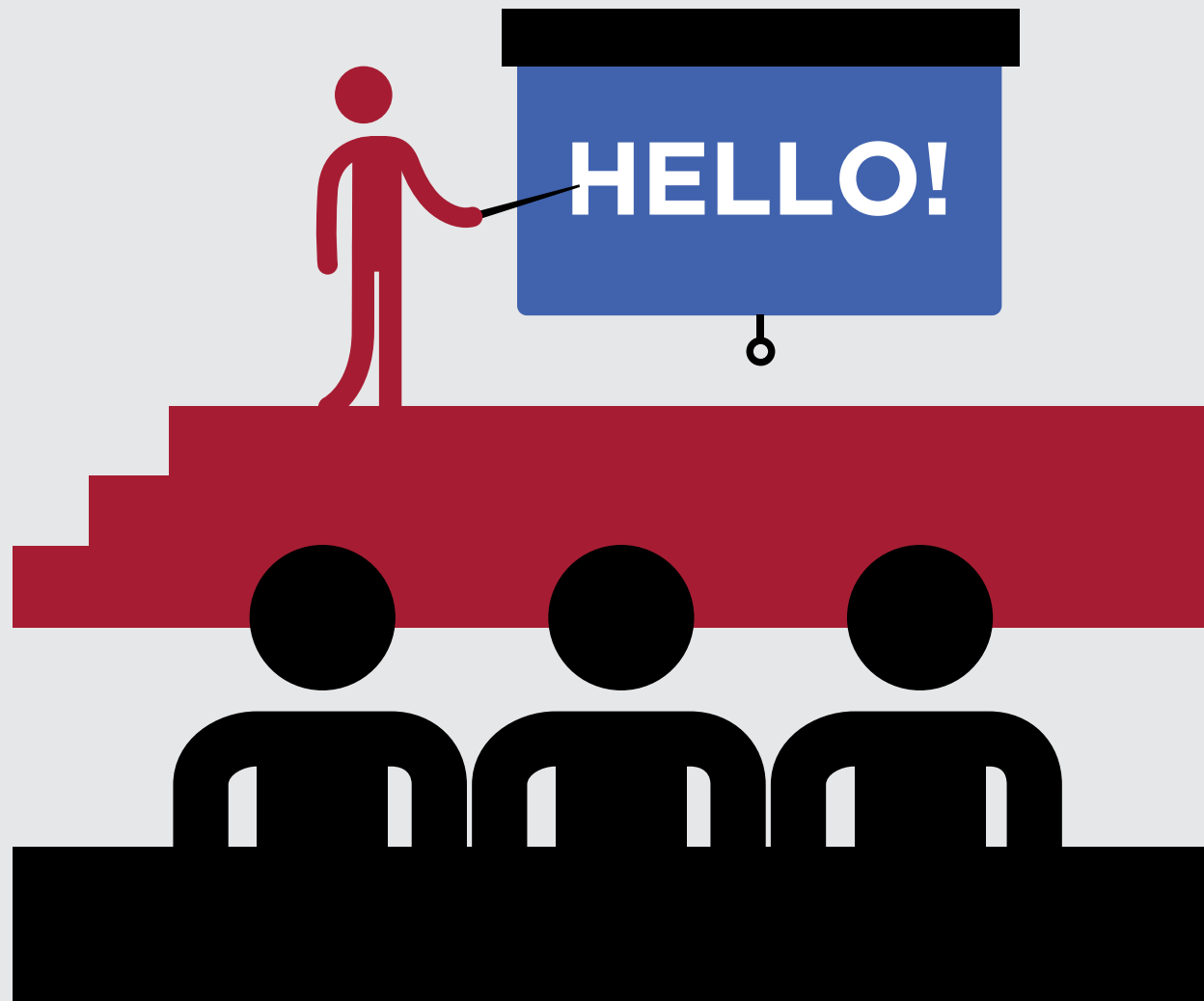
3: Measure the impact of BC on programme delivery

Determine what success looks like through proof of concept.

[infoasaid](#) believes that BC as a membership-wide programming reality has solid strategic value for IFRC. Good BC will help ensure that its values and principles are alive in the approach to serving communities, that its programmes are truly community-driven and that it is accountable to the communities it serves.

This is what will set IFRC apart from traditional aid providers.

INTRODUCTION



“In the humanitarian operation of the future, beneficiaries of emergency aid will use technology to tell us what they need, cash, food or education, find out from us what to expect, and track its arrival, just as we track an order from Amazon.com now.”

Toby Porter, Save the Children, in The Economist, 6 July 2007.

The external operating environment of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has changed dramatically in the last 20 years, demanding that it reviews the way it provides humanitarian assistance.

Two of the most significant developments are the staggering growth of mobile and internet-based technologies across the world, up alongside the widening recognition in the humanitarian sector of the need for greater accountability to beneficiaries.

The global population reached 7 billion in early 2012. Shortly afterwards, the number of active SIM cards in the world hit 6 billion, 4.2 billion of them in developing countries (GSMA MDI, 2012). As for internet access, well over two billion people are now online.

Since 2007, developing countries have increased their share of the world’s total number of internet users from 44% in

2006, to 62% in 2011 (ITU, 2011). Mobile-broadband subscriptions have grown 45% annually over the last four years. Today, there are twice as many mobile-broadband as fixed- broadband subscriptions.

Over the next five years, telecoms providers will continue to develop cheaper smart phones and extend 3G networks to areas which currently only have 2G cover (infoasaid, 2012). This will make the mobile internet more widely available in developing countries and more affordable, as well. as.

In parallel, the humanitarian sector since the 1990s has invested heavily in a range of quality and accountability initiatives¹, in a search for agreement on common standards of conduct and improved accountability to beneficiaries (BRC, 2007; Knox-Clarke and Mitchell, 2011). This has led to an increased awareness of the importance of communications between themselves and crisis-affected populations, not just as a human right and moral duty, but also as a means of improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance.

Thought- and practice-leadership

IFRC has a long history and tradition of community engagement. It is currently a thought- and practice-leader of the humanitarian sector in what it terms beneficiary communication (BC). However, recognising a potential to enhance what exists, IFRC has undertaken a review of its current approach to BC and the extent to which it is mainstreamed across all operations. As a senior staff member from the Europe Zone succinctly noted, “What was right yesterday is not necessarily right today. We have to adapt to new realities.”

This report – the culmination of targeted field and desk research – provides a roadmap for IFRC to mainstream the BC approach. The goal for IFRC is to ensure that BC is an integral part of both the disaster cycle and the programme cycle, in all operations throughout the IFRC.

This requires clear, universal consensus on the relevance and purpose of BC for IFRC, and co-ownership of the approach at all levels.

Section 1 of this report provides an introduction to the context within which infoasaid’s mainstreaming review, carried out from April to June 2012, was undertaken.

Section 2 describes the methodology of the review.

Section 3 offers a suggested definition of BC, highlights its relevance for IFRC and indicates who ought to own it within the Federation.

Section 4 describes to what extent BC is already integrated within IFRC programmes, highlights gaps and provides a rationale for enhancing what exists.

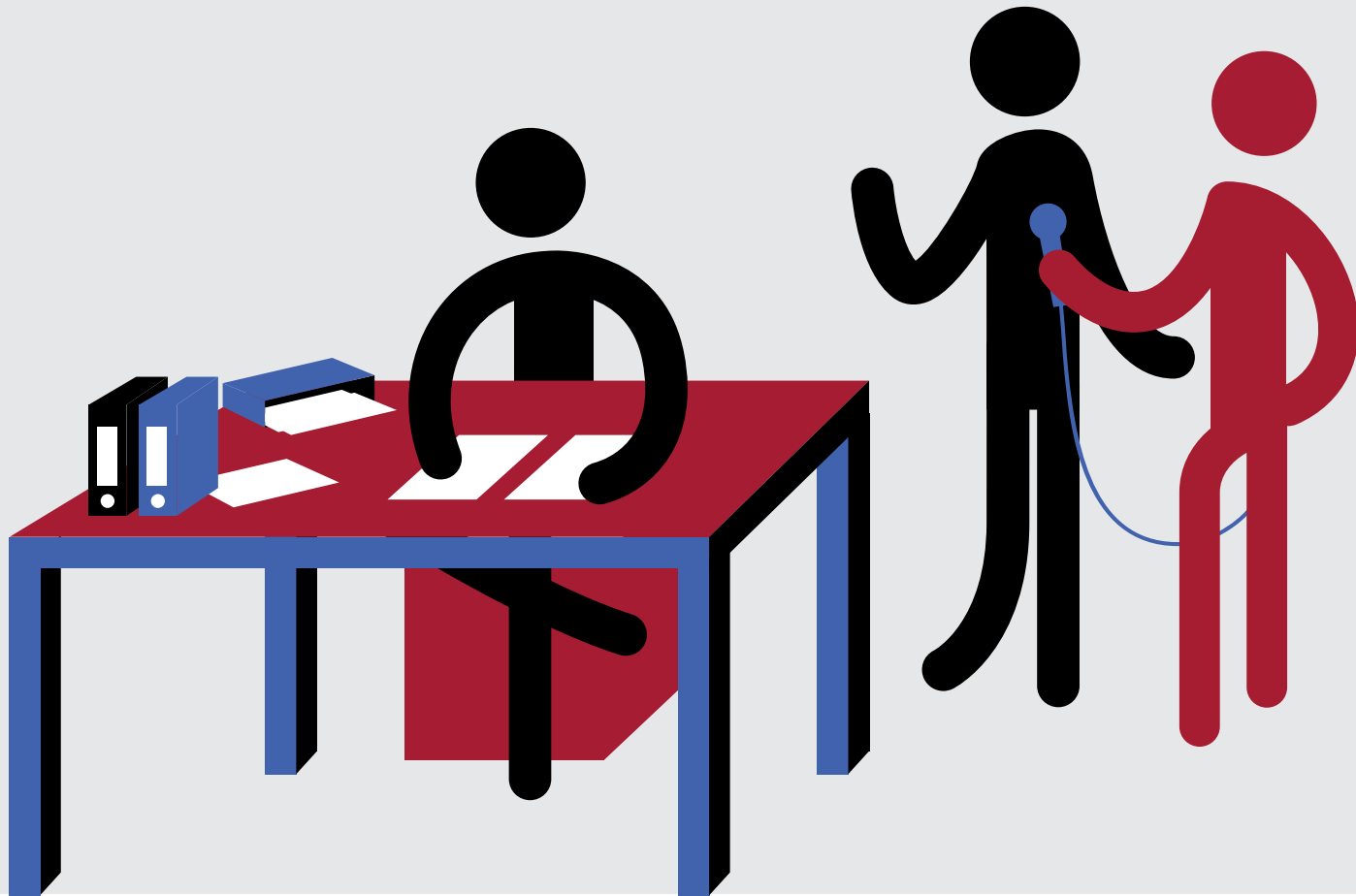
Section 5 presents the main findings of the mainstreaming review.

Section 6 gives key recommendations.

Section 7 outlines key steps in the mainstreaming process.

² These include but are not limited to: *People in Aid* (1995); *the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action* (1997); *the Sphere Project* (1997); *Quality COMPAS* (1999); *the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP)* (2003); *Synergie Qualité* (2003); *the Emergency Capacity Building Project* (2005); and *the CDA Listening Project* (2005).

METHODOLOGY



The findings, conclusions and recommendations in the present report are informed by [infoasaid's](#) preliminary mainstreaming review (henceforth referred to as 'the review'). This involved an 'institutional scan' of IFRC's relationship with BC as well as lessons learned through [infoasaid's](#) broader partnership agreement with IFRC.

The partnership evolved over a number of months and included **three main areas of infoasaid support** to IFRC:

1. Technical support for the integration of BC in key policy instruments, including strategies and operational guidance, and the development of an M&E framework for BC. In this regard, [infoasaid](#):

- a) Undertook an initial scoping exercise of IFRC's BC needs/areas of support;
- b) Provided content on BC for inclusion in the Disaster Management Strategic Operational Framework (DMSOF);
- c) Integrated BC into the Plan of Action (PoA);
- d) Developed a draft M&E (monitoring and evaluation) framework for BC.

2. Field support for the BC team in the Asia-Pacific Zone (APZ) with the collection of baseline data within the context of an APZ-supported project, 'Integrating Beneficiary Communications across Red Cross and Red Crescent Programming', in **Bangladesh, Philippines and Indonesia**.

This included:

- a) Assessing and reviewing the scope of BC activities and initiatives within each National Society;
- b) Assessing and reviewing existing BC tools, approached and capacities within each NS;
- c) Identifying preferred communication/media channels of communities and beneficiaries (12 focus groups were conducted in the Philippines and Indonesia).

A review that dealt with three key questions: What has been done and learnt? Where does IFRC now need to go? And how is it going to get there? The review combines and capitalizes on all the learning from the various components of [infoasaid's](#) partnership work together with IFRC.

Data collection involved:

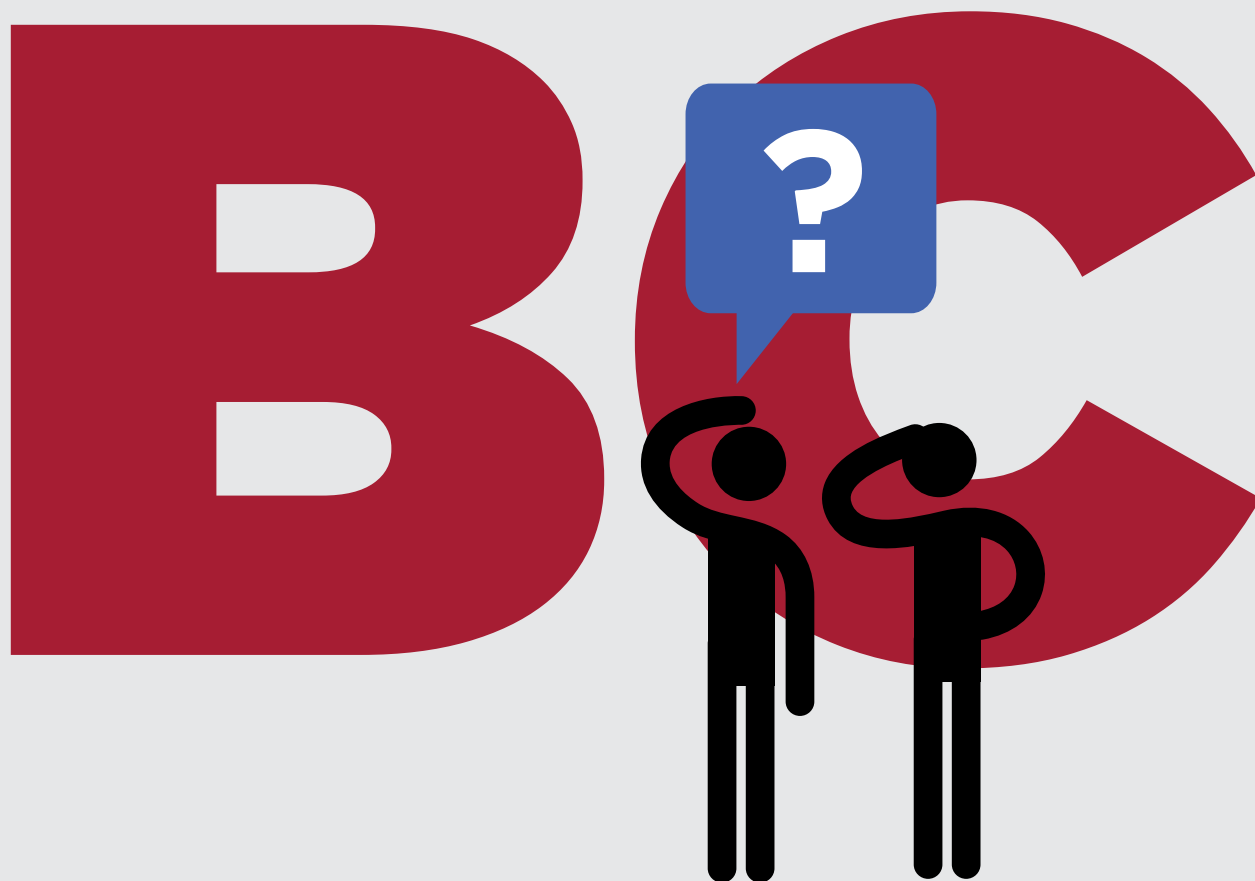
- a) Extensive study of key documents internal to IFRC, including policies, strategies, guidelines, publications, and evaluations (see References, page 32).
- b) 71 semi-structured interviews with key informants, either face-to-face or by telephone. Various interview guides were developed, targeting different stakeholders.

A breakdown of the interviews:

- **20 interviews:** Selected Secretariat staff based in **Geneva** and in the **five Zones**. These included Under Secretary-Generals, Heads of Departments and Senior Officers in Geneva, and Heads of the Zones.
- **Eight interviews** with selected members of the BC Working Group; Three interviews in **Bangladesh** with IFRC staff and four interviews with staff from the National Society;
- **17 interviews** as part of field work in **Indonesia**, including IFRC staff and staff of National Societies and Partner National Societies, and;
- **19 interviews** interviews in the **Philippines**, including IFRC staff and staff of National Societies and Partner National Societies.

BENEFICIARY COMMUNICATION

NATURE, PURPOSE & OWNERSHIP



“The old charity paradigm is out the door. People in communities do have capacities, if you find ways of using them.” infoasaid interview, IFRC staff member, Indonesia

BC can unleash the capacities of people in crisis-affected communities. Its hallmarks are adaptability, creativity and innovation. It is about the right of access to information and its dissemination, and the ability to influence decisions. It is about enabling communities to adapt to, withstand and recover from external and internal shocks, thereby building resilience.

BC is not another competing initiative that needs to be marketed in-house by an isolated, underfunded, internal champion. Rather, **BC is about changing the way in which IFRC delivers its programmes, enhancing what exists, doing better, working smarter and reaching further.**

There are differing interpretations of what BC is in within IFRC, the purpose it serves and who owns it. All depends on who you speak to. **The lack of a common definition must be overcome.**

Defining BC

Based on its review and consultation with key IFRC stakeholders, infoasaid offers below a definition of BC, explains its relevance to IFRC and suggests who ought to own it.

BC is a cross-cutting approach that entails:

- **Information provision** to crisis-affected communities, resulting in greater knowledge and awareness in those communities, and thus to behavioural change;
- **Dialogue with crisis-affected communities**, resulting in more meaningful participation by community members;
- **Analysis and action by IFRC**, which include four elements:

- **Analysis** and verification of information received;
- **Reorientation** of programmes based on feedback;
- **Advocacy** on behalf of beneficiaries (humanitarian diplomacy); and
- **Responses** to crisis-affected communities on decisions and action taken by IFRC that produce greater co-ownership and community-driven programme outputs.

The purpose it serves

BC has the potential to improve programme quality by ensuring that programmes are more needs-based and responsive to changing realities. BC is a vehicle for accountability. If information is not shared with communities, how can one guarantee transparency? And if one doesn't listen to communities, engage with them in a dialogue and ensure that their feedback is acted upon, how can one claim to be accountable? BC is therefore the servant of accountability.

A senior official from the Philippines Red Cross (PRC) clearly illustrates this, telling infoasaid:

“Communicating with beneficiaries is a very important aspect of PRC’s work. PRC should be accountable to its partners, but it should also be accountable to its beneficiaries... In addition to delivering relief goods, if we do not explain why we are doing it and the limitations of what we are doing and what we expect from the beneficiaries in return, then we are not living up to the standards of humanitarian assistance. In addition to being accountable and managing expectations, communication is a tool for reaching more people, increasing coverage and in some cases even preventing disaster and the need for response.”

Beneficiary communication demands a range of communication channels. **There is great scope for innovation through the use of new media and technology options** that can complement more traditional forms of communication and offer opportunities for broader programme coverage and efficiency gains.

“Our model right now for implementing ICBRR² is very labour-intensive. To really make a difference here, that design is never going to do it. Beneficiary communication is an opportunity to think more broadly. How can we talk to more people and make greater impact?”

infoasaid interview, staff member, Canadian Red Cross in Indonesia

Finally, BC provides a strong evidence base for humanitarian diplomacy: feedback from communities provides a key source of monitoring data.

Given that communicating with beneficiaries is central to programme delivery, BC naturally covers the entire programme cycle. And since projects are implemented at each phase of Disaster Risk-Reduction, Response and Recovery, BC also cuts across the disaster cycle.

Who should own it?

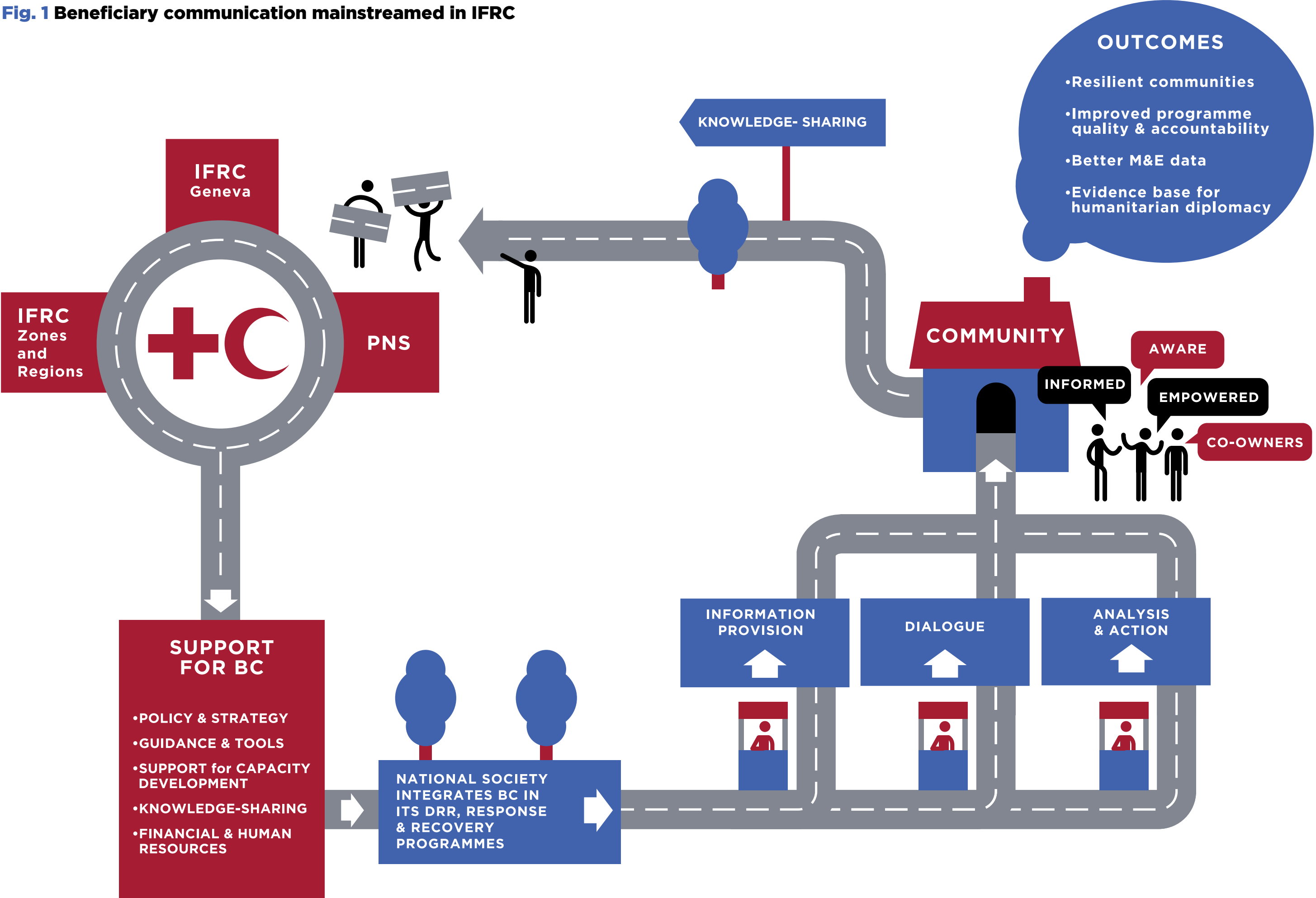
Opinions differ about whether BC should be a ‘stand-alone’ approach or integrated and mainstreamed into all programmes. BC as an approach can never be stand-alone: **BC activities support the delivery of programme interventions, at a fundamental level and across the organization.** However, BC as a function – a unit of experts who provide a support service to many programmes – can be stand-alone. In large-scale emergencies, for example, it makes less sense to house a BC unit for each programme than to provide a single, separate unit geared to service all of them.

The delivery points for BC are National Societies, but the Secretariat and Partner National Societies have a role to play in providing support to National Societies in the form of guidance, tools, financial resources, technical support and capacity development.

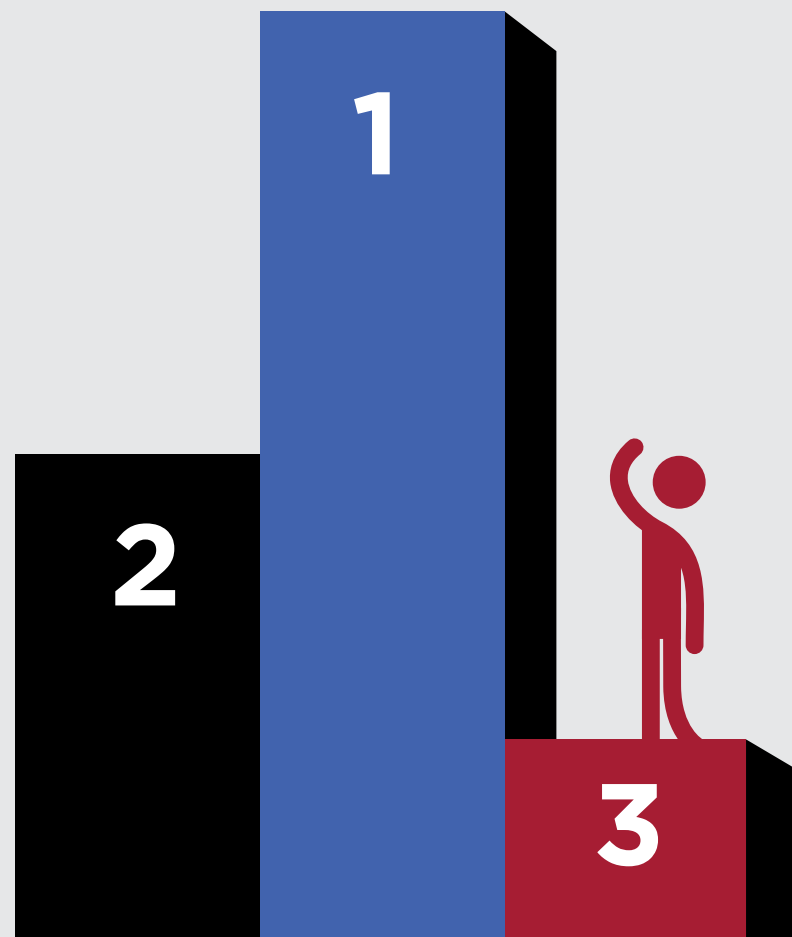
BC thus affects, and is the responsibility of, colleagues in virtually all departments across all levels of IFRC. The roadmap on the next page illustrates the effective mainstreaming of BC across IFRC.

² ICBRR: Integrated community-based risk reduction

Fig. 1 Beneficiary communication mainstreamed in IFRC



ENHANCING WHAT EXISTS



The purpose of beneficiary communication is clearly put in a number of IFRC's documents and statements:

"We will engage in meaningful communications with our beneficiaries to ensure that we continuously improve the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and impact of our assistance and that we remain accountable to them." Disaster and Crisis Management Position Paper, 2011, p.11

"As self-governing National Societies we are accountable to the clients of our services, our members, volunteers and other stakeholders... Our accountability principles include transparent information-sharing, meaningful beneficiary participation and systems for lessons-learning and responding to concerns and complaints." Saving Lives, Changing Minds, Strategy 2020, 2010, p.31

"We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources. We often act as an institutional link between those who want to assist and those who need assistance during disasters. We therefore hold ourselves accountable to both constituencies. All our dealings with donors and beneficiaries shall reflect an attitude of openness and transparency..." Principle 9, The Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief

It is clear from these statements that BC is viewed as a means to an end, a way of enhancing programme quality, accountability and, ultimately, impact.

However, interpretations depend on stakeholders and particular situations. The IFRC's National Societies are community-based, community-driven and community-led organisations, a global network of comprising

over 13 million volunteers. As such, they have a long history and tradition of community engagement. Volunteers of National Societies already communicate face-to-face extensively with beneficiaries in health and DRR programmes, with varied approaches and experiences.

"We do BC. We do community meetings." Staff member, Bangladesh Red Cross

"For me, it seems that PMI (Indonesian Red Cross) already does BC. I don't know. But we have 400 branches, and most of them are already doing this. But we don't know that's what it is called. We are probably doing this every day" Staff member, Indonesian Red Cross

"Our communication with communities and volunteers is totally direct. It is part of our daily work with them. All of our interventions are participatory. We conduct VCAs³ and use different participatory tools during programme implementation. We are already doing BC." PNS Delegate, Philippines

The IFRC is a thought- and practice-leader in beneficiary communication in the humanitarian sector. Since the 2005 World Disasters Report, IFRC has identified systematic, two-way communication with those affected by disasters as a necessary and integral aspect of humanitarian response – and as one in urgent need of improvement and investment.

In response to the World Disasters Report, and with growing evidence of the benefits of effective communication as well as widening recognition of the rights of disaster survivors to information, this area of work has grown rapidly within IFRC in recent years. Innovative communication projects have been developed in the Province of Aceh, Indonesia, Pakistan and Haiti.

Much has been done by IFRC in this area to date. The success and value-added of BC has been documented in independent evaluations. **Despite these achievements, there is potential for improvement.** Indeed, a lot more work remains to be done internally to mainstream BC across IFRC.

Findings from the [infoasaid](#) review indicate that:

1. BC has yet to be integrated systematically in operations, across the disaster cycle and programme cycle, consistently and predictably in all 187 National Societies. The review highlighted varying interpretations of BC, confusion about its objectives, and differing levels of interest regarding what some perceived to be a "new initiative" and others, on the contrary, perceived to be an integral part of their existing work.

2. Existing communication practices may not be as effective as believed. When discussing the tsunami evaluations, a senior IFRC staff member in the Asia Pacific Zone (APZ) told [infoasaid](#):

"BC was an area we professed to know but we realised we were not as good as we thought. Through some of our projects initiated during the tsunami recovery, we learned how much we did not know...we realized we didn't know the community as much as we thought we did."

There is scope for more effective dialogue with affected communities, and the reorientation of programmes based on feedback received. A Lessons-Learned report by IFRC published in 2011 captured useful insights from recent beneficiary communication and accountability programmes in Indonesia, Haiti and Pakistan (henceforth referred to as the 'Lessons-Learned report') highlighting the need to go beyond merely providing information:

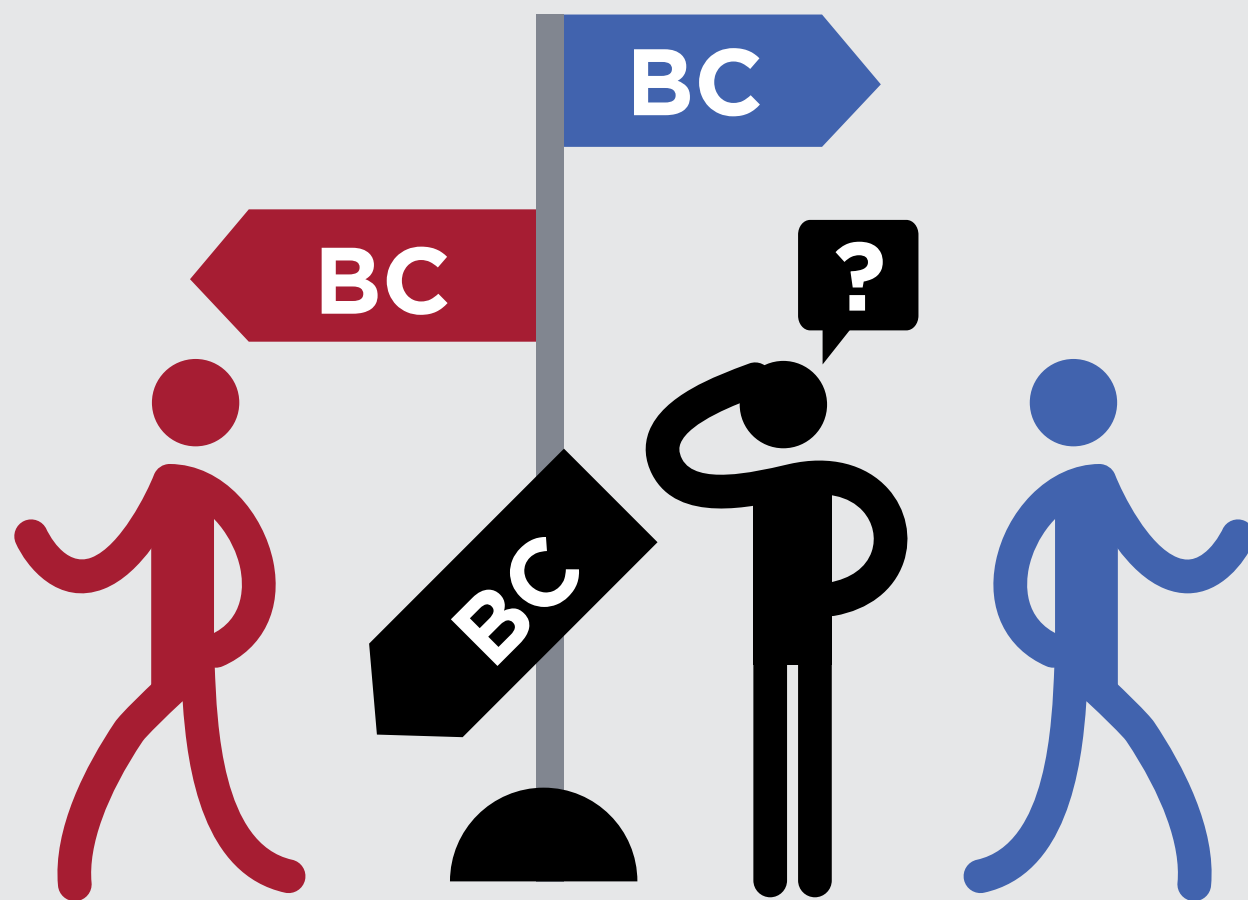
"The systematic and widespread collection, channelling and acting (if necessary) on information between communities and operational programmes require strengthening in all operations. The majority of information sent to communities was reported to be one-way communication. Staff suggested a stepped approach to communication with, and participation of communities, of asking, receiving and acting." IFRC, 2011, p.17

In summary, while it is true that many National Societies are already "doing BC", their efforts can be improved. **IFRC has clear commitments in place – it now should translate these into practical implementation.** As one senior staff member of the Secretariat in the Middle East and North Africa Zone remarked, *"We are committed, we just need to deliver."*

³ VCAs: Vulnerability and capacity assessments

⁴ Beneficiary Communication Evaluation, Haiti Earthquake Operation 2011. Catherine Chazaly, July 2011; Final Evaluation of Community Outreach Project, Final report, 2005-2009, Risang Rimbamaja, Indonesia, July 2010

FINDINGS



5.1. DEFINITION OF BC AND STRATEGIC VISION

The interviews conducted by [infoasaid](#) reveal **multiple interpretations of the meaning of 'beneficiary communication'**. BC is variously understood to be about providing information about IFRC's services to beneficiaries, conducting community meetings, establishing a dialogue between IFRC and its beneficiaries, and advocating on behalf of beneficiaries. It is also seen to be about using participatory planning techniques, conducting evaluations, and adopting new technologies such as the mobile-phone-based Trilogy Emergency Relief Application (TERA).

"There are some programmes doing BC, but they don't call it that. In Nias [an island off the west coast of Sumatra], we had a latrine construction project which had a BC component from the start, although it is not labelled as such. It included consultations with the community, posters, training of village volunteers." Staff member, Indonesian Red Cross

"The willingness is often there, but there is often no knowledge on how to do [beneficiary communication] effectively.... We are living in a modern world... you cannot just go house to house and tell people about what you're doing. The population is 95 million people... we need to make use of technology." Staff member, Philippine Red Cross

There appears to be some confusion around the following six points:

1. The target population for BC activities: Who are the 'beneficiaries'? Is it those receiving assistance from

IFRC (who could be volunteers or other members of the community) or the crisis-affected population as a whole? Several interviewees even noted their dissatisfaction with the term 'beneficiary communication' itself.

2. The tools: Is BC only about the adoption of new technologies or does it include 'traditional' methods, such as community meetings?

3. The approach: Is information dissemination also seen as BC or must it include dialogue? Very few interviewees made any mention of analysing, verifying or reacting to the data received from beneficiaries.

4. The timing of BC within the disaster cycle: Is it about early warning systems or is BC only possible in the recovery and development phase?

5. The purpose: Is BC about programme effectiveness, greater transparency and accountability to beneficiaries, improved visibility for the National Society, managing expectations with beneficiaries, community empowerment or all of these?

6. The distinction between BC, participatory planning and M&E: What is the relationship between BC, a participatory planning process, a mid-project assessment, and final evaluation?

In an attempt to provide greater clarity, the BC Team in the APZ has embarked on the development of a BC policy with global application. However, the majority of respondents at the Secretariat expressed caution.

A senior Secretariat official explained, *"There probably exist over 1,000 different policies since the creation of IFRC and the policy development process is currently under review. We cannot have a new policy for every single issue. Rather, we should have policies for very specific issues, such as blood."*

Furthermore, the Governance Department of the IFRC Secretariat has embarked on the development of a draft Policy Framework. The 24th Governing Board Session, held in September 2011, requested the Secretary General to propose a comprehensive process to review and consolidate the Federation's Policy Framework. This Policy Framework is to clarify what constitute General Policies and Activity Field Policies, lay out a process for their development and describe the role of policy and its relation to strategy and technical guidance.

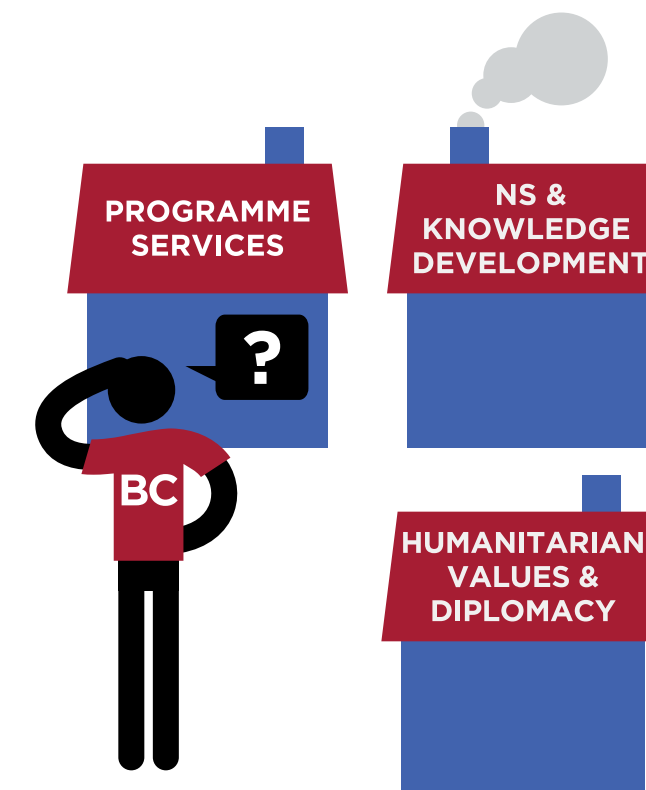
The first draft is due in September 2012 for review by the Youth Commission. The final Policy Framework will be approved in the 2013 General Assembly.

There is clearly a need for a document on beneficiary communication that provides direction, a point of reference and a guide to thought and action for IFRC. However, with a broad policy review process now underway, BC colleagues face the vexing question of what kind of document to produce in the interim.

The IFRC lacks a universally shared definition and understanding of what BC is, as well as an overarching global strategy and guidelines for BC that encapsulate this definition. **This is perhaps the most significant barrier facing attempts to mainstream BC across the entire organization.**

At a session on BC and accountability organised in May 2012 at the Haiti Learning Conference (for the Latin America Zone), an IFRC staff member from Haiti said, *"Many people aren't aware of BC or why they should be doing it. A lack of clear guidelines, minimum standards and frameworks means the requirements and expectations of staff in relation to BC are not properly understood. This leads to BC being patchy and delivered at different levels and with different consistency."*

5.2. An institutional home



With beneficiary communication such a **broad and cross-cutting issue demanding a welter of skills and partnerships**, no wonder that many humanitarian agencies disagree about where to locate BC in their organograms. IFRC is not a stand-out in this regard.

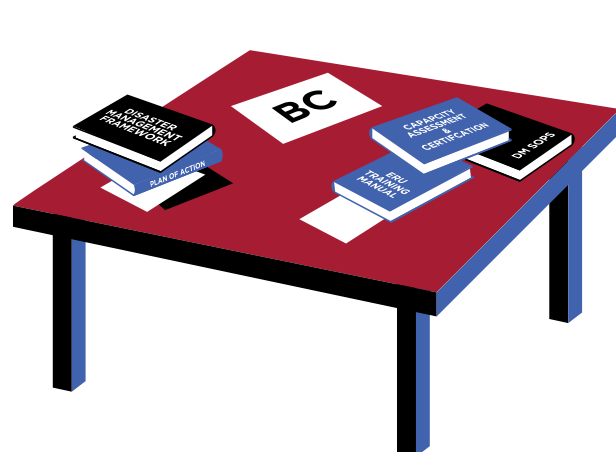
Under the overall umbrella of IFRC Programme Services, the Disaster Services Department is focussed entirely on disaster response. For its part, the Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction Department is focussed on disaster-risk reduction. Other Departments, too, such as Health, have a purely sector-specific focus. **BC cuts across and should serve all of these Departments, but where to place it?**

At present, BC is 'located' in the Communications Department of the IFRC Secretariat, which also focusses on the very different fields of fundraising, donor relations, cause marketing, and public relations. Although the Communication Department presents BC as vitally important, in reality the department, true to its core function, may well place greater emphasis on the transmission of information to an external audience than on efforts to empower a target population.

Indeed, while BC certainly requires the skills of communication experts, it is first and foremost about community-driven programme delivery, not external relations.

Thus, BC can only be effective if it is integrated into programme implementation and budgeted as a core component of programme interventions. It should therefore ideally be located within Programme Services at the IFRC Secretariat, drawing on expertise variously from Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PMER), Communications and other Departments, where required.

However, BC placed squarely under only one of the Departments within Programme Services could narrow and limit its focus. Therefore, even if the Communications Department is not the ideal home, given the different nature of much of the rest of its work, there is no more convincing alternative at present.



Ultimately, more important than the question of where BC is located in IFRC's organogram is that of whether the service is effectively available to all programme staff and whether – and how – BC is meaningfully integrated into all programmes.

5.3. Integration into key policy documents, guidance and tools

Integration of BC requires a review of existing policies, strategies and operational guidance and requires that a space for BC is carved into all key documents where appropriate, at the level of the Secretariat and National Societies.

Based on [infoasaid's](#) review of key policy instruments, it was evident that an explicit mention of BC was lacking from the following important working documents:

1. Disaster Management Strategic Operational Framework (DMSOF)
2. Plan of Action (PoA)
3. Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) indicators
4. General Disaster Management Standard Operating Procedures (DM SOPs)

[infoasaid](#) has made a first attempt at integrating BC in points 1.- 3. above. However, this input must first be considered by the respective Departments (Disaster Services and Performance Departments), refined if need be and finalised in collaboration with the Global BC Coordinator.

At the level of the National Societies reviewed in APZ, the [infoasaid](#) research team did not come across any explicit mention of BC in strategy or policy documents in Bangladesh, Indonesia or the Philippines. However, in both Bangladesh and the Philippines, certain elements of BC are implicitly captured throughout the documents.

Immediate opportunities for BC in IFRC

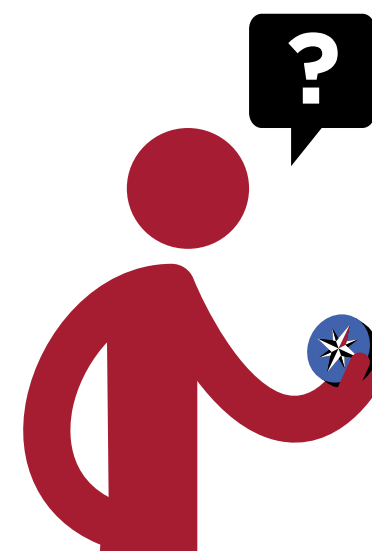
At the time of writing (July 2012), the Strategic Plan 2012 – 2016 of the Philippines Red Cross is still in draft form. It is a window through which to integrate, with the help of this National Society, a more explicit reference and commitment to BC into the document.

Similarly, a recently formed Planning Unit in the Indonesian Red Cross is now reviewing the existing Strategic Plan and developing long-term planning documents. The [infoasaid](#) team in May 2012 discussed with Planning Unit staff in Indonesia the possibility of developing key performance indicators linked to BC as part of this process.

A staff member from a Partner National Society noted, *“Working with PMI [Indonesian Red Cross], you should look at their policy first. If it's not in their policy, it's very hard. If it's in policy, it will go forward. That means they will support it. [It] could be the strategic plan, the annual plan.”*

The inference is that if key Indonesian Red Cross documents such as the Strategic Plan, national DM guidelines, or operating procedures do not clearly mention BC, the concept is unlikely to be embraced.

5.4. Capacity development



At present, there is no centralised, structured and standardised approach to capacity development for National Societies. Each Department in the Secretariat has their own plans and approaches. Currently, only APZ is investing in targeted capacity development support for BC in three National Societies (Indonesia, Philippines and Bangladesh) in the Zone.

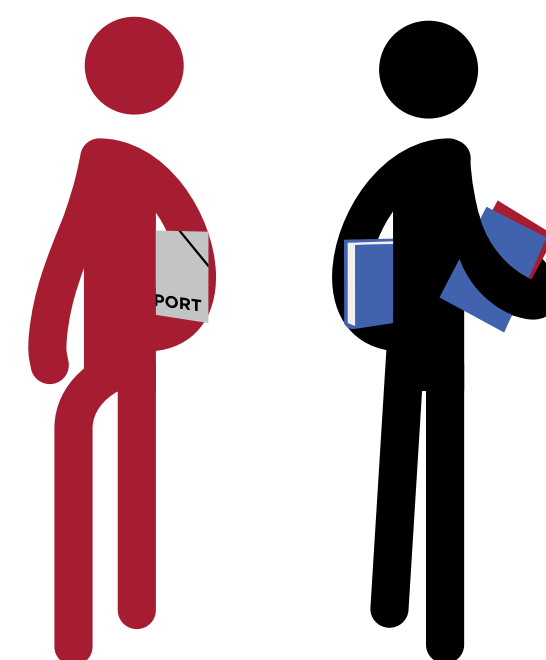
There are also no links between organisational development (OD) and BC. The creation of a feedback system, and systematic analysis and action based on the feedback received, require a change in the way National Societies currently operate.

However, there are plenty of opportunities for integrating BC into existing training programmes, carrying out simulations and including courses on the Learning Platform, and ensuring that BC is included in OD support plans.

5.5. Knowledge-sharing

“We don't talk to each other, we work in silos and the Secretariat is a million miles away from the most remote branch of a NS that may not even have internet connectivity.” Staff member, Irish Red Cross.

Knowledge-sharing is inevitably an enormous challenge in an organisation the size of IFRC. [infoasaid's](#) research in AZP found a striking example of this. Many staff of the country's National Society were completely unaware of the Community Outreach Project implemented by the Irish Red Cross in Aceh following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, even though it was a milestone project that promoted a multi-channel approach for two-way communication and informed much of IFRC's current BC model.



Efforts are being made to address this gap. For example, a BC section has been created on FedNet – a good start, but a lot more can be done.

5.6. Human resources

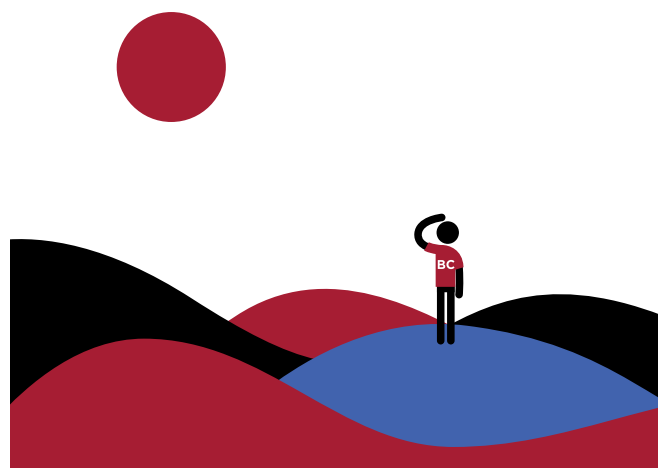
The Global BC Coordinator is also the APZ BC Programme Manager and while he is determined, highly competent and passionate, he has been assigned 'mission impossible'. It is impossible for one full-time BC staff member simultaneously to:

- Integrate BC at the level of IFRC policy and strategy;
- Support resource mobilisation efforts;
- Provide technical support services to five Zones and promote knowledge-sharing;
- Oversee and manage a significant programme of work in the APZ;
- Facilitate the roll-out of the TERA system globally.

Dynamic, passionate and talented people drive change, but **the change required cannot be achieved by one champion alone.**

The Lessons-Learned report also alluded to capacity constraints across programmes.

“BC, a multi-dimensional programming approach, requires a variety of skills, and lends itself to a small team set-up. Respondents reported that human resources did not match programme size. A need existed for a multi-dimensional team of communicators, information managers, and programme management, with planning, monitoring, evaluation and community mobilization skills.” IFRC, 2011, p. 29



In the Philippines, the Secretary General has agreed to host a BC focal point. In Bangladesh, staff from the National Society and IFRC highlighted the need for technical support to advance on-going negotiations with mobile service providers for the implementation of a pilot TERA project.

A key obstacle to the effective integration of BC, highlighted at the Haiti Learning Conference, is a lack of resources dedicated to BC. This includes insufficient financial resources, skilled personnel and time – at all levels.

5.7. Financial resources

At present, the APZ is the only Zone that has dedicated financial resources to support a programme of work in Asia Pacific dedicated to strengthening BC capacity in three National Societies. The bulk of these resources was unspent money from the tsunami response.



National Societies use a range of creative approaches to mobilise resources, from cost recovery to contributions from bi-lateral donors in-country, support from Partner National Societies and contributions from members and public donations.

However, BC is not systematically built into project proposals or appeals. National Societies lack guidance on budget templates for BC and an understanding of what some of those costs might entail.

SECTION 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Define BC and develop a strategic vision

“BC is a priority. But it is better to get a common understanding on what BC really is. We have several different definitions. We need a common understanding and what it means for our work.”

Staff member, Indonesian Red Cross

The IFRC faces a new opportunity to meet this demand. With IFRC's broad policy development process currently under review and given that beneficiary communication and accountability commitments are already included in Strategy 2020, the DM Position Paper and the Code of Conduct, **we recommend that IFRC develop a beneficiary communication strategy**⁵.

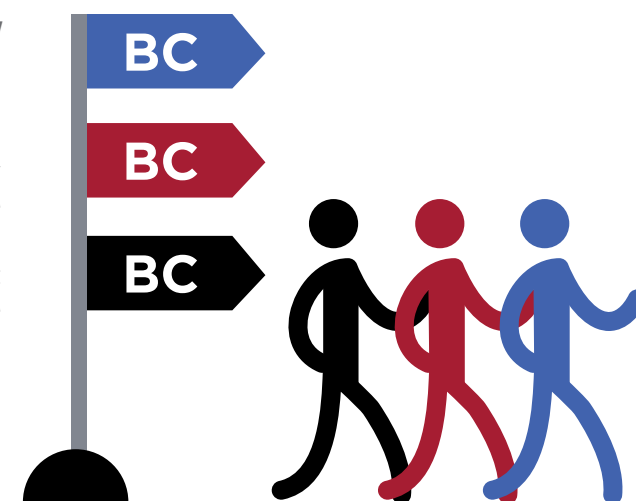
This must provide a clear corporate definition of BC, together with a conceptual framework that demonstrates BC's key strengths in supporting participation, M&E and accountability. The strategy should articulate IFRC's strategic aims with regard to beneficiary communication and be accompanied with an implementation plan and some compelling case studies to serve as “runway lights” in guiding National Societies.

“When things are more clearly defined they are given a term, when they are termed, they gain meaning and relevance and can be measured and compared.”

IFRC staff member, Bangladesh

Once the BC strategy is in place and approved by Management, there is a need to raise awareness about the strategy across IFRC (Geneva, Zones, Regions and National Societies). There is already a wealth of great resources that can be disseminated alongside the strategy, including the Lessons-Learned report and the BC video www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlmGkU7qKxQ.

The marketing campaign could start with a message from the Secretary General emphasising the importance of this work, as well as screen casts, news articles on FedNet and presentations at Zonal and Regional IFRC meetings. **There needs to be a common understanding, appetite and demand for BC. People will only embrace BC if they are “sold” on the benefits to themselves, their leaders and communities.**



6.2. Link BC to programmes regardless of institutional ‘home’

Fortunately, staff within the Communications Department at the Secretariat understand the importance of BC. The Global BC Coordinator has been afforded a high degree of flexibility by his department managers (themselves champions of BC) to provide a one-man support service to all the other Departments.

⁵ According to the Policy Review Paper, a strategy is: “the means and manner by which the mission of the International Federation is achieved at different levels. It is based on careful monitoring and analysis of global trends and humanitarian challenges. Furthermore, it takes into account the relationship between the forces in the external environment and the internal resources of an organization. Strategy involves the determination of a long-term mission and ultimately prescribes the course of action by using the competitive advantage of the Red Cross and Red Crescent as a global network. Finally, it results in a managerial allocation of resources to most effectively reach those objectives. This definition applies to both the ‘master strategy’ – Strategy 2020 – as well as to sub-ordinate strategies, strategic frameworks, and strategic operational frameworks, as appropriate to the specific technical area they describe.”



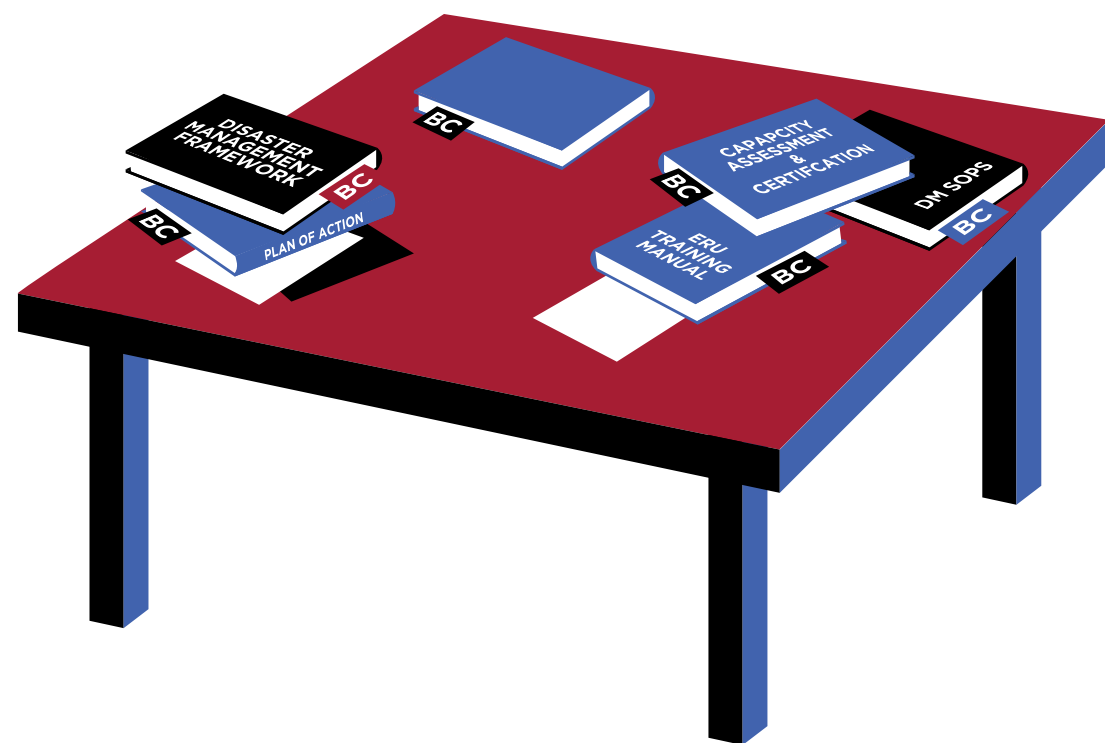
The Global BC Coordinator's challenge is to ensure that even if BC remains 'located' in the Communications Department for the time being, its purpose is effective integration into the disaster and programme cycles across IFRC's operations. It should be made clear that the Communications Department deals with both external relations and beneficiary communications.

6.3. Integrate into key policy documents, guidance and tools

For BC to be fully mainstreamed throughout IFRC, it needs to be integrated in key documents such as the DMSOF, PoA and OCAC indicators. Initial inputs have been provided by [infoasaid](#). **However, BC also should be integrated in the general DM SOPs being developed by Disaster and Crisis Management.** They will be available for review and feedback in September 2012.

National Societies, in particular, need support to do this better.

"We need direct assistance, such as coaching, to make the strategy more adaptive and to insert this new term into our existing structure and strategy. Not to make a new strategy but put into one that exists."
Staff member, Indonesian Red Cross



BC should be integrated across:

- **The disaster management cycle** (DRR, response and recovery)
- **The project management cycle** (assessment, planning, implementation and M&E)
- **The programme areas** (health, shelter and non-food items, food security, water, sanitation and hygiene and so on).

For this, a range of additional tools and resources are required:

Harmonized DRR messaging

Much-needed standard and harmonised messages for public awareness and education for DRR are under development. The Community Preparedness and DRR Department has embarked on an initiative to develop steps in the mainstreaming of generic messages for 'All-Hazards Family Disaster Planning' and for specific hazards such as droughts, earthquakes, floods, pandemics, tropical cyclones and wildfires.

For each hazard, the messages are grouped under assessment, planning, risk mitigation and preparation for response. The key messages are currently undergoing a validation and revision process and should be ready in 2014, so as to have a set agreed upon and accepted by the broadest range of partners in the UNISDR system. **This will be a great resource and BC colleagues should ensure that they engage with this process.**

Readiness for action

National Societies need their own contextualised messages (post-disaster), media and telecoms landscape guides, and assessment checklists to be able to spring into action on BC in an emergency. **IFRC can draw on infoasaid's development and publication of these resources⁶** and could develop additional ones, particularly audience profiles and media and telecoms landscape guides.

Measuring success

There is need for a generic M&E framework that provides a menu of indicators to measure progress at the level of objectives and outputs related to beneficiary information, dialogue, analysis and action. This has been developed with support from [infoasaid](#). However, the framework will have to be finalised by the Global BC Coordinator in collaboration with PMER colleagues and then disseminated widely.

New guidelines on feedback and complaints handling
IFRC already has an excellent M&E guide in place that recognises the importance of feedback as a source of valuable data for monitoring purposes:

"M&E provides opportunities for stakeholder feedback, especially beneficiaries to provide input into and perceptions of our work, modelling openness to criticism and willingness to learn from experiences and to adapt to changing needs."

IFRC, 2011, p. 41

However, there is a need for specific guidelines on feedback and complaints handling. These should include:

- Definitions of feedback, complaints and grievances and what they constitute;
- Protocols for data collection, storage and analysis;
- Confidentiality and data protection;
- Case-handling: Case history, tracking and resolution;
- Response times and delivery mechanisms;
- Communications channels for data capture and response;
- Services marketing.

Synchronizing internally

Based on the recommendations of a review of IFRC's accountability systems and recommendations by the One World Trust in 2011, the IFRC Performance Department will be embarking on an initiative to develop an Accountability Framework for both internal and external stakeholders, including beneficiaries of aid.

It is important that any BC strategy and guidance that is developed dovetails closely with the Accountability Framework's wording on accountability to beneficiaries.

All IFRC colleagues and National Societies involved in beneficiary communications should be aware of the global roll-out of the Accountability Framework and synchronize actions with it.

6.4. Strengthen knowledge-sharing

There is already a BC section on FedNet. This could be strengthened with additional resources and case studies. It could also be given greater prominence by being placed in the drop-down menu under 'Resources and Services.' At present, it is buried away in the Asia-Pacific section and hard to locate.

The following could be done in addition:

- **Creation on FedNet of a centralised, global data base on BC:** 'Who is doing what, where (WWW);

- **Creation of a resources section on FedNet.** Such an electronic library should be regularly updated by staff from National Societies;
- **Development of a global contact list** of staff interested and involved in BC;
- **Establishment of a community of practice** to enable peer-to-peer exchange through moderated discussion forums;
- **Development of more structured knowledge-sharing and outreach campaigns,** using social media and other channels.

6.5. Centralise, standardise and structure BC capacity development

All new Programme, PMER and Communications staff at the Secretariat and in National Societies should be inducted in BC. **An e-learning course on BC should be included on the Learning Platform and made mandatory for new staff.** The Learning Platform aims to reach 25,000 users by 2012, offering great outreach potential.

infoasaid has developed an e-learning course on communication with crisis-affected communities (www.infoasaid.org/e-learning), which could be considered by IFRC for inclusion on the Learning Platform. IFRC could create additional modules, building on the basic skills course developed by infoasaid.

Sessions on BC should be included in training programmes for Emergency Response Units (ERUs) (particularly Health, Water and Sanitation), Field Assessment and Coordination Teams (FACT) and Regional Disaster Response Teams (RDRT)

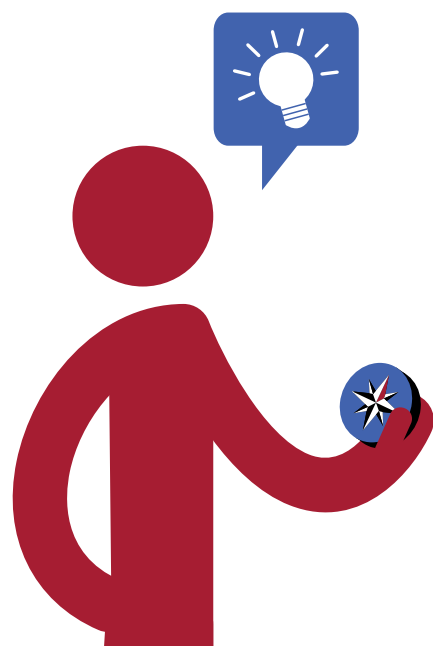
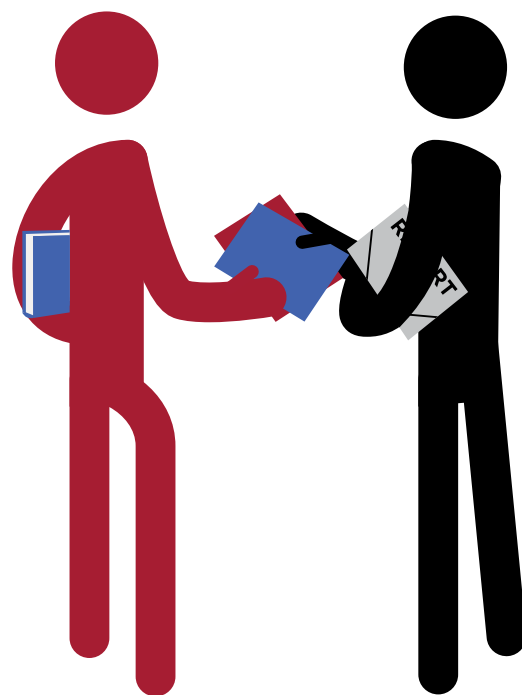
Face-to-face training events including simulations for key staff from National Societies should be held at Zonal level.

Key Programme, PMER and Communications staff from selected National Societies in the Zone could be invited to participate. Simulations are an engaging way to learn through practical exercises embedded in hypothetical scenarios, described by one IFRC staff member as *“boot camp for ‘ben comms’ in the jungle.”*

IFRC could partner with media development organisations, FrontlineSMS, FIRST Response (Suitcase Radio), Freedom Fone, Télécoms Sans Frontières and Vodafone (instant networks) as well as other aid agencies during the simulations. This would inject a sense of reality and encourage partnership with other actors.

6.6. Support field-level pilots

Clearly, BC is about rights and responsibilities, not choice. However, the reality is that National Societies are autonomous and self-governing. As such, the demand has to come from them, and they have to appreciate the benefits. **National Societies must know what support is on offer and available to help kick-start the work.** Zonal offices could thus help advertise the support services and encourage National Societies to compete for selection as pilot countries for the roll-out of BC by submitting proposals for consideration to the IFRC.



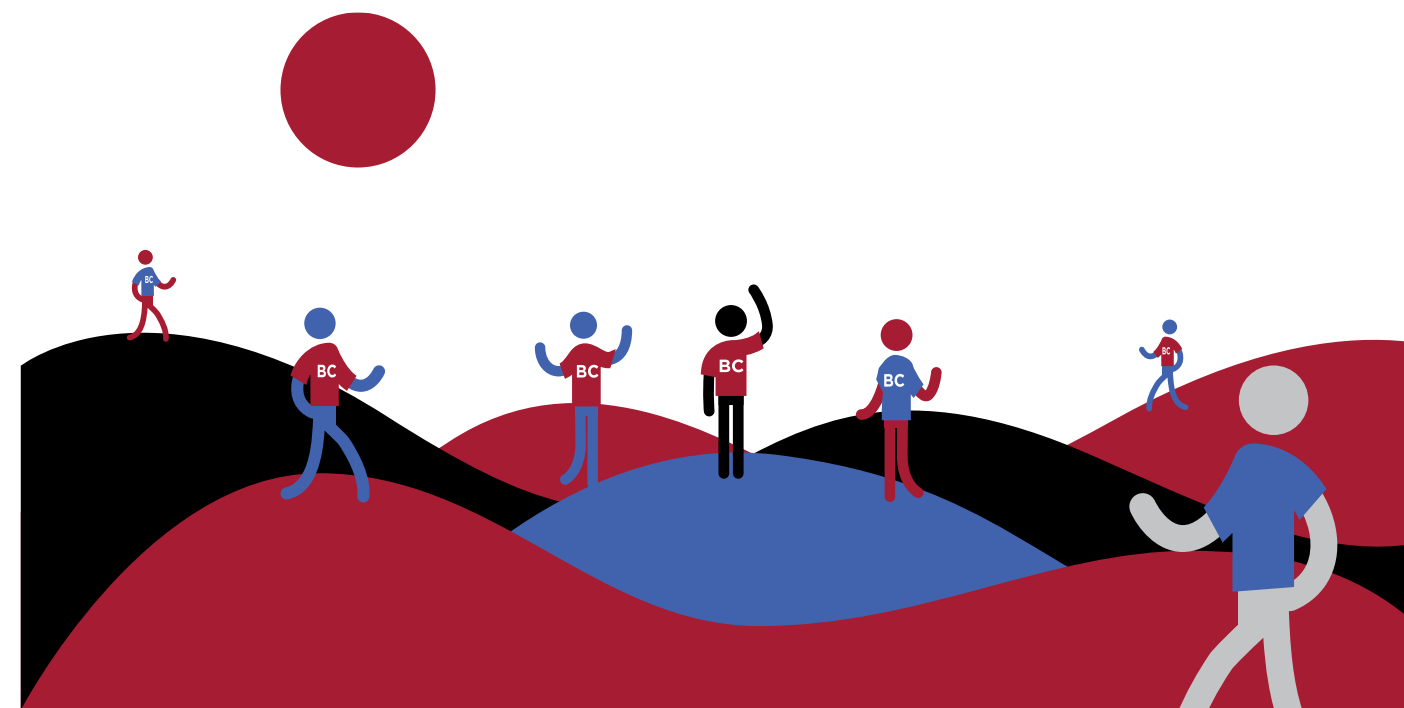
In the case of Haiti, Indonesia and Pakistan, *“Initiating a pilot programme within contexts that are new to the approaches and programme tools proved successful in terms of building capacity, creating greater buy-in by stakeholders, and created opportunities for trailing two-way communication approaches.”*

IFRC 2011, p. 31

This work could be funded through a global BC Fund and the BC staff members at Zonal level could drive the agenda forward. **The best approach may be to begin working with coalitions of the willing** (as the APZ has done) and then let the inspirational practice radiate throughout the organisation and spread over time, through peer-to-peer support and other mechanisms.

6.7. Augment human resources

There is a critical need for additional full-time BC staff positions in Geneva, the Zones and ‘pilot/focus’ countries. The recommended positions below are followed by some key responsibilities to consider when writing a job description.



Create a new BC position in Geneva

At present, the role of the Global BC Coordinator has been decentralised to the APZ, with the Global BC Coordinator also serving as APZ Programme Manager for BC.

A new Global BC Coordinator position should be created and centralised in Geneva. The current Global BC Coordinator can then return to focus efforts on APZ and provide peer-to-peer support to other Zones.

The role of the BC staff member in Geneva would be to:

- Draft the BC strategy and secure its endorsement by Management;
- Design an awareness/outreach campaign for BC;
- Support resource mobilisation for BC;
- Ensure that BC is integrated in key tools and guidance;
- Update and maintain the BC section on FedNet;
- Source and compile case studies from Zones;
- Moderate the BC Community of Practice;
- Coordinate BC Working Group meetings and follow-up.

A BC position in each Zone

The role of the BC staff member in each Zone would be to:

- Provide technical support to National Societies in the Zone for the design and implementation of BC programmes;
- Support awareness-raising and capacity development efforts of NS;
- Facilitate sharing of experiences and learning between NS in the Zone;
- Support resource-mobilisation efforts;
- Provide advice on coordinating Movement partners information and communication activities;
- Push forward pilot initiatives in willing Partner National Societies.

A BC position in selected countries

The role of the BC staff member at country level would be to:

- Analyse programmes, goals and objectives and how communication can support the delivery of programmes;
- Assess the media landscape and develop audience profiles;
- Undertake community information needs and access assessments;
- Develop a communication strategy;
- Work closely with programme, PMER and communications colleagues to ensure the integration of BC in programmes;
- Coordinate Movement partners information and communication activities;
- Carry out beneficiary communication projects and activities;
- Work closely with programme colleagues to ensure that feedback is analysed, dealt with appropriately, programmes are adjusted accordingly and that responses are communicated to communities;
- Monitor communications initiatives and ensure that feedback received from communities feeds M&E processes;
- Advocate externally on behalf of beneficiaries (humanitarian diplomacy);
- Share inspiring practice and lessons learnt with other National Societies, and contribute to the BC Community of Practice;
- Participate in simulations and training held at Zonal level;
- Forge partnerships with media development organisations and technology providers;
- Support resource mobilisation efforts for BC.

The BC staff positions at all levels would most likely require the profile of a Communication for Development Expert. There is also a need to ensure that profiles of BC experts are included on the FACT roster and that these experts participate in FACT deployments. The Emergency Response Units of Health and Water and Sanitation should also include BC experts.

6.8. Dedicate financial resources

Strategy means nothing without capacity and finance. The best strategy will have little impact if the financial resources are not available to fund key staff positions and drive the activities needed to deliver on the implementation plan.

Resource mobilisation can take place at multiple levels. However, given the need for an initial injection of resources to raise BC awareness and capacity and to pilot a few interventions in interested National Societies, **it may be a good idea to set up a global BC Fund or make a provision for it under an existing Fund, such as the Intensive Capacity Development Fund.**

The BC Fund could be managed by the Secretariat in Geneva, with contributions from PNS. BC can also be systematically included in fundraising appeals and Governmental donors could also be approached with proposals.

As more and more National Societies understand and see the value of BC, they can themselves start to raise resources through their own creative approaches and systematically mainstream BC costs into their programme budgets.



SECTION 7

MAINSTREAMING PLAN

Step 1. Change minds internally: Shift thinking and create a shared understanding

1. IFRC leadership should determine that BC is a top priority for the Federation and its membership.
2. Restate the commitment to BC in a powerful and compelling message to members and Secretariat staff.
3. Define BC as central to the delivery of IFRC principles, values and commitments.
4. Rebrand BC in a way that retains the familiarity (even if the terminology remains somewhat dated) but with greater clarity and meaning.
5. Understand that BC challenges and ultimately changes the relationship between National Societies, volunteers and communities, from 'power over' to 'power with.'
6. Think of BC as a viral change process, not a project or a new initiative.
7. Realise that each National Society will appreciate BC differently and will invest in the adoption of change to varying levels and degrees.

Some will focus on BC technology, while others will integrate technology with deeper, programme design-level changes. Some will embrace a rebalanced relationship between those who serve and those who are served. Others will wish to preserve the power status quo. Support National Societies with this reality in mind, **but hold to BC as a cross-cutting programming approach, not a menu of options.**

Step 2. Institutionalise change: Reposition and resource the effort

1. Provide a clear definition and conceptual framework for BC.
2. Champion change from the highest IFRC echelons.
3. Make references to BC in key policy instruments and operational guidelines explicit, not implicit.
4. Set up a BC Community of Practice for knowledge-sharing.
5. Recruit for a Geneva-based BC position and five Zonal positions.
6. Allocate financial resources to support National Society capacity development and the roll-out of pilot projects⁷.
7. Fund the mainstreaming through special funding from PNS, Governmental contributions and appeals.

Step 3. Measure BC's impact on programme delivery through a Proof-of-Concept process

1. Through Zonal offices, set programme and organisational baselines with each National Society in terms of its BC culture and approach. Measure progress against baselines.
2. Showcase the benefits of BC in countries and Zones where enthusiastic BC practitioners agree to demonstrate and share learning.

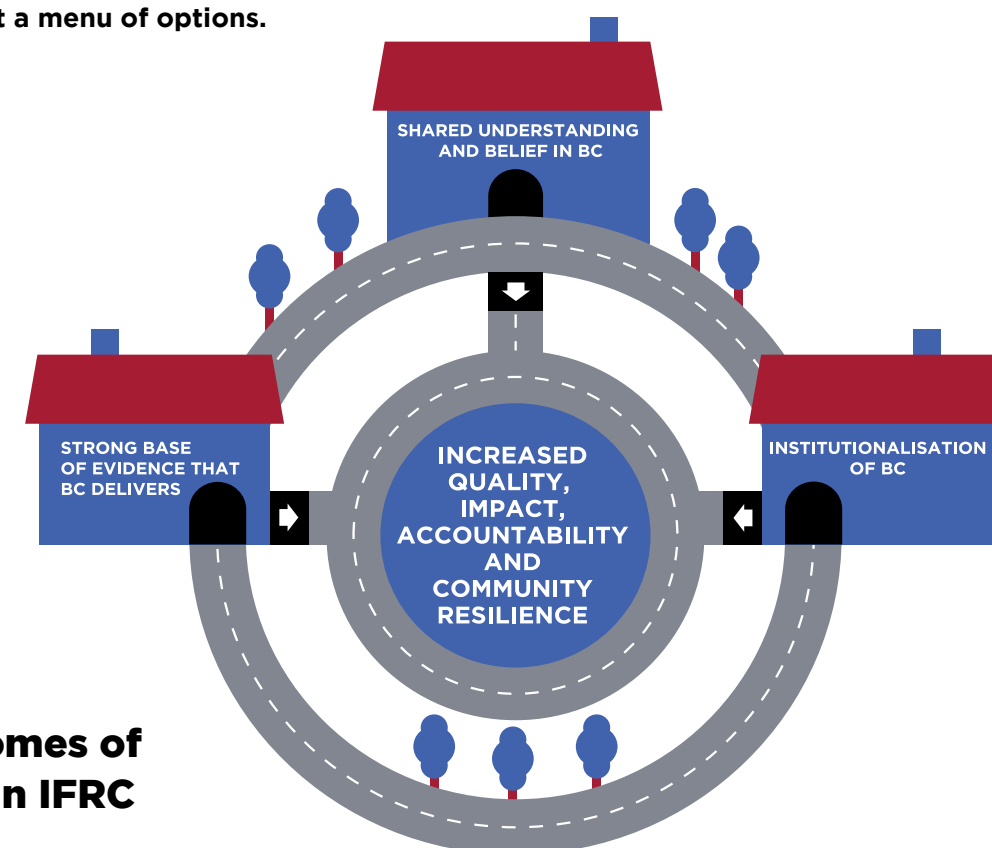


Fig. 2 Central outcomes of mainstreaming BC in IFRC

⁷ Infoasaid is working on a costed action plan, which will be shared at the BC Working Group meeting in July 2012. However, it is not included in this report.

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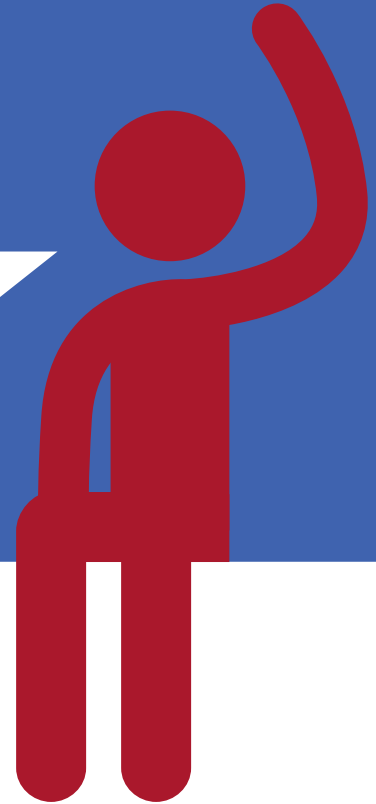
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Making beneficiary communication a membership-wide programming reality will have real strategic benefit for the Federation.

This will ensure that IFRC values and principles are alive in the approach to serving communities, that its programmes are truly community-driven and that it is accountable to the communities it serves.

This is what will set IFRC apart from traditional aid providers.



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