

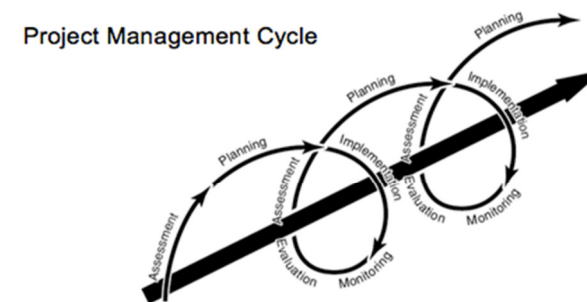
Accountability to Beneficiaries (AtB) Minimum Standards in MSM response

During an emergency community engagement can be overlooked in the rush to respond, however, accountability to those affected by disaster is a crucial component of quality programming. Ensuring strong AtB will lead to better quality programme design, increased community ownership of the response, and will help affected communities recover more quickly. Agencies giving focus to AtB as part of emergency programmes have also reported that it has saved money, helped with staff satisfaction and retention, led to quick identification and correction of errors, and improved staff security.

The importance of accountability is reflected in the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which includes a commitment to “hold ourselves accountable to those we seek to assist”. In addition a number of National Societies, including the British Red Cross, have developed further specific commitments to accountability to beneficiaries and crisis affected-communities. In recognition of the need to ensure accountability from the onset of a response, while taking into account the initial acute emergency operating context, BRC’s Emergency Response Team has committed to 15 minimum standards for AtB in MSM. These are based on BRC’s wider AtB commitment and help operationalize these by outlining what is expected during the: assessment; planning; implementation and monitoring; and exit, evaluation and learning phases.

It should be noted:

- 1) It is recognised that the response cycle is not linear and requires teams to regularly review and plan while implementing. The minimum standards are linked to the types of activities and decisions that typically take place in each phase, regardless of when they happen. Depending on the rotation, individual MSM teams are likely to focus primarily on one or two stages and the minimum standards linked to these rather than all 15.
- 2) The term ‘community’ is used throughout. In contexts where people have been displaced this refers to both the displaced community (potentially living in a camp) *and* the host community.



Source: Engineering in Emergencies (RedR 1995)

Accountability to Beneficiaries (AtB) in MSM - 15 minimum standards

This document sets out 15 minimum standards that should be met. Each minimum standard is followed by bullet point ideas for how these can be achieved.

Working with National Societies as part of MSM

Key as part of this:

1. The commitment to accountability to beneficiaries is communicated to the host NS, and the realisation of good practice as part of the MSM response is facilitated.
 - Explain to key counterparts BRC’s commitment to AtB, the benefits of strong AtB, and practicalities during an emergency response.
 - Build on existing good practice, interest and capacity, to support the host NS to achieve these minimum standards as part of the MSM-NS response.
2. BRC’s AtB commitments are upheld through maintaining an accountable relationship with the host National Society and other ERUs
 - Communicate the purpose and parameters of the MSM ERU.
 - Work with NS counterparts to design, plan and implement programme activities.
 - Provide contact details to the host NS and other ERUs of an IFRC focal point in country and at HQ to contact with feedback, or any complaints.
 - Actively provide opportunities for the host NS to input into deployment reviews.

Key during this stage:**3. Staff, volunteers and communities understand who is doing the assessment and why.**

- Brief staff and volunteers on the responses to anticipated questions about the assessment from the community.
- Where possible make advance contact with community leaders to arrange the assessment.
- During the assessment inform the community about:
 - Red Cross mandate
 - The objectives of the assessment
 - Timeframe of assessment
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are identifiable (with T-shirts and ID badges).
- Communicate the main assessment results and next steps with community leaders and/or other key stakeholders.

4. The assessment identifies the needs and capacities of different groups (including the more vulnerable).

- Identify stakeholders at community level.
- Speak to community members, including men, women, young, elderly, disabled, ethnic minorities and more vulnerable groups.
- Consult with men and women separately.
- Debrief post-assessment with field staff to capture observations and feedback.
- Assessment findings and recommendations are reported by sex, age-group, & vulnerable groups.

5. Information to inform ways of working with the community during implementation is gathered as part of the assessment.

- Speak to men and women to identify:
 - Preferred channels of communication.
 - Existing community structures and power dynamics, including the extent to which leaders represent the community.
 - Representatives of more vulnerable groups.
 - Gender dynamics to inform how activities need to be implemented.

Key during this stage:**6. Activities for community engagement are integrated into programme plans and monitored, and sufficient time and resources are allocated.**

- Ghant charts and budgets include specific activities and resources (items and staff time) needed for community engagement, including:
 - Selected communications channels, where possible chosen in consultation with beneficiary representatives
 - Community participation activities
 - Options for hearing feedback and complaints
 - Periodic reviews involving the community to monitor community satisfaction with the project.
- Log-frames and associated M&E plans include indicators for tracking community engagement. E.g. # of committees/groups established; # of focus group discussions held with men and women to review latrine location and set-up.

7. Approaches for hearing about (and acting on) programme errors; community feedback; and satisfaction with programmes are developed.

- Identify host NS current practice, and opportunities for strengthening this.
- Identify a central focal point for collating and reviewing feedback and complaints.
- Decide on simple tools for staff to document feedback as part of activities.
- Identify appropriate channels for receiving complaints, through community consultation where possible, and set out simple complaint and response procedures.

8. Programme teams are supported and trained to have the necessary skills and knowledge for community engagement.

- Ensure both HP and Sanitation teams (staff and volunteers):
 - Reflect gender balance and ethnic diversity of the community.
 - Have skills needed for community engagement.
- Develop key messages and brief staff and volunteers on:
 - RC mandate (when not already covered)
 - Expectations and ways of working (including Code of Conduct, and working with the community)
 - Project activities, timelines and targeting criteria
 - How community members can raise complaints and provide feedback, staff role in this, and how this will be used.

Key during this stage:**9. Sanitation and hygiene promotion activities reflect local preferences and are safe and accessible for more vulnerable groups**

- Hold focus group discussions with men and women to decide latrine and hand-washing station:
 - Set-up (including location, overcoming protection risks, access issues for more vulnerable groups, and where feasible the design).
 - Maintenance (including what will be the best way to keep latrines clean, take care of hand-washing systems, solid waste).
- Community representatives participate in the development of targeting criteria (where used).

10. Programme implementation encourages communication to maximise transparency with communities

- Discuss with communities via multiple, accessible formats the:
 - Red Cross mandate
 - Expectations and ways of working (including Code of Conduct)
 - Project information: activities, timelines and targeting criteria
 - How they can raise complaints and provide feedback
- Use at least two varied communication channels (combining written and oral methods). This may include: meetings, posters/leaflets, SMS messages, radio, or via committees.
- Provide information in the languages most commonly used by the community.

11. The community participates in realising Hygiene Promotion and Sanitation activities.

- The local affected-population contributes skills and materials to the project, where appropriate.
- Where appropriate, form committees that are representative of the wider community.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of committees collectively and communicated them to the wider community.
- Involve men and women in reviewing construction progress and quality of infrastructure.

12. Community complaints and feedback is used to improve programmes.

- *Field staff role:* Staff record feedback and complaints they hear from communities, and time is given in daily team meetings for staff to share community feedback.
- *Alternative channels:* Set-up channels for receiving, collating, reviewing and responding to complaints. For example this may include: a dedicated 'phone line, a 'questions' desk, regular community meetings, or via a community committee.
- *Satisfaction surveys:* As part of monitoring beneficiaries and community members are periodically asked about their satisfaction with the programme, including sanitation design and set-up.
- Document and review feedback and complaints centrally (i.e. not only locally) so that this information can be used to inform planning and implementation.
- Use feedback and complaints to adapt the programme, and respond to complaints.

Key during this stage:

The degree to which communities will be affected by an MSM exit, and so involved in shaping the exit strategy, depend on if the NS will continue activities. As relevant links should be made with recovery.

13. The exit strategy is designed based on input from relevant stakeholders.

- NS feedback (and if relevant community feedback and evolving needs) informs MSM exit strategy.
- Formal handover of relevant materials and equipment where appropriate is agreed.

14. The exit strategy is clearly communicated in advance to relevant stakeholders.

- An exit strategy communications plan is designed.
- Programme staff and volunteers are briefed on the exit strategy.
- If relevant, communities are informed about the exit, reasons, and what next.

15. The MSM deployment evaluation and learning reflects on how the response engaged with communities and the National Society, and the extent to which the AtB MSM guidance was met.

- Debriefs discuss the extent to which these minimum standards were met.
- MSM review and learning reports include a section on AtB.

Relevant tools and templates to support MSM teams in meeting the 15 minimum standards

The [WASH Cluster Accountability Handbook](#) (included on all laptops) contains good tools and guidance for how to implement strong accountability approaches as part of WASH programmes, and the updated MSM handbook contains information on MSM approaches, including where AtB should be specifically references. In addition the following tools, specifically designed for the MSM, are provided on laptops:

Community feedback complaints and satisfaction - Tools and Guidance	
Community feedback complaint and response - options for emergencies	For managers
Community Feedback Log for use in emergencies - for staff and volunteers	For staff and volunteers to use during community visits.
Complaints and feedback tracking table	For managers or an identified feedback focal point
Satisfaction review questions	For staff to use with communities
Satisfaction review data entry sheet template	For staff to use with Satisfaction Review Questions
Community participation and engagement – Tools	
Community Committee ToR template	For managers to adapt with committees
Community Meeting Summary Form	For staff and volunteers to use with communities
Community communications - Tools and Guidance	
Communication with beneficiaries in emergencies – options and examples for MSM	For managers to consider different options
Poster Overview of Red Cross and Response - for communities	For communities
Q&A What is the MSM - Handout for staff and volunteers	For staff and volunteers
Q&A from assessment to implementation – for staff and volunteers to use with communities	For staff and volunteers to support in answering community questions
Information & communications needs assessment template	For managers or staff identified to lead on using more high tech communication channels
MSM Exit Strategy - thinking about communication	For managers
AtB management support tools – Tools and Guidance	
Engaging with communities - rapid briefing outline for field staff	For managers to use with field staff and volunteers
Tasks and skills needed for community liaison – example JD for emergencies	For managers to consider tasks and skills needed in teams
PSEA emergency programme checklist and quick reminder for managers	For managers
Checklist - practice against the AtB for MSM 15 minimum standards	For managers and HQ MSM Working group members

For further examples and resources see: [Case Studies and Tools from HAP members](#); [Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities \(CDAC\) network](#); or contact BRC's Performance and Accountability Team.