

Table of contents

Part 1: Introduction	5
Who is this handbook for?	6
How is this handbook organised?	8
General guidance on selecting an activity	9
Essential Guidance for all activities	13
How to organising effective meetings	14
Selecting the participants and managing groups	15
Planning your activity	18
Linking with others	19
How to avoid risks	19
Community action planning	20
How to share information	22
How to spread good ideas further	27
Following-up and monitoring	29



Part 2: Sections	
Gardens	30
Compost	48
Shaded Seedling Nurseries	68
Homemade Liquid Fertilisers	80
Improving Farming Practices	92
Lead Farmers and Demonstration Farming	110
Water Harvesting and Conservation	124
Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	144
Nutrition Awareness	160
Reducing Fuel for Cooking	176
Early Warning and Early Action	192
Savings and Loan Associations	216
Part 3: Annex	230
a. Acknowledgements	231
b. Acronyms and abbreviations	232
c. Tables, diagrams and other resources referred to in the handbook (organised by section)	232
d. Useful resources (organised by section)	240



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“The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and starting on the first one.”

Mark Twain, American author



Introduction

This handbook describes 12 activities that Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) volunteers can easily carry out by themselves using resources already available in the community. The activities are designed to help communities to produce more food and income and to stay safe and healthy in areas where there are challenges such as droughts and floods. Each activity selected is particularly relevant for the local context in Southern and Eastern Africa, but most activities can be done anywhere in the world with some small adjustments. The information is presented for Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers to guide their discussions and activities with communities.

This handbook has 12 sections. The activities in each section can help increase food security and strengthen livelihoods. The sections are:

1. Gardens
2. Compost
3. Shaded Seedling Nurseries
4. Homemade Liquid Fertilisers
5. Improving Farming Practices
6. Lead Farmers and Demonstration Farming
7. Water Harvesting and Conservation
8. Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
9. Nutrition Awareness
10. Reducing Fuel for Cooking
11. Early Warning and Early Action
12. Savings and Loan Associations



Photo: Zimbabwe, 2019 © Jordi Matas/British Red Cross

All these activities have been designed to:

- Be easy to understand and carried out by Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers,
- Require little or no external resources, support, technology or funding,
- Need no special skills, capacities or external advice. .

Each activity has been carefully selected to increase the ability of people to withstand, or be 'resilient to,' the shocks, stresses and hazards related to changing climate. These activities do not represent a comprehensive list of all actions that build resilience, but those that have been proven to be effective by a wide range of organisations and Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and staff.¹ The activities can benefit families and communities in a wide range of contexts and different locations.



What is a resilient community?

A resilient community is one that is better able to **withstand and recover** from shocks and stresses.

Resilience refers to how well a person, community, household, organisation or any other living thing or system can survive and respond to different types of shocks and stresses.

Resilience involves identifying and understanding issues before they become a 'crisis' and being **prepared for** and able to deal with the shocks. It also means being able to **adapt** or change the way we do things so that we can work and live better in increasingly uncertain and changing conditions.

A resilient community...



Adapted from Kenya Red Cross Society 'Framework for Community Resilience', 2017.

Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is designed for RCRC volunteers to use together with communities. Volunteers can carefully share and discuss the activities described in this handbook with different members of a community, allowing them to select their preferred activities. Whenever possible, volunteers should try to promote relevant activities that help the poorest and most vulnerable people.

The content of this handbook is also useful for those managing programmes and projects, helping the design of interventions to be led by volunteers and the communities they work with.

¹It was written with input from volunteers and project staff across the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, and was tested in Malawi with volunteers, project staff and a small number of communities. The steps have been developed after consultation with many projects, experts, research and with other volunteers from within the movement and beyond.

What knowledge or skills do volunteers need?

The activities in this handbook have been selected deliberately so that volunteers do not need any special knowledge or skills to lead these activities. The most important skills needed are those that RCRC volunteers usually already have:

- **Motivating and organising people** and helping people come to decisions in groups
- **Patience and persistence to clearly explain ideas** and trying to help and support people
- **The confidence to ask other knowledgeable people** such as successful gardeners, government extension officers, health workers or teachers for advice and persuade these key people to support you in an activity



Photo: Chad, 2019 © George Osodi/British Red Cross

What knowledge or skills do participants need?

The activities in this handbook have been selected so that people participating in activities do not require any special knowledge or skills. The aim is that volunteers will guide participants using the information in this handbook and work together with knowledgeable members of the community, such as lead farmers, extension officers, teachers or health workers, to build their skills.

How can volunteers gain further knowledge and skills and access training?

The activities in this handbook are intended to be low cost and easy to do, so volunteers should not need additional skills or training. However, if volunteers are able to improve their knowledge and understanding by talking to knowledgeable people locally, referring to some of the useful resources in the Annex or accessing any available trainings, then this will help them gain confidence and expertise. For some activities, such as Savings and Loans Associations (Section 12), further training and advice from local experts might be needed and is encouraged.

As a volunteer you should try and get advice or support from other knowledgeable or experienced people nearby first. If this is not possible, you may want to build your own technical knowledge to be confident that you are giving the right advice and support. You can do this by asking other knowledgeable people for advice, researching further information online or in libraries, signing up to training opportunities, or learning by doing.



Top Tip: Volunteers do not need to know everything themselves – try asking other knowledgeable people if they can provide advice and support or if they may be willing to help with demonstrations, training and other support.

Ask your local, regional or national Red Cross and Red Crescent representatives what advice or support they could provide. There are excellent training courses provided online by *the IFRC Livelihoods Centre*. Local and regional government extension services and local non-governmental organisations may also have support or training opportunities that they may be willing to offer.

How is this handbook organised?

This handbook is organised in three parts:

Part 1

The introduction explains;

- What the handbook is, who it is for and how to use it.
- General guidance on selecting an activity
- Essential guidance to follow before you start the activity that applies to all the suggested activities to help volunteers to plan, get organised and get started.

Part 2

12 Easy Volunteer Actions Sections – a ‘menu’ of different activities for volunteers and their communities to select from. Each activity chapter contains:

- A summary of the activity – what does it look like? What are the main benefits, and any ‘key messages’ to help introduce the activity to others?
- A Preparation section – what the volunteer needs to do before the activity can start and when is the best time to start it. This Preparation section encourages the volunteer to assess the ways risks can be avoided before the activity begins.
- A ‘How to implement the activity?’ section – with a step by step description of how to carry out the activity. It lists some ‘Things to watch out for’, includes ‘Top tips’ from practitioners and ‘Key messages’ to focus on when implementing the activity. It also lists other activities in the handbook that can support the selected activity.
- An overview of ‘Resources and skills needed’ – which summarises any resources needed and their approximate costs; any skills or knowledge needed by volunteers or participants; and finally what needs to be monitored or followed-up by the volunteer.

Part 3

The Annex contains additional sources of information;

- Acknowledgements
- Acronyms
- Tables, diagrams and other resources referred to in the handbook (organised by section)
- Useful Resources (organised by section)

General guidance on selecting an activity



Choose the activities that are right for your community context

There are no strict rules. Each activity will need to be assessed on a case by case basis.

We have tried to select activities that are suited to lots of different types of people. Almost all activities are suitable for women, men, youths and the elderly, and some are more suited than others for children or people with disabilities or chronic illnesses and the people that care for them.

Most activities are suitable for all contexts (rural, urban, conflicted affected, disaster prone etc.). However the following sections are less suitable for 'nomadic communities or people on the move': Gardens, Composting, Homemade Liquid Fertilisers, Improved Farming Practices, Lead Farmers and Demonstration Farming, Water Harvesting and Conservation but there will always be exceptions. Cookstoves (Section 10) are likely to need to be portable for people on the move.

Almost all activities can be adapted to work in towns and cities, though some like the Improving Farming Practices, Lead Farmers and Demonstration Farming sections will be less suitable. From the Water Harvesting section only the rooftop water harvesting would be suitable in an urban area.

It can be challenging to choose an activity and decide who to involve in the community. It may be that several of the activities are of interest to your community and you will need to decide with the community which is most appropriate and manageable. You might need to adapt activities so that they are right for the people and contexts of the community where you volunteer.

This section will help you organise discussions with people to decide which of the 12 activities will be most beneficial for the communities you are working with.



Top Tips:

- **Don't over-stretch yourself by trying to do too many activities or too much at once!**
- **Choose a section and start with one activity first.**
- **Start small and you will end up stronger!**

You are advised to **start with only one activity first**.

This will allow you to:

- ✓ Gain support and agreement from participants
- ✓ Gather advice and support from other knowledgeable, experienced people to make the first activity a success
- ✓ Build experience and confidence, and gain the trust of the community before tackling another activity

Selecting the right activity can be complicated, so you are advised to consult others and break the decision-making down into stages: first, shortlist activities and consult key stakeholders, and then confirm the final selection with the community.



Photo: © Aernout Zevenbergen/Pact

Follow these steps:

Step 1 Review all the activities and make a shortlist of those you think will suit the community based on their context and the conditions, risks and crises they face

- Take note of what information you will need to confirm the activity is feasible in your community
- Take note of what information you will need to carry out the activity

Step 2 Discuss the choice of activities with key people

- Ask male and female community leaders, other volunteers and other relevant knowledgeable people about which activity they would prioritise
- Ask a few of the people you think will be participating in the activity about their preferences and if they think it will be feasible
- Try to ask some of the poorest or most vulnerable people (or the people that represent them) about their needs and priorities
- Make a list of key questions to discuss with the key people you talk to. Here are a few questions you may want to include in your first discussions:
 - What are the needs or problems in the community?
 - Who are the people who most need help in the community?
 - Do any projects or activities already exist that address these issues?
 - Which of the activities on this shortlist could help address the most important problems?
 - Can people and particularly the most vulnerable participate in these activities?

Step 3 Select a provisional activity to start with

Step 4 Confirm the selected provisional activity with the community

Call a community meeting

- Include the key people from your initial consultation: community leaders, knowledgeable local people, extension officers, NGO staff etc.
- Ensure you invite people you think might benefit from being involved in the activity.
- Try and include some of the poorest or most vulnerable people (such as the elderly, people with disabilities or who are looking after the chronically sick, female heads of households) or the people that they nominate to represent them.
- Be ready to listen carefully and respectfully to what people say in the meeting.
- Be ready to take note of their concerns and their ideas



Explain the purpose of the meeting

- Discuss and get the views of the community on which activities will be most helpful to improve their ability to better withstand shocks and stresses, with particular attention to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

Present and discuss the findings of the initial shortlisting

- Present a short summary on each of the shortlisted activities which were discussed with key people and why the provisional activity was selected.
- Ask for feedback from lots of different people on whether they agree with the selection of the provisional activity. Be sure to call on people who you hope will get involved.

Find an agreement for one activity

- If there is a general agreement for one activity, then agree when to meet with all those interested in supporting or participating in the activity for further planning.
- If there is a no clear agreement on one activity, consider holding a vote to select the most popular. Before the vote, summarise the key points of each activity and the potential benefits of each one. Reassure people that other activities can be considered again at a later date.
- If there is no agreement, go to Step 5.

Step 5

If needed, organise a community action planning meeting to identify other new activities

- The community may decide there are other activities to work on that are different to the activities in this handbook. Follow the advice in the 'Community Action Planning' section below to identify other solutions and activities.
- You will still find valuable ideas in this handbook and in the Essential Guidance for all activities section that will help you support alternative activities.

Following all these steps and involving a good mix of leaders, knowledgeable people and different people from the community who would participate and benefit from the activity, will help you to be sure you select the right activity.

If, at any time, information comes to light that the activity is not suitable, do not try to continue something that is clearly not working. Go back to Step 1, and see if you can find another starting point for an activity in the community.



Remember you may find out new information that will encourage you to go back and change your decision!

It is worth taking time to make the right decision!

After you and the community are confident you have selected an appropriate activity, go through the next section of Essential Guidance to help you with the planning of the activity.



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“It is essential for volunteers to read and follow the advice in this section to avoid doing any harm within their communities.”



Essential Guidance for all activities

What will you find in this section?

- How to organise effective meetings
- Selecting participants and managing groups
- Planning your activity
- Linking with others
- How to avoid risks
- Community action planning
- How to share information
- How to spread good ideas
- Following-up and monitoring

The essential guidance in this section is relevant for all the activities in the handbook. After provisionally selecting the activity, follow the guidance to plan the activity and begin to mobilise people to take part.



Photo: Chad, 2019 © George Osodi/British Red Cross

How to organise effective meetings

People's time is important to them and running good meetings helps them appreciate the activity and motivates them to get involved. Here are a few tips on how to run an effective meeting;



Top tips: Calling for a meeting

- Announce the time, place and purpose of the meeting and who it is for. Use different channels of communication to announce the meeting and make sure that people who should take part in the meeting are able to receive the message.
 - If you are not very well known in a community, you may prefer to ask another respected individual or leader in the community to call a meeting on your behalf. This could be the community or women's group leader. If the meeting is in the local school for example, perhaps the headteacher may be able to call the meeting for you?
 - Alternatively, ask if you can introduce your ideas and activity at an existing community meeting such as a village meeting, local council, parents-teachers or neighbourhood meeting. You may not be given much time there so introduce the idea briefly and then propose another meeting time to discuss your idea in more detail.
- **Find out when the best time for a meeting is** - make sure that the types of people who really need to be there can come. For example, think about different tasks and working hours for women and men that might prevent them from participating.
 - **Find a suitable place for the meeting** - make sure it is safe and comfortable and in a place that is easily accessible to the types of people that you invite. Think about mobility problems faced by the elderly, people with disabilities (PWD) or people who are chronically sick, and any transport limitations that people may face.
 - **Announce the time and place and ensure that the meeting starts on time.** Sometimes there are people who will be late or cannot join – that is fine, and you can just make a note of this. Try and start on time because people's time is precious, and some may have to leave before important announcements or before decisions are agreed.

Photo: Mozambique, 2010 © Damien Schumann/IFRC





- **Be clear about the purpose of the meeting:** what information will be shared and what decisions should be made.
- **Prepare a list of agenda points for the meeting,** announce the agenda and follow it.
- **Allow enough time for anyone who is presenting** – but set a time limit per speaker. It is worth asking a trusted person to be a ‘timekeeper’ and move people onto the next agenda item if time is running short. If some questions or discussion points would require a lengthy discussion that are not part of the agenda, make a note of it and come back to them in another meeting.
- **Make the meeting relevant** to the group that is attending and consider breaks and refreshment.
- **Take a note of the people who attend** and how they would prefer to be contacted with information (e.g. mobile text messages, noticeboards etc.).
- **Ensure that everyone at the meeting can take part in any discussion** - consider how you can encourage people who may feel less confident or less able to speak up (women or the elderly, children or people with disabilities for example). You can give time to discuss things in smaller sub-groups rather than discussing everything in one big group. This allows some quieter members to be able to give their opinion. Allow time for questions at the end of the meeting.
- **Summarise key decision points and next steps** at the end of the meeting.

Each meeting is different. As group members get to know each other, running the meetings becomes easier! Get to know each other, running the meetings becomes easier! More guidance on holding meetings is provided below, in the section on Group Activities.

Selecting participants and managing groups

After the initial consultation and the community meeting, you will already have some knowledge on who would be best suited to be involved. But it is important to check your ideas with the wider community. Consult the poorest and the most vulnerable who might benefit the most from the activity. Here are some tips:



Top tips:

- Be sure that you discuss and prioritise people who are most in need of the benefits from the activity.
- Ensure that people who sometimes do not attend or speak out at community meetings are consulted. How are you going to consult people with disabilities or households caring for chronically sick people or those living or caring for those with HIV/AIDS? If possible, go and talk to a few of these types of people face-to-face or consult their representatives (for example a disability group or organisation).
- In any meeting, it is important to keep asking yourself; ‘Who is not here who should be here?’ ‘Who is here but not speaking up?’ ‘Who is dominating the discussion?’
- Ensure you consult different ethnic, religious and language groups who may be less easy to access. You may prefer to consult their representatives or religious or traditional leaders.
- Remember! You cannot always include everyone who wants to be involved. Be realistic about what you can manage. Start with a small number of people and then expand later.
- Be open and transparent – you can ask the community themselves to decide who should be invited to participate in the activity or you can decide the reasons for selection. It is important to consult and keep the wider community informed about the reasons you have used to select the people for the activity. You can communicate this in many ways, such as in meetings or by displaying on notice boards etc. Always do a final check whether the people selected are the right ones in the community. Consider asking “Is there anyone who has been missed out?”

Decide whether to do the activity as a group or as individuals

The participants will need to discuss and decide whether people will work on the activity together in groups or whether people would prefer to do the activity by themselves or with their families or households. There are benefits and challenges with both. The right decision will depend on what the activity is and who is involved. Asking the following question can help you discuss and decide:

Who are the people you will be focusing on and working with?

Is the activity going to be for everyone in the community, or will it be for specific groups of people, such as disabled people, the youth or women only?

Is the activity suited for groups or individuals?

Think about the activity itself - will this require people to work together (for instance building a structure to harvest water at a school)? Or will a group of people learn about the activity together, but then carry out what is required on their own? Or will the activity involve working with households one by one?

For example:

- Section 12, Village Savings and Loans Associations, requires working in a group.
- Activities about gardening and farming can be talked about and done in groups, or individual households can decide to do them on their own.
- In Section 10 there are activities to improve cookstoves that can be demonstrated in a group meeting, and then volunteers or group members can visit other households to help them design and build their own cookstoves.

If it is a group activity, is it better suited for a general community discussion, or for specific groups of people?

Is the activity interesting to one type of person in particular – such as pregnant women, mothers of new-born children or school children? If the answer is yes, then you should mobilise that specific group and make sure the messages are tailored to them.

- For example, hygiene messages need to be understood by everyone in the family, but you may want to deliver the messages in different ways for children, men and women.

Some activities are relevant and important for the whole community, but, because of cultural practices and beliefs, it may be easier to discuss the activities in separate groups, for example:

- Certain personal health issues are easier for women to discuss among themselves separately from men.
- Young mother may prefer to hear messages about feeding and nutrition of children and babies away from other family members, who might want to impose their own set practices.

Individual activities

For activities that will be done mainly in individual homes, we are confident that as a RCRC volunteer you know how to follow local customs and courtesies about working with households. Below are a few tips to keep in mind.

Many activities can be started as group discussions and then followed up by individual household support. In a group or community meeting, you can explain what the activity will be, and to set up a timetable of when individual households will be visited and when they will carry out the activity.



Top Tips on working with individuals and households

- Agree a time to meet with the household and be there on time.
- Ensure the right people are at home for the activity. This may include the person planning to do the activity as well as other decision-makers such as wives and husbands.
- Introduce yourself, being courteous, not staying too long and leaving politely. Be clear on the purpose of the visit and stick to that purpose.
- Involve the household members in a discussion and be respectful – avoid lecturing anyone!
- Follow up on any promises or commitments that you make and do not make any commitments you cannot deliver.

Group activities



Working in groups is a great way to maximise time and resources. But it can take time and effort to agree on how to share the workload and divide the produce or profits. Try to predict problems before you start, and try to find solutions to deal with them.



Photo: 2009 © Kate Holt/AusAID

Try not to invite too many people to a meeting, or it will be difficult to manage, and some people will not be able to hear or participate.

Groups are strong and effective when they organise themselves, work together and involve everyone fairly. Ensure that everyone who is part of the group or meeting is heard and that no single person – no matter how important they are – dominates the meeting or group. Some ways to ensure that everyone can participate and have a say in a group include:

- Break the group into smaller groups of three to five people to discuss topics among themselves. One person can share with the rest of the group what their sub-group discussed and decided.
- Divide sub-groups by gender, age, or other categories if there are things that need to be discussed separately. For mixed groups, it is important to include people from different backgrounds, with different interests and needs, as well as women and men.

- Use different methods to engage people such as discussions, showing or drawing pictures, acting things out, practical demonstration, songs or games.
- Ask for help to ensure that vulnerable groups can attend. For instance, if someone has difficulties walking, arrange for someone to bring them to a meeting and reserve a seat for them.
- Assign different roles to different people, ensuring that some activities are reserved for quieter people.
- Elect group leaders. Groups need to be well organised, and many groups benefit from having a formal structure such as a chairperson or leader, a deputy or co-leader, a secretary and a treasurer. As a volunteer, you can help support a group to organise itself by providing advice – but you need to let the group organise itself, and to choose its own leaders and roles. Be clear that they need to suggest at least two people and where possible men and women should both be considered. Voting can be done openly by show of hands or anonymously by casting a ballot. The Annex at the end of this handbook gives some further guidance on how to undertake fairly 'Voting or election of leaders'.



Top tip: Sometimes it's best not to elect a group leader right at the start. You can ask people to 'rotate' being leaders, so everyone has a chance to do it. Then you can see who gains the trust of the group, and which people have leadership potential.

Planning your activity



Photo: Malawi, 2019 © Jo Zaremba

Once you have agreement on what activity you will carry out, and who will participate, start to draw up a plan for how to implement the activity together with the participants or group.

Each Action Section provides a step by step guide for that specific activity. Use that guidance to draw up your own action plan, agreeing on **when** to do **what**, **who** is responsible, what **resources** are needed and who will contribute what.

It may help to write your plan in a notebook, on a flipchart or even on a chalkboard or wall. Your plan may change and become bigger as time goes by, so start with listing activities that you can realistically do in the first 4 to 8 weeks.

Any work that is carried out in the community needs to be agreed and have permission from different types of people and organisations. Make sure that you get approval for the activity plan and for the steps involved from community leaders, key officials (such as government) and the Red Cross Red Crescent local staff or representative.

Linking with others

You can achieve much more if you link and work with others who have information, skills, knowledge, experience and sometimes even resources that can be helpful. The activities can be a good way to build a network with these people – and the network can provide a lot of support for the activity you choose.

Working with other skilled people will help you achieve more and may allow you to spread the activity to many more people (see 'Spreading good ideas').



Photo: © S. Truelove/innocent foundation

Spreading messages group to group by song.

Some activities will be most successful if the volunteers have a good link to people or organisations that provide important technical information, such as weather forecasts, extension officers and health workers etc. Below are a few ways to build and develop a network of contacts.

- Find out about other organisations that work in your area and when they visit, introduce yourself and explain what you are doing.
- Draw up a list of all the people that know about the topic of your activity. Reach out to a few people and note down other people that they know. As the list grows, so does your network!
- Join or create a phone or digital group – like a 'WhatsApp' group – with volunteers in other branches and share ideas and information with them.
- Look at the Useful Resources in the Annex of this handbook. Ask your Red Cross representative, local teachers or government staff to help you to find some of these resources, especially if they are online.
- Listen to the radio. If you can access the internet. check online resources.

Be careful connect with organisations or information sources that have a good reputation and beware of those that spread rumours. If in doubt about the quality of information from an organisation, check with your Red Cross Red Crescent representative!

How to avoid risks

It is important to discuss risks before you start any activity! Many activities fail when something happens that was not planned for, like a flood or another crisis. In each activity section there is a part called How can risks be avoided? . Discuss these and ask people to consider what other things that could go wrong. What ways can people think to avoid these risks? If floods, cyclones, droughts or other common hazards occur, can people prepare or do things differently to help the community to be ready?



Top tip: Plan on what to do if things do go wrong – and think about how you can help the activity to recover!

Community action planning

If you are unable to select an activity from within this handbook that is suitable for your community, then you and your community may decide to try to identify alternative activities to help solve community problems that are not listed in this handbook.

This section outlines a way of working with the community to discuss the problems they face and come up with solutions, or better ways of doing things that could minimise the problems. Section 5 on 'Improving Farming Practices' and Section 6 on 'Lead Farmers and Demonstration Farming' also use slightly modified versions of this 'community action planning' approach. You are encouraged to refer to these sections for more detail.

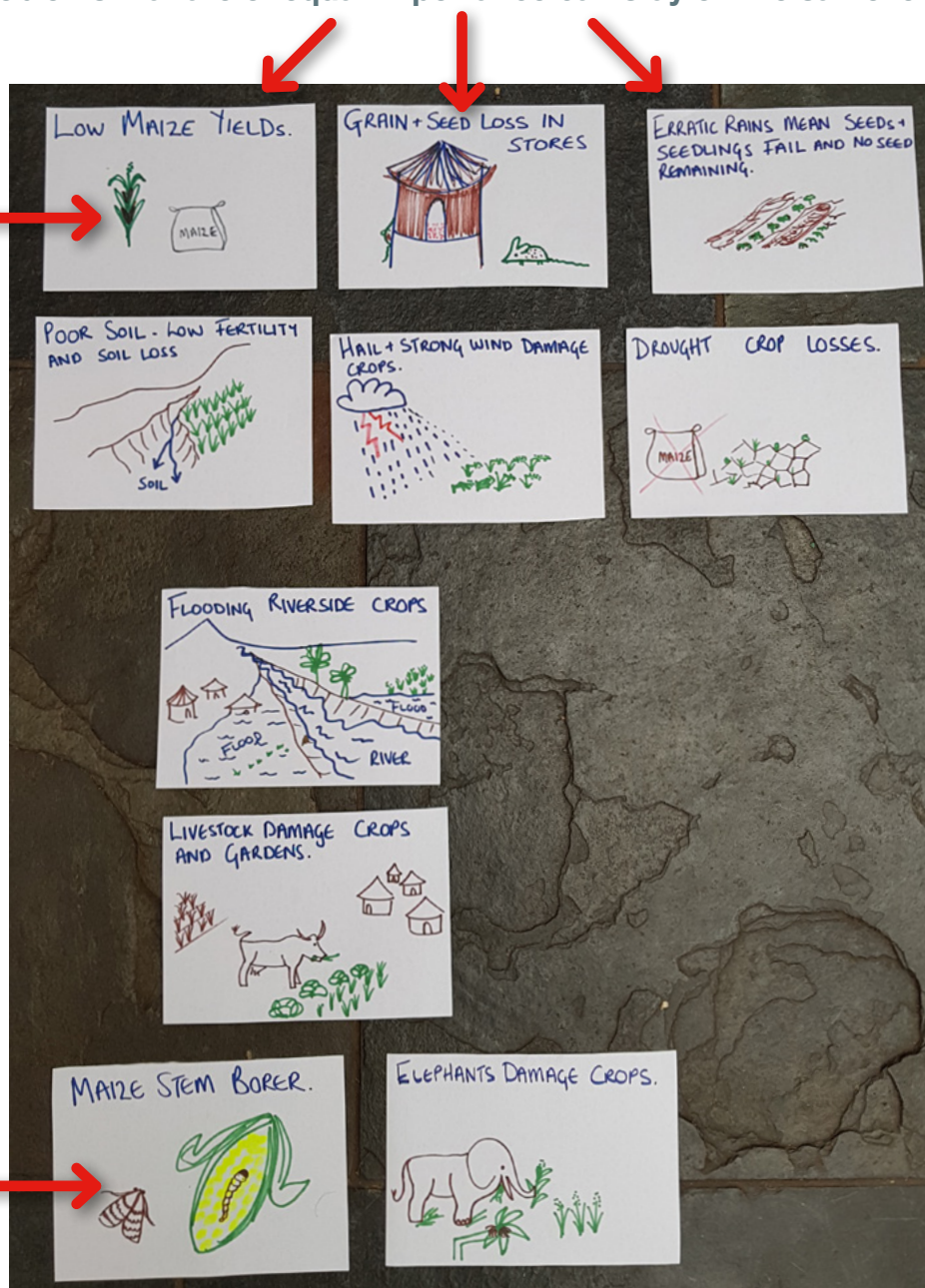
Preparation

Call a meeting (see 'Organising Meetings'). You will need pieces of paper or card, pens and somethings to either weigh down the pieces of paper on the floor (such as stones); or something to stick papers onto a wall. You will also need someone who can write to keep notes. If many people in your community are not able to read, then you may decide to draw simple pictures or symbols of each of the problems and solutions to help those people to follow the discussion more easily.

Problems that are of equal importance can stay on the same level

High priority problems

Low priority problems



Step 2 - Prioritising problems.

**Step 1 – Defining the issue, need or problem**

- Start the meeting with a clear purpose – for example ‘to identify a problem with farming’, or ‘to find a better way to capture and store water when it rains.’ Be specific so that the ideas that are generated are not too broad.
- If the meeting or group is bigger than 20 people, ask people to work in small sub-groups of 4 to 5 people and to write down or remember all the issues, problems or needs that they come up with.
- If the group includes people who can write, you can ask them to write one problem on one piece of paper. For example, if the ‘problem’ is crop losses, people write down each type of crop loss on a separate piece of paper.
- Or, you can ask people to discuss as much as they can about each point and write down as many details as possible, for example, for each crop: when it was lost, why, how, and what was done to try and save the crop.
- You can ask questions and encourage everyone else to ask questions to get as many problems listed as possible.

Step 2 – Prioritising

- As a group, you will need to decide on the most important problems or issues to work on.
- You can ask the group to place pieces of paper in order of importance. The most important issues or problems should be first and the least important should be last.
- Prioritising can take time as people need to discuss things and they will have different opinions. Allow these discussions to take place.
- Once the priority list has been agreed, make note of the order!
- You may decide that the meeting has been long enough, so suggest to people that you come back and discuss the solutions to the problems another day.

Step 3 – Generating Ideas and solutions

- Begin by reviewing the problems identified, starting with the priority ones at the top of the list and ask people to suggest solutions to the problem. You can ask people the following questions, to stimulate their ideas:
 - How can we be prepared to face this problem?
 - Can this problem be avoided? How?
 - Can this problem be shared with other communities or organisations?
 - Have anyone heard or seen ways of solving this problem or making it less worse?
 - Does anyone know of ways to make sure this doesn’t happen in the future?
- Think of some of the activities in this booklet – would they help with this problem?
- Go through as many of the ‘problems’ as you can!

Step 4 – Selecting a solution

- Look at the list of solutions – and ask the group to come to a decision on an activity that they think they could manage to undertake that would make the biggest improvement to the community. In order to be manageable, the community must feel that it has access to the right resources, skills or advice to make the solution successful. Solutions should always maximise the use of locally available materials.
- If a solution is identified that can help solve several problems, that has extra benefits.
- If there are a number of activities that are selected by the group and the group cannot decide on which one to start with, try to ask the group to think about selecting the one that will have most benefit to the poorest or the most vulnerable people. Or, ask the group to think about which activity they could achieve quickly, so that the community feels encouraged. You can consider voting for the preferred option!

Community engagement and accountability (CEA) is an approach that is key to Red Cross and Red Crescent programming and operations. CEA is an approach that puts communities at the centre of all activities. Through this approach, communities are involved in defining what is to be done, how it is done, and in communicating and carrying out the activities. [From ICRC 2016, A Red Cross Red Crescent Guide to Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA).]

How to share information

Many activities in this booklet involve communicating and providing messages to community members about an issue or problem. Messaging involves a lot more than ‘telling’ or speaking, and there are different ways to present messages. The method you choose will depend who you are speaking to, the purpose or aim of the messages, and the importance of the message. You can be creative in how you communicate with others.

All the messages presented in this booklet are general and intended for many different contexts and people – you will need be creative in adjusting your messages to make sure they make sense in your community and that they are heard by your community.



- **Information shared with communities has the most impact when it is accurate, important, meaningful, and speaks directly to the people involved.**
- **It is important to share information with staff and volunteers before it is communicated publicly so that everyone shares consistent messages.**
- **You should test your information with some community members and volunteers to ensure it is well understood.**

Select the combination of messaging types that will suit you, your activity and your community best:



Individual messaging takes time but is effective and can help make real changes in people's long-standing behaviours. House to house visits offer an opportunity to promote messages such as hygiene and sanitation. You can present your message, and also demonstrate how to improve things in a way that is directly relevant to that household, and watch them and support them in doing things. Individual messaging is also useful for discussing things that may be embarrassing or difficult for someone to talk about in a group.



Group meetings are useful for getting information to a number of people so that everyone understands, for example, when implementing a new way of farming. They can also be used to make announcements, demonstrate or present things to many people at once, but keep some of the personal interaction of individual messaging.



Mass media and social media are effective in delivering information to many people through loudspeakers, radio, posters, leaflets, notice boards, stickers and t-shirts. Social media channels can share a message with many people quickly but make sure that people have access to it and be careful about managing and verifying information shared.



Follow the advice below to develop a plan to deliver messages or any communication effectively:

01. Set the goal or purpose of the message. Is it about presenting an urgent piece of information, for example warning of a flood? Or is it about changing behaviour, for instance encouraging people to wash their hands?

02. Be specific about what you want to achieve with your message. Do you want the community to act immediately – for example evacuate? Or do you want them to think about improving something they are already doing?

03. Decide who this message is for. Describe these people - who are they? How do they normally receive messages – in a group or as individuals? Can they read or would pictures, or songs, be better?

04. Decide on the best way to spread the messages, thinking about when, where and how the messages are going to be communicated. Think about how much time the people you want to reach will have – and how much time you have.

05. Design your messaging plan. See some example methods in the table below – be creative in how you will communicate the information that people need.

- Test the messages and how you deliver them. Check the messages with a group who are similar in age, educational level and culture to those the message is trying to reach. Practice messaging!

06. Deliver the messages!

07. Follow up and repeat – the best messages are repeated many times before they are understood and remembered!

Try to use many different types of communication methods. This table describes some of the different methods you could use:

Presentations, explanations & speech

- Present the message directly to a group of people or an individual.
- Speak clearly and keep the point that you want to make as short and clear as possible.
- Allow people to ask questions and give ideas.

Demonstration

- Present a message through showing how to do something or how something works.
- This is one of the best ways for convincing people that something works as it provides evidence they can see.

Posters, letters, leaflets, pictures, flipcharts, graffiti, drawings etc.

- Use drawings, cartoons and illustrations to represent the messages or to open discussions.
- Remind people about the message when the poster or leaflet or letter is displayed for some time.

Photo: © S. Truelove/APT



Deliver messages in as many different ways as possible.

Popular songs, storytelling or drama

- Create a short play, a song or a story to communicate the messages.
- Involve your audience – let them sing along, respond to questions in a play, use examples that they can relate to!
- Useful for messages that have several arguments, reasons or points to make.
- Effective in getting and holding people's attention as they become involved in the drama / song / story!

Digital, phone messaging, radio etc.

- Very effective to give important short messages to people who have mobile phones or radios.
- Good way to reach many people, repeat messages, and change messages to update people.
- Use 'whatsapp' groups on mobile phones and set up a system for people with phones to repeat messages to households without a phone.

Top Messaging Tips:



- Give one message at a time.
- Keep messages focused and simple.
- Avoid giving too much information at one time.
- Present messages positively and encourage people to make positive changes. Avoid telling them what NOT to do - focus on what TO DO.
- You can have fun and use humour whenever it is appropriate.
- Repeat the message using different methods, and update people regularly.



Spreading messages.

Photo: Tanzania, 2015 © MaronKoningstein/CIAT



Training others to present messages

Gather a group of trainers or community messengers and hold a session to train them. Explain that they will learn what messages are important to spread and develop their own creative ways to deliver them. Run the session by:

- Sharing the messages that they will be spreading and discuss each message. Make sure everyone agrees with and understands these messages and why they are important.
- Divide the group into smaller teams of 4 – 5 participants. Assign one message to each of these groups and ask them to develop a presentation of this message.
 - The team can use whatever way they would like to present the message – drama, a song, a poster etc.
 - The team should use only the resources they have with them or they can find nearby easily – their voices, their acting skills, any sticks / stones / writing materials.
- Give 30 minutes for the teams to work in their groups and then ask them to come back together as a group.
- Let each group present their message to the rest of the group – allowing a maximum of five minutes per presentation.
- At end of the last presentation, ask the group to discuss what they thought worked well and less well.

Adapted from Danish Red Cross Youth. 2019. Youth Club Activities.

Photo: © S. Truelove/innocent foundation



Try to make sure all members of the community have an equal chance to contribute. Check that the most vulnerable and people who do not often speak out are sitting at the front and are given the chance to speak.

”

*“Little steps can make
big things happen”*

How to spread good ideas further



Spreading ideas from person to person or group to group. This is sometimes called ‘passing on the gift’. It does not mean passing on a resource, it may be as simple as passing on a good idea!

Once an activity has run successfully in one area, it can be a good example for other communities to follow. As a volunteer, you will be able to share the experience with other people, but if each of the people involved in the activity commits to spreading the idea to their friends, family and neighbours, then the news will reach many more people.

Below are some ways to help increase the number of people whom you can reach with an activity and achieve greater scale and impact.

- Some projects run an awareness session in a community location - such as markets, schools or health centres – to show and tell other people about the new methods and the ideas they have used that have helped them.
- Develop posters or other displays in public spaces to show what has been done.
- Ask successful households to showcase what they have done. For example, a household that has successfully built and started using improved cookstoves can become a demonstration site for others to learn from.
- Ask a successful group to commit to training and supporting another group of people. You may need to follow up and check that the quality of instruction is maintained.
- Train other volunteers, community workers or community members to carry out specific activities, such as spreading messages on health or nutrition.
- Encourages exchange visits between communities – these are a good way to demonstrate successful activities like gardens or water harvesting projects. Invite members of a neighbouring community to visit – or go to visit another community and learn and share new ideas!
- Form clubs that try out new and improved ways of doing things, and once they learn what works best, become ‘ambassadors’ who will spread the word to others!
- Hold competitions to encourage as many households to take part in the activities as possible. The household that exhibits the best practices may be awarded a medal, status of ‘model home’ or ‘best household of the year’ and be used as a demonstration site!



Example of a group activity - Mothers' Clubs

A Mothers' Club (MC) is an association of volunteer women who adhere to the Red Cross and Red Crescent principles, and come together to educate other members of the community on topics they have previously been trained on such as maternal and child health, hygiene and sanitation practices, nutrition, etc. After taking part in these training sessions, the members of the Mothers' Clubs become ambassadors of good practices in their community or neighbourhood.



Photo: Chad, 2019 © George Osodi/British Red Cross



Photo: Chad, 2019 © George Osodi/British Red Cross

Following-up and monitoring

For each of the 12 sections you will find an action section that includes a short description of ‘What needs to be monitored or followed-up on?’. Volunteers should refer to these and think what other aspects they will need to monitor to ensure that an activity is undertaken to a good standard and to decide whether it is going well or not. This will allow them to learn what works and what doesn’t work so well, so they can advise people about how to do things better.

- Monitoring involves taking note of what people are doing, how they are doing it, and **what the results are!** Decide on a few things to monitor – for instance how many people are able to eat vegetables from their garden - and assign people to regularly collect the information. Reviewing the monitoring notes and comparing them across different households or activities can also help find ways to do something better the next time.
- Go back to your activity plan to check off those activities or **tasks that have been completed** and find out if and why things have not been done or have not worked as planned. Use these lessons to adjust and improve the way things are done in the future.
- **Monitoring also helps volunteers to check factors or risks that affect communities.** Regularly checking for signs of a drought, a health problem or even the price of crops or other factors can provide important information – or signals – for planning. Such information can help decide when to take actions early to protect people and their livelihoods against a hazard or other problems (see Section 11 on Early Warning and Early Action). Checklists are an effective way to keep track of what needs to be monitored and when.

The most effective monitoring happens when communities or households start to monitor themselves. Encourage people to monitor things that affect them regularly – for instance checking that they are eating the different food groups every day or monitoring their health regularly when pregnant. Encourage communities to identify their own signs of progress – the signs of change that represent success to them. These maybe things you had not initially thought of!



Photo: © S. Truelove/innocent foundation