Community Trust Index

Building Community Trust for a better response

Community Trust Index:

Measuring and Fostering Community Trust in Humanitarian Action

Content

Background and Context

Trust is a vital element in the functioning of communities and the development of societies. It fosters cooperation, facilitates economic growth, and promotes resilience in times of crisis. However, trust levels have been declining in many communities, leading to fragmentation, social isolation, and a breakdown in social capital. Trust is also the foundation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) mission. Trust in humanitarian action is strongly linked to fostering acceptance, which increases access to affected people, and enables National Societies to assist those in need in an unbiased manner, as was stressed in the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent[1]. Trust is critical to community strengthening and resilience to anticipate, prevent and respond to disasters, conflicts, and health and social issues.[2] The current COVID-19 pandemic and the expansion of the crisis in Ukraine have shown that the reputation and growth of humanitarian programs and operations can be jeopardized by the lack of confidence of the public, communities, and authorities.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) works to increase community acceptance of different services offered in programmatic areas. The IFRC 2030 Strategy[3], which embodies the goals of 192 National Societies, demands for urgent shift of leadership and decision-making to the most local level through transformations that include ensuring trust and accountability. Accordingly, IFRC is committed to growing its presence in underserved communities, fostering engagement with underrepresented groups, and ensuring that communities have access to the information they need to make decisions.

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) approaches, such as inclusive participation, are increasingly recognized as essential for deepening connections with communities we seek to serve, fostering mutual trust, and fostering long-term and sustainable community resilience.[4] Nevertheless, trust is complex but often taken for granted. Defined as "a person's belief that another person or institution will act consistently with their expectations of positive behaviour"[5], trust is driven by a solid social

[1] https://rcrcconference.org/about/33rd-international-conference/trust-in-humanitarian-action/
[2] https://rcrcconference.org/blog/building-trust-in-the-red-cross-red-crescent-brand/
[3] S2030-EN.indd (ifrc.org)
[4] https://www.ifrc.org/trust-and-accountability#:~:text=Trust%20is%20the%20foundation%20of%20humanitarian%20action.%20The,to%20all%20of%20our%20relationships%20at%20the%20IFRC.
[5] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/government-at-a-glance-2019_7c8e6ca7-en

contract[6], which are rules, obligations, norms that bind the different people together and shape their thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. It is challenging for public health and humanitarian responders to act and develop plans to restore and uphold community trust without a tool to measure the various dimensions of trust and understand the strength, weaknesses, and chances to enhance it.

To close this gap, the IFRC Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) Unit is establishing the Community Trust Index is in the process of developing a Community Trust Index aimed at assisting humanitarian and public health organizations in measuring, tracking, and fostering trust within communities.

Presently, the Index is being tested within National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and is in its research design phase, with the aim of obtaining recommendations for future implementation. The research design phase strives to strike a balance between providing a scientifically reliable tool while allowing for local organization ownership, taking into account the varying capacities of these organizations. The design phase of the Index is part of the IFRC COVID-19 Emergency Appeal funded by USAID-BHA entitled "Building Trust during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Humanitarian Settings".

What is the Community Trust Index?

The Community Trust Index is an evidence-based tool aimed at measuring and fostering trust between humanitarian organizations and the communities they serve. During its pilot phase from 2022 to 2023, the Index primarily is focusingon assessing community trust towards Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies in two key dimensions: competencies, which encompass capability, technical skills, relevance, and effectiveness; and values, including participation, integrity, accountability, and transparency. However, in its upcoming implementation the Index will also assess barriers and enablers to community trust in humanitarian action more broadly and will focus on specific thematic issues and problematics, such as climate change, migration, or public health services. By examining trust within these specific contexts, the Index aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence community trust and to identify strategies and actions for enhancing trust in different areas of humanitarian actions.

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[6] Shafik, Minouche (2022). The Pandemic and Our Broken Social Contracts. Available from https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/new-social-contract-needed-for-21st-century-by-minouche-shafik-2022-01?barrier=accesspaylog

The Community Trust Index's main goal is to give humanitarian structures and programs a reliable, scientifically tested tool to measure community trust towards a humanitarian organization, and to explore and develop evidence-based recommendations, actions, and plans to increase community trust and enhance the impact of humanitarian action.

Specifically, the Community Trust Index can be used for:

1. Measuring and tracking trust dimensions over time and exploring the factors that influence trust in specific NS, communities, and populations.
2. Developing evidence-based recommendations, plans, and actions to increase community trust.
3. Addressing the social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors of trust and advocating towards increased compliance, better governance, and accountability to communities.

As shown in the table below, the Community Trust Index can be used in conjunction with other data for enhance National Societies' and branches' programming and operations, engage communities, be accountable to those who are affected, and contribute to the improvement of specific programs pertaining to climate change, health, migration and identity.
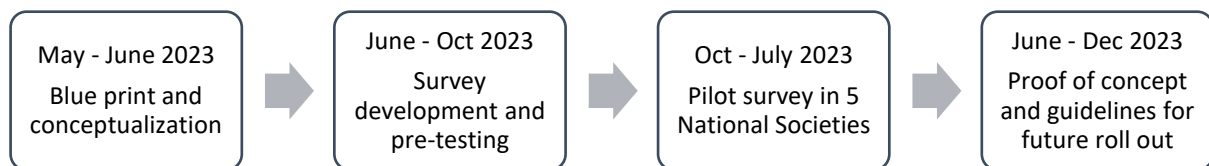
Table 1: Examples of how to use the Community Trust Index across IFRC strategic areas

Climate change	• To track community trust and foster community-led adaptation and mitigation to climate change. • To understand and increase trust in the adoption and implementation of the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations.
Health and Care	• To foster community trust in the uptake of primary health care and community-based health services, routine immunization, and WASH services.
Migration & Identity	• To understand how different types of trust are implicated in the way migrants, displaced persons and host communities accept and use humanitarian service points and protection services, especially in the cross-border context.

The Research Design Phase: Process and Outputs

The establishment of the Community Trust Index begins with the research design phase, which includes a literature review, the production of a quantitative questionnaire, cognitive interviewing, pilot testing surveys, and cross-country testing. To facilitate communication and exchange with different regions and programs, an initial working group with IFRC and external experts has been formed.

Figure 1: Overview of the research design phase process

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│  May - June 2023 │     │  June - Oct 2023 │     │  Oct - July 2023 │     │  June - Dec 2023 │
│                  │ ──▶ │                  │ ──▶ │                  │ ──▶ │                  │
│  Blue print and  │     │     Survey       │     │  Pilot survey in │     │ Proof of concept │
│ conceptualization│     │  development and │     │ 5 National       │     │ and guidelines   │
│                  │     │   pre-testing    │     │ Societies        │     │ for future roll  │
│                  │     │                  │     │                  │     │ out              │
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A **literature review** of published and unpublished materials was undertaken to clarify concepts and approaches and assess existing evidence regarding trust. The following sources were consulted: OECD Trustlab, World Values Survey (WVS), Gallup World Poll, Eurobarometer, Scientific journal articles, Edelman Trust Barometer, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Global Migration Lab, Internews' Rooted in Trust, and The Trust Project. Overall, the literature review highlighted that trust is a multi-dimensional measure. Competence and goodwill/values are the two more widely accepted distinct dimensions of trust[7]. The subscales of competence include reliability, technical skills, experience, etc., and the subscales of values include ethics, integrity, transparent, benevolent, etc. In appendix 1 is the theoretical framework of this research.

A **questionnaire** was drafted with questions corresponding to the Trust Index, Trusting Behaviors, and socio-demographics and previous experience/history with the National Society, and it is designed to be administered to the general population or any community member who has heard of a Red Cross and Red Crescent Society. The Trust Index section

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[7] 1) Das, T. K., & Teng, B. S. (2001). Trust, control, and risk in strategic alliances: An integrated framework. *Organization Studies*, 22(2), 251-283. 2) Twyman, M., Harvey, N., & Harries, C. (2008). Trust in motives, trust in competence: Separate factors determining the effectiveness of risk communication. *Judgment and Decision Making*, 3(1), 111–120.3) Jiang, X., Jiang, F. F., Cai, X. L., & Liu, H. (2015). How does trust affect alliance performance? The mediating role of resource sharing. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 45, 128-138.
15. Connelly, B. L., Crook, T. R., Combs, J. G., Ketchen, D. J., & Aguinis, H. (2018). Competence- and integrity-based trust in interorganizational relationships: Which matters more? *Journal of Management*, 44(3), 919-945

scientifically measures the level of community trust towards the National Society as a multi-dimensional concept. The trusting behaviors measure the behaviors that exhibit trust directly relevant to the National Society's program or operational outcomes, which will be customized and identified by each National Society. The respondent socio-demographics are for strategic data disaggregation to ensure that vulnerable groups are included in the survey – IFRC has a set of recommended socio-demographics questions to be included in any National Society's data collection. The respondent's previous experience/history with the National Society are mediators of trust that need to be accounted for in the analysis.

The questionnaire was translated and pre-tested through **cognitive interviewing** in specific countries (currently Argentina, Sudan, Azerbaijan, and Malaysia) to ensure the questions are understood as intended. In these countries, CEA practitioners have received trainings of trainers on cognitive interviewing to be cascaded to interviewers in their local languages.

Following the cognitive interviewing process, the Community Trust Index survey will enter the **pilot phase** five National Societies from 2022 to 2023, to gather lessons from implementation when it is rolled out in a larger population to draw conclusions and recommendations and to generate action plans integrated into National Societies programs and processes to build, maintain, or restore trust in specific dimensions of community trust.

The following outputs will be produced at the end of the research design phase:
1. An overarching concept note of the Community Trust Index
2. A simplified pitching document of the Community Trust Index
3. A blueprint of the Community Trust Index research process
4. A survey tool (questionnaire)
5. A guide for qualitative data collection and analysis
6. A final proof of concept and microsite of the Community Trust Index with guidelines for future implementation

Community Trust Index's Future Vision

The Index's future vision refers to the use of the after the research design phase to systematically collect data and integrate the results in programs, frameworks, and actions to improve community trust in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The vision for the future of the Community Trust Index is aligned with the Seville Agreement[8] and the

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[8] https://www.ifrc.org/document/seville-agreement

IFRC 2030 Strategy[9], which calls for greater focus on empowering National Societies and branches to develop themselves. National Societies and branches are well positioned to operationalize the Index and implement measures to improve community trust because of their proximity to communities.
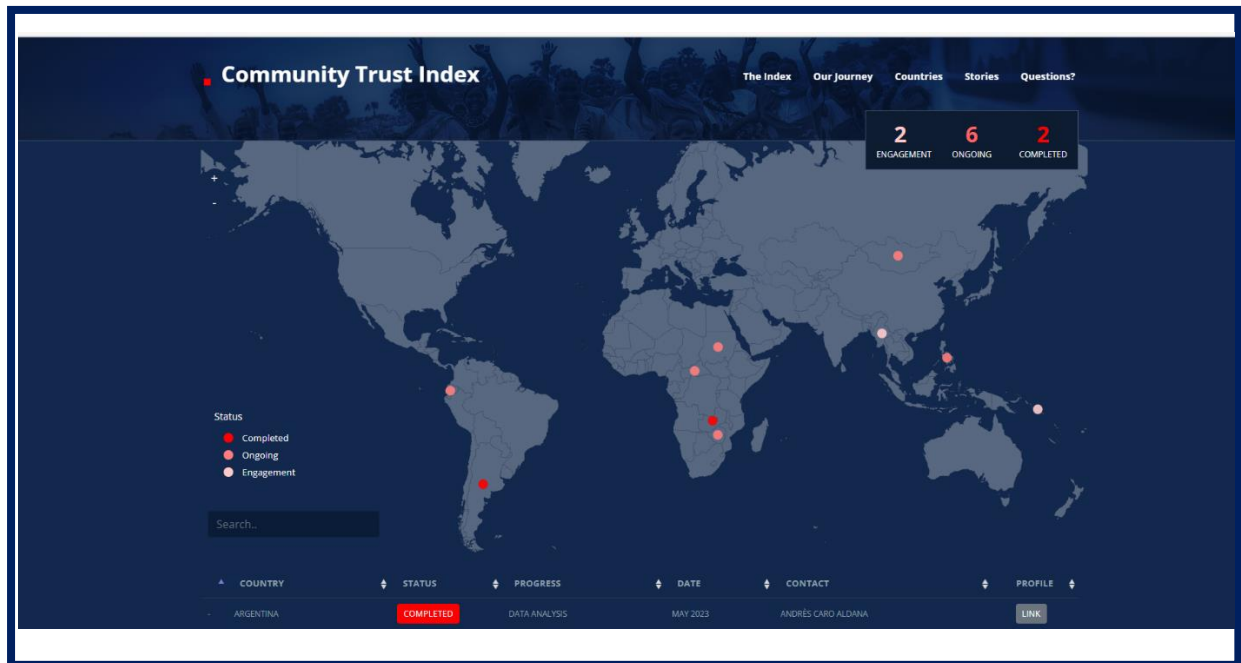

Figure 2: Example of how the Community Trust Index landing

Future-looking, the following factors are essential for the Community Trust Index to be implemented successfully:

a) *Assess community trust in key thematic and priority areas:* Lessons from the pilot phase will allow for the adaptation of the Index to include questionnaires and qualitative supplements that will assess barriers and enablers to community trust to inform and guide humanitarian programs and operations. Specifically, the Community Trust Index will look into trust to enhance specific thematic issues such as climate change, migration, or public health services, and contribute for the effectiveness and relevance of humanitarian initiatives.

b) *Embedded in local priorities:* The Index will be adapted and applied primarily at the national and sub-national levels, provided the necessary technical support, to allow a localized understanding of challenges and opportunities to community trust. While the survey aims to be standardized, the qualitative data collection guide is purposively unstructured to allow for local adaptation to capture topics, themes, and population groups relevant to each context.

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[9] https://www.ifrc.org/strategy-2030

c) *Supported by solid data:* The Index will produce data using mix-method techniques (qualitative and quantitative) for a solid understanding of the variation of trust, trust perceptions, and trusting behaviours. Findings will be triangulated with available data from contextual analysis, feedback data, secondary research, and metadata.

d) *Connecting research to action:* The Index serves as a measurement instrument for understanding trust gaps in the community, but it is comprehensive enough to suggest mechanisms for filling those gaps. It also provides clear guidelines on how research findings are turned into actions and applied in programs (such as Community Engagement and Accountability) – what is referred as 'data for action'.

e) *Inform existing frameworks and platforms at IFRC and beyond:* Apart from informing programming, the Index results may be integrated in different Red Cross and Red Crescent processes and frameworks that aim to improve access, acceptance, and effectiveness of humanitarian action. Some of these processes are the IFRC Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA), the IFRC Certification process, and the IFRC Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment (BOCA). The IFRC-teste Index can be useful for other humanitarian organizations.

f) *Repeated and systematic:* The Index is intended to be implemented regularly, every two years, in order to enable ongoing measurement of trust, action plans, and tracking of changes and advancements on trust throughout time.

g) *Avoid benchmarking or comparison:* Because trust is a sensitive, complex, and context-specific issue, the Community Trust Index will not be used to rate, rank, or compare National Societies according to how communities trust them.

h) *Building capacities:* By systematically training National Societies staff and volunteers on issues connected to data collection and turning evidence into action in different phases, the Index offers the chance to contribute to the broader goal of building capacities.

With these factors in mind, the Community Trust Index's future vision is not meant to be linear but rather presented in a circular structure to allow for feedback loops, advancements, and tracking progress over time. The future vision consists of six major phases: planning, data collection, data analysis, findings and recommendations, action plans, and evaluation and learning.
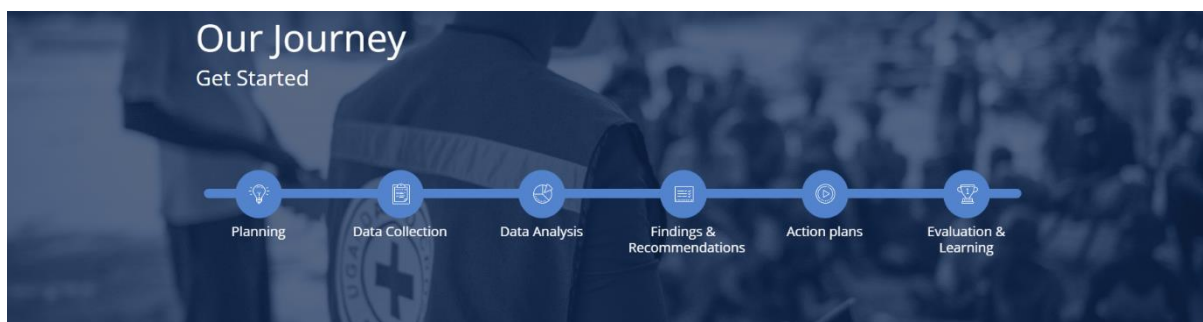
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